

Jewish Life and Thought in an Academic Community

A Case Study of Town and Gown

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One of the most highly prized values of the Jewish heritage is a profound respect for reason, a reverence for learning. Homage to the intellect was frequently expressed by the sages of the Talmud, but it is the pulpit of today that constantly reminds the American Jew that his faith has the deepest regard for the mind of man: "A student is like a seed in the ground; once it sprouts it grows toward heaven."

If it be true that Judaism does so respect reason and the intellectual, one would expect that the Jewish academic community would be attracted to a faith which so exalts man's rational powers. This is not the case. The vast majority of "Jewish professors" consider all religion to be either logically untenable or — in the case of liberal reinterpretations — ineffectual and without a *raison d'être*. Our "eggheadian" faith does not attract the professional egghead.

Meanwhile, back in the synagogue, the rabbi continues exalting the value of reason — while those Jews whose personal creed is the intellectual search generally look upon Judaism as middle- to low-brow. Perhaps it is time that Jewish religious leaders came to regard more seriously not simply abstract intellect, but the Jewish intellectuals on our college campuses. Perhaps it is also time for the Jewish professor to give more serious consideration to a faith which does hold that "an ignorant man cannot be pious."

I

The purpose of this study is to examine Jewish life and thought among the faculty members of a particular university community and to delineate those characteristics that are distinctive when

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compared with the life and thought of the local "town" Jews. After observing the more striking contrasts between "town and gown," we shall view the academic community more closely, attempt to discover the marked differences *within* that world, and speculate as to why they obtain. The bisected community which we shall be discussing is not large — approximately 250 families, almost equally divided between town and gown and circling the campus of the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. How "typical" this academic community may be is an open question requiring more general research. This particular study is based to some extent on a questionnaire which was circulated in the Spring of 1961 among Jewish faculty families and among members of the "town" community of a similar age grouping.¹ A limited number of interviews were held to clarify crucial areas. These techniques were employed by the author, who — as rabbi in the community for only three years — felt himself in need of relatively reliable data so that his accumulating impressions would be somewhat biased by the facts.

Any study of "town and gown" should carefully consider the particular town that is the basis for comparison. In the twin cities of Champaign-Urbana live approximately 77,000 people; about 1 percent of them are Jews. The community's chief "industry" is the university, and the academic families, coming from all over the United States and indeed from all over the world, contrast dramatically with the native Midwestern businessman. The Jewish "town" of 122 families is exceedingly well integrated into the larger community. There is, for instance, no discrimination in the country club, which includes many Jewish members. There are no Jewish neighborhoods, and — while parents socialize largely with Jewish friends — their children do not form a "Jewish crowd" and do socialize quite freely within their schools and neighborhoods. While there is no significant anti-Semitism, a few bigots are "known," and there is considerable sensitivity to Gentile opinion. Half of the

¹ Seventy-three faculty families responded, representing 76 percent of the cross section selected for the questionnaire. Fifty percent of the sampling of fifty-two town families responded.

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Jewish husbands are independent businessmen, and over half of them deal in clothing, food, or liquor. Thirty-two percent are professional men, of whom two-thirds are in the medical field. There are townspeople in real estate, scrap iron, manufacturing, and wholesaling; and there are a few salesmen and skilled workers. The Sabbath faces its usual competition with one additional feature: Friday is shopping night.

Most characteristic of the town are the deep divisions that make for proud denominationalism in larger cities, but that dramatically inhibit Jewish life in a smaller community. There are the "old families" of German background. In 1904 twenty-two of these families founded a Reform congregation. Their children are still quite active in Sinai Temple and look back on "the old days" when the temple was closely connected with the Hillel Foundation, which — as a national movement — began at the University of Illinois and which shared its rabbi with the community. In 1950, the temple elected its own rabbi, and the Hillel director served the needs of more than 2,000 students.

There are the "old families" of East European background who look back to 1912, when their community began to take shape, and to a *shul* that is no longer active. Some are now members of Sinai Temple, especially if they have young children. Almost all are quite active in B'nai B'rith and Hadassah.

