Hybrid Judaism:

Irving Greenberg and the Encounter with American Jewish Identity

by

Darren Kleinberg

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Joel Gereboff, Chair
Tracy Fessenden
Moses Moore

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of more than half a century, Rabbi Dr. Irving Greenberg has developed a distinctive theology of intra- and inter-group relations. Deeply influenced by his experiences in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement, Greenberg's covenantal theology and image of God idea coalesce into what I refer to as Hybrid Judaism, a conceptualization that anticipated key aspects David Hollinger's notion of Postethnicity. As such, Greenberg's system of thought is mistakenly categorized (by himself, as well as others) as an expression of pluralism. The twentieth century arc of social theories of group life in America, from Melting Pot to Postethnicity by way of Cultural Pluralism, serves to highlight the fact that Greenberg is better located at the latter end of this arc (Postethnicity), rather than in the middle (Pluralism). Central to Greenberg's proto-postethnic theology is the recognition of the transformative power of encounter in an open society. Greenberg's ideas are themselves the product of such encounters. Understood fully, Hybrid Judaism has great relevance for American Jewish identity in the twenty-first century.

DEDICATION

For Yitz.

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For the better part of two decades, I have had the extraordinary privilege of interacting with students of all ages in a wide variety of educational settings. Often, the topic at hand intersected with some aspect of the ideas contained within these pages. I owe a debt of gratitude to all of those that I have studied with for allowing me to engage them in different aspects of this material and for engaging me all the more.

Of all the teachers I have been privileged to learn from, Rabbi Dr. Irving "Yitz" Greenberg is the one to whom I owe the greatest debt of gratitude. The first time I studied with 'Rav Yitz' was a life-changing encounter and I consider myself extremely lucky to have maintained a close relationship with him ever since.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

In 1974, Rabbi Dr. Irving Greenberg presented a paper at the International Symposium on the Holocaust, held at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City. The proceedings of the symposium were edited and published in *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust* (1977). Greenberg's chapter, entitled "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," is considered by some to be his "most important statement on the subject" of the Holocaust (Katz "Irving" 62). In section four of the essay, subtitled "Jewish Theological Responses to the Holocaust," Greenberg explored what he referred to as "Dialectical Faith, or 'Moment Faiths.'" Extending Martin Buber's suggestion that we can only speak of 'moment gods,'[1] Greenberg wrote that "We now have to speak of 'moment faiths,' moments when Redeemer and vision of redemption are present, interspersed with times when the flames and smoke of the burning children blot out faith – though it flickers again" (Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke" 27). Writing in the wake of a full realization of the horrors of the Holocaust, Greenberg declared that moment faiths "end[] the easy dichotomy of atheist/theist…" (Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke" 27).

Today, forty years after the symposium and almost seventy years after the end of the Second World War, American Jews are in a different 'moment': the twenty-first century American Jewish reality is one not of moment gods or moment faiths, but rather one of *Moment Judaisms*. The plural form, 'Judaisms,' indicates the sharp and very real distinctions between many of the different expressions of Judaism across the American

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[1] Greenberg explained Buber in this way: "God is known only at the moment when Presence and awareness are fused in vital life. This knowledge is interspersed with moments when only natural, self-contained, routine existence is present" (Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke" 27).

Jewish landscape.[2] The sheer variety of Jewish behaviors, rituals, and social mores demands an acknowledgement of the plurality of Jewish*ness*. Furthermore, the fact that some members of the Jewish community deny that other self-identified Jews are members of the same religion suggests that we must think of Judaism in plural terms.[3] The additional suggestion that contemporary Judaisms are 'momentary' is intended to acknowledge the increasing complexity of individual identity. For increasing numbers of American Jews, the many Judaisms from which to choose are only some of the various identities that are available for adoption and that contribute to the complex identity politics of Postethnic America. It is in this context that I offer a consideration of Irving Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism.

The meaning of American Jewish identity is being renegotiated in the twenty-first century. The subject has received increasing attention in recent years, exemplified by a conference held at Brandeis University in March of 2014 to address the topic, "Rethinking Jewish Identity and Education."[4] Two of the central questions posed by the conference co-chairs were "What does it mean to learn to inhabit or embody an identity or identities?" and "What do we know about the ways that contemporary Jews do so?" A recent survey of scholarly research on the subject of Jewish identity stated that "Over the past half century, there has been growing concern with and attention to the issue of

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[2] The same can be said for world Jewry; however, my research focuses on Greenberg's understanding of, and prescriptions for, the American Jewish community.

[3] For example, according to the interpretation of Jewish law (*halachah*) recognized by most members of the Orthodox community, one can only claim Jewish status if one has a Jewish biological mother or if they have completed a religious conversion according to Orthodox standards. As such, those Reform Jews that have a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, or that convert to Judaism according to the standards of the Reform movement, are not considered Jewish by most members of the Orthodox community. Using this example, it would be appropriate to describe the Orthodox and Reform religious communities as representing distinct Judaism*s*.

[4] See http://www.brandeis.edu/mandel/events/identityconf.html.

'Jewish identity'" (E. H. Cohen 8). One attempt at redrawing the lines of American

Jewish identity has addressed the question of affiliation with synagogue-based

movements. Sociologist Steven M. Cohen has written that "At any given moment, about

40% of American Jewish adults belong to synagogues in the United States" (S. M. Cohen

1). Because synagogue affiliation only accounts for a minority of American Jews at any

one time, denominational categorization is no longer adequate to describe the

contemporary American Jewish community. Moreover, Rabbi Dr. David Ellenson,

former President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, has written that

"contemporary denominational differences are undoubtedly more linked for most

American Jews on the folk level to matters of style and behavior than to deep theological

commitments that distinguish the movements one from the other" (Ellenson 74). With the

exception of Orthodox Jews, who account for approximately ten percent of the American

Jewish community, even when American Jews do affiliate with a synagogue movement,

such associations rarely represent deeply held religious commitments. In this light,

increasingly popular descriptors such as 'non-,' 'post-,' and 'trans-denominational' that

locate American Jews only in relation to synagogue movement affiliation, fail to fully

account for the shifts that are taking place in American Jewish life.[5]

In 2007, the Spertus Museum in Chicago took a step further and hosted an exhibit

entitled *The New Authentics: Artists of the Post-Jewish Generation*. The accompanying

volume opened with an essay from Staci Boris in which she wrote that "*Post-*

Jewish…takes its cues from postmodernism – a pervasive if highly contested state of

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[5] For a thoughtful treatment of the changes taking place in synagogue life, see Heller, *Synagogues in a Time of Change: Fragmentation and Diversity in Jewish Religious Movements*. Herndon: The Alban Institute (2009).

cultural affairs in which all notions of purity and certainty (modernism's key values) are rejected in favor of hybridity and relativity" (Boris 20). As the ensuing chapters will demonstrate, it is precisely these qualities of hybridity and relativity that distinguish contemporary *Moment Judaisms* from earlier articulations. Other works that have explored similar themes include the wide-ranging collection of essays, *You Should See Yourself: Jewish Identity in Postmodern American Culture* (2006), Martin Jaffee's collection of short musings, *The End of Jewish Radar: Snapshots of a Postethnic American Judaism* (2009), and Shaul Magid's *American Post-Judaism: Identity and Renewal in a Postethnic Society* (2013). Each of these texts describes a reality in which American Jewish identity is undergoing significant change. But what is identity?

Throughout this work, I will refer to individual and group identity/ies. It is important at the outset to clarify what is intended by my use of the term. David Hollinger has suggested that the word identity is less than ideal. In Hollinger's words, "the concept of identity is more psychological than social, and it can hide the extent to which the achievement of identity is a social process by which a person becomes affiliated with one or more acculturating cohorts" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 6). This point is central to my thesis: individuals become affiliated to groups, i.e. they *adopt* identities, as a result of a social process that I will refer to as *encounter*. Throughout this work, the language of identity is intended to refer to an individual's sense of *identification*, and thus affiliation, with a group – whether religious, cultural, ethnic, or any other – that results from socialization with other affiliates (either directly or indirectly) of that group. The emphasis on affiliation "calls attention to the social dynamics" involved in the

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achievement of identity and clarifies the intended meaning of the term 'identity' (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 6).

Given the emphasis being placed on the importance of social dynamics in the formation of identity in the contemporary American Jewish context, another critically important factor contributing to the rise of *Moment Judaisms* is that of intermarriage. The recent Pew survey of American Jews, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans* (2013), showed that since the second half of the last decade of the twentieth century, more than half of the members of the American Jewish community have married a non-Jewish spouse. These couples, and the offspring that are produced by them, have increasingly complex identities that are informed by the religious, cultural, and ethnic ties that intersect in their familiy lives. When high rates of intermarriage are considered alongside a wide variety of beliefs and practices, differing standards for claiming personal status as a Jew, and the shifting tides of denominational Judaism, it becomes clear that a new way of thinking about American Jewish identity in the twenty-first century is sorely needed.

