

THE COMMON BONDS OF ORTHODOX, CONSERVATIVE, AND REFORM JUDAISM

IN RECENT MONTHS THERE HAS BEEN MUCH TALK IN OUR COMMUNITY ABOUT WHAT SEEMS TO BE CERTAIN NEW SECTS IN JUDAISM. THESE GROUPS BEAR THE NAMES LIBERAL AND RECONSTRUCTIONIST. MANY PEOPLE HAVE ASKED ME TO EXPLAIN WHAT THESE NAMES MEAN. WE CAN UNDERSTAND THEM ONLY IF WE FIRST UNDERSTAND CLEARLY THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORTHODOX, CONSERVATIVE AND REFORM JUDAISM. UNFORTUNATELY, FEW AMERICAN JEWS ARE ABLE TO DEFINE THE NATURE OF THESE MOVEMENTS CLEARLY. ~~IT IS VAS IEST TO DEFINE THEM~~ AND MOST ~~THE~~ JEWS AND STATISTICAL STUDIES SHOW THAT MANY REFORM JEWS BELONG TO ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONS AND SOME ORTHODOX JEWS BELONG TO REFORM CONGREGATIONS WITHOUT BEING AWARE OF THE CONTRADICTION ~~OF IT~~ INVOLVED.

Belonging to Conservative are really not concerned about the specific orientation of their congregation. AS A RESULT to which they belong. As a result it is not possible to say

LET US BEGIN ^{roughly} BY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND ORTHODOXY. ORTHODOXY TEACHES THAT GOD DICTATED EVERY WORD IN THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, THE TORAH, TO MOSES. IT HOLDS THAT THE WORLD WAS CREATED JUST AS THE BIBLE SAYS IN SIX DAYS. IT ACCEPTS THE FACT THAT THE NAME OF THE FIRST MAN WAS ADAM AND THAT HE WAS MOULDED FROM A LUMP OF CLAY. IT TEACHES THAT JOSHUA MADE THE SUN STAND STILL, AND THAT

THE LAW IN THE TORAH PROHIBITING THE EATING OF PORK IS TO BE FOLLOWED AS STRICTLY AS THE LAW TEACHING, "THOU SHALT NOT KILL". ORTHODOXY GOES FURTHER AND SAYS THAT THE ADDITIONAL RITUALS INSTITUTED BY THE RABBIS WHO COMPILED THE MISHNA AND THE TALMUD ARE AS BINDING UPON THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AS ARE THE LAWS OF THE TORAH. IN OTHER WORDS THE ORTHODOX ACCEPT RABBINIC LAW AS WELL AS BIBLICAL LAW, ^{to them} BOTH RITUAL AND MORAL ^{above laws} LAWS HAVE

approximately equal standing

THE ORTHODOX RELIGIOUS SERVICE IS MUCH THE SAME AS IT HAS BEEN FOR OVER A THOUSAND YEARS, AND IT INCLUDES PRAYERS BESEECHING GOD FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE WITH ITS ANIMAL SACRIFICES AS WELL AS PRAYERS CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IN THEIR SELFSAME BODIES. THEY ^{obviously} DIVIDE THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN MODERN TIMES, AS IN DAYS OF OLD, INTO THREE GROUPS, THE PRIESTLY GROUP, THE LEVITES, AND THE ISRAELITES. WE COULD SUMMARIZE THE ORTHODOX POSITION BY SAYING THAT IT IS WEDDED TO A BELIEF IN THE LITERAL TRUTH OF EVERY WORD IN THE BIBLE: IT CLINGS TO THE EXTREME IMPORTANCE OF DETAILED RITUAL: AND IT LOOKS FOR THE RESTORATION OF ANCIENT TEMPLE PRACICES. TO THIS MUST BE ADDED A BELIEF IN

THE COMING OF AN INDIVIDUAL MESSIAH, A HUMAN BEING, WHO WILL LEAD ISRAEL AND MANKIND TO JUST AND PEACE. OF COURSE, ORTHODOXY

STILL TEACHES THE CONCEPT OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE. IT CONTENDS THAT WE ARE CHOSEN AS GOD'S MOST PRECIOUS PEOPLE AND THAT WE ARE THE OBJECT OF HIS SPECIAL CONCERN.