Finally, there are the families who have moved to Champaign-Urbana during the past twenty years from urban Jewish areas. They represent a cross section of Jewish life and are most notable for having a high proportion of professional (especially medical) men. Most of these couples are quite happy to live in this small Jewish community that is highly integrated into the larger community and that has little of the intense Jewish cultural life of metropolitan areas. Some do reminisce about the old *shul* or Jewish center in Chicago, and a few enterprising and understanding students satisfy this nostalgic hunger by importing delicatessen products and selling them to the exiles.

To speak of the Jewish faculty families as a "community" is misleading, as Jewishness is — for many — an insignificant aspect of their lives. Nevertheless, it is a common, if not a uniting, factor,

and we are concerned with how the "Jewish professor" reacts to his ethnic and religious background.² We shall rather arbitrarily consider as "Jewish" all faculty members who were raised by parents who considered themselves Jewish *or* who converted to Judaism *and* who have not converted to another faith. There is no "religious" listing of the academic staff, and so the precise number of Jewish families is a matter of some conjecture. The United Jewish Appeal "list" includes all those known to the identifying members of the community and totals 117. Estimates run as high as 150, but for the purposes of this study we shall consider the "known" community. Those who have not been detected by the UJA perhaps deserve to be considered "assimilated."

There are no reliable figures on the growth of this community. According to one of the older families, in 1912 there were four Jewish members of the faculty. The majority seems to have come to the University during the past ten years, and at the present time approximately 6 percent of the total faculty is Jewish. Of these, 33 percent are in the social sciences; 30 percent in mathematics and the physical or biological sciences; 16 percent in engineering and related "applied" sciences; 15 percent in the humanities; and 6 percent in miscellaneous fields — including a football coach and a fencing master. The largest concentration is found in the department of mathematics: sixteen in all. Other areas with prominent Jewish representation are psychology, sociology, and physics.

This is a young community, and the father's average age is close to forty. Approximately two-thirds of the academic community are first generation — that is, born in America of at least one foreign-born parent. About one-sixth are foreign-born, and the remaining sixth, from second-, third-, and fourth-generation homes. Thirty-seven percent were reared in homes which they considered Orthodox; 31 percent Conservative; 12 percent Reform; 20 percent culturally Jewish but nonreligious.³ Forming the larger proportion,

² Our concern, of course, extends to wives and children. Since, however, the occupational difference is the focus of this study, we shall emphasize the husband's attitudes and record the wife's views only when she differs markedly.

³ These figures, and most percentages to be cited, are approximations based on returns from seventy-three families and projected on the basis of general knowledge of the

then, are the children of the later Eastern European immigrants, children who were raised in the stormy days of the Depression and New Deal. No longer could a bright young man so easily take the giant step from immigrant to clothing manufacturer or independent merchant. Some of the sons are working their way up in large corporations or have entered the legal or medical profession. Others have found a satisfying way of life in the academic world, where status is not determined by money or birth or religion, but by one's ability to understand a world in which the sons of immigrants are less likely to go into business for themselves.

II

Having sketched the two communities in broad outline, we turn now to our central area of concern: How do town and gown differ regarding their Jewish life and thought? The most obvious difference is that of institutional affiliation. The percentages of families affiliated with either the temple or the local B'nai B'rith are: 96 percent of the town and 34 percent of the gown!⁴ The effect of children on affiliation is clearly seen when we observe that approximately 55 percent of the faculty parents who have children of Sunday school age are members of the congregation, membership being a prerequisite for sending the children to the school. Virtually all town children attend the school.

The impulsive explanation for the smaller proportion of faculty "affiliated" is that the academic community is "not religious." If by "religious" are meant traditional observance and worship, then the townspeople are hardly more distinguished by a personal need for faith. To cite but one statistic, while only 15 percent of the faculty members attend worship services on at least six Sabbaths

nonrespondents to include all 117 Jewish faculty members. Some figures (e. g., departmental distribution) are readily available and do not require an estimate.

⁴ Eighty-four percent of the town are affiliated with the temple. The additional 12 percent are generally more traditional families who have no children of Sunday school age and for whom B'nai B'rith membership is the preferred form of Jewish affiliation. Thirty-two percent of the gown are temple-affiliated. An additional 2 percent are members of B'nai B'rith.

during the year, the proportion of temple-going townspeople is but 25 percent — not so dramatic a contrast as to account for the very much higher percentage of town affiliation. There must be more significant factors.