At the heart of my research is the claim that the various notions of pluralism that have described group life in the United States for the greater part of the twentieth century – whether in the form of Horace Kallen's theory of Cultural Pluralism, Will Herberg's Triple Melting Pot, or Nathan Glazer's Multiculturalism – have each failed to appreciate the importance of the social dynamics of identity to which David Hollinger has alerted us and to which the realities of American Jewish life clearly point. As Milton Gordon reminded his readers in 1964, something happens "when peoples meet" (Gordon 60). Although my research touches on the nature of identity across a broad range of group affiliations, my primary focus is on religious identity in the United States and, more

specifically, American Jewish identity. Through a detailed analysis of the work of Irving Greenberg, one of the foremost American Jewish thinkers and activists of the past half century, it will become clear that he is mistakenly identified (by himself as well as others) as an advocate of pluralism. It is my claim that, in truth, his covenantal theology and 'image of God' idea combine in a proto-postethnic theology of encounter that I refer to as Hybrid Judaism.

Greenberg is generally acknowledged by scholars, practitioners, and laymen as one of the most significant figures in American Jewish life in the past half century. His contributions have received scholarly attention for a number of decades now, although not yet as the focused attention of an entire work. The earliest serious consideration of Greenberg as a theologian came in David Singer's influential essay, "The New Orthodox Theology" (1989). Singer identifed Greenberg along with David Hartman and Michael Wyschogrod as charting new territory in the American Orthodox Jewish community. Whereas for many in the modern Orthodox community, "synthesis[6]…has largely been a one-sided affair," Greenberg, Hartman, and Wyschogrod were identified as producers of a "small but growing body of Modern Orthodox writings that does indeed take up the question of Orthodox self-understanding in light of modernity" (Singer, "Theology" 38). Although Singer's essay offered only a short survey of Greenberg's contributions, he was correct in his observtion that they expressed "a commitment to a brand of Orthodoxy that stands radically exposed to the modern experience – modern ideas, modern values, modern history, etc. – in all its fullness" (Singer, "Theology" 38). In addition to this

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[6] According to Singer, "'Synthesis' has indeed been a key term in the vocabulary of modern Orthodoxy, signifying its most highly prized ideal" (Singer, "Theology" 36), and that "Synthesis as a theory implies, indeed requires, significant cross-fertilization between Judaic and Secular spheres: between tradition and modernity, between Torah and 'wisdom'" (Singer, "Theology" 37).

essay, in 2006 Singer also published an insightful analysis of the 1966 debate between Greenberg and Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstion that played out in the pages of the Yeshiva University student newspaper, *The Commentator*.[7]

A few years after the publication of Singer's essay, Steven T. Katz published a collection of his essays, entitled *Historicism, the Holocaust, and Zionism: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought and History* (1992). The volume included Katz's first critical considerations of Greenberg's work in the essay "'Voluntary Covenant': Irving Greenberg on Faith after the Holocaust." A noted scholar of the Holocaust in his own right, Katz offered a summary of the main arguments of Greenberg's Holocaust theology. He also raised questions regarding Greenberg's failure to define his terms precisely, critiqued the "lack of logical rigor" (Katz, "Faith after the Holocaust" 240) in his writings, and claimed that "much of its argumentation is unconvincing, its use of sources open to question, and its 'method' often lacking in method" (Katz, "Faith after the Holocaust" 245). Katz was certainly correct that Greenberg's writings lacked the systematic rigor of formal theology; nevertheless, an evolving structure and logic can be identified when his entire corpus is taken into account. Despite his crtique, Katz made clear that his concerns "reflect[ed] the seriousness with which [he] believe[d] one must take Greenberg's theological position" and recommended that "those truly concerned with the present condition of the people Israel and the viability of Jewish belief in the post-Holocaust age" take Greenberg's work under consideration (Katz, "Faith after the Holocaust" 245). Subsequently, Katz reprinted the essay along with the addition of a brief intellectual-biography in his edited volume, *Interpreters of Judaism in the Late*

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[7] See below, pp. 93-94, 124-131.

Twentieth Century (1993). Katz also included some of Greenberg's most significant

works on the Holocaust in his important co-edited reader, *Wrestling with God: Jewish*

Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust (2007) and, finally, served as co-

editor of *Continuity and Change: A Festschrift in Honor of Irving Greenberg's 75th*

Birthday[8] (2010).

The most comprehensive treatment of Greenberg's theological response to the

Holocaust has come from Michael L. Morgan. His book *Beyond Auschwitz: Post-*

Holocaust Jewish Thought in America (2001) includes the chapter, "Irving Greenberg

and the Post-Holocaust Voluntary Covenenant." Morgan's analysis returned to

Greenberg's essays from the 1960s and, although he did not explore the implications of

those writings for Greenberg's later work in detail, he did highlight some of the points of

connection. Chapters three and four of this dissertation will fully explicate the genesis

and evolution of Greenberg's ideas. As we shall see, while Morgan and Katz's

contributions on Greenberg's Holocaust theology have yiedled important insights, they

also cast him too narrowly as a Holocaust theologian.

Michael Oppenheim has offered a survey of some of Greenberg's major

contributions in his essay "Irving Greenberg and a Dialectic of Hope" (2000). The essay

touches on Greenberg's theological response to the Holocaust, his covenantal theology,

the 'image of God' idea, religious pluralism, feminism, and a range of other topics. It

serves as a useful introduction to Greenberg's thinking without engaging in a critical

treatment of his work. Turning to more searching treatments of Greenberg's approach to

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[8] Few of the essays in the *Festschrift* engage Greenberg's work directly, although contributions from
Eugene Borowitz, Alice L. Eckardt, Arnold Eisen, David Ellenson, David Hartman, and Elie Wiesel,
among others, certainly underscore his significance.

religious pluralism, Marc A. Krell's *Intersecting Pathways: Modern Jewish Theoligians in Conversation with Chrsitianity* (2003) and Sandra B. Lubarsky's "Deep Religious Pluralism and Contemporary Jewish Thought"(2005) both offer important engagements with Greenberg's work. On the practical plane, Edward T. Linenthal's *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Musuem* (1995) and Benny Kraut's *The Greening of American Orthodox Judaism: Yavneh in the Nineteen Sixties* (2011) both present important narratives that describe Greenberg's influential role in American Jewish institutional life.

Although these works combine to expand our understanding of Greenberg's work and its continuing relevance, they also highlight the fact that there is still much work to be done. An overemphasis on Greenberg's Holocaust theology has clouded out many of his other important contributions. Moreover, even as treatments of his theology have detected how radical his thinking is, none have yet fully unpacked the very practical implications of his ideas. Undoubtedly, there will be continued interest in Greenberg's work, evidenced by the international conference convened by the Oxford Center for Hebrew and Jewish Studies held in June of 2014, entitled "Modern Orthdoxy and the Road Not Taken: A Critical Exploration arising from the thought of Rabbi Dr. Irving 'Yitz' Greenberg." It is in this light that this full-scale consideration of the meaning and implications of Greenberg's convenantal theology and 'image of god' idea is so important.

Chapter one begins with a sketch of the historiographical record of American religious history, pointing out and problematizing the relatively recent emphasis on pluralism by such noted scholars as Martin Marty, Catherine Albanese, and William R.

9

Hutchison. This serves to situate my research within the broader context of American religious history and historiography.

In chapter two, the focus turns to a discussion of what I refer to as the century-long arc of social theories of group life in America. Narrating the shift from Melting Pot to Postethnicty, I arrive at a clear sociological defintion of pluralism that originates in the important contributions of Horace Kallen. Milton Gordon's important critique of Kallen provides the bridge from Cultural Pluralism to David Hollinger's notion of Postethnicity. While Hollinger describes the *nature* of identity in postethnic America, Gordon explains how it got there through his appreciation of the importance of social contact between primary relationships – what I call *encounter*.

In chapter three, I introduce the central figure of this dissertation: Irving Greenberg. As the earliest American Jewish thought-leader to engage notions of postethnicty (although not by that name), it should be of no surprise that Greenberg was himself deeply influenced by significant and varied social encounters. By right, Irving Greenberg is one of the most celebrated American Orthodox Jews of the second half of the twentieth century. A traditionally ordained rabbi, a Harvard trained Ph.D., and one of the most influential public figures in American Jewish life, Greenberg was, among a long list of achievements, a founding member of the Association for Jewish Studies, centrally important to the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and a leading figure in Christian-Jewish relations and intra-Jewish community building. As well as receiving great praise for his efforts, Greenberg has also been publicly criticized by his peers in the Orthodox community, threatened with heresy charges by his rabbinical association, and rejected as an outsider by the centrist Orthodox mainstream and the

haredi wing of the American Orthodox community. Each of the episodes surveyed in this chapter played a role in Greenberg's formulation of his theology of Hybrid Judaism.