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LET US BEGIN TONITE BY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND ORTHODOXY. THE FIRST ESSENTIAL POINT ABOUT O. IS THAT IT ACCEPTS THE LITERAL TRUTH OF THE BIBLE. IT TEACHES THAT GOD DICTATED THE TORAH OR FIRST FIVE BOOKS TO MOSES. IT TEACHES THAT THE WORLD WAS CREATED IN SIX DAYS AND JOSHUA DID MAKE THE SUN STAND STILL. THE SECOND DISTINGUISHING FEATURE ABOUT O. IS THAT IT IS BASED ON THE AUTHORITY OF JEWISH LAW. IT TEACHES THAT BEING RELIGIOUS IS A MATTER OF FOLLOWING THE TRADITIONAL LAW AS IT IS FIRST SPECIFIED IN THE BIBLE AND AS IT IS LATER EXTENDED BY THE RABBIS WHO COMPILED THE TALMUD. FOR THE ORTHODOX, ^{Jew} THE LAW IS NOT DIVISIBLE INTO MORAL AND RITUALISTIC LAW. TO HIM EVERY DETAIL OF THE LAW IS EQUALLY VALID, AND ONE MUST NOT QUESTION THE LAW CONCERNING KOSHER FOODS JUST AS ONE MUST NOT QUESTION THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. A THIRD FEATURE OF ORTHODOXY IS ITS ANTICIPATION OF THE COMING OF A MESSIAH, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO WILL BE A DESCENDENT OF KING DAVID, WHO WILL BE KING OF AN INDEPENDENT ISRAEL AND ^{who will} USHER IN AN ERA OF PEACE AND JUSTICE FOR ISRAEL WHICH WILL BENEFIT THE ENTIRE WORLD. FOR O. THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH HAS A BASIC NATIONALISTIC KERNEL, AND ITS UNIVERSAL ~~BY~~ IMPLICATIONS ARE ^{secondary} MERELY INCIDENTAL. ~~THE THE BROAD AREA OF~~ THE FUTURISTIC HOPES OF O. ARE INCLUDED A BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, THE REINSTITUTION OF THE ANCIENT TEMPLE WITH ITS ANIMAL SACRIFICES, AND THE REINSTITUTION OF THE POWER OF THE PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES.

IT IS ONLY FAIR TO STATE THAT IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT O. JEWS PRAY THREE TIMES A DAY FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH AND THE RESTORATION OF ANIMAL SACRIFICES, ~~THEY DO NOT REALLY ANTICIPATE~~ THESE PRINCIPLES ARE ACCEPTED MORE BY THE EXTREME ORTHODOX THAN BY THE SO-CALLED MODERN ORTHODOX. THE PROBLEM FOR THE MODERN ORTHODOX, HOWEVER, IS THAT THEY ~~MAY~~ SEEM POWERLESS TO DEVELOPE A PROCEDURE WHICH WILL ENABLE THEM TO CHANGE THE OLD JEWISH LAW TO WHICH THEY ARE BOUND. AS A RESULT THEY SEEM TO BE PRAYING FOR THINGS IN WHICH THEY NO LONGER BELIEVE, ~~AND~~ CERTAINLY THE AVERAGE ORTHODOX JEW WOULD BE HORRIFIED TO DISCOVER THAT HE WAS PRAYING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, FOR A RETURN TO ANIMAL SACRIFICES. THIS SITUATION HIGHLIGHTS THE PROBLEM OF THE O. JEW IN MODERN TIMES. HIS INTELLECT MAY INSTRUCT HIM THAT SOME OF HIS VIEWS ARE WRONG, BUT HE IS WEDDED TO A SYSTEM OF PROCEDURE WHICH DOES NOT PERMIT HIM TO INSTITUTE CHANGES. THE CENTER OF GRAVITY IN O. IS IN THE PAST, AND ~~THE~~ O. JEW IS CHAINED TO LAWS THAT ARE THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD.

II

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM REPRESENTS AN INTERMEDIATE STAGE IN THE EFFORT OF THE MODERN JEW TO LIBERATE HIMSELF FROM THE UNCHANGING LAWS OF HIS PAST. CONSERVATISM ~~IS~~ according TO A RECENT BOOK ON THE SUBJECT BY DR MOSHE DAVIS, BEGAN WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, (p. 18, "The Emergence of Conservative Judaism"):

1. Jews MUST TRY TO ADAPT THEMSELVES TO THE NEW SPIRIT OF UNIVERSALISM AND SCIENCE

2. KLAL YISROEL, THE ALL-INCLUSIVE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS A PRIMARY GOAL

3. JEWISH LAW CAN BE CHANGED, ALTHOUGH IT MUST STILL BE CONSIDERED THE BASIS ~~OF JUDAISM~~ of AUTHORITY in Judaism

4. THE TRADITIONAL MITZVOS OR RITUALS MUST BE ACCEPTED AS THE BASIC PRE-CONDITION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH WAY OF LIFE.

