

## ARTICLES

### American Jews and the Effort to Reform Motion Pictures, 1933–1935

Felicia Herman

In his 1932 book *Jews on Approval*, the popular writer and orator Maurice Samuel argued that Jews “are probably the only people in the world to whom it has ever been proposed that their historic destiny is—to be nice.” Writing about American Jews of his day, he asserted that they are driven by a “fear of gentile opinion” and the “panic of outside reaction” from which “no platforms or pulpits [are] free.”<sup>1</sup> Looking back on the first half of the twentieth century, historian Henry Feingold has implicitly agreed with Samuel’s assessment: like other groups trying to attain middle-class status, Jewish immigrants and their descendants appeared “to bear more than their share of concern for appearances. They want[ed], above all else, to be acceptable and [were] often willing to go to extreme lengths to achieve respectability.”<sup>2</sup> This “everlasting drive for status,” critic John Murray Cuddihy asserts, has been a central force of Jewish life in the Diaspora, and it can be summed up by “a simple question: What will the Gentiles say? Or think?”<sup>3</sup>

This concern for the public image of American Jews has always been an essential component of the American Jewish relationship to the film industry. Throughout the twentieth century, various elements of the American Jewish community sought to influence the content and message of American motion pictures. As such, Jews constituted just one of many groups which exerted pressure on the film industry, recognizing the power of film to entertain and inform, and attempting to police their public image by manipulating this central form of American popular culture.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish relationship to the film industry is a particularly valuable area in which to understand the Jewish quest for status and concern for appearances, for here Jews were forced to articulate quite concretely—indeed, even visually—the way they wanted to be perceived by the outside world.

Although this dynamic has been ever-present in the Jewish relationship with the film industry, the discussion of the dangers to

the Jewish public image posed by motion pictures became especially intense in the early 1930s. Between 1930 and 1934, American debates over film content reached a fevered pitch, and would-be film reformers—primarily Protestant and Catholic clergy and lay leaders—accused the motion picture industry of intentionally corrupting the morals of film audiences by foisting a seemingly unending stream of salacious motion pictures on the American people. Because “Hollywood” had long been synonymous in many film reformers’ minds with “Jews,” attacks on the industry in this period often revealed disturbing antisemitic undertones. Drawing on a rhetoric that stretched back for at least two decades—and on a much older antisemitic theme associating Jews with sexual immorality—many reformers argued that immoral films were the result of the inherent immorality of the Jews who made them.<sup>5</sup>

Yet while film historians have discussed the antisemitism which often colored film reform rhetoric in this and other periods, not enough attention has been paid to the role of Jews as film reformers—not simply as the objects of reformers’ ire. Indeed, in the early 1930s several Jewish organizations and individuals became deeply involved in the crusade to reform motion pictures, occupying a unique and complicated position vis-à-vis the film industry. Because there were so many Jews in Hollywood, Jewish communal leaders who might have shared the views of film reformers could not afford simply to join the crusade against “immoral” motion pictures for fear of feeding the antisemitism that drove so much of that effort. Yet neither could the Jewish community sit passively by while other groups criticized the industry, a stance that might imply either collusion with Jewish filmmakers or approval of film immorality. The explicit question became whether Jews could—and should—find a way of criticizing the product—“immoral” films—without criticizing the producer, who was so often a Jew.

Under the surface, however, the question of Jewish status, of Jewish appearances, of gentile reactions, was always present. Jewish leaders believed that the attacks on Jews in the film industry reflected in one way or another upon all Jews, because filmmakers were being attacked specifically as Jews. Various factions of the American Jewish community chose different routes for responding to this crisis, depending upon the way they wished to be perceived by the non-Jewish world. Although on other occasions they may have struggled

to construct an appropriate image of Jews on screen, here Jewish leaders were working toward a different goal: no less than the preservation of the moral reputation of the American Jewish community as a whole.

### The Setting

The American film industry faced several challenges in the early 1930s. The effects of the Depression began to become apparent in 1931, when weekly movie attendance dropped from the previous year's high of ninety million to seventy-five million. In 1932 and 1933, this figure held steady at only sixty million.<sup>6</sup> The industry was also facing threats to its oligopolistic structure and questionable business practices, and although these were temporarily sanctioned by the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), industry executives lived in fear of deeper federal investigations or interference.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the so-called Payne Fund Studies, a series of sociological and psychological studies published in 1933, seemed to demonstrate that movies exerted an important—and primarily negative—impact on the behavior and beliefs of their audiences, especially children. Although, according to the Studies' most recent historians, the various studies reached only "cautious conclusions that emphasized limited, indirect models of media influence and the extent to which individual social and environmental differences moderated film's impact on the young," a popular summary of the works by Henry James Forman, *Our Movie Made Children*, an "antimovie polemic," became "the representation of the [Studies] in the public mind."<sup>8</sup>

The moral and civic groups that had been trying to reform motion pictures for decades seized upon the industry's moment of vulnerability.<sup>9</sup> Film reformers were especially frustrated in the early 1930s because the problem of film immorality had supposedly been solved with the industry's adoption of the Production Code in 1930. The Code, the latest in a series of self-regulatory codes for film content adopted to fend off threats of external censorship, had seemed the most far-reaching and promising system yet for controlling movie morality.<sup>10</sup> Written by Father Daniel Lord, a Jesuit priest, and Martin Quigley, an influential Catholic layman and the editor of the exhibitors' trade journal *Motion Picture Herald*, the Code sought to create a cinematic moral universe, where evil was always punished

and good always rewarded.<sup>11</sup>

But the Code originally lacked an effective enforcement mechanism, and very quickly the film reformers cried foul. The Studio Relations Committee (SRC) of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) had been charged with the task of assessing moral content of MPPDA members' films, but it was a small committee with little authority. Moreover, producers could appeal SRC decisions before a jury of other producers, where a "you-scratch-my-back-I'll-scratch-yours" mentality prevailed. As a result, films released between 1930 and 1934—like *The Story of Temple Drake* (1933), *Gabriel Over the White House* (1933), and *Scarface* (1932)—were in fact some of the most titillating, radical, and graphic films released by Hollywood to date.<sup>12</sup>

Reformers' frustration with the apparent failure of the Code often turned ugly. Joseph Breen, an influential Catholic layman and the man who would soon become Hollywood's chief censor, expressed the views of many when he wrote in 1932 to Father Wilfrid Parsons, the editor of the Catholic weekly *America*, that "Nobody [in Hollywood] gives a damn for the Code or any of its provisions." The Jews in the film industry, he alleged, "are simply a rotten bunch of vile people with no respect for anything...[who] seem to think of nothing but money making and sexual indulgence."<sup>13</sup> Although Breen's comments, written in private, were certainly more acerbic than most, they were not unique: Protestant, Catholic, and mainstream periodicals contained numerous articles which implicitly or explicitly blamed the perceived immorality of Hollywood films on Jewish studio owners and producers. In the Catholic press, for example, powerful Los Angeles Bishop John J. Cantwell asserted that the Jews in the film industry had the power but not the will to keep the screen free from immorality: "[C]ertain it is that if...Jewish executives had any desire to keep the screen free from offensiveness they could do so."<sup>14</sup> Among Protestant periodicals, the Methodist *Churchman* attacked the "shrewd Hebrews" for their "meretricious methods" of "selling crime and shame" on screen; and even the liberal *Christian Century* concluded that Jewish executives were responsible for the degraded state of many films.<sup>15</sup> A few American intellectuals went on the offensive as well. For example, Theodore Dreiser, angered at the way Paramount had adapted his *An American Tragedy*, wrote with implicit antisemitism of the way "Mr. Zukor, Mr. Lasky and Mr. Thalberg,...not artists but

business executives," refuse to allow "the writers, directors and players whom they employ and control to exercise freely their artistic perceptions and capabilities."<sup>16</sup> He was more explicit in private: "[T]he movies are solidly Jewish," he wrote to a friend. "The dollar sign is the guide—mentally & physically. That Americans should be led—the mass—by their direction is beyond all believing. In addition, they are arrogant, insolent and contemptuous."<sup>17</sup>

Jewish organizations and individuals viewed the antisemitic condemnations of the film industry as a threat to the reputation of the entire American Jewish community. The attitude that "the minority is always judged by its lowest representative" prevailed, especially among the middle- and upper-class descendants of German Jews who still ran many of the community's important national organizations.<sup>18</sup> In addition, after 1933, as domestic antisemitism spread, communal leaders believed critiques of the film industry could threaten the physical safety of American Jews as well. The Jewish executives in Hollywood were some of the most well-known Jews in America, and many people certainly equated Hollywood with Jews; yet, as historian Stephen Whitfield observes, Jews in the film industry were neither elected by the community as its public representatives, nor were they particularly devoted to Jewish life.<sup>19</sup> Jewish leaders therefore sought to exercise some control over the industry: they were concerned, as one rabbi wrote, about "the possibility of an anti-Semitic movement being launched, first against the Moving Picture Industry, because it is the most vulnerable, and of the further extension of that movement toward Jews in all walks of life."<sup>20</sup>

