

# Communal

## RELIGION

INFORMATION concerning the religious life of the American Jewish community during 1949-50 was difficult to compile: the data was scattered, and statistics conjectural, for the most part.<sup>1</sup> However, most experts tended to agree that the program of synagogue building continued, that membership in synagogues and affiliated associations was on the increase, that synagogue attendance was improving, that adult education was continuing to attract substantial enrollments, and that religious ceremonies were being observed in more homes with increasing regularity. An objective evaluation of the significance of these developments was still being awaited; it was hoped that the survey being undertaken among its affiliated congregations by the (Conservative) United Synagogue of America, in co-operation with the Bureau of Applied Social Research of Columbia University, would shed light on the religious life of the American Jewish community when made public at the United Synagogue convention to be held in November, 1950.

### *Synagogue Membership*

Exact statistics concerning the proportion of American Jews who were members of synagogues were unavailable, and estimates varied. Thus, Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan estimated that congregational memberships in the large cities where 85 per cent of the Jewish population resided amounted to less than 10 per cent of the total Jewish population ("Toward the Formulation of Guiding Principles for the Conservative Movement," published as a supplement to *Conservative Judaism*, May, 1950). Dr. Kaplan estimated that, allowing for a larger affiliation among the remaining 15 per cent of the population, at most 600,000 individuals were members of synagogues. To this number must be added approximately 250,000 High Holy Days seatholders who are not members of congregations; the total then would be 850,000 Jews associated with congregations. Will Herberg quoted Rabbi Moshe Davis ("Postwar Revival of the Synagogue," *Commentary*, April, 1950) to the effect that one and a half million Jews, including those who held synagogue seats for the High Holy Days, were affiliated with religious institutions.

This latter estimate corresponds approximately to the present writer's own calculations, which are based upon the following figures: The United Syna-

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, figures in this report are based on a questionnaire prepared by the author and distributed by the AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK in the spring of 1950.

gogue of America reported that its constituency of 400 congregations totaled 150,000 families. The (Reform) Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) indicated a membership of over 400 religious units comprising 100,000 families. The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations stated that it had a membership of 500 with an estimated minimum of 100,000 families. These national organizations listed a total of 350,000 families; on the basis of 3.3 individuals to a family, 1,155,000 Jews were enrolled in congregations affiliated with national organizations. To this figure must be added an additional 2,000 congregations of various sizes, predominantly Orthodox in inclination, that were unaffiliated with national bodies. On the basis of fifty families to a congregation, (which is undoubtedly an understatement), these congregations comprised 100,000 families, or about 330,000 people. The grand total of 1,485,000 members is thus obtained.

Another large category of religious associations was that of seatholders who purchased admission for the Holy Days. This class was found among all congregations, but was particularly large among the Orthodox ones. The number of High Holy Day seatholders and their families may be estimated at 250,000. Hence it would seem that a total of 1,735,000 were associated with congregations in worship. This was approximately 40 per cent of the Jewish population; the remaining 60 per cent would appear to have been completely outside of the synagogue during 1949-50.

### *Synagogue Attendance*

Dr. Kaplan further estimated that, except for the High Holy Days, the average synagogue attendance seldom amounted to more than 10 per cent of synagogue membership (*ibid*). Even Sunday morning services, formerly customary in Reform temples, were being abandoned, and very few Reform congregations still retained Sunday services. Thus, synagogue attendance remained the primary problem confronting the religious leadership.

### *Organization of Lay Bodies*

Religious Jewry in the United States was organized during 1949-50 in three lay organizations corresponding to the branches of the American synagogue.

#### ORTHODOX

The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations was attempting to organize the communities associated with it. This was an extremely difficult task, because of the heterogeneity and diversity of interests among the various congregations. Nevertheless, there were sporadic attempts at co-operation by like-minded congregations in larger metropolitan areas such as New York City, for such specific purposes as adult education and Kashrut.