WE CAN SUMMARIZE THESE POINTS BY SAYING THAT IT WAS THE GOAL OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM AT ITS FOUNDING TO RETAIN THE AUTHORITY OF THE ANCIENT JEWISH LAW, BUT TO CHANGE IT IN SUCH A WAY AS IT WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH MODERN SCIENCE AND UNIVERASLISM. THE POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGE, HOWEVER, WERE SEVERELY LIMITED BY ~~THE~~ *The* ~~THE~~ ANOTHER PRINCIPLE OF CONSERVATISM, NAMELY THAT THE TRADITIONAL MITZVOS OR RITUALS ARE A BASIC PRE-CONDITION FOR JUDAISM. IN OTHER WORDS; CONSERVATISM STATED THE BASIC NEED FOR CHANGE, BUT THEN TIED ITS OWN HANDS BY THIS LAST REQUIREMENT. THE MORE LIBERAL CONSERVATIVE RABBIS HAVE RECOGNIZED THIS POINT.

SOME OF THESE CONSERVATIVE RABBIS, LIKE MORDECAI KAPLAN AND IRA EISENSTEIN HAVE FORMED A ~~RECONSTRUCTIONIST~~ WHICH THEY CALL RECONSTRUCTIONISM. FOR APPROXIMATELY 35 YEARS THEY HAVE TRIED TO INFLUENCE CONSERVATIVE RABBIS TO BECOME MORE LIBERAL. THEY HAVE THEMSELVES ADMITTED ALMOST COMPLETE DEFEAT AND TODAY THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT A NEW SEMINARY FOR MEN WHO THINK AS THEY DO.

WE SHALL SPEAK MORE OF RECONSTRUCTIONISM IN A MOMENT, BUT IT IS IMPT. TO POINT OUT HERE THAT IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM HAS RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN JEWISH LAW, IT HAS NOT TAKEN THE STEPS NECESSARY TO ALTER THIS LAW, AND IN THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES, CONSERVATISM HAS RETREATED INTO MODERN ORTHODOXY. THE LEADERSHIP OF ITS SEMINARY IS CLOSELY CONTROLLED BY ITS RIGHT WING OR ORTHODOX INCLINED SPOKESMAN. THE REFORM OBJECTION TO CONSERVATISM IS THAT THERE IS AN EXTREME DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THE RABBI AND THE LAYMEN. CONSERVATIVE RABBIS MAINTAIN A STANDARD OF RITUALISTIC OBSERVANCE FOR THEMSELVES WHILE THE AVERAGE CONSERVATIVE JEW IS SUBSTANTIALLY NON-OBSERVANT. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT THE BASIC C. POSITION IS INTELLECUALY REFORM AND EMOTIONALLY TRADITIONAL. THIS WOULD BE TRUE FOR THE C. RABBIS ONLY. THE AVERAGE C. JEW IS LITTLE MORE OBSERVANT THAN THE AVERAGE REFORM JEW. IN SPITE OF THE C. JEW'S IMPATIENCE WITH THE NON-OBSERVANCE OF THE R. JEW, STATISTICS CLEARLY SHOW THAT THE C. JEW OBSERVES LESS THAN 15% OF THE MITZVOS OR RITUALS REQUIRED BY THE ORTHODOX. IN TERMS OF THE PRACTICAL OBSERVANCE OF THE MASSES, WE CAN SAY THAT C. JUDAISM IS CHARACTERIZED BY A SHARP DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RECOMMENDED OBSERVANCE AND THAT ACTUALLY FOLLOWED BY THE RANK AND FILE. IN THIS SENSE, C. JUDAISM IS A MOVEMENT CONTAINING GREAT EXTREMES, WHICH FOR SOME REASON ARE ACCEPTED IN GOOD HUMOR BY BOTH THE RABBIS AND THE LAITY, AS IF TO SAY, WE MUST PROJECT A POSITION EVEN IF WE DON'T MAINTAIN IT.