In the town, church or synagogue affiliation is an almost universal custom among business and professional people. A “good citizen” supports his church — this is almost a *sine qua non* for civic respectability. Furthermore, the Jewish citizens, with an eye on non-Jewish opinion, have the additional incentive of wanting their community to be well-respected by the larger society. One Friday evening, shortly after the stores began Friday night opening, some twenty-two Methodists visited the synagogue service unannounced and outnumbered the Jews in attendance. The congregation was informed of this exposure of Jewish religiosity. On the next Sabbath there was a near-capacity congregation — but no Methodists. In the town, religious affiliation is “the thing to do,” and the Jewish community is not going to be the exception.

In striking contrast, there is no comparable custom within the academic community. In fact, middle-class organizational life in general and religious institutions in particular are considered rather low-brow by large numbers of the faculty. A typical comment was that of a professor who admitted that Judaism has stood for important values, namely, love of learning and concern for human rights; however, he continued, these values *he* could find more easily in the academic world than in the local Jewish community. The implication of this and of numerous other attitudes indicates that the University itself has become, in a certain sense, the religion of the faculty.

How many aspects of religious faith and fellowship we find in the Academic Commitment! There is the dominant philosophy of naturalism. Its method is scientific; its faith, that all being can be explained in terms of a single order of efficient causation in which a supernatural Deity has no place; its morality, the ideals of humanism rooted in finite human experience; its messianic hope, that man — through understanding the consequences of his actions — can build a better world. There are, of course, denominations. The “high church” of Art and Humanities expresses in the aesthetic mode

man's striving for fulfillment. There are the monks who seem remote from human life, but who commune with Nature in search of deeper Knowledge. Certainly there are those who consider the Social Gospel to be the justification of all learning and who work for the improvement of human relations in the larger community. There is even the skeptic who analyzes the world, but can find no naturalistic reason to care about humanity. Finally, as in many religions, there is a fellowship that is so exclusive as to be in conflict with the universal ideals of the faith. Thus, the Academic Commitment generally espouses democracy and the maximum interaction between groups, while the faculty families voluntarily segregate themselves into a kind of intellectual country club with its departmental clans. Frequently condescending towards the provincialism of the Midwesterner, the academic club is virtually closed to even the more intelligent members of the larger community.⁵

With such a faith and fellowship, can we be surprised that conventional religious affiliation does not have a powerful appeal? There *are* those who are not entirely satisfied with the academic creed, who want "something more." Still, the primary force behind the affiliation of most academic families is: "So the children should know something." Following a common urban pattern, once the children are of Sunday school age (rarely before), the parents "join." They want their children to understand the history, the literature, and (in some cases this is a concession) the religion of their cultural heritage. Some feel quite strongly about the survival of Jewish life; others simply wish the child to feel secure as part of the group with which he will be identified by society.

A condition that does *not* exist in the town is the real possibility of raising a child without any formal religious education. The case is otherwise in the gown. Almost half of the academic families are able to dispense with religious education for their children, because church affiliation is far from universal among the faculty. Especially if the family lives in a University neighborhood, little Sammy's friends can come over on Sunday morning to play space man instead

⁵ This degree of closeness — it has been suggested — is particularly pronounced in academic communities which are cut off from large centers of culture.

of trundling off to Church school. When, however, there was a room-shortage in the temple and the suggestion was made to suspend the kindergarten temporarily, it was the *town*-mother who objected: "But the neighbor's child goes to Church!"

So the absence of a compulsory social custom and the presence of a community that seems to provide a way of life — these factors, together with the more commonly cited condescension towards religion, are decisive in explaining the difference between town and gown in the quantity and quality of affiliation. Nevertheless, affiliation itself barely indicates the attitudes towards faith and people. In comparing first the religious attitudes, we will not insist on one definition of "religious." Rather shall we examine separately certain aspects of life and thought that have historically been considered elements of the Jewish faith: a belief in God; an ethical way of life; the use of traditional symbols for worship and home observance; and the study of Torah.