Although the United States never witnessed the same widespread, state-sponsored, and ultimately genocidal antisemitism as did Germany, and although public opinion polls late in the 1930s demonstrated that most Americans disapproved of Nazi antisemitism and were not willing to support antisemitic campaigns, American Jewish leaders nevertheless feared that the increasing number of public and private manifestations of antisemitism would become a nationwide movement.<sup>21</sup> In fact, historian Leonard Dinnerstein concludes that after 1933, the United States experienced "an explosion of unprecedented antisemitic fervor."<sup>22</sup> "Genteel bigots" in the United States accepted Hitler's Jewish-conspiracy explanations for the worldwide economic crisis; the prominence of Jews in Roosevelt's administration led many critics to decry the "Jew Deal";

fundamentalist and even some liberal Protestants believed that anti-Jewish animus was in part a result of the Jews' failure to convert to Christianity; demagogues like William Dudley Pelley, Father Charles Coughlin, and Reverend Gerald Winrod drew increasingly large audiences of disaffected Americans looking for a scapegoat for their problems; discrimination against Jews continued in housing, employment, and in universities; and Nazi sympathizers occasionally committed acts of vandalism or violence against Jews and their property.<sup>23</sup>

For Jewish communal leaders, these manifestations of antisemitism, however scattered or weakly supported, were extremely worrisome. Jews in the 1930s did not have the benefit of hindsight: they did not know that antisemitism would not increase in the future, that the United States would never adopt antisemitism as a political tool, nor, for that matter, that Hitler's power would never spread to the United States and that the Nazis would ultimately be defeated. In the 1930s Jewish communal leaders and many other Americans believed that their country's political future was an open question.<sup>24</sup> Harry Schneiderman expressed this uncertainty in the *American Jewish Year Book's* review of the year 1934–35: "The feeling was spreading that anti-Jewish forces, unprecedentedly [*sic*] powerful, pernicious, and unscrupulous, were at work, and that on the outcome of the struggle against those enemies depends to a large extent the fate of future generations of Jews."<sup>25</sup> In 1936 the editors of *Fortune* justified their authoritative study of Jews in the professions by explaining that the "apprehensiveness of American Jewry has become one of the important influences in the social life of our time"; their study was therefore intended to refute antisemitic conspiracy theories by delineating the actual percentages of Jews in various industries.<sup>26</sup> And by 1941 Rabbi Milton Steinberg concluded that American Jews had become "apprehensive over their security as never before in their history."<sup>27</sup>

This heightened perception of antisemitism intensified Jewish anxiety over the community's public image. In the political realm, for example, condemnations of the number of Jews in the Roosevelt administration led to frantic calls from some Jewish quarters for the administration's Jews to resign. Such calls, however, were met with the argument that it was not only the right, but also the responsibility of Jews as good Americans to support their country through public

service.<sup>28</sup> The same dynamic prevailed in the realm of Jewish culture: in the 1930s and early 1940s, for example, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) was embroiled in debates over whether to publish the poems of A. M. Klein, many of which contained graphic language and sexual imagery. Historian Jonathan Sarna argues that, as a Jewish publishing house, JPS “felt obliged to uphold standards that would place it above reproach...and sought to project an image of Jewish probity, dignity and righteousness, especially in matters concerning love and sex.” Many of Klein’s poems—especially the love sonnets—did not make it into the volume JPS eventually published; in others, words such as “gutter” and “filth” were changed to spare what Sarna calls JPS readers’ “high (or prudish) sense of morality.”<sup>29</sup>

This type of anxiety spilled over into the film realm, the locus for so much anti-Jewish animus. Jewish leaders feared the possibility that the entire Jewish community would be held responsible for the purported immoral actions of a few Jews in the film industry. Four distinct strategies emerged within the Jewish community for dealing with the problem of film immorality and the campaign to reform it. The first, pursued by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Los Angeles Jewish Community Committee (LA-JCC), involved trying to protect the Jewish public image by discouraging Jews in the industry from allowing the production of the types of films deemed immoral by reformers. The next two strategies were undertaken by two members of a committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) created to investigate the film morality question. One was promulgated by Rabbi William Fineshriber of Philadelphia, who believed that the best way to protect the Jewish image was to cooperate as much and as publicly as possible with Catholic and Protestant film reform groups. The other strategy within the CCAR committee was that of the committee’s rogue element, Rabbi Sidney Goldstein of New York’s Free Synagogue, who, inspired by true moral outrage and the tenets of the social justice movement, believed that the best way to protect the Jewish public image was to castigate Jewish filmmakers for producing immoral films and to struggle in earnest to remove such films from the nation’s theaters. The fourth strategy for dealing with the problem of film morality and the film reform campaign was one expressed by Henry Montor in the pages of the American Jewish press. Montor, who was on his way to becoming an important leader in the American Zionist movement, espoused a more

radical view of the film situation than either the ADL or the CCAR. Montor believed that it was the obsessive concern over the Jewish public image which itself was the problem, and he criticized Jewish participation in the film reform effort as little more than a public relations ploy. Each of these strategies reveals a somewhat different understanding of the importance of the public image of Jews and of the form that public image should take.

**“To Bring Jewish Producers and Executives to a Sense of their Responsibility”: The Anti-Defamation League and Los Angeles Jewish Community Committee<sup>30</sup>**

One of the founding missions of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith in 1913 was to eradicate the negative image of Jews then common on American film screens. This it considered to be the “most pressing problem confronting” American Jews, and it was relatively successful in battling it.<sup>31</sup> In the late 1920s several Jewish organizations and communal leaders criticized Cecil B. DeMille’s *The King of Kings* (1927), a filmed passion play, for what they believed was the film’s antisemitic caricatures of the Jewish high priest, the Pharisees, and Judas Iscariot, as well as the film’s presentation of the Jewish role in the crucifixion—all common elements of passion plays that Jewish leaders believed were even more dangerous when they appeared in a high-profile, big-budget motion picture.<sup>32</sup> In response, the MPPDA asked B’nai B’rith, whom it perceived as the representative of American Jewry, to become the official Jewish consultant to the industry. B’nai B’rith turned this duty over to the ADL. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the ADL was the first Jewish organization to respond to antisemitic attacks on the film industry in the early 1930s.<sup>33</sup>

The ADL and its new ally, the LA-JCC, which former ADL leader Leon Lewis founded in 1934, decided that the best way to combat the attacks on the film industry was to warn Jewish industry executives of the threat their films posed to the Jewish community. Protests against immoral films were becoming more organized and more threatening. In March 1934 the film trade presses began to warn of the impending “Church War on Films,” and in April the Catholic hierarchy established the Legion of Decency, recruiting millions of Catholics to pledge their abstinence from immoral films.<sup>34</sup> Its members, Legion leaders

asserted, stood ready to boycott specific films, local theaters, or even entire theater chains. Although the Legion of Decency itself was not explicitly antisemitic—indeed, Protestant, Jewish, and interfaith groups cooperated with it—in the document which became the “blueprint” for the Legion, Martin Quigley placed the blame for immoral films on Jews in the industry who he asserted, “have no fixed moral convictions.”<sup>35</sup> A month after the Legion’s founding, fearful that the Legion might become explicitly antisemitic, ADL national director Richard Gutstadt began planning a trip to Los Angeles to meet with Jewish motion picture leaders. By placing the attacks on the industry within the context of the general rise in antisemitism, Gutstadt hoped, he told Lewis, to “[bring] these men to a clearer understanding of the situation...[and] impel greater discrimination in the movie field” in the future.<sup>36</sup>

Gutstadt was only able to plan such a meeting because of the connections the newly created LA-JCC had established with Jews in the film industry. Lewis, the first national secretary of the ADL, had moved from Chicago to Los Angeles after being wounded in World War I; in Los Angeles he served for several years as the ADL’s primary representative. Since January 1933, when Hitler became chancellor of Germany, Lewis had been engaged in ferreting out Nazi sympathizers in southern California.<sup>37</sup> The region, as Lewis himself put it, had become a “hot-



*Richard E. Gutstadt*  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)

bed” of Nazi activity, even at the studios run by Jews.<sup>38</sup> But in the spring of 1934, frustrated over clashes with local B’nai B’rith leaders—especially over meddling into his investigations—Lewis had resigned and created the LA-JCC, a local umbrella organization of self-appointed notables drawn from the major national Jewish organizations, and from Los Angeles’s Jewish civic and social luminaries.<sup>39</sup> Many of the LA-JCC’s members had connections to Jews in the film industry, especially Mendel Silberberg, an entertainment lawyer who was soon appointed LA-JCC chairman, although Lewis, as executive secretary, managed the committee’s day-

to-day operations.