TO THE CREDIT OF C. JUDAISM, WE MUST SAY THAT ITS SCHOOLS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY SUPERIOR TO MOST O. SCHOOLS, AND IT HAS PROVIDED A HOME FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF JEWS, FOREMERLY O., WHO ~~WERE~~ WERE UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE FRANK AND BOLD BREAK THAT REFORM JUDAISM MADE WITH THE ANCIENT TRADITION. IT MUST BE FURTHER SAID THAT THE C. SEMINARY FOR THE TRAINING OF RABBIS IS ONE OF THE TWO OR THREE MAJOR SOURCES OF JEWISH CULTURE TODAY, AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE AMERICAN SCENE IS UNMISTAKABLE. ON THE OTHER HAND, ~~ONE CAN~~ IT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPATIENCE OF REFORM JEWS WITH C. JEWS WHO ~~PRAY AS THE O. JEW~~ PRAY AS THE O. JEW FOR THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, WHEN THE BELIEVE IN THIS DOGMA, AND WHO PRAYS FOR THE RESTITUTION OF ANIMAL SACRIFICES, WHEN THEY CLEARLY DON'T BELIEVE IT. THE ESSENCE ~~OF THE REFORM VIEW IS A CONSISTENCY BETWEEN DOCTRINE AND OBSERVANCE.~~

difficult to like

Prays conservatives don't do so

IT IS TO THE CREDIT OF C. JUDAISM THAT IT HAS KEPT ALIVE SOME MEASURE OF JEWISH RITUALISTIC OBSERVANCE, ALTHOUGH WHAT HAS SURVIVED IS OF AN ECLECTIC NATURE. C. JEWS SEEM TO PICK AND CHOOSE WHAT RITUALS THEY PERSONALLY WISH TO FOLLOW AND WHAT IS NOT TO THEIR LIKING. ON THE OTHER HAND, REFORM JUDAISM HAS MADE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN JUDAISM BY REEMPHAZING THE ROLE OF THE PROPHETS IN OUR PAST TRADITION. IT IS WE WHO HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR JEWS TO FEEL THAT JUDAISM IS CONSISTENT WITH THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT AND WITH THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY. IT IS WE WHO HAVE TAUGHT THE MOST CLEARLY THAT RELIGION MEANS NOTHING IF IT DOES NOT MEAN, AT LEAST, AN OBEDIENCE TO ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND HUMANITY TO MAN. RABBI SOLOMON FREEHOF, ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED RABBIS OF OUR AGE, HAS MAINTAINED THAT EACH SEGMENT OF JUDAISM HAS ITS ROLE TO PLAY. ~~OR~~ WERE IT NOT FOR ORTHODOXY WE MIGHT LOSE CONTACT WITH THE VITAL ELEMENTS OF OUR PAST WHICH ~~KEPT~~ KEPT JUDAISM ALIVE THROUGH THE AGES. WERE IT NOT FOR CONSERVATISM, JEWS MIGHT HAVE LESS COHESIVENESS BECAUSE ~~THEY~~ REFORM HAS NOT ACCENTED RITUAL. WERE IT NOT FOR REFORM, JUDAISM WOULD LOSE ITS MOST CREATIVE ARM IN MODERN TIMES. THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION THAT EACH MOVEMENT HAS STILL A GREAT DEAL TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE RICHNESS OF JUDAISM.

III

REFORM JUDAISM HAS TRIED TO HOLD HIGH THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF OUR FAITH SO THAT JEWS WOULD DEVOTE THEIR GREATER ENERGIES TO WHAT IS MOST IMPT. IN OUR FAITH. WE HAVE FRANKLY STATED THAT MUCH OF JEWISH LAW WAS INCONSISTENT WITH THE MODERN SPIRIT, AND WE HAVE BEEN UNAFRAID TO MAKE NEW PRONOUNCEMENTS, IN THE PROPHETIC SPIRIT, WHICH HAVE LINKED TOGETHER THE BEST IN THE JEWISH PAST WITH THE BEST IN THE PRESENT. WE HAVE CLEARLY STATED THAT WE ACCEPT THE BIBLE NOT AS THE WORD OF GOD BUT AS THE WORD OF INSPIRED MEN TRYING TO REACH AS HIGH AS THEY MIGHT. FOR US THE BIBLE IS THE HISTORY OF ONE'S PEOPLE'S CONTINUING VALIANT EFFORT TO LIVE A LIFE OF MEANING, AND IT DOES NOT LOSE REVERENCE FOR US BECAUSE WE SAY IT IS NOT A SCIENTIFIC BOOK.

We have taught Jews not to look for one man, a Messiah, to save them, but rather that they must strive with other peoples to bring about the universal democracy of the Messianic Age.

ReFORM JEWS ARE NOT ASKED TO PRAY FOR THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY OR FOR THE RESTORATION OF ANIMAL SACRIFICES. WE STATE SIMPLY THAT THESE BELIEFS BELONG TO A TIME PAST. THESE PRAYERS ARE ELIMINATED FROM OUR PRAYER BOOK, AND WHERE THE O. AND CONS.