Orthodox Jews in the United States were also organized in the United Jewish Religious Bloc of America. The bloc consisted of eleven national bodies, including the Rabbinical Alliance of America, the Mizrahi groups, and units of the Agudat Israel. The bloc represented an attempt to unite rabbinic and lay organizations for the purpose of rendering moral, financial, and political

support to the Israeli Religious Bloc. It was hoped that unification would take place during 1950 or shortly thereafter.

#### CONSERVATIVE

The United Synagogue of America was the national union of Conservative congregations; its affiliated organizations on a national scale included the National Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, the National Women's League, and the Young People's League; these groups served Conservative families through their respective synagogues. The United Synagogue functioned through seven service departments and seventeen regional offices.

#### REFORM

The UAHC also co-operated with national associations of sisterhoods, brotherhoods and youth groups. The UAHC serviced Reform families through thirteen regional councils and eight bureaus centered in UAHC headquarters in Cincinnati. In November, 1948, the decision had been made to move the central offices of the UAHC from Cincinnati to New York City in order to work more effectively. This plan was in the process of realization: The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods had provided \$225,000 for the acquisition of a site and the late Dr. Albert A. Berg<sup>2</sup> had made available the necessary funds for the building, to be known as the Moretz and Josephine Berg Memorial House of Living Judaism.

#### RECONSTRUCTIONIST FOUNDATION

The adherents of the Reconstructionist movement, inclusive of the subscribers to the *Reconstructionist*, its official organ, numbered a maximum of 5,000. This membership was divided about equally between lay people, the majority of whom were professionally active in Jewish life, and rabbis; two-thirds of these rabbis were Conservative and one-third Reform. There was a sprinkling of Orthodox rabbinical subscribers to the magazine. The budget of the Reconstructionist movement amounted to \$50,000.

The Reconstructionist Foundation was the administrative and fiscal arm of the movement, which attempted to represent an ideological alignment transcending the existing organizational divisions in all areas of Jewish life. Reconstructionists sought to influence the prevailing agencies to realize their proposal for an organic Jewish community.

### *Rabbinic Organization and Consolidation*

Like the lay membership of the congregations, the three branches of the American rabbinate were organized in separate bodies.

The Orthodox rabbinate continued divided into a number of groups and alumni associations. Of these bodies, the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) had a membership of 425, of whom 55 to 60 per cent were graduates of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of the Yeshiva University

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<sup>2</sup> See Obituaries.

in New York. Also affiliated with the RCA were a large percentage of the alumni of the Hebrew Theological College of Chicago, as well as a small number from the lesser American yeshivot and the large yeshivot in Israel and Europe. The Union of Orthodox Rabbis numbered 520 members, predominantly European in origin; the Rabbinical Alliance of America had a membership of approximately 150, most of whom were from such extreme Orthodox yeshivot as Yeshivath Torah Vodaath and Yeshivat Rabbi Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, N. Y., and Yeshivat Tifereth Jerusalem, in New York City. There were, thus, a total of approximately 1,100 Orthodox rabbis organized in rabbinic bodies.

The (Reform) Central Conference of America Rabbis had a membership of more than 600; two-thirds were graduates of the Hebrew Union College, the remainder graduates of the Jewish Institute of Religion.

The (Conservative) Rabbinical Assembly of America had 450 members. Of this number, 90 per cent had been ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 10 per cent by European and American academies.

There were thus a total of 2,150 rabbis organized in professional groups in the United States.

Several special projects undertaken by rabbinic organizations deserve recording. The Rabbinical Assembly membership pledged \$100,000 to the 1949-50 campaign fund for the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The Rabbinical Council of America repeated its annual "Torah-tour" throughout the country during 1949-50. Teams of rabbis visited urban and rural communities to strengthen Orthodox Jewish life.

#### TRENDS

A noteworthy trend among the rabbinic groups during the period under review (July, 1949, to July, 1950) was that in the direction of changing the historic name of the "Reform" movement to "Liberal." This tendency was in line with the complete process of re-examination of the Reform position. The Reform rabbinate was in the midst of adopting a new constitution and modifying its whole structure. Some members of the CCAR conference went so far as to assert that they "would like to see some form of closer contact between the left-wing Conservatives and our group."