The most significant difference may well be the contrast between the naturalistic orientation of the faculty and the supernaturalism of the town. The belief that

. . . there is a God who is all-powerful, all-wise and all-righteous . . . [who] guides and controls our destinies . . . who somehow "hears" the prayers of man . . .

was held with or without qualifications by 74 percent of the townspeople polled.⁶ Of the faculty, however, only about 8 percent of the men and 15 percent of the women expressed agreement with this traditional theistic view. Included in this handful are those who, while not comfortable with a faith in a righteous, all-powerful Being, do believe in a God not reducible to aspects of nature or man's aspirations. Some may hold to a pantheistic mysticism somewhat parallel to the Emersonian tradition in the Unitarian Church. There is also a trace of interest in the ideas of Milton Steinberg and Martin Buber. Nevertheless, the existence of a God who is considered a Being with awareness is not taken seriously by over 90 percent of the academic community.

This is not to say that our professor is without a kind of faith.

⁶ Seventy-two percent of the men; seventy-six percent of the women.

Eighty percent of the responding faculty members expressed agreement with the statement:

If a man learns to care for the well-being of the oppressed and the stranger and to strive for a world of righteousness, he will find more satisfaction in life than will a person whose concern is limited to himself and his immediate friends and family.

This proposition is the basis of Mordecai M. Kaplan's value theory: "When we defeat love by yielding to an impulse which we share with the sub-human, we cannot be happy."⁷ Awareness of God is, for Kaplan, the "feeling that man's ethical aspirations are part of a cosmic urge, by obeying which man makes himself at home in the universe."⁸ Our professor generally would agree that the universe is so constituted that man will feel "at home" when he follows the basic values of his Jewish heritage. He feels, however, no need to label this quality of reality "God" or to speak of Godhood as whatever helps man towards this "salvation" or to use such vitalistic phrases as "cosmic urge." It frequently appears that our professor accepts the essence of Kaplan's theology but refuses to speak his language.

Finally — and typically — the academic Jew does not care to participate in worship services for the purpose of assuring himself that his ideals will help him feel at home in the universe or experiencing fellowship with other Jews or affirming the worthwhileness of life. That is, he finds great difficulty in "reconstructing" the meaning of worship so that he may pray to a Power, Process, or Quality which is without awareness of man. There are exceptions: 10 percent of the faculty members are *non-supernaturalists* who *do* attend services with some regularity. We shall later discuss this perhaps significant minority.

While there is a marked contrast in theological belief between town and gown, the contrast in synagogue attendance is surprisingly mild. While three-fourths of the town expresses a belief in a super-

⁷ Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Basic Values in Jewish Religion* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1957), p. 89.

⁸ Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* (New York: Behrman House, 1937), pp. 244-45.

natural Deity, only one-fourth attends services with any regularity — as compared with 15 percent of the gown. Among the townspeople, furthermore, there is no correlation between the “attenders” and the “believers.” Perhaps the belief is superficial — what one is supposed to believe about God. More likely, there is here a latent faith in God that becomes activated in extreme situations when one’s personal powers cannot meet an overwhelming crisis.

An interesting side light is the discovery that while the faculty wives are almost as naturalistically inclined as their husbands and attend services with the same infrequency, when they *do* attend, they seem to have a more meaningful experience. They are particularly more prone to be introspective, to attempt self-understanding and to find a feeling of serenity in the service.⁹ No such discrepancy between the experience of the town husbands and wives was evident.

Turning briefly to our approximation of religious observance in the home, we can observe an interesting phenomenon among the faculty families: While 6 percent do not eat pork, 17 percent light Sabbath candles, 30 percent hold a Passover *seder* regularly — and 50 percent light Hanukkah candles! The most marginal of families visit the sisterhood gift shop and the children’s library before Hanukkah. The Christ in Christmas makes it most difficult for Jews to leave Judaism altogether.

The ethical aspect of religion does not lend itself to statistical comparisons. Both town and gown are “for brotherhood.” Their contrasting views regarding specific social issues reflect the general difference between academic values and middle-class standards. It might be more fruitful to ask to what degree, if any, our two Jewish communities differ in their social concerns from the larger communities of which they are a part.

The popular image of the academic world is that of a nest of long-haired radicals. Actually, there is wide variety of social viewpoints — varying from predominantly Republican faculty neighbor-

⁹ Various kinds of worship experience were tallied, and — based on the same scale — the wives scored 76 to the husbands’ 42. For example, 33 percent of the wives stated that, during services, they frequently “try by self-understanding to resolve [personal] problems.” Only 4 percent of the husbands admitted to self-examination during worship.

hoods to a department known for extreme conservatism to the social scientists who generally take "liberal stands" on national and community issues. The Jewish faculty members are active, out of proportion to their numbers, in the local organizations concerned with assuring equal opportunities for members of minority groups. While Jews represent about 6 percent of the faculty, they provided 18 percent of the signatures on a controversial petition in behalf of academic freedom. Eleven percent of the social scientists are Jewish — perhaps another indication of concern with society and its problems. The factors involved in this kind of concern are problematic. Some faculty members would look to immigrant parents with their consciousness of minority rights. Others may speak of a religious heritage. Whatever the reason, whenever there is a pressing issue involving human rights at an open meeting of the City Council, a *minyan* is present.