A week after creating the LA-JCC, Lewis engineered the establishment of a Motion Picture Committee composed of prominent Jewish studio executives.<sup>40</sup> This small group of men—which consisted, at first, of Irving Thalberg (MGM), Harry Cohn (Columbia), H. Henningson (Universal), Joe Schenk (20th Century), Jack Warner (Warner Bros.), Emanuel Cohen (Paramount), Sol Wurtzel (Fox), and Pandro Berman (RKO)—met with Lewis monthly to discuss issues relevant to both the film industry and the Jewish community, and to contribute funds for the LA-JCC’s work.<sup>41</sup> From the outset, Lewis



*Harry Warner*  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)



*Jack Warner*  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)

declared this type of direct connection to the industry “a great deal better” than the MPPDA/ADL committee established in the wake of *The King of Kings*. Without the MPPDA acting as a not-always-sympathetic middleman, LA-JCC leaders could take their concerns to Jews in the industry themselves. Gutstadt agreed with Lewis’s assessment, telling Lewis that he hoped that the Motion Picture Committee would prove beneficial both to antidefamation work in general and, more specifically, to the defense of the industry against the “rapidly increasing church battle” against film immorality.<sup>42</sup> Since Lewis and Gutstadt stayed in close communication, considering the ADL and LA-JCC to be intimately connected, both organizations enjoyed privileged access to many of Hollywood’s Jewish producers and studio executives—to the “sanctum sanctorum,” as Gutstadt put it.<sup>43</sup>

Gutstadt traveled to Los Angeles at the beginning of July 1934. There, without any publicity, he met with a group of industry leaders that included many of the members of the Motion Picture Committee, along with Louis B. Mayer, David O. Selznick, and Harry Warner. Although in general the ADL preferred quiet, behind-the-scenes

maneuvering, such an approach was particularly important in its relationship with the motion picture industry, lest antisemites use ADL/industry contacts to bolster the theory that “the Jews” controlled Hollywood. As Lewis described, the purpose of the meeting was “to impress upon these men the fact that the Motion Picture Industry was the outstanding target of the Anti-Semitic groups and that they carried on their shoulders a tremendous responsibility.” Gutstadt first raised the problem of the “increasing carelessness” of films with antisemitic images, an ongoing ADL concern which the assembled group agreed that the Motion Picture Committee should handle in the future. Then, “in a very tactful manner...which could not give offense to anyone present,” he raised the problem of film immorality. In response, the industry executives promised that a “determined and sincere effort was being made to remove all causes of criticism” on this score. Indeed, that very day, in MPPDA meetings, these same men had agreed upon sweeping changes which would ensure the industry’s ability to strictly enforce the Production Code, primarily through Joseph Breen and the new Production Code Administration.<sup>44</sup> Gutstadt left satisfied with the outcome of his meeting, and he did not raise the issue again in his correspondence with LA-JCC leaders.<sup>45</sup>

While ADL and LA-JCC leaders were pleased with the response they received from Jewish industry executives, they did not realize that in the process of encouraging these men to change their behavior, they had unwittingly accepted the terms of film reformers and internalized the very antisemitism that drove so much of the criticism of the industry. ADL and LA-JCC leaders never actually addressed the question of whether Hollywood films were immoral. Indeed, there is no evidence that any of them had actually seen the films under discussion, like Mae West’s *She Done Him Wrong* (1933) and *I’m No Angel* (1933), *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933), or *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1932).<sup>46</sup> These men accepted without investigation the notion that the Jewish executives who ran most of the studios *were* in fact responsible for these films while, in fact, there was considerable debate at that time over who actually “controlled” Hollywood: the heads of production in Los Angeles, the studio chiefs in New York, or the Wall Street investment houses which had financed the expansions of the studios in the 1920s and then assumed control of several of the studios after they began to suffer from the Depression.<sup>47</sup>

In seeking to change Jewish producers’ behaviors, ADL and

LA-JCC leaders treated the censorship battle as an internal Jewish problem—it was the improper actions of some Jews, not the beliefs of antisemites, which they sought to reform—and they asserted that individual Jews bore a collective responsibility for the safety and reputation of the entire Jewish community. As middle-to-upper-class descendants of Central European Jews trying to shape the behaviors of the largely East European film executives, ADL and LA-JCC leaders were acting out an established ethnic dynamic in American Jewish history. Other descendants of Central European immigrants, for example, had responded to the rise in American antisemitism at the turn of the century by blaming the new East European immigrants for discrediting the Jewish community, and they urged them to cease those behaviors which they believed were causing antisemitism: gaudy dress, conspicuous consumption, and/or radical politics.<sup>48</sup> This was a mild form of Jewish self-hatred, a phenomenon commented upon even in the 1930s.<sup>49</sup> For example, *The Nation* observed in 1938 that “[c]onservative Jews, faced with the insanity of anti-Semitism, are tempted to abandon rationality themselves and accept as their own criteria of behavior the prejudices that operate against them.” Fear of antisemitism led many Jews to assert that the behavior of one Jew could affect the reputation of the community: as *The Nation* put it, the Jewish radical, for example, “is looked upon not merely as a wrong-headed fellow, but as a menace to the race.”<sup>50</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre would later describe this feeling of collective responsibility in his classic *Anti-Semite and Jew*: a Jew who meets a Jewish prostitute, for example, “sees in the humiliating situation of a prostitute the humiliating situation of Israel...In the last analysis it is *he* who is prostituted, humiliated; it is he and the whole Jewish people.”<sup>51</sup> Although, as we will see, there were some Jews who criticized this mode of thinking, it was an understandable reaction to the fear that pervaded Jewish self-defense organizations in the 1930s. With no end in sight to the recent rise in antisemitism, ADL and LA-JCC leaders chose to protect the public image of Jews by trying to minimize any behaviors which antisemites might use against the Jewish community.

**Interfaith Relations and Social Justice:  
the Central Conference of American Rabbis**

As Jewish self-defense organizations, the ADL and the LA-JCC had tried to protect the Jewish public image by quietly attempting to remove an apparent cause of American antisemitism. In contrast, the two Reform rabbis who constituted the CCAR's film morality committee each believed that only public actions would protect the Jewish community's reputation by demonstrating openly that Jews disapproved of film immorality. Yet the two rabbis placed Jewish participation in the film crusade in two different contexts: Rabbi William Fineshriber, the committee chair, believed that film morality should be viewed as part of the burgeoning interfaith movement (then known as the "goodwill" movement), while Rabbi Sidney Goldstein contended that the issue was one of social justice.<sup>52</sup> Both men agreed, however, that the more publicity the CCAR committee received in this endeavor, the better. Other national Jewish organizations, like the United Synagogue of America (the Conservative congregational body), the Synagogue Council of America (a group of rabbis and lay leaders from across all three American Jewish movements), and the National Council of Jewish Women also issued statements condemning immoral films, but the CCAR was the most actively involved in the crusade over film immorality.<sup>53</sup> Reform Jewish leaders, who were largely assimilated descendants of Central European Jews, were more convinced than either Conservative or Orthodox leaders in this period of the importance of shaping a positive image of Jews in the American mind. Even the Reform movement was somewhat divided on this score, however, and the debates within the CCAR committee over its proper methods and actions reflect in miniature the transformation the Reform movement was undergoing in the interwar period: from an accommodationist, assimilationist, Central European, old-guard leadership to a younger, more aggressive, more particularist, and more East European one.<sup>54</sup>

The CCAR met for its annual convention in June 1934, just as the Legion of Decency was stepping up its crusade against immoral films. Condemnations of the motion picture industry—often either implicitly or explicitly antisemitic—were becoming more frequent in the trade and general presses, as were reports or rumors of film boycotts across the nation.<sup>55</sup> The CCAR reacted to this threat by creating a way for Jews to become publicly involved in the film reform effort: the conference passed a resolution creating a committee to cooperate with other religious and civic groups seeking to improve the

moral standards of motion pictures.<sup>56</sup>

Interestingly, the CCAR resolution had originated with the ADL itself. When the ADL's national chairman, Sigmund Livingston, asked Chicago Rabbi Charles Shulman, a member of the ADL's Special Advisory Council and a CCAR leader, to raise the issue of immoral motion pictures at the convention, Gutstadt had not yet traveled to Los Angeles and the outcome of his meeting was, of course, uncertain.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps Livingston believed that the CCAR, as a religious organization, was a more appropriate public spokesperson for Jewish morality than the ADL, a self-defense organization. Indeed, as we have seen, the ADL seemed to care little for the moral content of Hollywood films; perhaps they hoped to hedge their bets by creating a two-pronged attack on the industry, one from the perspective of self-defense and the other from the perspective of morality and religion.

Whatever the reason for Livingston's letter, Shulman responded energetically to his request. Together with a group of prominent Reform rabbis from across the country,<sup>58</sup> Shulman introduced a rather radical and sweeping resolution that denounced the industry for its "wanton indifference to the responsibilities that it carries, and for the abuses that it has thus far tolerated," calling upon "the Jewish people of the nation to refrain from attending any and all picture houses that still show films that undermine character and morality," and urging Jews "to co-operate to the fullest



*Charles Shulman  
(courtesy American Jewish  
Archives)*

extent with their neighbors to purge the motion picture industry of those elements injurious to moral well being."<sup>59</sup> This resolution, however, proved too vehement for the rest of conference attendees. First, it was far too broad a denunciation of the predominantly Jewish motion picture producers, too closely resembling the attacks on the industry which were so often tinged with antisemitism. It was highly unlikely that any Jewish group would pass such a damning statement about other Jews in the tension-filled 1930s. Second, the resolution threatened a Jewish boycott of immoral films and here skirted the realm of improbability. Neither the CCAR nor any other rabbinical or

secular Jewish body could reasonably hope to coordinate or enforce such an action by American Jews, who did not take kindly to orders from "above." Not only did rabbis not wield the kind of power over their congregants as priests might over Catholic lay people, but most American Jews in the 1930s did not even belong to a synagogue, where they might have been swayed by a rabbi's moral pleadings.<sup>60</sup> American Jews could not even unite around Zionism or behind a boycott of German goods; it was even less likely that they could come together to boycott motion pictures which some Catholics and Protestant leaders had deemed immoral.<sup>61</sup> Shulman's boldly moralistic resolution was therefore revised in favor of a much milder one which refrained from casting blame for the "harmful moral influence" exerted by many films and instead created a committee to study the problem and cooperate in the film reform effort.<sup>62</sup>