PRAYER BOOKS ONLY EXPRESS MOST OF THEIR PRAYERS IN BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, WE HAVE ALTERED THE ANCIENT PRAYERS TO INVOKE GOD'S BLES SINGS ^{not only on Israel but} ON ALL MANKIND. IN REFORM JUDAISM THE OBSERVANCE OF THE RABBI IS NOT EXPECTED TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE OBSERVANCE OF THE PEOPLE, NOR DOES THE RABBI ASK THE PEOPLE TO ~~DO THINGS THAT~~ PRACTICE OBSERVANCES WHEN HE REALLY KNOWS THEY WON'T DO THEM. IN REFORM J. WE TRY TO DEVELOP A MINIMUM SET OF RITUALS, AND THEN WE ALL TRY TO FOLLOW THEM.

ONE CANNOT BE A REFORM JEW IN THE TRUE SENSE UNLESS HE IS CONSTANTLY SEEKING WAYS TO IMPROVE HIMSELF AND HIS RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION. ~~WHEN REFORM JUDAISM TEACHES THAT~~ UNFORTUNATELY, ABOUT 100 YEARS AFTER ITS REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD, REFORM JUDAISM BECAME A NEW KIND OF ORTHODOXY, AND ITS LEADERS BECAME VERY ANXIOUS NOT TO MAKE ANY CHANGES IN THE RITUALISTIC STRUCTURE WHICH HAD BECOME ^{characteristic of} ~~CONCRETE~~ IN REFORM. WHEN TRADITIONAL JEWS HOLD UP THEIR NOSE AT THE MENTION OF REFORM, THEY ARE REACTING TO THAT PHASE OF REFORM WHEN IT HAD BECOME TOO PROUD OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS ^{to be flexible} AND TOO EXCLUSIVE// IN ITS RESTRICTIONS. WHAT WAS TRUE OF REFORM JUDAISM 40 and 30 YEARS AGO IS NO LONGER TRUE TODAY. FORTUNATELY, WE HAVE UNDERGONE AND ARE UNDERGOING A SECOND TRULY CREATIVE PERIOD WITHIN OUR OWN MIDST.

WHEN REFORM JUDAISM BEGAN, IT WAS SO ANXIOUS TO ^{Proassert} RESCUE THE PRIMACY OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN JUDAISM THAT IT MADE THE MISTAKE OF THINKING THAT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY COULD SURVIVE WITHOUT SOME DEFINITE BASIS OF RITUALISTIC AND CULTURAL OBSERVANCE. ~~TIED TO THIS ERROR WAS THE OVER-ZEALOUS EMPHASIS ON~~

REFORM JEWS HAD TO LEARN THE LESSON THAT THE JEWS ARE NOT ONLY THE BEARERS OF A RELIGION, THEY ~~ARE~~ ALSO CONSTITUTE A PEOPLE, IN THE SENSE THAT THEY SHARE A HISTORY ^{and culture} THAT GOES BACK 4,000 YEARS. ~~AND A PEOPLE CANNOT EXIST WIT//~~ IT REMAINED FOR RABBI STEPHEN S. WISE, THE GREATEST RABBI OF OUR AGE, TO TEACH US THIS LESSON. DISSATISFIED WITH THE ANTI-ZIONIST STAND OF THE CINCINATTI REFORM SEMINARY, WISE, THE LEADING REFORM RABBI OF THE EAST, FOUNDED THE JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION IN NEW YORK TO TRAIN RABBIS WHO WOULD BE REFORM IN THEIR RELIGIOUS VIEW, BUT ^{more flexible} ~~SOMEWHAT~~ IN THEIR APPROACH TO RITUAL, AND MORE CONSCIOUS OF THE PEOPLEHOOD OF ISRAEL. THIS WAS IN THE EARLY 1920s. WHEN THE NEW YORK SEMINARY WAS FOUNDED, STEPHEN WISE, TURNED TO A LIBERAL CONSERVATIVE RABBI WHOM HE THOUGHT WAS TRYING TO DO THE SAME THING IN THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT THAT HE WAS DOING, ~~AND~~ IN THE REFORM MOVEMENT, AND HE ASKED THIS MAN TO BECOME THE PRESIDENT OF THE JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION. RABBI MODECAI KAPLAN AND STEPHEN WISE THOUGHT ALIKE IN MOST WAYS. KAPLAN WAS CONVINCED, IN SPITE OF HIS CONSERVATIVE BACKGROUND, THAT MODERN JEWS HAD TO MAKE A SHARP BREAK WITH THE PAST. HE URGED CONSERVATIVE JEWS TO DENY THE DOCTRINE OF THE BODILY RESURRECTION AND TO ELIMINATE THE PRAYERS FOR THE RESTORATION OF ANIMAL SACRIFICES. THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT WOULD NOT ACCEPT EVEN THIS MINIMUM COMPROMISE.