The townspeople are part of a Midwestern middle-class community. Such a large proportion of the Jewish families are, however, from urban immigrant backgrounds that there is no clearly dominant view on any social issue. A significant proportion of Jewish families do participate in the League of Women Voters, braille programs, and other civic endeavors; but — and this is pure impression — the Jewish community does not appear to be any more active in these areas than are the liberal Protestant fellowships. As would be expected, the town merchant does not share the professor's enthusiasm for such measures as a state Fair Employment Practices Commission.

Turning finally to the study of Judaism, we find that in neither community is there anything approaching the traditional concern with Torah as a guide for living. Among the faculty members there is some concern with the problems of being Jewish today. A group of professors meet triweekly to discuss such themes as the constants of Judaism, and there is interest when the temple's adult education program deals with the theologies of Kaplan, Steinberg, or Buber.¹⁰ The mood, however, varies from mild curiosity to a search for meaning that never seems to be answered . . . again, the desire "for something."

¹⁰ About 20 percent of the faculty show at least some interest in these discussions.

Within the town, there is no such searching. The townspeople, by and large, have few conscious doubts about their Jewishness and Judaism. Their views are more settled, and they are less inclined to question them. A small Men's Club holds a monthly Bible class, and the preferred sermon topic is Jewish history and literature. What is sought from these studies is more knowledge about the Jewish heritage and, perhaps, some general principles for living. Excursions into such questions as how the values of Torah can be applied to social and economic realities are often considered "not Jewish" and an unnecessary duplication of news commentary.

We have been emphasizing the contrast between the Jewish academic and town communities. Only in the area of ethical standards have we compared the Jewish with the *non*-Jewish faculty. Further study along these lines would be of considerable interest. Exactly how church-going is the Gentile professor? Are his philosophic views as thoroughly naturalistic as those of his Jewish colleague? According to one non-Jewish observer, with the exception of a few departments, such as agriculture, the naturalistic view is completely dominant, but the Jews are more outspoken in expressing it. Of particular interest is the virtual absence of religious existentialism as a point of view that is considered seriously. There is a professor who claims that he is the "only one on campus." If this university is typical, it suggests a perhaps unwanted insight: that the profound philosophies of Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Buber — which are supposed to be stirring intellectual currents in our time — are causing scarcely a ripple in academic circles outside of the seminaries.

When Jewish life is considered in its nonreligious aspect, the faculty community appears considerably more involved than has been indicated thus far. For example, about 60 percent of the faculty have contributed to the UJA at least twice in the last three years, and this is easily as high a proportion as the town can claim. Approximately 20 percent of the Jewish faculty members have stated that at least 75 percent of their close friends are Jewish. Even among those who make no contribution to any Jewish institution or philanthropy (one of the better signs of marginality in our gown community), approximately half of the respondents observed that

half of their close friends are Jews. Almost everyone enjoys "Jewish" food and jokes, and the best-known Jewish author is Sholem Aleichem. All this is a reflection of the largely first-generation urban background. Consequently, a much more significant proportion of the faculty could be considered "ethnically," as opposed to religiously, oriented.

Most characteristic of the nature of this ethnic identification is its *wide variation* — from the ardent Reconstructionist to the avowed assimilationist. While among the townspeople there is a rather *even* degree of ethnic involvement, within the University community there is dramatic contrast between the strongly identified who are trying to preserve Jewish culture in a Midwestern cornfield and the cosmopolite who feel that there are enough barriers between people in this world without the clannishness of Jews. Between the two extremes we find the larger proportion of the faculty, culturally affirming their Jewishness by discussing Jewish problems, giving to the UJA, and sending their children to Sunday school.