The formation of the CCAR committee was covered in the Jewish, mainstream, and film trade presses, and the committee chair, Rabbi William Fineshriber, immediately set about offering Protestant and Catholic leaders his assistance in the crusade against immoral films.<sup>63</sup> He received an immediate, positive response from the Protestant Federal Council of Churches (FCC), which suggested that further cooperation be conducted under the aegis of the National Conference of Jews and Christians (NCJC).<sup>64</sup> In fact, the NCJC News Service had already sought more information on the CCAR resolution and committee, since they were "particularly anxious...to describe the action which has been taken by Jewish agencies" in the motion picture reform field.<sup>65</sup> As the most important American interfaith organization, the NCJC shared the CCAR's desire to distance American Jews from the perceived moral failings of the Jewish men who dominated Hollywood. The Catholics were not quite as receptive, however. Cincinnati Archbishop John McNicholas's office did not respond to Fineshriber's letter for three months, and although his secretary claimed this was because the letter had been misplaced, two other possible explanations suggest themselves for the Catholic disinterest.<sup>66</sup> Of the three religious groups in the NCJC, the Catholics were the least active and the least committed to interreligious cooperation; moreover, as we have seen, one of the underlying themes of the Catholic crusade was that Jews as a group were responsible for the moral lapses in motion pictures.<sup>67</sup>

Despite McNicholas's failure to respond, Fineshriber's fellow

CCAR committee member, Rabbi Goldstein, quickly became involved in interfaith meetings held in New York City to coordinate protests against the industry.<sup>68</sup> Representing the CCAR and the local intermovement New York Board of Jewish Ministers, Goldstein pledged that the Jewish groups would support the crusade “without reservation.” In a move which his colleague Fineshriber would never take, Goldstein publicly denounced both the MPPDA and the prospect of effective self-regulation by the industry.<sup>69</sup> Instead, he proposed that a national supervisory committee made up of producers, clergy, and important members of the public should oversee films—rather than a board of censorship, which leaders of each of the three faiths publicly opposed, or industry self-regulation, which Goldstein consistently distrusted.<sup>70</sup> Goldstein’s proposal was approved by the interfaith committee, although no action seems to have been taken toward making this idea a reality.<sup>71</sup>

Although the further activities of the New York interfaith committee were not covered in either the mainstream or trade presses, the CCAR committee apparently came to believe that it needed to act on its own as well. A warning of imminent antisemitism galvanized Fineshriber into new action in the fall, separate from any interfaith activities. Perhaps with the upcoming annual Catholic Bishop’s Conference in November in mind, Worth Tippy of the FCC warned Fineshriber in late October that the Legion of Decency was “likely at any time” to transform its “intense feeling against the moral quality of films...into anti-Semitic feeling”; the Catholic press already had. Tippy was confident that the Jewish producers must not “realize the danger to their people,” and he expressed the hope that “your [influential] conferences of Rabbis can get together with Jewish leaders in the industry” to correct the problem of immoral films.<sup>72</sup> Fineshriber interpreted this letter, as well as recent resolutions about motion picture morality passed by Episcopalian and Lutheran bodies, as a threat of an “explosion on the part of Protestants” which, together with potential Catholic outbursts, could create an enormous problem for American Jews.<sup>73</sup> In the fall and winter of 1934–35, therefore, he and Goldstein met with studio executives in New York and Los Angeles, in meetings arranged through the personal connections of both Rabbi Stephen Wise, Goldstein’s boss, and Harry Warner, the Jewish industry figure most known for moralizing and for his dedication to Jewish causes.<sup>74</sup>

Although there is no record of Fineshriber's discussions over the three weeks he stayed in Los Angeles (Goldstein, because of a scheduling mix-up, stayed only a day), he was clearly impressed by the industry's promises to reform itself. In his discussions with industry figures, Fineshriber apparently echoed the ADL's message that Jews in the industry had a responsibility to safeguard the Jewish community's reputation, and the responses he received from industry executives suggest that he conveyed his message in a cooperative and convivial manner.<sup>75</sup> The mutually positive feelings Fineshriber's visit engendered certainly emerged in his report, which reads rather like a MPPDA press release in its praise for, confidence in, and protective stance toward the industry.<sup>76</sup> In



*William Fineshriber*  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)

the report, which received a great deal of publicity, Fineshriber deflected blame for film immorality from the film industry to the religious, social, domestic, and educational spheres, all of which had a responsibility, he argued, to educate the public to patronize better films.<sup>77</sup> In other words, as the industry often asserted, it was only providing audiences with the kinds of films they desired, and if audiences asked for immoral films, the industry had no choice but to comply. Fineshriber was also steadfast in his refusal to condemn the MPPDA or its president, former Postmaster General Will H. Hays—in sharp contrast to Goldstein.<sup>78</sup> Aside from the warm relations Fineshriber had established with Hays and other MPPDA leaders in Hollywood, he was also no doubt affected by new Catholic reports which pronounced recent Hollywood films “99½% Clean,” as a January 1935 *Hollywood Reporter* headline read.<sup>79</sup> With the Catholics no longer adjudging films immoral, the CCAR committee's goals seemed fulfilled: it had made its views known to Catholics and Protestants and, secondarily, had warned Jewish producers of the threat they were posing to the Jewish community's reputation.

For Fineshriber, the most important part of the CCAR committee's work was its potential for strengthening interfaith cooperation. A non-Zionist and a long-time supporter of interfaith activities,

Fineshriber represented the old guard of Reform rabbis, who in the early 1930s were losing their grip on the leadership of the CCAR.<sup>80</sup> Fineshriber saw in the CCAR film committee the opportunity for the conference to gain, in his words, the “standing and prestige” it deserved among other American religious and moral organizations.<sup>81</sup> In the interwar period, Reform Jewish organizations were particularly involved with the goodwill movement, believing that it offered the best hope for a positive American Jewish public image, as well as social acceptability, a measure of defense against Christian antisemitism, and an increased sense of self-esteem and belonging. Instigated and led by Protestants, the goodwill movement initially engendered ambivalence and even outright hostility among both Jews and Catholics, but by the time the NCJC was organized in 1927, Jewish support had grown: nine of the ten groups originally affiliating with it were Jewish, and five of these nine were either explicitly Reform organizations or organizations closely connected to Reform



*William Fineshriber (right), with unidentified actor  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)*

Judaism.<sup>82</sup>

Once Fineshriber had made public the CCAR's willingness to cooperate with Christian groups and had secured promises from

industry figures to reform, he was satisfied. Although the CCAR committee's impact on the goodwill movement or the film reform campaign is difficult to quantify, its cooperation with Christian groups in the film crusade certainly did not hurt American Jews' public image. Unlike the ADL and LA-JCC's quiet efforts, the CCAR's well-publicized activities demonstrated to whomever was paying attention that the Jewish community was willing to confront the film industry where matters of morality were concerned.

Sidney Goldstein, however, believed that the CCAR had not gone nearly far enough in confronting the evils of the film industry. For Goldstein, the issue was one of social justice, like the battles to eradicate child labor or the purported evil excesses of capitalism. As he put it, the crusade against motion pictures was but "one phase of a great wave of moral wrath that is sweeping wide and deep through every segment of life."<sup>83</sup> Goldstein had a passion for social justice which probably exceeded even his colleague Rabbi Wise's,<sup>84</sup> although both men were in the forefront of the Reform movement's social justice activities, including campaigns to improve the quality of life for working people and to prevent child labor, venereal disease, white slavery, and juvenile delinquency.<sup>85</sup> As a social-justice issue, the battle to purify "immoral" entertainment was not open to any compromises, according to Goldstein—immoral films were a potential "source of moral contagion" and needed to be curbed so as not to "endanger the moral life and spiritual welfare of the people."<sup>86</sup>



*Rabbi Sidney Goldstein*  
(courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Goldstein's uncompromising focus on the ethical issues of the film reform crusade and his placement of the issue within the realm of social justice brought him into conflict with the more accommodationist Fineshriber. In a broader sense, this was a reflection of the many differences that existed between Wise's disciples in the Reform movement and the elite, decorous Central European Jews who controlled the CCAR, B'nai B'rith, and the American Jewish Committee, organizations with which Wise consistently clashed on matters of method.<sup>87</sup> Goldstein and

Fineshriber clearly disagreed in their interpretations of the degree to which the CCAR should cooperate with the industry. "Fineshriber went to the Coast in part to investigate the Hays organization and program in Hollywood," Goldstein protested to CCAR president Samuel Goldenson, but he came back "with a letter of commendation from the very man who is so largely responsible for the conditions against which we have protested."<sup>88</sup> Goldstein was even more upset when he read Fineshriber's draft of the CCAR Committee's official report: "I could not myself sign a report which exonerated the Hays organization by the omission of any reference to the number of times Hays and his group have betrayed the public," Goldstein told Fineshriber, and Fineshriber therefore issued his report as an individual rather than as chair of the CCAR committee.<sup>89</sup>

Dissatisfied with the outcome of the CCAR committee's work, Goldstein continued to work to reform motion pictures through other organizations like the New York Board of Jewish Ministers, where he set up a motion picture committee that cooperated with similar committees of the New York Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations and the Metropolitan Conference of Temple Brotherhoods.<sup>90</sup> There is little evidence, however, that any of these additional groups accomplished much. Goldstein's views on the industry did receive some attention when his article "The Motion Picture and Social Control" was published in William Perlman's *The Movies on Trial*, along with articles by Edward G. Robinson, Bishop Cantwell, Upton Sinclair, John Haynes Holmes, and Chapin Hall.<sup>91</sup> He continued to harbor negative feelings about the motion picture industry and to protest its supposed immorality as the years went on.<sup>92</sup>

In his work with the CCAR committee and all his later activities for film reform, Goldstein asserted that Jews had a special responsibility to combat the evils of the motion picture industry. He believed that Jews in the industry were responsible for those evils, and thus that the American Jewish image was being sullied by the actions of a few immoral Jews. The moral elements of the Jewish community therefore needed to take a strong stand against their wayward coreligionists: "We must purge our own people of everything that brings discredit and dishonor to Israel," he told Goldenson.<sup>93</sup>

### **Jewish Pride: Henry Montor**

It was this type of sentiment that particularly outraged Henry Montor, whose own strategy for dealing with the film morality problem was based on a distaste for the methods of organizations like the ADL, LA-JCC, and CCAR. Montor, a journalist and Zionist, would soon become executive director of the United Palestine Appeal (UPA) and then a vice-chairman of the United Jewish Appeal, responsible for overseeing the fund drives for the UPA and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.<sup>94</sup> Although in the film morality debate he spoke only for himself, and there is no evidence that his opinions at all shaped Jewish communal behaviors, Montor's views nevertheless offer a forceful and rather surprising counterpoint to those discussed above. Montor's stand on the movie reform crusade was as uncompromising as Goldstein's, but in a completely different direction.