On the other hand, the left-wing Conservatives referred to who adhered to the Reconstructionist philosophy believed that rapprochement between the Conservative and Reform movements was highly desirable and necessary. During 1950-51 the Reconstructionist movement planned to initiate steps to accomplish this end.

The prime mover in this movement for rapprochement was Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan. On the one hand he urged the Conservative movement to accept as legitimate and recognize as normal theological diversity within the movement and within the Jewish community as a whole. At the same time Dr. Kaplan pleaded for "unity in diversity" with Reform Judaism. He appealed to the Reform rabbis to aid in the establishment of "the corporate reality of the Jewish people"—that is, of the Jews of the world and the Jews of Israel, not of the state of Israel. This corporate reality was to be accomplished by means of a covenant, openly arrived at and proclaimed in Jeru-

saalem by the representatives of all Jewries. ("The Next Step in the Reform Movement," *Hebrew Union College Quarterly*, December, 1949.)

#### LOCAL ORGANIZATION

A significant trend of another sort on the religious scene was the transformation of metropolitan rabbinic bodies into functioning organizations contributing essential services to the community. The outstanding organization of this kind was the New York Board of Rabbis, which had a membership of 450, representing an increase of 250 since 1947. The New York Board was an affiliation of all rabbis who lived in New York City and environs, as well as in up-state communities.

The Board was officially recognized for some purposes by New York City and State. Thus, the Mayor's Reception Committee called upon the Board to send a rabbi to represent the Jewish community at municipal functions. The Board was also officially recognized by the state and city of New York as the nominating agency for chaplain appointments in hospitals, prisons, and other public institutions.

The Board supervised the activities of 61 chaplains who ministered in 111 institutions throughout the State. To indicate to the chaplains as well as to the general membership how the resources of psychiatry could be utilized for spiritual counselling, the Board had arranged an Institute for Pastoral Psychiatry, manned by members of the Department of Psychiatry of Mount Sinai Hospital. In this work the Board was subvented by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York.

#### *Theological Seminaries*

The institutions of learning that trained rabbis continued to be the spiritual and intellectual inspiration of each section of the synagogue in the United States. This was particularly true of the Reform and Conservative seminaries which influenced and unified their respective movements. The existence of several Orthodox seminaries in the United States tended to favor a division of loyalty within the Orthodox constituency, and competition for support and status on the part of the seminaries. Consequently the influence of each of the Orthodox seminaries was geographic and sectional, rather than central.

#### REFORM

Hebrew Union College (HUC) celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary in the spring of 1950. Prominent among the diamond jubilee festivities was a nation-wide broadcast saluting the institution on the radio program *America's Town Meeting of the Air* broadcast on March 14, 1950. The program was a symposium on the question "How Can Organized Religion Advance American Democracy?" Another anniversary feature was the Day of National Sabbath observed by all Reform congregations on April 1, 1950.

In June, 1949, a rewarding recognition came to HUC from the Department of Education of the State of Ohio. This official body authorized HUC to offer Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees for work done in residence

in Hebraic and cognate studies. It was believed that HUC was the first Jewish seminary in the United States to offer the Ph.D. degree. The HUC-Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) ordained eighteen rabbis, of whom ten were graduates of the JIR in New York City, and eight of the HUC in Cincinnati.

#### CONSERVATIVE

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTSA) at the opening of its sixty-third academic year in September, 1949, held convocation exercises at which 175 presidents of Conservative congregations in various parts of the country received citations for their labors and achievements on behalf of Judaism. At this assembly Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, United Nations mediator in Palestine, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in recognition of his "unforgettable and indispensable service to the cause of human understanding among all people." The JTSA ordained seventeen rabbis at its commencement ceremonies in June, 1950.