Should one wish to compare the general ethnic involvement of town and gown, the two extremes within the academic community would cancel each other, and the town would be found to be more deeply conscious of its connection with the Jewish people. At least 60 percent of the townspeople would say that three-fourths of their close friends are Jewish — compared with 20 percent of the gown. Mixed marriages represent 6.5 percent of the town community and approximately 20 percent of the gown.¹¹ The four Jewish-born couples who joined the Unitarian Church are all academic families. A special kind of involvement with the Jewish people, though most notable among Jews who do not consider themselves ethnically involved, is the tendency to be "very much concerned" when Jews behave publicly in an unethical manner. Sixty-eight percent of the responding town men, as compared with 30 percent of the gown men, expressed such concern.¹² Among the most concerned in the

¹¹ In both communities, in about one out of three instances, the children are being raised as Jews.

¹² An interesting "sex-difference": neither town nor gown wives were nearly so concerned with non-Jewish opinion as were their husbands. The figures for the ladies: Town — 32 percent (cf. 68 percent); Gown — 10 percent (cf. 30 percent).

town are a few families who are members of the American Council for Judaism.

Why does the academic community present the unusual configuration of ardent ethnic feeling, a mild affirmation of Jewishness, and an outright assimilationist view — all expressed by families from largely first-generation urban backgrounds? We shall later examine these attitudes more closely. For now let us suggest that once the memories of Jewish culture become vague, the *town* Jew can still find reasons to remain within the fold: he retains a latent supernatural faith, and the larger community expects him to be Jewish. By contrast, once the *gown* Jew no longer finds meaning in the ethnic fellowship or the folkways, he has neither traditional belief nor strong social pressure to encourage his identity. While some still feel closely attached to Jewish cultural life, most express a mild nostalgia, and a sizable portion drift away altogether. One could argue that the conventional divisions of Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Judaism are replaced within the academic world by ethnic “denominations.”

III

We have attempted to delineate the more distinctive features of the University Jewish community as compared with that of the town. We have observed marked contrast in the areas of institutional affiliation, religious orientation (from theological belief to the study of Torah), and ethnic involvement. Let us now move our camera in for a closer view of the differences *within* the academic world. The danger in discussions of “character-types” is that we often fail to see the trees for the forest. We see percentages instead of people. In speaking of the “typical view,” the minority report may be omitted.

Because of the very small number of faculty families who have a religious orientation, it is more helpful to subdivide the community into the ethnic denominations suggested in the previous section. These divisions were determined by an EI (ethnic identification) scale, which included such items as proportion of close Jewish friends, the factor by which Jewish philanthropy exceeded giving to



Courtesy, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.

PART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CAMPUS

A kind of intellectual country club

(see p. 108)

non-Jewish causes, familiarity with Jewish literature, concern with Israel, etc. Those who scored 60 or above were considered to have a strong EI and included 23 percent of the total community. Those scoring below 60, but contributing to any Jewish institution or philanthropy — and not advocating the assimilation of Jewish life — were considered to have a weak EI, and they made up 47 percent of the community. Thirty percent contributed to *no* Jewish cause *or* favored assimilation — and were considered marginal. Let us now attempt to portray these three different approaches to Jewish life.

Our strongly identified individual is most willing to participate in Jewish life, sometimes as a leader, but certainly as a worker for the UJA or as a speaker for the temple sisterhood. He feels that all American Jews have an obligation to support Israel. He almost certainly has a Passover *Seder* at home and, of course, lights the Hanukkah candles. He probably eats pork products, although one-fifth of this 23 percent does abstain. More likely than not — especially if there are children — his wife will light the Sabbath candles. He remembers a little Hebrew, and may send his child to the midweek Hebrew school. Almost three-fifths of those in this category attend worship services at least six Sabbaths during the year. The remaining two-fifths attend only on the High Holydays. When asked why they attend on the High Holydays and not throughout the year, they may reply that the High Holydays afford an opportunity for “continuity with my personal and Jewish past” or that it is a “tradition without religious implications”! Whether “religious” or not, the strongly identified want Jewish life to survive because of the values of Jewish culture and because of the contributions which that culture can make both to Jews and to mankind.