The important encounters that are sketched out in chapter three set the stage for chapters four and five. Together, they represent the first systemtaic treatment of what I refer to as Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism. Although Greenberg himself adopted the language of pluralism, it is clear that his ideas extend beyond pluralism, embracing notions of religious identity that are immedately recognizable as precursors to Hollinger's conception of postethnicity. Greenberg's Hybrid Judaism describes those Jews that are deeply rooted in their Jewish identity but also radically open to opportunities for hybridity. Rejecting the narrow and negative qualifiers of non-, post-, and trans-denominationalism, Hybrid Judaism affirmatively acknowledges the reality that different expressions of Judaism (including, but not limited to, denominational ones) in the twenty-first century are influenced, transformed, and, in some cases, coupled with other religious and cultural identities from both within Judaism and beyond it. While the language of non-, post-, and trans-denominationalism refers to affiliations within the Jewish community alone, Hybrid Judaism has no outer limit, communicating the ability to incorporate almost any new attachment or affiliation from within *or beyond* the Jewish context.[9] The full implications of Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism serve to reassert his importance for American Judaism in the twenty-first century.

Finally, in chapter six, I turn our attention to other significant scholars of religion that have grappled with the changing nature of religious identity. Each thinker – either through contrast or similarity – further establishes Greenberg as a boundary-breaking

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[9] The question of limits will be addressed in chapter four. See p. 173, footnote 29.

thinker that was ahead of his time. Irving Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism

represents his absolute clarity about the nature of American Jewish life and identity in the

second-half of the twentieth century. Rather than call for a retreat from the open society

or lament that all would be lost, Greenberg asserted Judaism's capacity to enter fully into

the public square and called for an embrace of the transformations that would necessarily

occur as a result.

Chapter One

In his foreword to the 2013 volume, *God in America: Religious Pluralism in the United States,* the distinguished scholar of American religion, Martin Marty, wrote that his "one-word answer" to the question "What is American religion about?" was "Pluralism" (Cohen and Numbers ix). However, as we shall see, scholarly narratives of American religious history have only recently begun to tell a pluralistic story of religion in America. At the same time, questions have been raised in recent decades as to whether pluralism is itself still a useful framework for understanding an increasingly complex American religious landscape. Moreover, the very term is often left undefined or, just as often, it is employed in more than one sense. To gain an understanding of pluralism and American religious history I will begin with a consideration of the historiographical record. As such, pluralism will be considered primarily in its descriptive sense. In chapter two, I will turn to the conceptual definition of the term alongside other theories of group life in America and consider its dual function as both a descriptive and prescriptive framework for religion, and group life in general, in America.

Catherine Albanese, in her groundbreaking textbook *America: Religions and Religion* (1999) has written that "To be plural means to be more than one. To be a pluralistic land means to be one country made up of many peoples and many religious faiths" (Albanese, *America* xv). In this purely descriptive sense, the American religious scene has surely been pluralistic – 'diverse' may be the better term – from the earliest days of the colonial period. As Sidney Mead has written, "the colonials had experience with it ever since two persons of different religious perspectives landed on the continent

with intention to stay…Pluralism was the essence of the colonial experience…" (Mead 50). Mead's claim is evidenced by Hannah Adams' 1784 *Alphabetical Compendium of Various Sects* and the handful of similar compilations from the colonial period that reflected aspects of the religious diversity of the time.[1] These colonial compendia were not formal religious histories and the religious diversity they described was more a diversity of Protestant Christianities than of religion in general.[2] Moreover, the general lack of acknowledgement of the presence of a wide diversity of Native American tribes and those that originated from the African continent also spoke to the limitations of such records of religious diversity in America.

It is widely acknowledged that the writing of American religious history proper began with Robert Baird's *Religion in America* (1844) and Phillip Schaff's *America: A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character* (1855). Baird (1798-1863), himself an Evangelical Protestant minister, described the history of American religion in theological more than historical terms. Dividing all American religions into two categories, 'evangelical' and 'non-evangelical,' he included groups such as Jews, Atheists, and Socialists in the latter category. As R. Laurence Moore has described, Baird's theological outlook directly influenced the historical narrative he portrayed, including his minimization of the growing role of Roman Catholics and Mormons in American religious life (Moore 5-9). Phillip Schaff (1819-1893) was a Swiss-born and German-trained historian of Christianity who arrived in the United States in the 1840s. According to one scholar, he "was probably the most learned Protestant theologian and

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[1] Another example is Thomas Branagan's 1811 volume, *A Concise View of the Principal Religious Denominations in the United States of America* (R. L. Moore 4).
[2] For example, Jews did not number more than 2,500, or .04%, of the US population until the end of the 18th century, and Catholics were estimated to have numbered less than 5% of the total population in 1790.

scholar who worked in the United States during the nineteenth century" (Moore 7), and someone who shared a religious and theological worldview in common with Baird. As Moore has described it, "As with Baird, Schaff's sense of what God intended guided his choices of what to emphasize about American religious life and what to play down" (Moore 8). For more than a century after Baird's book was first published, historical treatments of American religion largely followed a similar approach. The story they told of religion in America generally failed to acknowledge or represent the full extent of religious diversity that was actually present on the American religious landscape. The authors of the texts that followed in this tradition were primarily 'church historians' engaged in the production of salvation histories. [3] They were often clergymen or professors at universities from the Northeast that were originally established as religious seminaries.[4] They rarely ventured out of the close confines of New England Protestantism. As Albanese has written, "…when we look at America's…religious history books [] we find that they generally tell one major story…For if you tell the one story of America, perforce, it will center on the history-makers, the Anglo-Saxon and Protestant majority – and perhaps those most like them…" (Albanese, *America* xv). She went on to point out that the result of telling 'the one story' is that it "suppresses the distinctive identities of the many peoples who count themselves part of the American venture" (Albanese, *America* xvi). The historiographical limitations of such narratives,

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[3] For a more detailed analysis of the development of church history in the American academy, see Bauer, ed. *Reinterpretations in American Church History*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (1968).
[4] Amanda Porterfield has noted that "Before 1975, many of the faculty teaching religious studies in colleges and universities received their advanced degrees from mainline Protestant divinity schools, and the curricula developed in those schools provided models for curricular programs in religious studies" (Cohen and Numbers 23).

though oblivious to early 'scholars' such as Baird, have become more apparent to subsequent historians of American religious history.

Elsewhere, Albanese has provided an insightful historical narrative that illuminated the dominant approaches to American religious history and historiography. She described the earlier historiographical trend that emphasized Protestant hegemony and overlooked the reality of religious diversity in America as the *consensus narrative* of American religious history (Albanese, "American Religious History" 5-6). Thomas Tweed has also described it as "the old 'grand narrative' of consensus and progress in American history, which was peopled by white males and set in public places." He added that "attempt[s] to tell 'the whole story' of U.S. religious history have focused disproportionately on male, northeastern, Anglo-Saxon, mainline Protestants and their beliefs, institutions, and power" (Tweed 3). Underlining the influence of this approach, Catherine Albanese reminded her readers that "when the common-school movement spread across the United States…the models came from New England," (Albanese, *America* 14), thus privileging a single dominant narrative of American religious history throughout the education system. And, of course, the white male-dominance in the field was also reflective of the balance of power between the races and genders in society in general. Taken together, these factors outline the sources of the emphasis towards the white, male, northeastern, and Protestant version of American religious history. Because of the hegemonic power of these factors, it was not until the twentieth century that a number of key developments would significantly shift the historiographical tide.

The pivot point at which the consensus narrative turned towards a more inclusive and pluralistic approach to writing American religious history came with the 1972

publication of Sydney Ahlstrom's *A Religious History of the American People*.

Ahlstrom's work represented both the culmination of the consensus narrative and the

beginning of a new way to tell the story of religion in America. Making this transition

explicit in the final chapter of his book, Ahlstrom wrote that American religious history

was "A Great Puritan Epoch" which "can be seen as beginning in 1558 with the death of

Mary Tudor, the last Monarch to rule over an officially Roman Catholic England, and as

ending in 1960 with the election of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the first Roman Catholic

president of the United States" (Ahlstrom 1079). Critics have suggested that Ahlstrom's

description was still too reminiscent of Baird's and other expressions of the consensus

narrative, especially due to its lamenting tone for the passing of the Puritan Epoch.[5]

Nevertheless, Ahlstrom concluded his book with a section entitled "Toward Post-Puritan

America"[6] in which he addressed topics such as "Twentieth-Century Judaism," "Roman

Catholicism in the Twentieth Century," "Piety for the Age of Aquarius: Theosophy,

Occultism, and Non-Western Religion," and "Black Religion in the Twentieth Century."