In May, 1950, the JTSA kindled a memorial lamp in the tower of the Library building, to burn perpetually in commemoration of the destroyed centers of Jewish culture and learning in Europe. The lamp was lighted at a special service in the JTSA synagogue and marked the first observance of Rabbi Akiba Memorial Month, dedicated to the study of Torah in memory of the six million Jews martyred during World War II.

A unique event in the affairs of the JTSA was the announcement in November, 1949, that Maurice Levin had resigned his business responsibilities with Hearn Department Stores to devote his time to the National Committee on Endowment Development of the Seminary. Mr. Levin was chairman of this committee, which planned to collect an endowment of \$15,000,000 for the JTSA.

#### ORTHODOX

The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of the Yeshiva University celebrated the fifty-third anniversary of its founding in April, 1950, with formal ceremonies at which 100 rabbis who had completed their studies during the past three years received their Semikha (ordination). This was the thirtieth Semikha exercise in the history of the institution. It must be noted that the Orthodox yeshivot do not ordain men at fixed periods; Semikha is given whenever students are deemed to have fulfilled the requirements for this ordination. Figures for ordinations by the other yeshivot were unobtainable.

#### *Adult Education*

All sections of the American synagogue were establishing institutions for adult education, the Orthodox and Reform on local levels, the Conservative on a national level. (The Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Baltimore reported that it was the pioneer Orthodox rabbinical seminary in the field.) Young Israel, the lay organization for Orthodox youth, sponsored adult education schools throughout the country. Whether they were receiving central super-

vision from the national office was not ascertainable. Increasing numbers of Reform congregations likewise promoted adult institutes for Jewish studies.

The (Conservative) National Academy for Adult Jewish Studies granted charters to institutions that conformed to designated standards and issued credit certificates to students who had fulfilled a standard course of study during the year, as well as to students who had completed the required hours of study during the period of three years. The Academy prepared and published text books, and provided an advisory service on methods of organizing adult institutes and their curricula. Affiliated with the Academy were 125 local schools with a student body of over 10,000 enrolled in more than 400 courses. In addition, the Teachers Institute of the JTSA operated the Seminary School of Jewish Studies, in New York, with an enrollment during 1949 of 891 students. There were more than 400 students in the extension department of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

### *Finances*

The financial cost of the religious establishment could not be fully appraised. However, the JTSA asked the Jewish community for \$1,972,000, which, together with income from JTSA endowment funds, would cover the budget of the Conservative movement—that is, of the JTSA, the Rabbinical Assembly, and the United Synagogue. The United Synagogue reported a budget of \$145,000; the Rabbinical Assembly one of approximately \$30,000. The HUC-JIR, together with the UAHC, appealed for \$1,875,000, an amount which, augmented by the HUC-JIR endowment income, would satisfy their budgetary needs. HUC indicated that its budget in 1949–50 was \$519,000; the CCAR expended \$25,000. Yeshivah University operated on a budget “exceeding \$1,200,000” for all its departments. Its endowment funds totalled \$1,164,744, an increase of \$250,000 for 1949–50. However, this budgetary figure does not cover the cost of the entire Orthodox movement. The Rabbinical Council of America, one of the Orthodox rabbinic bodies, expended \$20,000 for 1949–50. The Synagogue Council of America, a confederate organization representative of all religious divisions, functioned with a budget of \$65,000.

### *Social Action*

Both Reform and Conservative rabbinic bodies had active standing Commissions on Social Action. These commissions issued statements on various controversial issues and attempted to educate their lay affiliates. The Women's League of the United Synagogue and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods had perfected agencies to educate members to understand social problems and to develop techniques to influence legislative bodies. On behalf of all of organized American religious Jewry, the Synagogue Council of America issued important statements with regard to international peace and American democracy. Whenever the Synagogue Council found it necessary

and advisable it sought the co-operation of non-Jewish religious organizations. Thus, on April 10, 1950, the Synagogue Council proposed a common study by Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant groups of the problems of peace.