Montor's "Should Jews Join the Movie Crusade? NO!" was a long article syndicated in several Anglo-Jewish newspapers, one of many discussing the question of Jewish participation in the crusade which appeared in the Jewish press in the months after CCAR began cooperating with Protestant and Catholic groups. Opinions were mixed. Some writers, believing like Goldstein that this was a "battle for the Jewish name," urged Jewish involvement. The Jews in the industry had "surrender[ed] Jewish ideals," wrote journalist Louis Minsky, and thus Jews should not only participate in the crusade against immoral films, but should do so more aggressively and vigorously than other groups.<sup>95</sup> Others wondered about the ulterior motives of the crusade. The editors of the Minneapolis/St. Paul *American Jewish World* questioned whether this was not simply "a thinly disguised attempt to displace Jews from the dominant role they are said to hold in the industry" and whether Jewish participation in the reform battle was not "an admission of specific Jewish responsibility as well as a confession of guilt."<sup>96</sup> In the *Chicago Jewish Chronicle*, Bernard Levin chronicled other aspects of society that needed reforming, and asked why the film industry in particular had come under so much fire: "That this selection was accidental I do not believe," he concluded, inferring that antisemitism lay at the heart of the effort.<sup>97</sup>

Montor also expressed strong misgivings about Jewish

cooperation in the film reform effort. He criticized the efforts of “some members of the American rabbinate”—no doubt the CCAR—who had made it appear that Jewish abstention from the movie crusade would taint the Jewish public image “as surely,” he wrote, “as the evasion of conscription during the World War would have done.” Montor departed from many of his fellow American Jews in arguing that “for the Jewish people as a whole to assume responsibility for real or fancied delinquencies of individuals is a form of self-imposed martyrdom which is intolerable...It is a strange emancipation that the Jew in America enjoys if he must subscribe to the doctrine that every Jew who has bad manners jeopardizes the existence of the race.” And he astutely pointed out that most of the rabbis who encouraged Jewish participation in the film reform crusade did so out of a desire to protect the Jewish public image rather than from any deeply held moral convictions. “This constant fear complex,” Montor argued, “must inevitably undermine the morals of the American Jew and impress him with the conviction that his life is hazardous and his preservation dependent upon his yielding to every temporary aberration of the majority...If every Jew can vote for himself, every Jew should be allowed to think for himself, without regard to what reaction such thought may cause in the breasts of Catholics and Protestants.”<sup>98</sup>

Montor was criticizing the very mentality that seemed to drive Jewish life in the Diaspora: the ubiquitous concern for appearances, for what the Gentiles might be thinking. He believed that this “constant fear complex”—more extreme Zionists might have called it a *galut* mentality—led Jewish leaders to distort the film morality problem, which he argued was not one of collective Jewish responsibility for immorality, but rather a move to stop the maturation of film into an art form able to deal with serious social and moral issues.<sup>99</sup> Of course, Montor’s criticism, if taken to its most extreme conclusion, would have led him to a solution more strident Zionists were reaching in other areas: that only in a Jewish state, where Jews would constitute the majority, could any Jew hope to live without the fear of offending their gentile neighbors. As a good American Zionist of the interwar period, however, Montor would not have advocated a solution which cast aspersions on the potential for Jews to develop freely in the United States, or which intimated that a Jewish state should be a home for all Jews and not just the persecuted Jews of Europe.<sup>100</sup> Montor concluded instead that conservative, “self-

righteous" forces should not be allowed to stifle the "art" of the movies, and that parents should realize that not all films were appropriate for all audiences—that "irresponsible parents" should be stopped from "convert[ing] motion picture houses into transient nurseries."

Montor may not have been a radical, but he was ahead of his time. He was certainly not alone among industry observers in suggesting that movies should be restricted to age-appropriate audiences, but such a system would not be adopted until 1968, when the Motion Picture Producers Association (the successor to the MPPDA) replaced the desiccated Production Code with the still-operative ratings system. More importantly, however, in criticizing the attitude which drove so much of American Jewish life, Montor articulated ideas that would not become widely acceptable until the counterculture movements of the 1960s challenged the cultural hegemony of middle-class white, male Protestants and promulgated a new ideal of ethnic, racial, and gendered distinctiveness.

In the 1930s, however, concern over gentile perceptions still dominated the Jewish relationship with the film industry. In their activities on behalf of film reform, ADL, LA-JCC, and CCAR leaders were motivated by a very real fear for the safety and future of American Jewry, a fear born out of economic depression, political uncertainty, and the worldwide spread of antisemitism. Not until these problems were resolved would the American Jewish community begin to rethink the place that the concern for appearances held in the American Jewish mind.

---

*Felicia Herman received her Ph.D. in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University 2002. She is currently a Program Officer at Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation. The author would like to thank David Ben-Ur, Andrea Most, Mark Raider, Jonathan D. Sarna, Rona Sheramy, and the attendees at the Fourth Scholars' Conference on American Jewish History commenting on earlier versions of this essay. She would also like to thank the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives for providing her with a fellowship to conduct the research for this essay, and the American Jewish Historical Society, the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, and the Urban Archives Center at California State University, Northridge, for their expert assistance.*

**NOTES:**

1. Maurice Samuel, *Jews on Approval* (New York: Liveright Inc. Publishers, 1932), 9, 39, 81.

2. Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America* (New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1974), 142.

3. John Murray Cuddihy, *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (Basic Books, 1974; Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), x–xi.

4. On other groups, see Ruth Vasey's account of the ways foreign governments sought to shape images of themselves or their people on screen, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918–1939* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Steven J. Ross has detailed the ways labor unions and other representatives of the working class intervened on films relating to workers (as well as their construction of an alternative cinema to combat negative images of workers in mainstream films) in *Working Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); and Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), includes some discussion of the NAACP's efforts to better the screen image of African Americans. Of course, this phenomenon is still alive and well: quite recently, the Clinton White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy launched a campaign to encourage studios, directors, and screenwriters to include antidrug messages in their films. See *New York Times*, July 12, 2000, A19 (hereafter, NYT).

5. There are many well known early examples of antisemitic attacks on the industry. In 1920 Reverend Wilbur Fisk Crafts launched a crusade "to rescue the motion pictures from the hands of the Devil and 500 un-Christian Jews," and the next year Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent* fulminated at length on "The Jewish Aspect of the 'Movie' Problem" and "Jewish Supremacy in the Motion Picture World." Canon William Sheafe Chase's 1921 volume *Catechism on Motion Pictures in Inter-State Commerce*, a compendium of criticism of the industry, continued the trend of blaming Jews for immoral pictures, citing the *Dearborn Independent* articles. In the early 1920s well-known Methodist minister Bob Shuler used his pulpit, his magazine, and his radio station to fume against, among others, "a few millionaire Jews [who were] debauching the whole nation with suggestive and licentious films, in order to swell their gate receipts and practically own and dominate, control and dictate to" Americans. See *Jewish Activities in the United States, Vol. II of the International Jew* (Dearborn, Mich.: The Dearborn Publishing Co., 1921), the second volume of antisemitic articles from the *Dearborn Independent*; Steven Alan Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Harold Brackman, "The Attack on 'Jewish Hollywood': A Chapter in the History of Modern American Anti-Semitism," *Modern Judaism* 20 (February 2000): 1–19. On the older association of Jews with sexual perversion and immorality, see Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 113–27.

6. For film attendance figures, see *Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures* (1948): 65. On the effects of the Depression, see Andrew Bergman, *We're in the Money: Depression America and its Films* (New York University Press, 1971; Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1992) and Tino Balio, ed., *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

7. The NRA Codes were declared unconstitutional in May 1935. See Balio, *Grand Design*, 18–21; Colin Shindler, *Hollywood in Crisis: Cinema and American Society, 1929–1939* (New York: Routledge Press, 1996), 32–51; Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), 244–46; and Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books,

1994), 168–71.

8. Garth S. Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie, and Kathryn H. Fuller, *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7, 58.

9. For a history of early film reform efforts, see many of the articles in Francis G. Couvares, ed., *Movie Censorship and American Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907–1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 48–52; Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 30–32, 122–32; and Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art*, 108–82.