In these chapters we see the first inklings of a serious historical treatment of religious

diversity in America. As Tweed has correctly observed, "Ahlstrom, and most authors

who have followed him, have scripted scenes for the 'others' to play" (Tweed 13).

  In the more than forty years since the publication of Ahlstrom's magnum opus,

American religious history has been written in what some have called a "Post-Ahlstrom

Era" (O'Toole). During that time, a number of texts have been recognized as pioneering a

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[5] Sidney Mead's "By Puritans Possessed" is still the strongest critique of Ahlstrom's work. Mead took Ahlstrom to task for lamenting the "sad post-Protestant because post-Puritan world." See Mead, "By Puritans Possessed." *Worldview* (1973): 49-25.

[6] Part IX runs just over 100 pages in a book that totals just fewer than 1,100 pages in total, not including the bibliography and index.

more accurate retelling of the story of religion in America. The most prominent among them are Catherine Albanese's text book, *America: Religions and Religion* (1981),[7] R. Laurence Moore's *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (1986), Thomas Tweed's *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (1997), Jonathan Sarna's edited collection *Minority Faiths and American Protestant Mainstream* (1998), and William R. Hutchison's *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (2003). Each of these books has expanded the telling of American religious history beyond "church history" with its theological, creedal, and confessional limitations, to allow for a more inclusive American religious history. They have given non-Evangelicals, non-Protestants, women, non-whites, southerners, south-westerners, and westerners more central roles to play in the narrative. As David Hackett wrote in the introduction to the first edition of his reader, *Religion and American Culture* (1995), "Today the study of American religion continues to move away from an older, European American, male, middle-class, northeastern, Protestant narrative concerned primarily with churches and theology and toward a multicultural tale of Native Americans, African Americans, Catholics, Jews, and other groups" (Hackett xi).

The origins of this historiographical shift can be located in the first third of the twentieth century when the formal field of American Studies began to develop. Scholars at the University of Chicago played a critical role in this development, producing (among others) two influential schools of thought: the Chicago School of Sociology and the Chicago School of American Religious History. Scholars at the Chicago school of

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[7] Porterfield claims that Albanese's contribution was "the first book to elevate pluralism to the level of the defining theme of American religious history" and that it "marked an important turning point in the study of American religion" (Cohen and Numbers 32).

Sociology, such as Robert E. Park (1864-1944) and Louis Wirth (1897-1952), began to pay closer attention to the study of urban areas and social relations between different groups. This new approach to sociology was an early pre-cursor to the 'social history' movement that became popular in the latter part of the twentieth century in both history and religious studies departments. One result of this development was greater attention being paid to the lives of Americans *as they were actually lived*, as opposed to the way they were imagined by earlier scholars who had rarely come into direct contact with diversity or, worse still, simply disregarded it in prior narratives of American religious history.

The rise of 'social history' as a field of study has played an important role in the unfolding of American religious historiography. As noted above, 'social history' developed as a historiographical method under the influence of earlier developments in Sociology departments, particularly coming from the University of Chicago. Social history – also often referred to as the study of 'lived religion' - may best be described as "explorations of Americans' everyday experiences of religion" (Schultz 143). One of the exemplars of this approach to American religious history is Robert Orsi. A concise example of social history can be found in his contribution to the forum, "The Decade Ahead in Scholarship." In it, he wrote:

> Imagine a day in the life of a white, middle-class, middle-aged woman in the middle years of this century. (She was born in Appalachia but is living at the time we encounter her in Baltimore.) She consults her astrological chart in the morning…In the afternoon, she practices some form of self-help physical or psychological therapy (which may be rooted in a complex cosmology and anthropology quite at odds with the perspectives of her denomination). Then she visits her (Freudian, Rogerian, Jungian, Sullivanian, or existentialist) analyst in the early evening, just before the meeting of her reading group at church, which tonight is taking up the

issue, "The edges of Life: Can They be Determined? (or perhaps exploring "Religions of the East," or, earlier in the century, "What is Christian Science All About?" or, even more disorienting, Emerson's essay on nature). (Orsi 5-6)

In this excerpt, the complexity of the woman's religious life is immediately recognizable (even if she herself is unaware of it). Orsi's rendition of 'a day in the life' is a far cry from the grand narratives of Robert Baird. This methodological development presents American religion with a level of nuance that cannot but acknowledge the kinds of religious diversity that are found in America today.

The second Chicago school that played a critical role in the development of American religious historiography was that of American religious history. Scholars from the University of Chicago led the way in developing the field and generating new ways of thinking about American religious history that were independent of the theological presuppositions that characterized the work of Baird, Schaff, and the subsequent generations of scholars of American religious history that followed in their wake. In this way they were able to advance the field beyond 'church history' and embrace American religious studies more fully. R. Laurence Moore has written that William Warren Sweet (1881-1958) played a decisive role in this development, stating that Sweet "deserves the credit for establishing American religious history as an area of separate academic inquiry" (Moore 14). As a result of Sweet's contributions, "Chicago became the center of the discipline" (Bauer viii). Sweet was insistent that religious studies could be "an area of research that a secular-minded historian might tackle as appropriately as a minister or divinity school instructor" (Moore 14). If Sweet was correct, religious history could now begin to be written by scholars without a theological stake in the game. Contrasted with

Baird's religiously inspired version of events, this development represented an important shift in the way that American religious history would be written in the twentieth century and beyond.[8]

These historiographical shifts were complemented by the postmodernist critique that first began to appear in French deconstructionist writings in the 1960s. Postmodernism had a significant impact on the way history in general, and religious history in particular, would be written by generating a set of critical tools that were used to deconstruct grand narratives that attempted to pursue objectivity and attempt to tell 'the whole story' from one particular vantage point.[9] Rather than support the formulation of historical narratives that "negotiate power and construct identity," the postmodern critique undermined such power negotiation and identity construction. Jean Lyotard has bluntly written that, "I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives" (Rosman 16). For historians, this has meant that

> Gender, race, class, ethnicity, geographical location, cultural heritage, sociology, anthropology, demography, psychology, economics, and so on – all offer a unique perspective from which to produce a different, and valid, portrayal-cum-interpretation of past events. There is no 'God's-eye-view' of history that humans can produce. There are histories, not one unitary history. (Rosman 10)

The impact of the postmodern critique has been far-reaching; however, for our purposes it will suffice to recognize that it has provided a basis for more complex historical narratives that tell multiple stories from multiples locations and from multiple

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[8] Although, as recently as 2005, Tomoko Masuzawa has opined that contemporary religious studies departments still have a "higher concentration of unreconstituted religious essentialists…than anywhere else in the academy" (Masuzawa 7).
[9] The consensus narrative of American religious history is one such grand narrative.

perspectives. Moreover, it has not only called for greater inclusivity in the narrative of American religious history, but for the production of new narratives.

Despite this shift, there are still scholars who appeal to aspects of the consensus model. George Marsden has complained that the rising proliferation and fragmentation of the field has served to undermine "attempts to provide a coherent narrative in American religious history" (Marsden 15) and that "[t]he story of American religion, if it is to hang together as a narrative, must focus on the role played by certain groups of mainstream Protestants who were for a long time the insiders with disproportional influence in American culture" (Tweed 13). William Hutchison has suggested that while some have asked that "we try to get along without broad interpretations of any kind for American religious history…that cure would be worse than the disease." According to him, "we need organizing propositions, however tentative, if we are to get around intellectually in a messy world of particulars" (Hutchison 2). Consistent with shifts that have taken place throughout the field of American religious history, Hutchison acknowledged the obsolescence of older frameworks and broad interpretations, such as the Protestant triumphalism so central to the consensus narrative. Nevertheless, and in similar fashion to Martin Marty cited above, he was moved to replace older unifying themes with the idea of pluralism as an alternative grand narrative of American religious history. Given these developments, it is increasingly the case that the consensus narrative is employed more often to describe the contours of American religious *historiography* than as a tool with which to actually write American religious *history*.

The shift from the consensus model toward a greater acknowledgement of diversity has encouraged closer attention to additional factors that have influenced the

American religious landscape and, as a result, American religious historiography. Included among them is the impact of immigration. Asian immigrants to the United States which, by 1882, already included more than three million Chinese, brought with them "such 'foreign' religions as Confucianism and Buddhism" (Gaustad and Schmidt 219). A massive wave of European immigrants arrived on American shores in the decades between 1880 and 1920 that shifted the US population in an unprecedented manner and helped to recontour the American religious landscape. These new European immigrants included a population increase of American Jews by approximately three million and a Catholic population that grew at three times the rate of growth of the general population. In addition, as Hutchison has pointed out, there was also a growth in the number of new Christian denominations during this time, including African-American Protestant denominations (Hutchison 114). These changes would not only impact the diversity of American citizenry but they would also influence who would actually be writing American religious history in subsequent decades. For example, Jacob Rader Marcus (1896-1995) was the American-born son of an immigrant family who went on to become the founding figure of American Jewish studies and established the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1947. Just the example of Marcus alone speaks to the impact of immigration around the turn of the twentieth century on the writing of American religious history.