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IN KAPLAN'S VIEW CONSERVATIVE JEWRY HAD TO DO SUBSTANTIALLY WHAT REFORM HAD DONE, EXCEPT THAT HE WANTED CONSERVATIVE JEWS TO ACCENT THE PEOPLEHOOD OF ISRAEL AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MOST OF THE MITZVOS OR RITUALS. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KAPLAN AND RABBI WISE WAS NOT A DIFFERENCE IN MODD, BUT A DIFFERENCE IN DEGREE. KAPLAN ~~WANTED~~ WANTED MOST OF THE RITUALS TO BE MAINTAINED, EVEN THOUGH HE WOULD OPENLY SAY THAT THE RITUALS WERE NOT DERIVED FROM GOD. WISE WAS NOT REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT SO MANY RITUALS. WE WILL NEVER KNOW WHETHER THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN ~~THE~~ KAPLAN AND WISE WOULD HAVE WORKED, BECAUSE KAPLAN DEDICED TO STAY IN THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT AND ^{TO} TRY TO BORE FROM WITHIN. HE CALLED FOR A RECONSTRUCTION OF THAT MOVEMENT AND CALLED HIS ~~SEMINAR~~ ^{SEMINAR} MOVEMENT, "RECONSTRUCTIONISM." IT REPRESENTED A BOLD INTELLECTUAL BREAK FROM THE MAIN STREAM OF C. JUDAISM. KAPLAN FAILED COMPLETELY TO INFLUENCE C. JUDAISM. HIS DESCIPLES FROM THAT SEMINARY ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. THE C. MOVEMENT HAS BEEN CAPTURED BY THE MODERN ORTHODOX, NOT BY THE LIBERALS.

STEPHEN WISE WENT HIS OWN WAY WITH HIS ~~REFORM~~ SEMINARY. HE MADE MANY MORE CONVERTS TO HIS WAY OF THINKING THAN DID KAPLAN. WISE SPOKE OF "KALAL YISROEL" "THE COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL" HE THOUGHT THE TIME HAD COME FOR REFORM JUDAISM TO SPREAD ABROAD, AND FOR ITS OWN PART TO BE LESS RIGID. WE ALL KNOW THAT STEPHEN WISE BECAME THE FOREMOST FIGURE IN THE AMERICAN ZIONIST MOVEMENT, AND HE TRAINED MANY DESCIPLES. ULTIMATELY IN 1949 THE CINCINNATI REFORM SEMINARY MERGED WITH THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF DR. WISE, ADMITTING WITH THIS GESTURE THAT IT HAD BEEN WRONG IN ITS ANTI-ZIONIST STAND. THUS WAS REFORM JUDAISM IN ITS ENTIRELY WEDDED TO THE CONCEPT OF "KLAL YISROEL", THE COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL, . NO LONGER WERE REFORM JEWS TO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS AN ISOLA TED ELITE ..

IN ITS INTERNAL STRUCTURE, REFORM JUDAISM HAS ALSO CHANGED TREMENDOUSLY. ORIGINALLY WE WERE PREDOMINATELY A MOVEMENT OF JEWS FROM WESTERN EUROPE. TODAY OUR MOVEMENT IS DOMINATED BY JEWS DESCENDING FROM EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWS, AND WE HAVE GROWN TO A NATIONAL MOVEMENT OF OVER 600 CONGREGATIONS. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF OUR MOVEMENT ARE NOT CHANGED. IT WOULD BE ENTIRELY WRONG TO SAY THAT OUR MOVEMENT HAS BECOME MORE CONSERVATIVE.. THE C. MOVEMENT IS WEDDED TO THE TRADITIONAL JEWISH LAW. WE HAVE DECLARED THAT WE ARE NOT DEPENDENT ON THAT LAW AS THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY. THE C. MOVEMENT IS WEDDED TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THE 613 MITZVOS OF MOSES AS A PRECONDITION ^{of} ITS EXISTENCE.. WE ARE CONCERNED MERELY WITH DEVELOPING A SMALL SET OF RITUALS WHICH ARE ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL FOR OUR TIME AS AN AID IN KEEPING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY COHESIVE. ^{as an emotional support}

for the moral principles to which we are bound

VI

WE COME NOW TO SPEAK OF THE CONGREGATIONS WHICH CALL THEMSELVES RECONSTRUCTIOST AND LIBERAL. A LIBERAL CONGREGATION IS USUALLY ~~ON~~, A MEMBER OF THE REFORM MOVEMENT WHICH WISHES TO CLING TO CERTAIN RITUALS LIKE THE WEARING OF HATS.. FREQUENTLY SUCH A CONGREGATION WILL NOT HAVE A PREPONDERANT MAJORITY OF EITHER REFORM OR CONSERVATIVE JEWS, AND IT WILL CHOOSE THE WORD LIBERAL NOT TO OFFEND ITS C. CONSTITUENCY.