### *Law and Central Authority*

During the course of 1949–50, efforts were intensified by Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform groups to establish coherence and authoritative standards in Jewish law and religious practice. The Orthodox factions, to whom Jewish law presented primarily the problem of the desirability of a central authority to determine the status of the tradition, were divided concerning the advisability of creating such a body in Israel to meet the needs of world Jewry. The Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) announced that it would participate in a world rabbinic conference to discuss the creation of such an authority only on the basis of complete equality with other rabbinic bodies. The other Orthodox rabbinic bodies (the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and the Rabbinical Alliance of America) were opposed to this proposal—the Union of Orthodox Rabbis expressing itself as opposed to any attempt to create a universal authoritative rabbinic body under any name. However, it was clear from the discussion of this problem among these groups that a central religious authority was under consideration, and not the traditional Sanhedrin, with all its technical implications of the granting of Semikha in the legal sense of the term, and the rendering of decisions that would be binding on world Jewry. All the Orthodox rabbinic organizations were in agreement with the ruling of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel in the fall of 1949 that none of the fast days in the Jewish calendar had been abolished as a result of the establishment of the state of Israel.

#### REFORM ACTIVITY

Reform Judaism in general does not believe in the binding character of traditional law. Since the "Columbus platform" of 1937, Reform had tended to recognize the validity of traditional customs and ceremonies that possessed inspirational value. It further advocated the preservation of the Sabbath, the festivals, and Holy Days. However, wide diversity and dissimilarity existed in practices as in belief. Nor had Reform theology been defined in accordance with modern knowledge and philosophy.

#### CCAR INSTITUTE

To discuss these questions, arrive at a consensus of thought, and obtain an expression of opinion, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) invoked an Institute on Reform Jewish Theology in March, 1950, which met in Cincinnati. The results were naturally tentative. A recommendation was adopted to ask the conference to establish a permanent institute on theology to meet annually.

A second resolution urged that the conference take action at its 1950 convention to prepare a guide for the practice of Reform Judaism, in order to implement the "Columbus platform" and to "provide information concerning

prevailing customs, offer standards and criteria for the evaluation of ritual observances, and suggest their creative development." However, the convention defeated a proposal to prepare and publish such a guide.

#### CONSERVATIVE ACTIVITY

The problem facing the Conservative rabbinate was to attempt to adjust the Jewish law to contemporary conditions. In an effort to arrive at a working consensus the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards was reorganized in May, 1948, to represent every shade of opinion in the Rabbinical Assembly. The Assembly authorized this committee to consider modern social and ethical concepts in rendering decisions, and provided that members of the Assembly were free to follow either the majority or minority opinions. The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards presented two Responsa dealing with Sabbath observance at the 1950 convention of the Rabbinical Assembly. Though they came to different conclusions on one issue and agreed on another, both Responsa emphasized the current environmental and psychological needs of the people as vital arguments in arriving at their decisions. These documents, under the signature of the members of the committee who had approved them, were to be transmitted to the membership, and then made public.

#### *American Rabbinate and the Religious Scene in Israel*

The religious problem in Israel had repercussions among organized religious Jews in the United States. Every section of the American rabbinate sent official missions and observers to study the religious scene in Israel; each delegation reacted in accordance with its own religious concepts.

#### REFORM REACTION

The CCAR protested against existing laws which it considered as being discriminatory against non-Orthodox rabbis, asserting that the Chief Rabbinate refused to license non-Orthodox rabbis for the purpose of functioning as religious officials. The CCAR charged that the state of Israel was in practice supporting one church, the Chief Rabbinate, and that church and state were not separate and distinct in Israel, as they were in the United States. However, at the CCAR Convention in June, 1950, a resolution to denounce the inequality of treatment was defeated by a narrow margin.

#### CONSERVATIVE REACTION

The Rabbinical Assembly of America also sent an official commission to Israel. The commission's report, released in March, 1950, condemned the Religious Bloc for its use of political means to achieve religious ends which, the commission contended, must necessarily prove unrealizable. Censuring the prevailing favoritism towards members of the Orthodox rabbinate, the report proposed a series of measures to make clear the attitude of the Conservative rabbinate. The entire report and its recommendations were recommended by the convention of the Rabbinical Assembly held in June, 1950.