In 1924, the United States Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act which severely limited the number of immigrants that would be admitted into the country. It was not until the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that immigration would again play as significant a role as it had in the decades immediately before and after the

turn of the twentieth century. David MacHacek has suggested that the 'new religious

pluralism' of the 1960s resulted not only from "the presence of Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs,

Muslims, and others among the post-1965 immigrants" but also because

> the cultural environment into which the post-1965 immigrants [were] being received ha[d] changed significantly…In brief, the post-1965 immigrants, unlike earlier immigrants, stepped into a society that was rejecting a culture of communitarian consensus in favor of a culture that placed a positive value on diversity and dissent – that is, a culture of pluralism. (MacHacek 146-8)

In effect, the 'turbulent sixties' were a time when not only the demographic facts on the

ground were shifting, but also the attitudes of Americans across the country. Social,

cultural, and ideological developments impacted the agenda and interpretation of scholars

of American religious history. Undoubtedly, these factors would play a crucial role in the

way American religious history would be written from that time onward. With a much

more diverse and contested religious landscape that included religious faiths from all over

the world as well as home-grown religions, all within a context in which diversity was

becoming increasingly more accepted, a new historiographical paradigm emerged that

began to foster new narratives of American religious history. [10] American society at large

was undergoing significant change, and so was the academy. The American population

was becoming more diverse; so too were the research agendas of university history and

religious studies departments. These shifts, combined with new scholarly methodologies

informed by the growing interest in social history and postmodernism resulted in,

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[10] There have been two stages of American religious historiography subsequent to the *consensus* model that have addressed the diverse realities of the American religious landscape. They are the *conflict* model and the *contact* model. The conflict model "emphasizes contentiousness and contests for recognition, status, and a fair share of the benefits accorded to the various religious traditions and groups in the United States." The contact model "seeks to encompass the conflict model but also to include more. Its argument is that conflict has been only one of a series of exchanges between religious peoples and religious goods when they have met in the United States and that, therefore, any comprehensive narrative of religion in American must examine and explore all of these exchanges" (Albanese, "American Religious History" 6-7).

amongst other things, a significant reappraisal of American religious history and the historiographical approaches to researching and writing it.

Despite the impact of the two Chicago Schools, the development of the postmodern critique, and the waves of immigration, scholars of American religious history have continued to struggle to tell a fully inclusive story of American religious diversity. For example, in 1983 – more than a decade into the post-Ahlstrom era - Robert Michaelson proposed that "attention to Native American religions is one significant test of the adequacy of a comprehensive history of religions in that Republic" and that, as such, very few works of American religious history pass the test (Michaelson 668). Michaelson was only able to cite three examples that met his standard. Similarly, David Wills, in an essay published in 1987, pointed out that another aspect of American religious history that called out for a fuller treatment was that of "the encounter of black and white" in the United States (Wills).[11] Given that these two essays were both written in the 1980s, one could be forgiven for assuming that the academy had, by the second decade of the twenty-first century, responded to their call and that Native- and African-Americans, along with a long list of other overlooked groups in American religious life, would have all found their way into the narrative of American religious history. However, one is struck to discover that, in a 2010 essay from Kevin Schultz and Paul Harvey entitled "Everywhere and Nowhere: Recent Trends in American Religious

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[11] In 1972, Ahlstrom wrote that,

> The basic paradigm for the renovation of American church history is the black religious experience, which has been virtually closed out of all synoptic histories written so far – closed out despite the obvious fact that any history of America that ignores the full consequences of slavery and non-emancipation is a fairy tale, and that the black churches have been the chief bearers of the Afro-American heritage from early nineteenth-century revivals to the present day. (Ahlstrom 12-13)

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History and Historiography," the authors cite 'Pluralism" as their first item on a list of "directions that religious historiography is *moving*" [Emphasis added] (Schultz 135). It is also noteworthy, in light of Michaelson's observation regarding the treatment of Native American religion in American religious history, that there are no texts cited in Schultz & Harvey's essay that deal with the subject. As such, four decades into the post-Ahlstrom era, it appears that a pluralistic historiography is still only emerging.[12]

One important recent contribution to the study of religious pluralism in the United States is the 2013 volume *Gods in America: Religious Pluralism in the United States*. Based on the papers delivered at a 2007 conference entitled "Religious Pluralism in Modern America," the book includes a collection of essays from an impressive array of scholars of religion in America. The chapters address a wide range of topics including a survey of the development of religious pluralism in religious studies departments; exploration of how religious pluralism has manifested in physical spaces throughout the United States; respective treatments of its impact on Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Protestantism in the USA; and chapters on the impact of pluralism on women, popular religion, and African-American religion. The publication of this book certainly suggests that pluralism has become more prevalent as a historiographical tool with which to understand American religious history.[13]

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[12] For a searching analysis of the state of the field at the end of the twentieth century, see Stout and Hart, eds, *New Directions in American Religious History*. New York: Oxford University Press (1997).

[13] It must also be noted that *Gods in America* betrays precisely the shortcomings that, as I will outline below, have made pluralism an increasingly outdated way of thinking about religious diversity in America. Throughout the book, pluralism is employed in terms of simple, descriptive diversity. The chapters themselves are divided according to singular religious groupings – Catholicism, Hinduism, Judaism, etc. – and thus fail to address any questions of religious mixing. Only Thomas Tweed's treatment of Buddhism in the United States explores ground beyond pluralism with its consideration of what he terms 'transcultural collage.'

Ironically, even as a pluralistic narrative of American religious history has become more commonplace, it has also become outdated. As a result of the realities of an increasingly diverse American population, and the methodologies of the postmodern critique and social history that are more attentive to the complexities of their subject's lives, scholars of religion in America are coming to the realization that it is no longer adequate to think in terms of a simple plurality. Recalling Robert Orsi's "white, middle-class, middle-aged woman" cited above, it is becoming increasingly apparent that religionists in America do not inhabit singular religious worlds. Rather, they often have complex religious lives that intersect with multiple religious traditions. Acknowledgement of this increased complexity contributes to the realization that employing pluralism as a descriptive paradigm is inadequate for describing, understanding, and interpreting American religious history.

In the more than forty years that have passed since the publication of Ahlstrom's magisterial work, the narration of America religious history has increasingly shifted from a Protestant consensus narrative to a pluralistic one that has only begun to recognize the full extent of the diverse and contested nature of religious life and identity in America. Even as pluralistic treatments that describe greater religious diversity on the American scene are appearing more often in scholarly literature, it is still the case that the historiographical record of American religious history is a work in progress. The above sketch is suggestive of both the influence and, as we shall see in the following chapter, the increasing obsolescence, of pluralism as a framework for American religious historiography.

Martin Marty's suggestion, cited at the beginning of this chapter, that "pluralism" is "what American religion is about," only tells part of the story (Cohen and Numbers ix). While pluralism may have been a useful paradigm at some point in American religious historiography, it now fails to accurately describe the full complexity of American religious life in the twenty-first century. While Marty has suggested that "'Pluralism'…signals ways of doing things about the diversities of constituencies [in America]…, or ways of thinking about and conceiving them" (Cohen and Numbers x), he fails to recognize that pluralism is but *one* of the various ways that Americans have 'done things and thought about' religious diversity and, more importantly, that the nature of religious diversity in America is itself not fully appreciated when cast in terms of pluralism. Looking back from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, we can now appreciate pluralism as just one way of thinking about diversity and its impact on religion in America. Moreover, we can see that it served as the theoretical bridge between that which preceded it – the Melting Pot – and that which is now succeeding it – Postethnicity. It is to this theoretical arc that we now turn.

Chapter Two

At the close of the previous chapter, I suggested that pluralism is no longer useful

if we want to accurately describe the American religious diversity. To demonstrate this

point more clearly, it is necessary to develop a sharper understanding of precisely what

pluralism means. Even a brief survey of works on the subject of religious pluralism will

demonstrate that the term is employed in a variety of ways, if it is even defined at all. I

have already cited Catherine Albanese's descriptive suggestion that "To be a pluralistic

land means to be one country made up of many peoples and many religious faiths"

(Albanese, *America* xv). By contrast, Amanda Porterfield has written that "As I

understand it, religious pluralism is a term for religious diversity that imputes positive

meaning to religion and encourages appreciative understanding of its many forms"

(Cohen and Numbers 21). This definition has a prescriptive quality that is not present in

Albanese's. Yet another range of definitions can be found in William R. Hutchison's

Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal (2003).

There, the author charted an impressive history of religious pluralism from the colonial

period up until the present day and placed pluralism at the center of the narrative.