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SUCH A CONGREGATION WILL BELONG TO THE R. MOVEMENT RATHER THAN TO THE C. MOVEMENT BECAUSE IT IS STILL FAR TOO LIBERAL FOR THE LATTER. A LIBERAL CONGREGATION WILL PRESERVE SOME OF THE OUTWARD FORMS OF THE TRADITION, ALTHO ITS INNER SPIRIT IS SUBSTANTIALLY REFORM.

OF RECONSTRUCTIONISM, WE HAVE ALREADY SPOKEN IN PART. IT IS THE BIRTHCHILD OF A FEW LIBERAL CONSERVATIVE RABBIS WHO ARE FAR TOO RADICAL FOR THEIR C. COLLEAGUES. IT IS IN MANY WAYS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM A LIBERAL CONGREGATION, EXCEPT THAT IT IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE REFORM MOVEMENT. WITHOUT A SCORECARD, HOWEVER, IT MIGHT BE IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL THEM APART.

IT ~~MUST BE POINTED OUT~~ ^{need not be emphasized} THAT THE WORD "RECONSTRUCT" IS VERY SIMILAR TO THE WORD "REFORM". A RECONSTRUCTIONIST IS ONE WHO CONSCIOUSLY DISAVOWS THE DIVINITY OF THE BIBLE, AND ONE WHO CLAIMS THAT THE RITUALS ARE NOT DERIVED FROM GOD. A TRUE RECONSTRUCTIONIST IS MUCH MORE REFORM IN THIS SENSE, THAN A C. JEW. INDEED, INTELLECTUALLY, ^{the} A RECONSTRUCTIONIST IS REFORM. A RECONSTRUCTIONIST LIKE A REFORM JEW IN THE STEPHEN WISE TRADITION SPEAKS OF "KALAL YISROEL" THE COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL. UNLIKE THE C. JEW, THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST DOES NOT PRAY FOR THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, AND FOR THE REINSTITUTION OF ANIMAL SACRIFICES. WHEREIN, THEN, DOES THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST DIFFER FROM THE REFORM JEW? SUBSTANTIALLY IN THAT THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, LIKE THE CONSERVATIVE, IS STILL WEDDED TO THE ~~SUBSTANTIAL~~ QUANTITY OF MOSAIC RITUAL.

IN THIS SENSE, RECONSTRUCTIONISM SEEMS OUTWARDLY LIKE CONSERVATISM, THOUGH INWARDLY, IT IS REFORM JUDAISM. WE COULD SAY THAT RECONSTRUCTIONISM IS CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM FREED OF MANY OF ITS

CONTRADICTIONS. ^{A second major diff between Rec + Reform is that Rec. actually, however, there are only a handful of reconstructionist congregations in the world, while conservatism has over 600 congregations. In a practical sense, when we speak of reconstructionism we are merely speaking of the private views of Rabbi M. Kaplan and a small handful of followers. Some of the teachings of Rabbi Kaplan which were new 30 or 40 years ago have been absorbed into Reform Judaism thru Rabbi Wise and his Seminary. Since reconstructionism has so much in common with Reform Judaism on the one hand and with conservatism on the other, it has become lost on the American scene. Rabbi Kaplan is a gifted thinker, and American Judaism is in his debt, but not because he has founded a new rel. movement. Since Reform and C. congregations vary so much among themselves from congregation to congregation, the average American Jew finds it impossible to understand the subtle distinctions that Kaplan draws. Pragmatically, they have been helpful to individual Reform and C. rabbis in clarifying their own views, but not in sparking a distinct movement in American Judaism.}

ACTUALLY, HOWEVER, THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONGREGATIONS IN THE WORLD, WHILE CONSERVATISM HAS OVER 600 CONGREGATIONS. IN A PRACTICAL SENSE, WHEN WE SPEAK OF RECONSTRUCTIONISM

WE ARE MERELY SPEAKING OF THE PRIVATE VIEWS OF RABBI M. KAPLAN AND A SMALL HANDFUL OF FOLLOWERS. SOME OF THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI KAPLAN WHICH WERE NEW 30 OR 40 YEARS AGO HAVE BEEN ABSORBED INTO REFORM