10. On the Production Code and the circumstances leading to its passage and reaffirmation, see Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics and the Movies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930–1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Garth S. Jowett, “Moral Responsibility and Commercial Entertainment: Social Control in the United States Film Industry, 1907–1968,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 10 (1990): 3–31; Richard Maltby, “The Production Code and the Hays Office,” in Balio, ed., *Grand Design*, 37–72; and Stephen Vaughn, “Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code,” *Journal of American History* 77 (June 1990): 39–65.

11. Lord put forth his version of the origins and content of the Code in his memoir *Played By Ear: The Autobiography of Daniel A. Lord, S. J.* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1956).

12. For an extensive analysis of films made within this period, see Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*.

13. As Black observes, although few other Catholic leaders expressed antisemitic views quite as vehemently as Breen, neither did any of his important correspondents—including Martin Quigley, Father Parsons, Los Angeles Bishop John Cantwell, and Cardinal Denis Dougherty of Philadelphia—see fit to reprimand him for or disagree with his opinions: “all apparently saw some merit in placing a man with such views in Hollywood.” Black, *Hollywood Censored*, 70, 172. On Breen’s antisemitism, see Black, 70ff., 170ff.

14. Bishop John J. Cantwell, “Priests and the Motion Picture Industry,” *Ecclesiastical Review* (February 1934): 143. The next year Cantwell submitted an article for William Perlman’s volume *The Movies on Trial* that was essentially identical to his 1934 article. The paragraph from which this quote is taken, wherein he mentions the Jewishness of many Hollywood executives, was eventually edited out by Perlman, who consulted with Rabbi Sidney Goldstein on the question and agreed with the rabbi that “the motion picture should be treated as a problem in the field of social ethics and in the field of social morality and not as a sectarian problem at all.” Goldstein to Perlman, May 9, 1935; see also Perlman to Goldstein, May 7, 1935, and Perlman to Goldstein, May 11, 1935; Folder 82a, Rabbi Sidney E. Goldstein Papers, Stephen S. Wise Free Synagogue Archives, New York, N.Y. Articles by Cantwell and Goldstein eventually appeared in *The Movies on Trial*, William J. Perlman, ed. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1936).

15. The *Churchman* is quoted in Vaughn, “Morality and Entertainment,” 46; Fred Eastman, “Who Controls the Movies?” *Christian Century*, February 5, 1930, 173. Eastman probably did not mean any antisemitism—he even protested that he had not “the slightest prejudice against either Jews or immigrants” and was later influential in

bringing Jewish cooperation with the reform crusade to the public's attention. Nevertheless, he felt that the Jewishness of the studio executives was essential to understanding the state of the industry.

16. Theodore Dreiser, "The Real Sins of Hollywood," *Liberty*, June 11, 1932, 6.

17. Quoted in Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), 278.

18. Quote from a Jewish communal leader in Detroit, cited in Feingold, *Zion in America*, 147. For a discussion on the mindset of German Jews, see Naomi Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: German Jews in the United States, 1830–1914* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), especially 109ff.

19. Stephen J. Whitfield, *American Space, Jewish Time: Essays in Modern Culture and Politics* (Armonk, N.Y.: North Castle Books, 1988), 152.

20. William Fineshriber to Albert Lasker, December 12, 1934, Folder B3, Papers of Rabbi William H. Fineshriber, Archives of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, Philadelphia, PA (hereafter, Fineshriber Papers).

21. Poll data can be found in Charles Herbert Stember, "The Recent History of Public Attitudes," in Charles Herbert Stember, ed; *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1966), 114–15, 131, 137. Morton Keller discusses Stember's findings for the later '30s and early '40s in "Jews and the Character of American Life Since 1930," in Stember, ed., *Jews in the Mind of America*, 260–65. Keller concludes that antisemitism never became part of America's "major political responses to the Depression," nor did it constitute a significant portion even of movements on the political fringes. See also Feingold, *Zion in America*, 271–73.

22. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 105.

23. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 105–27. On groups sympathetic to the Nazis, see Donald S. Strong, *Organized Anti-Semitism in America: The Rise of Group Prejudice During the Decade 1930–1940* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1941).

24. See David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially 218–48. For a fictional evocation of this uncertainty, see Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (P. F. Collier, 1935; New York: Penguin Books, 1993).

25. Harry Schneiderman, "Review of the Year 5395," *American Jewish Year Book* 37 (1935–36), 136

26. Editors of *Fortune*, "Jews in America," *Fortune* (February 1936): 79.

27. Milton Steinberg, "First Principles for American Jews," *Contemporary Jewish Record* 4 (1941): 587.

28. See for example Sidney Wallach, "Must Jews Resign from Public Life?" *American Jewish World*, June 15, 1934, 1.

29. Jonathan D. Sarna, "In Search of 'Authentic' Anglo-Jewish Poetry: The Debate over A. M. Klein's *Poems* (1944)," in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, Vol. 4, Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Nahum M. Sarna, eds. (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989), 125–35; the quote appears on page 133.

30. Richard E. Gutstadt to Leon L. Lewis, March 2, 1934. Jewish Federation-Council of Greater Los Angeles Community Relations Committee Collection, Urban

Archives Center, California State University, Northridge, Calif. (hereafter, LA-CRC Papers).

31. "Bulletin Number Two," Anti-Defamation League, Chicago, Ill n.d. (circa 1913 - 1914). David Philipson Papers, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter, AJA); and *Report of Anti-Defamation League* (1915). Anti-Defamation League Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, N.Y., and Waltham, Mass. (hereafter, AJHS).

32. See Felicia Herman, "'The Most Dangerous Anti-Semitic Photoplay in Filmdom': American Jews and *The King of Kings* (DeMille, 1927)," *Velvet Light Trap* 46 (Winter 2000): 12-25.

33. In fact, the relationship between the MPPDA and the ADL languished between the premiere of *The King of Kings* and August 1933. After Hitler's rise to power in Germany, the ADL decided to revive its role as industry consultant. ADL leaders hoped to prevent antisemitic characterizations from appearing on film screens, believing that they would dangerously exacerbate the "somewhat tense situation as it affects groups throughout the world." See Gutstadt to Lewis, August 23, 1933; and Gutstadt to Fred Beetsen, December 26, 1933, LA-CRC Papers.

34. "Church War on Films," *Hollywood Reporter*, March 3, 1934, 1 (hereafter, HR). On the Legion of Decency, see James M. Skinner, *The Cross and the Cinema: The Legion of Decency and the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures, 1933-1970* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993); Black, *Hollywood Censored*; Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood*; Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," 59-61.

35. Quoted in Black, *Hollywood Censored*, 180. On Protestant and Jewish cooperation with the Legion, see HR, June 19, 1934, 1; June 23, 1934, 1; June 23, 1934, 3; June 28, 1934, 1; and June 29, 1934, 1; *Variety*, July 17, 1934, 5; Fred Eastman, "The Movie Outlook Today," *American Jewish World*, November 23, 1934, 3; NYT, June 23, 1934, 1; July 9, 1934, 1; July 10, 1934, 1; July 17, 1934, 21; July 18, 1934, 14; and July 24, 1934, 19.

36. Richard Gutstadt to Leon Lewis, May 31, 1934; see also Gutstadt to Mendel Silverberg [sic], June 15, 1934, LA-CRC Papers.

37. "Memorandum," (statement of activities since June 1933) 1934, LA-CRC Papers.

38. Lewis to Gutstadt, September 1, 1933, LA-CRC Papers. On Nazism in America, see Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* and Leland V. Bell, *In Hitler's Shadow: The Anatomy of American Nazism* (Port Washington, N.Y.: National University Publications, 1973). Los Angeles was the western headquarters of the Friends of the New Germany, which would eventually become the German-American Bund, and many of the pro-Nazi activities in the area were tied in some way to this large group. Investigating Nazi sympathizers at the studios constituted a major part of the JCC's work; there is much correspondence and many reports in the LA-CRC Papers which discuss it. On Paramount, for example, see, "N.2. Confidential Report," April 10, 1936, and "N.2. Supplementary Report," August 16, 1936; Mrs. Leo Strauss to L. A. Rose, August 5, 1936; Folder 3, Part 1, Series I, Subseries A; on MGM, see Lewis to Fred Pelton, May 27, 1936, Folder 9, Part 1, Series I, Subseries A; Meeting Minutes, November 24, 1934, Folder 14, Part 2, Series I, Subseries C; Lewis to Sigmund Livingston, May 24, 1933, all in LA-CRC Papers.

39. On Lewis's battles with local B'nai B'rith chapter President Harry Graham Balter, see Harry Graham Balter to Isidore Golden, March 25, 1933; Lewis to Balter,

March 27, 1933; Golden to Lewis, March 28, 1933; Lewis to Livingston, May 24, 1933, LA-CRC Papers. For Lewis's version of the founding of the LA-JCC, see Lewis to Allie Freed, May 15, 1934, LA-CRC Papers. As Lewis boasted to Freed, "[e]very Jew holding any important public office is on the Committee, including one Federal Judge and four Judges in the State Courts, as well as members of several city commissions, in addition to members of the 'nobility.'" The organizational meeting of the LA-JCC drew such local figures as Mendel Silberberg, Harry Graham Balter, I. B. Benjamin, David Blumberg, Louis Greenbaum, Judge Harry Hollzer, Irving Lipschitz, Rabbi Edgar Magnin, Marco Newmark, Judge Isaac Pacht, Aaron Riche, Arthur Rosenblum, Judge Lester Roth, Judge Ben Scheinman, Dr. Maurice Smith, Louis Nordlinger, David Ackerman, and Felix Jonas. "Memorandum of Meeting," March 9, 1934, LA-CRC Papers. See also Max Vorspan and Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1970), 221ff.