However, Hutchison's description of pluralism as having three distinct manifestations –

'-as toleration,' '-as inclusion,' and '-as participation' – resulted in a stretching of the

term beyond any cogent or specific meaning. According to Hutchison, 'pluralism as

participation' calls for the "acceptance and encouragement of diversity" (Hutchison 1).

Here we see a distinct quality not present in the previous two definitions: the prescriptive

suggestion that pluralism entails the active encouragement of diversity. On a historical

note, Hutchison also suggested that pluralism as participation "did not arrive until the second half of the twentieth century" (Hutchison 4), whereas Chris Beneke has suggested that there is evidence of participatory pluralism as far back as the very founding of the republic (Beneke). By contrast, Porterfield located the roots of American religious pluralism in the heyday of liberal Protestantism in the middle of the twentieth century (Cohen and Numbers 25-30). From just these few examples, the contested nature of the term is clear.

The earliest usage of the term pluralism dates back to the eighteenth century and referred to the simultaneous holding of two or more ecclesiastical offices by one cleric in the Church of England. In this sense it was seen as a corrupt institution in which "parishes, or benefices, could be bought and sold to the highest bidder" (Bender 7). In addition to this ecclesiastical application, later usages of pluralism have fallen into the philosophical, political, and sociological realms. Philosophically, pluralism has been used to mean "that the world is made up of more than one kind of substance or thing; (more generally) any theory or system of thought which recognizes more than one irreducible basic principle" (OED Online). This philosophical application of pluralism is most often associated with Harvard philosopher William James (1842-1910) and his 1909 Hibbert Lectures, later published as *A Pluralistic Universe*. Politically, pluralism has been understood as a "theory or system of devolution and autonomy for organizations and individuals in preference to monolithic state power" or "a political system within which many parties or organizations have access to power" (OED Online). Of these three usages

- ecclesiastical, philosophical, and political – the first has largely fallen out of use, with only the philosophical and political senses of pluralism still being widely employed.[1]

Turning to the Sociological application of the term pluralism, the *Oxford English Dictionary* states its fourth definition of pluralism as: "The presence or tolerance of a diversity of ethnic or cultural groups within a society or state; (the advocacy of) toleration or acceptance of the coexistence of differing views, values, cultures, etc." (OED Online). Within this definition are included both descriptive and prescriptive qualities of pluralism. Descriptively, pluralism refers to the simple fact that there is a *plurality*, a diversity, of peoples. Prescriptively, the OED refers to "(the advocacy of) tolerance of a diversity of ethnic or cultural groups within a society or state."[2] While "the presence of tolerance" describes reality *as it is*, "(the advocacy of) tolerance" describes, in Martin Marty's words, "ways of doing things about the diversities of constituencies [present]" (Cohen and Numbers x).

For the purpose of my research, the present discussion of pluralism will be limited to its sociological application, paying attention to both descriptive and prescriptive usages of the term. I will extend the discussion of pluralism beyond "ethnic or cultural groups within a society or state" and "differing views, values, cultures, etc.," as in the OED definition, to encompass religious groups and individuals. I will also contextualize pluralism in the century-long arc of twentieth century sociological theories of group life

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[1] For example, the political scientist, William E. Connolly, has published a philosophical work on the subject of pluralism. See Connolly, *Pluralism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. On the political side see, for example, Kozinski, *The Political Problem of Religious Pluralism: And Why Philosophers Can't Solve It*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010, and, Monsoma and Sopper, *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2009.

[2] The question of who is being tolerated and who is doing the tolerating and what that means for power relationships in a given society is an important one. For a thoroughgoing critique of the notion of tolerance, see Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

in America. To arrive at a full understanding of pluralism as a sociological concept, we cannot begin in the colonial period, as per Beneke; with the rise of liberal Protestantism, as Porterfield suggests; or in 1972, with the beginning of the post-Ahlstrom era in American religious historiography. Instead, we must look to the early decades of the twentieth century when pluralism as a sociological category received its earliest articulation. In doing so, I will be able to outline (1) the genesis and development of pluralism as a concept, (2) the characteristics that distinguish it from other concepts of group life in America, and (3) its limitations as a framework for thinking about religious diversity and identity in America.

Arguably the most widely known modern theory of American group life is that of the melting pot. Notions of America as a melting pot date back to Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), in which he observed that "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men" (Landsman 107). In the middle of the nineteenth century, Ralph Waldo Emerson compared contemporary America to the "smelting pot of the Dark Ages," and Herman Melville imagined American blood as "the flood of the Amazon…a thousand noble currents all pouring into one" (Hutchison 190). However, it was not until Israel Zangwill's play, *The Melting Pot*, was staged in 1908 and subsequently published in 1909 that both the phrase and the concept began to hold wide currency in American society.

Zangwill (1864-1926), a British Jew who came to be known as the Jewish Dickens, was a prolific author and playwright, public intellectual, and influential political

figure, especially with regard to the question of Jewish statehood.[3] Zangwill's influential

play, *The Melting Pot: A Drama in Four Acts* (1909), tells the improbable story of David

Quixano and Vera Revendal, both immigrants to the United States from Russia. David

and Vera fall in love and become betrothed to each other, despite the fact that David is a

Jew and Vera a Christian. To further complicate matters, it is revealed during the third act

that Vera's father, Baron Revendal, led the pogrom that resulted in the murder of David's

family and countless other Jews. Despite it all, the play closes with David embracing

Vera and offering a final thought as they look out on a beautiful sunset:

> It is the fires of God round His Crucible. There she lies, the great Melting Pot – listen! Can't you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth – the harbor where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight. Ah, what a stirring and a seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian, black and yellow. (Zangwill)

Vera adds: "Jew and Gentile." David continues:

> Yes, East and West, and North and South, the palm and the pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross – how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. Ah, Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations and races come to worship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations come to labour and look forward! (Zangwill)

In these excerpts from the play, David describes America as a country in which all

peoples come to be melted together into 'God's Crucible.' It is a place where all prior

differences can be overcome to create a new 'Republic of Man' in which the citizens

themselves take on a new collective identity. They are no longer Jewish, Christian,

Russian, or German, but rather American.

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[3] Ultimately, Zangwill became the leader of the Jewish Territorial Organisation (ITO), which was committed to finding a homeland for the Jewish people in a location other than Palestine. For a useful biographical treatment, see Leftwich, *Israel Zangwill*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1957.

Zangwill's melting pot came under fire from Anglo-conformists and Nativists[4] who were ill at ease with the idea that their conception of what it meant to be American might be diluted by the melting of immigrants into the cauldron of America. Others who read Zangwill's play balked at the idea that immigrants to America should abandon their ethnic, cultural, and religious heritage, or that they would be perfected through assimilation with other groups. Reading the play more than a century later, it is also clear that the vision of the melting pot would have sounded more familiar to Europeans, Christians, and Jews, than it would have to non-Europeans professing non-Biblical faiths. To be sure, even Jewish ears would find the 'Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God' to be a little too Christian for their tastes. Certainly, the marriage of the play's central protagonists – a Jew and a Christian – invited the ire of many Jewish commentators.[5] These reactions and others besides suggested that the melting pot was little more than a fanciful vision of America.[6]

Nevertheless, the 1908 opening night of *The Melting Pot* was attended by President Theodore Roosevelt who, it is reported, "leaned over his box and shouted to Mr. Zangwill, 'It's a great play'" (Leftwich 252). The endorsement from Roosevelt, as

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[4] Anglo-conformists "demanded the complete renunciation of the immigrant's ancestral culture in favor of the behavior and values of the Anglo-Saxon group" (Gordon 85). As for Nativists:

> Previously vague and romantic notions of Anglo-Saxon peoplehood were combined with general ethnocentrism, rudimentary wisps of genetics, selected tidbits of evolutionary theory, and naïve assumptions from an early and crude imported anthropology…to produce the doctrine that the English, Germans, and others of the 'old immigrants' constituted a superior race of tall, blond, blue-eyed, 'Nordics' or 'Aryans,' whereas the peoples of Eastern and Southern Europe made up the darker Alpines or Mediterraneans – both inferior breeds whose presence in America threatened, either by intermixture or supplementation, the traditional American stock and culture. (Gordon 97)

[5] For example, "Rabbi Answers Zangwill." 16 November 1908. *The New York Times.* Web. 18 August 2013.

[6] For a detailed analysis of the play, see Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 66-101.

well as a run of 136 performances helped solidify the idea of the melting pot in the imagination of the American public. As David Biale has observed, "the play became a pivotal moment in the American debate about the mass immigration of the early part of the century. Zangwill did not invent the term 'melting pot,' but he was instrumental in popularizing its use in American political discourse…" (Biale 19). So much so that it "has continued to reverberate in a variety of incarnations and reincarnations" (Biale 19). In effect, Zangwill's metaphor of the melting pot represented the beginning point of the century-long arc of attempts at describing group life in America. The next point along that arc would come from an outspoken critic of Zangwill and the Melting Pot.