## ORTHODOX REACTION

The United Religious Bloc of America was satisfied with the status of religious authority in Israel and was supporting the Religious Bloc in Israel in its efforts to widen its political influence in order to establish the traditional Jewish law as the law of the land in Israel. Accordingly, in January, 1950, American Orthodox groups reacted vigorously and publicly in support of the Israeli Religious Bloc to force the coalition government of Premier David Ben Gurion to modify its program for the education of children of religious parents in the immigrant camps.

The Orthodox rabbinate of the United States justified the Chief Rabbinate and its licensing policy in the public press, contending that the Chief Rabbinate had set up qualifications which rabbis had to possess in order to be recognized in Israel, one of which was the "degree of Semikha." Hence, the American Orthodox rabbinate concluded that no discrimination existed in Israel.

INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES<sup>3</sup>

Jewish religious bodies in the United States functioned in interfaith work on the national level through the Synagogue Council of America. During 1949-50 the Council participated in the Religion-in-American-Life program sponsored by twenty religious bodies of all faiths. President Harry S. Truman took note of this program and broadcast his endorsement in an address delivered in October, 1949. The Council also co-operated with the Federal Council of Churches and the National Catholic Welfare Conference in various matters. Many national organizations which required the co-operation of the synagogue turned to the Council.

The Jewish Chautauqua Society, sponsored by the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, continued its effective work on many college campuses. The Institute of Religious and Social Studies, under the auspices of the JTSA and with branches in New York, Boston, and Chicago, continued its program of educating Christian clergymen and theological students to the tenets of Judaism. Through formal courses and group discussion, leaders of Christian churches were obtaining a genuine understanding of Jews and Judaism. The JTSA again sponsored the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, in which many outstanding social and physical scientists, philosophers, and theologians of all faiths participated.

*Anniversaries*

A significant side light on the general religious scene may be found in the number of congregations of every religious grouping, in every part of the country, that celebrated jubilees, diamond jubilees, and centenaries during 1949-50. This was particularly noticeable among Reform congregations, many of which had been established by Jews of Central European origin during the second half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> See also *Intergroup and Interfaith Activities*, p. 70.

Oldest of the congregations celebrating anniversaries was Congregation Beth Elohim in Charleston, S. C., which celebrated its two-hundredth anniversary. Eight Reform temples marked centenaries: Temple Beth El in Detroit, Mich.; "The Temple" in Cleveland, Ohio; Congregations Emanuel and Sherit Israel in San Francisco, Cal.; Emanu-El Bne Jeshurun in Milwaukee, Wis.; Temples Israel in Dayton, Ohio; Gates of Prayer in New Orleans, La., and Ohev Sholom in Norfolk, Va. Eight synagogues celebrated their seventy-fifth anniversaries: Albany Hebrew Congregation in Albany, Ga.; Ansche Chesed in Erie, Pa.; House of Israel in Hot Springs, Ark.; Temple Beth El in Jersey City, N. J.; Sinai in Oakland, Cal.; Sinai in Sumter, S. C.; Shomer Emunim in Toledo and Temple Israel in Wilmington, N. C. Two congregations in Texas commemorated their fiftieth birthday: Emanuel in Beaumont and Beth El in Fort Worth.

Two Orthodox synagogues had memorable celebrations. House of Jacob, "the Old Shul," in Utica, N. Y. attained its centenary, and Sons of Jacob in St. Paul, Minn., observed its seventy-fifth birthday.

Two Conservative congregations also celebrated anniversaries: Ohev Shalom in Newark, N. J. was ninety-years old. Beth Israel in Hempstead, N. Y., marked its fiftieth year of existence by dedicating a new synagogue structure.

The Rabbinical Assembly of America was in the midst of celebrating its jubilee. Plans were complete for an extensive program of festive conventions throughout the country to emphasize and clarify the doctrines of Conservative Judaism.