Our “weakly identified” individual joins the temple so that his children can learn “something” about their cultural background. Occasionally he attends Jewish programs of particular interest to him, but his attitude is one of curiosity rather than of involvement. He gives to the UJA, but is not likely to feel that *all* American Jews have the same obligation. Although his children attend “religious school,” he sets an example of consistent unconcern with “religious” activities; he finds no meaning in Sabbath services, nor does his wife

light the Sabbath candles.¹³ In fact, less than half this group attend on the High Holydays. When asked why they send their children to study a religion which the parents do not practice, they may reply:

I'm not trying to encourage my children to be what I'm not — religious. I only want them to know something about their cultural background. To know *about* Jewish history, literature, and religion is part of their education. They *are* Jews . . . and are going to be identified as such.

There are one or two families who voice the desire for a completely secular school. There are even parents who wish to send their children to the religious school, but who — as a matter of principle — refuse to join the congregation that makes the school possible.

The marginal Jew, representing almost one-third of the community, feels no religious and the vaguest ethnic tie. One sure sign of marginality is that not even Hanukkah is observed! He has slight interest in Israel and an equally slight concern lest American Jews become too involved with a foreign state. His children do not attend Sunday school: Why impose on the child an ethnic connection that has no meaning for the father? Nevertheless, it is possible that half of his close friends are Jewish! While the more identified Jew explains the high proportion of his Jewish friends by saying: "I like Jews," his more marginal colleague might say: "I like people from the Eastern seaboard," or "There happen to be a large proportion of Jews in my department."

The deeper question must be: Why are some families more ethnically identified than others? Among the factors having no effect were departmental affiliation, propensity to join organizations in general, and having been a *bar mitzvah*! The vast majority of the total community was reared in first-generation Conservative or Orthodox homes, and whether their subsequent identification has become strong, weak, or marginal seems to hinge upon the pleasantness of their childhood associations with Jewish life and tradition. The more strongly identified remember with real nostalgia the *seder*,

¹³ Only two families were found to have a weak ethnic identification and a strong religious orientation.

the Sabbath eve candles, and even the *heder*! Less obvious was the finding that, while active Orthodox homes often influenced their sons to remain very much a part of the Jewish people — if not of their religion — there were among the marginal Jews hardly any instances of the classic rebellion against a rigid home. The typical recollection was a neutral feeling towards Jewish life as a child. Traditions were not strictly observed, and disinvolvement was easy because there never had been an intense involvement. Instead of ambivalence, there was more usually an almost “understanding” attitude towards the family, unsentimental and objective. The evidence is too slim for more than pure conjecture, but perhaps the parents of the Depression years were not quite so rigorous as were the earlier immigrants.

We turn now to an area of crucial importance for all those concerned with the Jewish faith and its future. What meaning do the more religiously oriented professors find in their Judaism? We shall be concerned with the small number — 15 percent — who attend worship services at least six Sabbaths during the year, for this attendance indicates at least a willingness to use religious symbols to express certain aspirations. Of these, two-thirds would consider themselves naturalists who could never believe in a supernatural Deity. What do they find in religious tradition that eludes their equally naturalistic colleagues?

The most dramatic fact is that seven-eighths of the religiously oriented have a strong ethnic identification. These are the families who come from Conservative or Orthodox homes, in which Jewish culture was warmly present — families who have deep attachments not only to religious traditions, but also to that cluster of nostalgia called *yiddishkeit*. With two individual exceptions, the religiously oriented have extremely close ties to the Jewish people as people. In most cases, then, a deep feeling for Jewish culture in all its forms seems a precondition for a willingness to worship within the tradition. One is led to conclude that the ethnic tie is primary. Certainly one professor's debt to Mordecai Kaplan is suggestive:

I wanted emotionally to stay, and Kaplan made it possible. Reconstructionism was a way out. I found I could preserve Judaism and reject the [traditional] theology.

There are no sons of Reform homes among the religiously oriented, for the Reform home in the thirties did not provide the ethnic tie that *seems* to be needed to hold the Jew who has lost his theistic belief. If the religious service is primarily a way of expressing an identity with the Jewish community, why should he bother?

Before we jump to the impulsive conclusion that all such worship is simply Jewish togetherness in religious clothing, there are additional factors to consider. Once our naturalist accepts the symbolism and attends services, he may well find the worship to be an "opportunity to express certain feelings," feelings of gratitude and appreciation that he does not take the time to express in everyday life. Then there is the well-attended Unitarian Church off the campus, a reminder that a naturalistic faith without a strong ethnic tie is possible.