Horace Meyer Kallen (1882-1974) was born into a rabbinic family in Germany and immigrated with his parents to the United States in 1887. Settling in Boston, Kallen attended Harvard College, earning his bachelor's degree and a doctorate in philosophy. Following a seven-year teaching post at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kallen helped to establish the New School for Social Research in New York City and joined its faculty in 1919, where he taught until a year before his death. Despite thoroughly rejecting his father's Orthodoxy, Kallen became an influential leader in the American Jewish community. He played a significant role in the establishment of the Menorah Society at Harvard College and supported the growth of the Intercollegiate Menorah Association on other college campuses (Greene). These organizations promoted "Jewish culture as a means to foster pride" and their founders, Kallen among them, "hoped that their study as well as their fellowship would combat the 'indifference' and 'shameful ignorance of things Jewish'" (Greene 28-9). In addition, Kallen was a staunch supporter of Zionism, serving as a founding delegate to the American Jewish Congress (Pianko

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302), and was often engaged in the cause for Jewish education, serving as vice-president of the American Association of Jewish Education, among other roles (Kronish 142).

Horace Kallen's most significant contribution, however, was his formulation of the concept of Cultural Pluralism as a response to both the melting pot idea and notions of Anglo-conformity and Nativism. Although he would not coin the term 'Cultural Pluralism' until 1924,[7] he began writing about group identity in America as early as 1906.[8] It was in the pages of *The Nation*, a weekly publication devoted to politics and culture, that Kallen would publish what would become one of his most well-known essays, entitled "Democracy *versus* the Melting Pot: A Study of American Nationality" (1915). Responding to his Wisconsin-Madison colleague and Nativist thinker, Edward Alsworth Ross (1866-1951), Kallen argued that, rather than posing a threat to the United States, immigrants, and the cultural diversity they brought with them, supported the democratic ideals that defined America. Turning to Zangwill's melting pot, Kallen claimed that, rather than melting into each other, immigrants could become American precisely as a result of holding on to their cultural particularity. In Kallen's words:

> …the outlines of a possible great and truly democratic commonwealth become discernible. Its form is that of a Federal republic; it substance a democracy of nationalities, cooperating voluntarily and autonomously through common institutions in the enterprise of self-realization through the perfection of men according to their kind. The common language of the commonwealth, the language of its great tradition, would be English, but each nationality would have for its emotional and involuntary life its own particular dialect or speech, its own individual and inevitable esthetic and intellectual forms…Thus "American civilization" may come to mean the perfection of the cooperative harmonies of "European Civilization"… (Kallen, "Democracy" 116)

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[7] The term 'cultural pluralism' was first used by Kallen in his essay, "Culture and the Ku Klux Klan." See Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998 (1924).
[8] See Kallen, "The Ethics of Zionism." *Maccabean* (1906): 61-71.

Kallen's vision was clear: America could not be a melting pot, nor could it respond to its newest immigrants in Anglo-conformist or nativist terms, because their diverse ethnic identities were 'involuntary,' and therefore inevitable.

Just a few months after Kallen's essay appeared in *The Nation*, he returned to the subject of Cultural Pluralism in America (although not yet by that name) in an essay published in *The Menorah Journal* entitled "Nationality and the Hyphenated American" (1915). In this essay Kallen looked to Switzerland as a model for American democracy. Kallen observed that "…the nationhood of Switzerland is the most integral and unified in Europe to-day, because Switzerland is as complete and thorough a democracy as exists in the civilized world, and the efficacious safeguard of nationhood is democracy not only of individuals but of nationalities" (Kallen, "Nationality"). For Kallen, a country populated by a diverse citizenry could only be truly democratic if the multiple nationalities present were distinct and protected. As such, Kallen believed that citizens of the United States should be empowered to carry a dual identity. Kallen called this the 'hyphenated American' and suggested that for "American nationhood…its democracy is its strength, and its democracy is 'hyphenation'" (Kallen, "Nationality").[9] A year after the publication of Kallen's two essays, the great American philosopher and educational reformer, John Dewey, echoed Kallen's ideas and implored his audience at the National Educational Association that "the genuine American, the typical American, is himself a hyphenated

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[9] W. E. B. Du Bois' notion of 'double consciousness,' while not identical, had much in common with Kallen's notions of cultural pluralism and hyphenation. As Daniel Greene has noted, "In 1897, just a decade before Kallen began to publish on pluralism, Du Bois famously asked, 'What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American?" (Greene 8). As Greene has also pointed out, the question of race was a significant "blind spot" for Kallen.

character" (Gordon 139). Put differently, Kallen (and Dewey) did not simply believe that America had a responsibility to protect the diverse peoples within its borders, but rather that the different peoples themselves had a responsibility to hold onto their ethnic and cultural identities to protect American democracy.

Almost a century prior, Kallen made explicit what was only hinted at in William Hutchison's treatment of pluralism in his book, *Religious Pluralism in America* (2003). While Hutchison and Kallen agreed that pluralism meant "the acceptance and encouragement of diversity" (Hutchison 1), Kallen's vision of Cultural Pluralism was more far-reaching in its qualification of the meaning of diversity and what was meant by its acceptance and encouragement. What was missing from Hutchison's definition but present in Kallen's formulation was the critical importance of group boundaries. In the closing paragraph of "Democracy *versus* the Melting Pot," Kallen employed a simile to make his point:

> As in an orchestra, every type of instrument has its specific timbre and tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony, so in society each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make the symphony of civilization. (Kallen, "Democracy" 116-7)

Here, the simile of the orchestra suggested that the different groups that made up a diverse society should have fixed and distinct identities. Werner Sollors, in his "Critique of Pure Pluralism," has explained Kallen's orchestral metaphor in this way:

> …the stable quality of each instrument must be preserved. Kallen's definition of cultural pluralism rests on quasi-eternal, static units, on the 'distinctive individuality of each *natio*'…on 'ancestry,' 'homogeneity of heritage, mentality and interest,' and mankind's 'psycho-physical inheritance.' (Sollors, "Critique" 260)

David Hollinger has also written that, in employing the metaphor of the orchestra, Kallen

"emphasized the integrity and autonomy of each descent-defined group" (Hollinger,

Postethnic 92). Put simply, ethnic identity was, for Kallen, fixed. Kallen famously

underlined this point at the end of "Democracy *versus* the Melting Pot" when he wrote

that, "Men may change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religions, their

philosophies, to a greater or lesser extent: they cannot change their grandfathers. Jews or

Poles or Anglo-Saxons, in order to cease being Jews or Poles or Anglo-Saxons, would

have to cease to be…" (Kallen, "Democracy" 114-5).[10] Kallen's point was two-fold: first,

that ethnic groups have a hereditary identity that they cannot escape[11] and, second, that

the identities of each group, like the instruments in the orchestra, are, and should remain,

distinct from one another.

Writing as a Jewish, European-born immigrant who called for equal acceptance of

Hebraism[12] in America, Kallen declared that the boundaries of cultural identity needed to

be sharply drawn and strongly upheld if democracy was to be successful. In his book,

American Pluralism: A Study of Minority Groups and Social Theory (1973), sociologist

William M. Newman used mathematical equations to represent different models of social

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[10] It is noteworthy that Kallen, himself a secular Jew, considered Jewish identity an ethnic/cultural designation and not a religious one. See footnote 12, below.

[11] Daniel Greene has given some attention to the fact that, although "By the mid-1920s, Kallen had set aside the notion of descent-based identity," critics "tended to remember him for what they interpreted as a theory of identity that essentialized descent" (Greene 89, 183). However, even if one removes the notion of descent-based identity, Cultural Pluralism stills calls for sharp boundaries between groups, regardless of how individuals come to be associated with them.

[12] Hebraism was "an identity grounded in scholarly study of Jewish history and culture" (Greene 16) and looked to the *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* for its inspiration. As such, Kallen was not sympathetic to religious expressions of Jewish group life. Daniel Greene has described it thus:

> Kallen advocated that [Hebraism] replace religion as the cornerstone of Jewish self-understanding…As Kallen wrote to Judge Julian Mack in 1915, 'Religion is less than life, and as life becomes more secularized, the religion of the Jews becomes less and less the life of the Jews. I use the word Hebraism consequently to designate the whole of that life, of which Judaism is a part…' (Greene 33)

interaction.[13] Kallen's theory – Newman called it 'Classical Cultural Pluralism' - is represented thus: A + B + C = A + B + C. Represented in this way, each group ('A,' 'B', and 'C') maintains its own identity even as it lives alongside other groups (Newman). As Hollinger has put it, pluralism intends "to protect and perpetuate particular, existing cultures" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 85).