### *Jewish Intellectuals and Religious Values*

During the period under review several articles by Jewish intellectuals dealing with their relationship to Judaism were published and became the subject of discussion.

Israel Knox (in his "A Humanist Religion for Modern Man," *Commentary*, January, 1950, p. 18-28) perceived "a reviving interest," on the part of Jewish intellectuals, "in religion, as such, and in Judaism, in particular." He was critical of several contemporary interpretations of Judaism in the United States, Orthodox and Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist, and clarified their shortcomings. However, though recognizing the right of intellectuals to find fault, he insisted that they must criticize meaningfully "if it is to lead to earnest thinking. They must not impose upon Judaism a 'frame of reference' which is alien to its very nature and which, if accepted, would transform it into something other than itself."

Knox then proceeded to place the Jewish religion within a naturalistic framework. He emphasized that Judaism was the outgrowth of Jewish experience, that the God of Israel was principally the God of justice, and that social morality was at the heart of the Jewish tradition. Knox was opposed to the "crisis" theology which some theologians had sought to introduce into Jewish religious thinking.

Emil L. Fackenheim (in "The Modern Jew's Path to God," *Commentary*, May, 1950, p. 450-457) wrote as an intellectual who was a traditionalist and

a mystic; Fackenheim showed little patience for metaphysical speculation about duty. His was the traditional, Rabbinic concept of God.

Before expressing this conviction, Fackenheim described the "absurdity" of the modern naturalistic and idealistic approaches to God and His existence. His thesis was that man could not be a spectator, an objective observer of God; he must be a participant in God. God's existence is beyond logic and beyond philosophic speculation; man "should commit himself to God by virtue of faith."

Fackenheim represented the intellectual who finds traditional Judaism completely satisfying, though he is immersed in modern thought. To him, faith transcends modern thought; it is beyond space and time.

HERBERT PARZEN

## JEWISH EDUCATION

### *Growth of Jewish School Enrollment 1900-50*

**D**URING the period 1900-50 Jewish school enrollment more than kept pace with the increase in the Jewish population. In 1900, according to a study made by Dr. Charles Bernheimer (AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, volume 2, p. 505-506), 36,000 children were registered in all the congregational and non-congregational schools in the United States. Assuming that another 9,000, or one-fourth of the children attending Jewish schools (a very generous estimate) were studying with private *melamdin* (teachers) and in the *hedarim* which substituted for schools in those days, the Jewish school enrollment at the beginning of the century was about 45,000. In the spring of 1950 the total number of pupils enrolled in all Jewish schools (exclusive of those receiving instruction privately and of the 5,200 students studying Hebrew in the public high schools in New York and other cities) was 266,609.<sup>1</sup> During this half century the Jewish population increased from 1,058,135 in 1900 to approximately 4,700,000 in 1950. The relative increases during this period in the Jewish school enrollment and in the Jewish population were thus 492.5 per cent and approximately 400 per cent, respectively.

These figures do not seem to support the charge frequently made that Jewish parents were less interested in the Jewish education of their children in 1950 than their immigrant grandparents had been fifty years before. The percentage cited above indicates that the number of parents giving their

<sup>1</sup> The Jewish school enrollment figure for 1950 is based on reported actual enrollment in all of the five major metropolitan centers having each a Jewish population of 100,000 or more (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Boston); in all of the six large urban centers having each a Jewish population of between 50,000 and 100,000 (Newark, Essex County, N. J., Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, San Francisco); and in ninety-four intermediate and smaller communities. These 105 communities were distributed over thirty-six states, and comprised a Jewish population of approximately 3,800,000, or approximately 82 per cent, of the total Jewish population in the United States. An estimate was made for the remainder of the smaller and intermediate communities whose aggregate Jewish population amounted to approximately 700,000, or 14 per cent, of all Jews in the United States, since no enrollment data was available.

For a detailed discussion of the method used in estimating the Jewish school enrollment in the smaller and intermediate communities, the reader is referred to the article "Enrollment in Jewish Schools, Spring 1947," *Jewish Education*, XIX, 3.