The question remains: Why do half of the strongly identified naturalists feel a desire to participate in religious worship, while the other half do not? Among the "secular ethnic," 40 percent were in the fields of physical science or mathematics; among the "religious ethnic," there was not a single professor from these fields!¹⁴ In contrast, social scientists — out of proportion to their numbers within the community — were willing to become part of the congregation.¹⁵ Could it be that social scientists, who are often concerned with the symbols of man and society, are more willing than the physical scientists to view religious literature in a less discursive and more aesthetic sense? Possibly the community concern that led the social scientist to his profession might encourage an interest in the religious community and its attempts to express man's aspirations.

As for the physical scientist, he often regards himself as "hard-headed" and considers concern with religion as intellectual fuzziness. Perhaps significant is Anne Roe's finding that a group of research physicists "was largely free of present parental ties of

¹⁴ This does not include such "applied" sciences as agriculture, engineering, and animal science.

¹⁵ Fifty-six percent of the "religious ethnic" are in the social sciences, while 33 percent of the Jewish faculty members are social scientists.

any strongly emotional sort and without guilt over this.”¹⁶ This implies the kind of neutral objectivity towards the traditions of the fathers that is indeed the case in Champaign-Urbana. Still, such a conjecture rests on data too scanty to afford more than a cue for further investigation.

Recalling our observation that the ethnic tie is usually a precondition for a religious orientation, we might conclude with an exceptional view. There are Jews with few cultural associations who, nevertheless, do find meaning in their faith. One such faculty wife has a word of counsel for the ethnic Jew:

It is my opinion that the cultural aspects of Jewish life, such as they are *per se*, should serve primarily to unite and support the Jewish community in order that this community might extend and practice the basic ethical precepts of Judaism more forcefully within the whole community. Jewishness for the sake of Jewishness serves no such purpose.

IV

In reviewing our conclusions, we should look once more at the academic community as a whole. When the individual differences become blurred and we compare the Jewish gown with the Jewish town, we face again the uneasy challenge of the professional intellectual. He is less likely to affiliate, for the University has become a sort of religion. Certainly his is a community which does not consider church affiliation as a necessary sign of respectability, and it is even possible for children to “get by” without a Sunday school education. Nevertheless, over half of “Sunday school parents” do affiliate, and a rather active participation in Jewish life can be for some 23 percent quite meaningful.

The religious orientation is strikingly distinctive — dominantly naturalistic as opposed to supernaturally theistic. While accepting the essential value theory of Mordecai Kaplan, the gown typically finds no reason to use theological terms or to participate in worship services. Home observance is “for children only,” and — while Sabbath candles burn in but a few homes — Hanukkah for most

¹⁶ Anne Roe, *The Psychology of Occupations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1956), p. 215.

parents is a therapeutic necessity. A large proportion of families are active in community and humanitarian endeavors, reflecting not only certain values within the academic world, but also their own immigrant-urban-Jewish background. While the townspeople are content with "Bible study," Jewish education for the professor has become a search on the part of a handful to find some deeper meaning in their Jewish identity.

There is more involvement with the Jewish people than with the Jewish faith. Although the gown as a whole is not so ethnically identified as is the town, concern with the welfare of the State of Israel is as marked among the faculty members as among the townspeople. Most distinctive is the wide variety in the degree of ethnic identification. Compared with the town, there are more intense feelings of Jewish peoplehood as well as a more pronounced tendency towards assimilation within the academic community. Middle-class norms seem to encourage a dropping of certain aspects of Jewish cultural life, but do not invite even the native-born to assimilate altogether. The more ethnic professor may bemoan the integrationist effects of small-town life, of which he is not really a part — but once the cultural tie is broken, there is neither middle-class compulsion nor supernatural belief to hold him to his people.

Within the gown community, we find that those who are closely identified look back on most pleasant home experiences centering around religious and cultural traditions. The most marginal are not found to be particularly rebellious — rather they appear neutral and unsentimental, and rarely was their home life so rigidly Orthodox as to prompt an angry rejection. Among the small group of naturalists who attend worship services with any regularity, almost all have a strong ethnic identification, but none of these are theoretical physical scientists. An intimate familiarity with Jewish traditions along with a willingness to look upon the symbols as the poetry of human aspiration — these are qualities that facilitate a faith for the Jewish professor.