40. "Memorandum of Meeting Held at Hillcrest Country Club," March 13, 1934, LA-CRC Papers. Neal Gabler is mistaken when he asserts that Jews in the film industry "dominated" the LA-JCC: they were, instead, concentrated in the Motion Picture Committee. See Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own*, 296-97.

41. Although most studies of Jews in the film industry take pains to emphasize their lack of commitment to Jewish causes, none have discussed industry figures' support of the LA-JCC. Many Jews in the industry were galvanized by the need to fight Nazism and antisemitism after 1933, and they supported the LA-JCC both out of a fear of antisemitic reprisals against the industry and Jews in general and out of a desire to support the antidefamation work being conducted in their local area, even in their own studios. The industry contributed almost 70 percent of the LA-JCC's funding in its first year and continued this trend in subsequent years; each studio was assessed a donation quota based on its size and percentage of Jewish executives. See Lewis to Gutstadt, March 21, 1934; Lewis to Gutstadt, January 17, 1935; "Statement of Cash Receipts and Disbursements," March 30, 1934-October 31, 1935; "Summary," n.d. (in Financial Files for 1933-35), with figures for 1933 and 1934, all in LA-CRC Papers.

42. Gutstadt to Lewis, March 29, 1934, LA-CRC Papers.

43. Gutstadt to Lewis, September 20, 1934, LA-CRC Papers.

44. Lewis to Sigmund Livingston, July 13, 1934, LA-CRC Papers. The changes included an agreement that all MPPDA member films would have to win the new Production Code Administration's (PCA) "purity seal" before release; that Joseph Breen would become the PCA director; that appeals of PCA decisions would no longer go through a jury of producers, but rather through MPPDA board members; and that exhibitors could cancel the showing of any picture released before July 15, 1934, if there were a "genuine" moral protest against it. These meetings were held on the heels of an announcement in film trade papers that a Catholic delegation was about to go to Hollywood to confront producers. *HR*, July 9, 1934, 1; *HR*, July 12, 1934, 1, 3.

45. Lewis to Sigmund Livingston, July 13, 1934, LA-CRC Papers.

46. In fact, Lewis told Gutstadt in March 1934 that he had been so busy that he "rarely" attended movies anymore, and "then only some pictures of outstanding merit." Lewis to Gutstadt, March 7, 1934, LA-CRC Papers.

47. Balio, *Grand Design*, 21-26.

48. On the strife between German Jews and East European Jews in the United

States, see Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 301–44; Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870–1914* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1962), 95–114; Stephen Birmingham, *“Our Crowd”: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 289–97; Feingold, *Zion in America*, 142–57; and Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: the Third Migration, 1880–1920* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 62–68, 86–88, 146, 162–63. This is also an underlying theme of Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908–1922* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970). For an overview of the literature on the gendered dimensions to this clash, see Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

49. Sander Gilman defines Jewish self-hatred as Jews’ “acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group—that group in society which they see as defining them—as a reality.” Although he does not apply his analysis to an American context until he reaches the 1960s—with the novels of Philip Roth and the films of Woody Allen—he does analyze in detail the Central European/East European Jewish dynamic which permeated modern European Jewish life. Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 2, 106–7, 253–55. Interestingly, a recent volume on the history of antisemitism has been criticized for placing too heavy an emphasis on the ways in which Jewish behaviors and attitudes might have promoted antisemitism in the modern era. See Alan Steinweis, review of *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews*, by Albert S. Lindemann, H-Antisemitism, H-Net Reviews, October 1997, available from [www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=16305880493317](http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=16305880493317), internet; and John Abbott, review of *Anti-Semitism Before the Holocaust*, by Albert Lindemann, H-Antisemitism, H-Net Reviews, July 2000, available from [www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=17290959011107](http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=17290959011107), internet.

50. Quoted in Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 123–24. See also Sorin, *A Time for Building*, 146.

51. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 105–6. Of course the Nazis would put the notion of Jewish collective responsibility to very concrete and diabolical purposes during the Holocaust, often killing groups of Jews in retribution for the perceived crimes of a few.

52. Rabbi Samuel Goldenson was the third and last member of the committee, but as president of the CCAR he was preoccupied with other issues. Fineshriber and Goldstein performed almost all of the work of the committee.

53. “United Synagogue Condemns Obscene Motion Pictures,” *B’nai B’rith Messenger*, May 18, 1934, 1; *Annual Report of the Synagogue Council of America*, 1934, in *Sixty-First Annual Report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (1935), 107–8; National Council of Jewish Women resolution, n.d., clipping in Fineshriber Papers. The national organizations inspired local groups to endorse similar resolutions. For example, in Minneapolis a group of five rabbis declared themselves in accordance with the Synagogue Council’s resolution and passed one of their own which condemned immoral entertainment of all kinds. See *American’s Jewish World*, October 19, 1934, 1.

54. On the transformation of Reform Judaism in this period, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit:

Wayne State University Press, 1988), 296, 334.

55. See for example, *HR*, June 9, 1934, 1; *HR*, June 15, 1934, 1.

56. *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 44 (1934), 134.

57. Charles E. Shulman to Samuel Goldenson, June 4, 1934; Goldenson to Schulman, June 7, 1934, Box 16, Folder 10; also Sidney Wallach to Goldenson, April 5, 1934, Box 16, Folder 12, CCAR Papers.

58. I thank Dr. Gary Zola of the American Jewish Archives for drawing my attention to the question of the identities and significance of the resolution's proponents. These were important men, many of whom served in large Reform pulpits across the nation and were leaders in the movement and in other Jewish organizations. This lent the resolution authority and demonstrates the significance of the issue to Reform rabbis. The nine rabbis who presented the initial resolution included two past and three future CCAR presidents and other rabbis active in the CCAR, ADL, and National Conference of Christians and Jews: Shulman and G. George Fox of Chicago, Ill.; Max Currick of Erie, Pa.; Abraham Feldman of West Hartford, Conn.; Edward N. Calisch of Richmond, Va.; Joseph L. Baron of Milwaukee, Wis.; Harry S. Margolis of St. Paul, Minn.; Louis Wolsey of Philadelphia, Pa.; and Solomon Landman of New York City, N.Y.

59. *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 44 (1934): 133-34.

60. Of those who did belong to a synagogue, only two-fifths (about fifty-four thousand) were affiliated with the Reform movement: hardly a major challenge to the box office, especially since most Reform Jews did not live in the major urban centers that constituted the prime box office markets. For statistics on members of Reform congregations from 1873-1980, see Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 197-98.

61. As Sidney Goldstein acknowledged, the chief difficulty of boycotts was that enforcement required a highly organized and thoroughly disciplined group. Catholics in some cities could enforce this sort of discipline, but neither Protestants nor Jews, Goldstein knew, possessed a similar organization or discipline. Sidney E. Goldstein, "The Motion Picture and Social Control," in *The Movies on Trial*, William J. Perlman, ed. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1936), 223-24. On dissension over Zionism, see Menahem Kaufman, *An Ambiguous Partnership: Non-Zionists and Zionists in America, 1939-48* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1991); on the German boycott movement, see Dollinger, *Quest for Inclusion*, 44-49; and Moshe R. Gottlieb, *American Anti-Nazi Resistance, 1933-1941: An Historical Analysis* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1982).

62. *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 44 (1934): 134.

63. Fineshriber to Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert and Most Rev. John T. McNicholas, June 25, 1934, Folder B/2, Fineshriber Papers. For examples of press coverage, see *NYT*, June 19, 1934, 24; June 27, 1934, 21; and *HR*, June 19, 1934, 1.

64. Tippy also told the *New York Times* of Fineshriber's letter, publicizing the CCAR's desire to cooperate. Worth M. Tippy to Fineshriber, June 27, 1934; Fineshriber to Tippy, June 28, 1934, Folder B/2, Fineshriber Papers. See *NYT*, June 27, 1934, 21.

65. Robert A. Ashworth to Goldenson, June 26, 1934, Box 15, Folder 17, CCAR Papers; Ashworth to Fineshriber, November 30, 1934, Folder B/2; and Louis Minsky to Fineshriber, December 3, 1934, folder B/3, Fineshriber Papers.

66. As soon as they located the letter, McNicholas's secretary told Fineshriber, "I

called it to the attention of the Archbishop and he asked me to answer it for him immediately." See William J. Gauche to Fineshriber, September 6, 1934, Folder B/2, Fineshriber Papers.

67. Rabbi William F. Rosenblum of New York noted the Catholic reluctance to cooperate as well. Rosenblum headed the ADL motion picture committee in New York, and he told Fineshriber in January that he believed that "the Legion of Decency does not seem to want our cooperation because the Catholics have branched out for themselves. "This convinced him that it was more important for Jewish groups to try to prevent antisemitic films than to cooperate with the Catholics—a logical conclusion for an ADL representative. William F. Rosenblum to Fineshriber, January 2, 1935, Folder B/4, Fineshriber Papers.

68. *NYT*, July 10, 1934, 1; *NYT*, July 17, 1934, 21; *NYT*, July 21, 1934, 14; *NYT* July 24, 1934, 19.