JUDAISM THRU RABBI WISE AND HIS SEMINARY. SINCE RECONSTRUCTIONISM HAS SO MUCH IN COMMON WITH REFORM JUDAISM ON THE ONE HAND AND WITH CONSERVATISM ON THE OTHER, IT HAS BECOME LOST ON THE AMERICAN SCENE. RABBI KAPLAN IS A GIFTED THINKER, AND AMERICAN JUDAISM IS IN HIS DEBT, BUT NOT BECAUSE HE HAS FOUNDED A NEW REL. MOVEMENT. SINCE REFORM AND C. CONGREGATIONS VARY SO MUCH AMONG THEMSELVES FROM CONGREGATION TO CONGREGATION, THE AVERAGE AMERICAN JEW FINDS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND THE SUBTLE DISTINCTIONS THAT KAPLAN DRAWS. PRAGMATICALLY, THEY HAVE BEEN HELPFUL TO INDIVIDUAL REFORM AND C. RABBIS IN CLARIFYING THEIR OWN VIEWS, BUT NOT IN SPARKING A DISTINCT MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN JUDAISM.

THE FUTURE IN AMERICAN JUDAISM CLEARLY BELONGS TO REFORM AND TO CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM. THE LATTER HAS MOVED TO THE RIGHT AND NOW IS TENDING TO COALESCE WITH THE MODERN ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONS WHICH STILL HAVE A CERTAIN VITALITY. REFORM JUDAISM, FOR ITS PART, IS MOVING FROM ITS CLASSICAL PHASE INTO A MORE DYNAMIC PHASE, WHERE IT IS IMPLEMENTING ITS BASIC INTELLECTUAL VIEWS WITH

emphasis on ethics →

Emphasize the centrality of the State of Israel as the spiritual & cultural center of Jews while Reform Jews feel that America is still much more vital to Jewish Survival. Both of course feel that the 2 communities have to cooperate together to contribute towards each other

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A CONCERN FOR A MINIMUM SET OF RITUALS WHICH WILL GIVE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TO OUR BOLD INTELLECTUALISM. IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS TO OUR MEMBERS THAT BETH AM IS IN THE FOREFRONT OF REFORM CONGREGATIONS POINTING THE WAY TO A NEW SPIRIT IN OUR MOVEMENT. YOU HAVE HEARD ME SAY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT WHAT MODERN JUDAISM NEEDS IS A COMBINATION OF THE INTELLECTUAL HONESTY OF REFORM AND PLUS THE WARMTH AND HUMANISM// JOY OF HASIDISM. THIS SENSE OF JOY IS CLEARLY ABSENT FROM LEGALISTIC ORTHODOXY AND FROM OTHER MOVEMENTS IN JUDAISM TODAY. IT IS HAS TO BECOME THE GOAL OF ALL JEWS IF WE ARE TO MAINTAIN THE ALLEGIANCE OF OUR PEOPLE.

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INSPIRE OF THE CLAIM OF THE NON-REFORM SEGMENTS OF JUDAISM, THEY HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN GIVING THE MODERN JEW A SENSE OF ARDENT COMMITMENT TO JUDAISM AND TO MAN. WE, IN REFORM, HAVE FALLEN SHORT IN THIS REGARD ALSO. WHETHER JEWS WEAR A HAT OR WHETHER THEY DON'T, THEY HAVE FAILED TO BREED INFORMED AND PROUD JEWS WHO ARE AT ONCE BOLDLY UNIVERSALISTIC AND ROOTED IN THE HISTORIC JEWISH FAMILY. WE IN REFORM JUDAISM LIKE TO FEEL THAT WE HAVE THE BEST CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING IN THIS DIFFICULT TASK, BUT WE WILL SUCCEED ONLY IF WE ARE ABLE TO BRING TO OUR PEOPLE THE DEDICATION OF THE HASIDIC RABBI WHO// OF WHOM THIS STORY IS TOLD.

ONCE THE RABBI WAS RIDING IN HIS WAGON WITH A GROUP OF HIS FRIENDS WHEN HE SAW SOMEONE WALKING ALONG THE SIDE OF THE LONG AND DUSTY ROAD. THE RABBI STOPPED THE WAGON AND INVITED THE TRAVELLER TO JOIN HIM AND HIS FRIENDS IN THE WAGON. " BUT", SAID THE TRAVELLER, " YOUR WAGON IS ALREADY TOO CROWDED". TO WHICH THE RABBI QUICKLY REPLIED AS HE PULLED THE TRAVELLER ABOARD, " LET US LOVE EACH OTHER A LITTLE MORE, AND THERE WILL BE ROOM FOR EVERYONE".