69. *NYT*, July 16, 1934, 11.

70. *NYT*, July 16, 1934, 11; *NYT*, July 25, 1934, 22; *NYT*, July 26, 1934, 14.

71. *NYT*, July 24, 1934, 19. A year later Goldstein was still proposing this idea as a superior system to self-regulation. See Goldstein, "The Motion Picture and Social Control," 227.

72. Tippy to Fineshriber, October 22, 1934, Folder B/2, Fineshriber Papers.

73. Fineshriber to Goldenson, October 24, 1934, Folder B/2, Fineshriber Papers. At the end of September, the film trade presses reported that the leadership of the film reform campaign seemed to be getting into the hands of the Protestant churches. See *HR*, September 25, 1934, 3.

74. On Wise's involvement, see Fineshriber to Goldenson, October 24, 1934, Folder B/2, Fineshriber Papers. On Warner's views in this instance, see Goldstein to Goldenson, November 21, 1934, Box 16, Folder 18, CCAR Papers; Harry Warner to Goldstein, November 5, 1934, Folder B/2, Fineshriber Papers; Warner to Goldenson, December 10, 1934, Box 16, Folder 18, CCAR Papers. For general information about Warner's moralistic stance toward moviemaking, see Cass Warner Spierling and Cork Millner, with Jack Warner, Jr., *Hollywood Be Thy Name: The Warner Brothers Story* (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998). For a particular application of this stance, see Michael E. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers: Warner Bros.' Campaign Against Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

75. On Fineshriber's intentions to remind Jewish executives of their responsibility to the community, see Fineshriber to Fanny Brin, April 13, 1935, Folder B/5, Fineshriber Papers; for industry figures' responses to Fineshriber's visit, see Warner to Fineshriber, January 16, 1935; Bob Lord to Jack Warner, January 16, 1935; William Goetz to Fineshriber, January 19, 1935; Hays to Joseph Hagerdorn, January 19, 1935, Folder B/4, Fineshriber Papers. See also Louis B. Mayer et al, to Fineshriber, January 16, 1935, Box 16, Folder 16, CCAR Papers.

76. Report, Special Committee, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Motion Picture Industry, March 24, 1935, Fineshriber Papers.

77. Report, Special Committee, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Motion Picture Industry, March 24, 1935, Fineshriber Papers. For press coverage, see *NYT*, March 25, 1935, 13; *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, March 25, 1935; *Evening Ledger* (Philadelphia), March 25, 1935; *American Jewish World* (Minneapolis and St. Paul), March 29, 1935; *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune*, April 5, 1935; and *NYT*, March 25, 1935, 13.

78. Goldstein to Fineshriber, February 26, 1935; Fineshriber to Goldstein, February 28, 1935, Box 16, Folder 16, CCAR Papers. Goldenson had expressed his approval of Fineshriber's report on February 21.

79. *HR*, January 9, 1935, 1; *HR*, January 11, 1935, 1; *HR*, January 18, 1935, 1.

80. The passage of the Columbus Platform in 1937 symbolized the ideological and leadership changes the movement was undergoing. Revising the Pittsburgh Platform of 1887, the archetypal statement of Classical Reform Judaism, the Columbus Platform offered a more traditional version of liberal Judaism that focused on Torah, God, and Israel and emphasized both the value of religious observance and the importance of Jewish peoplehood (not simply Jewish religion). Perhaps the most radical departure from the earlier statement of principles, however, was the Columbus Platform's endorsement of Zionism as both a worthy political and cultural movement. For the text of both platforms, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 387-91; the platforms are analyzed on 268-70 and 319-20.

81. Fineshriber to Goldenson, November 30, 1934, Box 15, Folder 19, CCAR Papers.

82. The NCJC changed its name to the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1938-39; on its history, see Benny Kraut, "Towards the Establishment of the National Conference of Christians and Jews: The Tenuous Road to Religious Goodwill in the 1920s," *American Jewish History* 77 (1988): 388-412. On goodwill in general, see Benny Kraut, "A Wary Collaboration: Jews, Catholics, and the Protestant Goodwill Movement," in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, William R. Hutchinson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

83. Sidney E. Goldstein to Goldenson, June 23, 1934, Box 15, Folder 21, CCAR Papers; Sidney E. Goldstein, "The Motion Picture and Social Control," *The Movies on Trial*, 230.

84. On Goldstein, see Sidney E. Goldstein, *The Synagogue and Social Welfare: A Unique Experiment (1907-1953)* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1955); *Who's Who in American Jewry* (1938): 365; on Wise, see Leonard J. Mervis, "The Social Justice Movement and the American Reform Rabbi," *American Jewish Archives* 7 (1955): 203ff.; and Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (New York: State University of New York, 1982).

85. In 1918 the CCAR adopted its first social justice platform, and by the 1920s and 1930s the Conference's pronouncements on the subject were so liberal that they effectively promoted socialism—much to the dismay of Reform lay people, many of whom comprised the capitalists the rabbinate was so eager to condemn. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 286-89, 309.

86. Goldstein, "The Motion Picture and Social Control," 208.

87. In 1934-35, for example, the CCAR was just beginning to endorse Zionism, Wise's most dearly held belief. Yet among those Reform rabbis who remained most steadfastly opposed to Zionism were Fineshriber and Goldenson. And of course, throughout the 1930s, Wise's American Jewish Congress locked horns with the B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee over the proper tactics for confronting Nazism.

88. Goldstein to Goldenson, March 1, 1935, Box 16, Folder 18, CCAR Papers. Fineshriber's attitude toward Hays can be traced back to a three-and-a-half-hour meeting which the two men and Harry Warner had in New York in November. Hays

had assured Fineshriber of his desire to see Fineshriber's efforts succeed, and he explained the ways in which he had tried on his own to reform the film industry. Hays even offered to pay the CCAR committee's expenses to Los Angeles, which Fineshriber declined. Nevertheless, Fineshriber told Goldenson that "Hays impressed me as being definitely serious in his desire to improve the status of the motion picture industry...he has earnestly striven to make those men see the error of their ways." Goldstein could not have agreed less. On the same day Fineshriber defended Hays's sincerity to Goldenson, Goldstein told Fineshriber that he had no faith in Hays or in any of his pronouncements: "His record is so disappointing that I am afraid we cannot rely upon his promise to reform the industry fundamentally and permanently. Neither the Catholics nor the Protestants have any confidence in Will Hays, and my own experience leads me to share their views." Fineshriber to Goldstein, November 27, 1934 and Goldstein to Fineshriber, November 30, 1934, Folder B/2, Fineshriber Papers; Fineshriber to Goldenson, November 30, 1934, Box 15, Folder 19, CCAR Papers.

89. Goldstein to Fineshriber, February 26, 1935, 16/16, CCAR Papers

90. Goldstein to Goldenson, March 8, 1935; and Goldstein to Goldenson, March 22, 1935, 16/18, CCAR Papers. Executive Board Meeting Minutes, March 12, 1935; and Board Meeting Minutes, April 9, 1935. Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations Papers, AJHS.

91. See correspondence in Folder 82a, *The Movies on Trial*, in Goldstein Papers.

92. Goldstein had complained about the industry; Fineshriber defended it, especially the films like those produced recently by Warner Bros., which "revealed a very fine, liberal, social spirit, and had a tremendous effect upon those who saw them. I wish you would let me know what pictures that you have seen recently that you consider dangerous to the morale of children and adolescents," Fineshriber concluded rather sarcastically. "I would like to see them, and then take the matter up with the proper authorities." See for example Fineshriber to Goldstein, December 15, 1937, Folder 18, Goldstein Papers.

93. Goldstein to Goldenson, June 23, 1934, Box 15, Folder 21, CCAR Papers.

94. Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 558.

95. Louis Minsky, "The Jews and the Movies," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, June 29, 1934, 11; see also "Purging the Films," *Opinion: A Journal of Jewish Life and Letters* (August 1934): 5; Evan Geffen, "Men and Events," *Opinion: A Journal of Jewish Life and Letters* (August 1934): 25; Joseph Brainin, "Should Jews Join Movie Crusade? YES It is Imperative," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, July 27, 1934, 9. (Many of the articles about the film industry were syndicated and thus appeared in several papers; I have only listed one source per article.)

96. "Cleansing the Movies," *American Jewish World*, July 27, 1934, 4. For a similar sentiment, see "Christian Raps Jews Who Join the Crusade Against Hollywood," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, October 12, 1934, 10. Rabbi William F. Rosenblum of New York expressed the same opinion in the *Jewish Transcript* (Seattle), October 19, 1934, clipping in Fineshriber Papers.

97. Bernard Levin, "A Cleanup for the Movies and More," *Chicago Jewish Chronicle*, July 6, 1934, 3.

98. Henry Montor, "Should Jews Join the Movie Crusade? NO!," *American Jewish World* September 7, 1934, 7. By using the example of Jews voting for themselves, Montor was arguing that it was hypocritical for those who asserted that there was no

Jewish vote to then try to convince all Jews to ascribe to the same moral viewpoint on film reform.

99. Similarly, Andre Sennwald lamented in the *New York Times* that the crusade would put an end to “adult” and “sophisticated” films and would lead to “an abrupt retreat from the vital questions which were being discussed in the best products of the new literature and new theatre.” See “Reflections and News of the Screen,” *NYT*, January 6, 1935, sec. 9, 5.

100. For a general overview of American Zionism, see Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism: From Herzl to the Holocaust* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1975).