The ideas in "Culture *versus* the Melting Pot" and "Nationality and the Hyphenated America" were finally brought together and given the name 'Cultural Pluralism' in Kallen's 1924 collection of essays, *Culture and Democracy in the United States*.[14] Although mostly a collection of previously published essays, Kallen added a "Postscript – To Be Read First" to the volume, entitled "Culture and the Ku Klux Klan." At the essay's conclusion, Kallen declared that, "Cultural Pluralism is possible only in a democratic society whose institutions encourage individuality in groups, in persons, in temperaments…the alternative before Americans is Kultur Klux Klan or Cultural Pluralism" (Kallen, "Culture" 35). For Horace Kallen, Cultural Pluralism meant more

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[13] I first encountered Newman's work in Kay, (2009). *The Paradox of Pluralism: Leadership and Community Building in Pluralistic Jewish High Schools*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). New York University, New York.

[14] Although the term did not appear in print until 1924, Kallen had already been using it for a number of years. He recounted the of origins of the idea thus:

> It was in 1905 that I began to formulate the notion of cultural pluralism and I had to do that in connection with my teaching. I was assisting both Mr. [William] James and Mr. [George] Santayana at the time and I had a Negro student name Alain Locke, a very remarkable young man – very sensistive, very easily hurt – who insisted that he was a human being and that his color ought not to make any difference.And, of course, it was a mistaken insistence. It *had* to make a difference and it *had* to be accepted and respected and enjoyed for what it was. Two years later when I went to Oxford on a fellowship he was there as a Rhodes scholar, and we had a race problem because the Rhodes scholars from the South were bastards. So they had a Thanksgiving dinner which I refused to attend because they refused to have Locke. And he said, 'I am a human being,' just as I had said it earlier. What difference does the difference make. We are all alike Americans. And we had to argue out the question of how the differences made differences, and in arguing out those questions the formulae, then the phrases, developed – 'cultural pluralism,' 'the right to be different.' (Sollors, "Critique" 269)

than just an "acceptance and encouragement of diversity," as Hutchison has defined

pluralism. Rather, he meant it to make a claim about the nature of ethnic groups and the

nature of democracy. According to Kallen, democracy could not exist without cultural

pluralism and cultural pluralism was predicated on the inheritance and maintenance of

distinct group identities.[15]

The differences between Kallen and Zangwill are stark. Where Zangwill imagined

an America in which all differences were 'melted away' to create a new breed of

American for whom religion, culture, or ethnic identity was no longer a barrier to

assimilation, Kallen saw it as a place where cultural and ethnic differences could, and

should, be retained and where immigrant groups would maintain clear boundaries

between themselves and other, parallel groups. As Daniel Greene has noted,

> Kallen's pluralist vision…relied on imagining the nation as a
> conglomerate of co-existing groups. He said little about cooperation and
> rejected the premise that cultures somehow would meld together to form a
> new homogenized American culture…The duty of each ethnic group
> within a nation was therefore to ensure political harmony but at the same
> time to resist cultural or biological uniformity. (Greene 73)

In effect, hyphenation and the model of the Swiss Cantons that Kallen found so appealing

informed a conception of cultural pluralism that pointed to harmonious co-existence

along with a commitment to retaining clear group boundaries.

The question of precisely how the different groups in American society would be

able to coexist while still retaining their distinct identities was raised by Milton Gordon in

his important book, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and*

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[15] Of course, there were, and continue to be, critics of Kallen's view. See Sollers, "A Critique of Pure Pluralism." Sacvan Bercovitch, ed. *Reconstructing American Literary History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. 250-279.

National Origins (1964). Gordon wrote that, "If one inquires…as to the specific nature of the communication and interaction which is to exist between the various ethnic communities and between individuals who compose them in the 'ideal' cultural pluralistic societies, the answer does not emerge clearly from Kallen's descriptions" (Gordon 148). Furthermore, Gordon concluded that

> Kallen's body of work on the cultural pluralism idea, remarkable and germinal as it is, tends to be embodied in a general framework of rhetoric and philosophical analysis which has not pushed to the fore that kind of rigorous sociological inquiry which the crucial importance of the idea ultimately demands. (Gordon 149)

As Gordon pointed out, there is an inherent tension in Kallen's formulation of cultural pluralism: "On the one hand, he is opposed to 'ghetto' existence and group isolation and favors creative interaction. On the other hand, he is against the dissolution of the communities" (Gordon 148). As a result, Kallen's cultural pluralism did not account for what might happen, in Gordon's words, "when peoples meet" (Gordon 60).[16]

Gordon surveyed a wide range of assimilatory trends in society as a result of people meeting and highlighted the difference between what he called *primary relationships* and *secondary relationships*. *Primary relationships* were defined by Gordon as "personal, intimate, emotionally affective, and…bring into play the whole personality," whereas *secondary relationships* were described as "impersonal, formal, and segmentalized, and tend not to come very close to the core of personality" (Gordon 32). An appreciation of the impact of social contact on the level of Gordon's primary relationships is critically important if we are to develop a full understanding of what

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[16] Gordon's source for this phrase is from Locke and Stern, eds, *When Peoples Meet*. New York: Hinds, Hayden, and Eldridge (1946).

happens "when peoples meet." I refer to this type of social contact as *encounter*. For

Kallen's cultural pluralism to manifest, it

> demands keeping primary group relations across ethnic lines sufficiently minimal to prevent a significant amount of intermarriage, while cooperating with other groups and individuals in the secondary relations areas of political action, economic life, and civic responsibility. (Gordon 158)

Put simply, Kallen failed to account for the importance, and increasing likelihood, of

encounters across group lines. Of course, in the half century since Gordon published his

book, let alone the century since Kallen's first explorations into cultural pluralism, the

American social landscape has changed a great deal and primary relationships that cross

group lines have become more and more common. Kallen's failure to fully appreciate the

likelihood and implications of such encounters represents the central weakness of his

theory of cultural pluralism.[17]

In addition to Milton Gordon's critique of Kallen, Courtney Bender and Pamela

Klassen have identified other shortcomings of a Kallen-esque brand of pluralism in their

important book, *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement* (2010). Writing

about pluralism from the perspective of religious group identity, they have observed that

pluralism fails to "adequately acknowledge the great diversity (and sometimes conflict)

within particular religious traditions…" (Bender 12). Taking this critique one step

further, Janet Jakobsen has suggested that

> the model of pluralism can fail to recognize both diversity within religious traditions and forms of religious difference that do not fit this model of organization, for example, those that are not organized around authorities who can act as spokespersons, that are not institutionalized in recognizable

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[17] This is especially surprising due to the fact that Kallen entered into the most significant of primary relationships, marriage, with a non-Jewish woman.

(and hierarchical) structures, and that are delineated by practice or land rather than by beliefs about which one might speak. (Jakobsen 32)

The suggestion here is that pluralism not only fails to acknowledge the diversity within religious communities, but that it also excludes certain individuals and groups that do not conform to normative expectations. In addition, Bender and Klassen make a similar observation to Gordon when they write that "the doctrines and programs of pluralism that dominate the contemporary academic and public conversations do not constitute a theory of understanding religious interactions as they take place in the world" (Bender 12). The result is a pluralism discourse that projects and upholds a false image of the nature of religious diversity and encounter in society. As a theory based on the notion of firm boundaries both between *and within* groups, pluralism fails to acknowledge the full extent of religious diversity or the manner in which diverse groups within and across religions interact and overlap. What these critics of pluralism suggest is that, first, America is not Kallen's imagined orchestra with neatly divided and organized groups living alongside one another and, second, that when individuals and groups have no choice but to encounter one another as they do in a diverse American social context, something happens.

Although Kallen's significant contribution to the century-long arc of sociological theories of group life in America appeared in response to Anglo-conformism, Nativism, and Zangwill's theory of the Melting Pot, its initial impact was not comparable. It is only from the vantage point of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries that Kallen's presence looms so large. In fact, in the early part of the twentieth century, when Kallen published his most important essays on the subject of cultural pluralism, the idea did not

make much of an impact at all. In general, it is fair to state that "[t]he idea never gained as much traction in American cultural life as the melting pot did" (Greene 181-2). Nevertheless, although the language of cultural pluralism did not become widespread for many decades,[18] the concept did begin to have greater currency in the second half of the twentieth century and the term 'pluralism' itself was increasingly employed in scholarly literature and in general American discourse.[19]

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it is clear that Horace Kallen and his theory of cultural pluralism represented a conceptual bridge from the Anglo-conformism, Nativism, and Melting Pot-ism of the early twentieth century to notions of multiculturalism in the 1960s and 1970s. Even though Kallen and his theory of cultural pluralism were often taken to task by late twentieth-century multiculturalists because of the "biological determinism suggested by his 1915 claim that one could not change one's grandfather,"[20] (Greene 183) it was also true that he was seen by others as a positive force whose "pluralist ambition was no small thing in its time" (Greene 184). Ultimately, and despite its theoretical and practical shortcomings, cultural pluralism has had an abiding influence on American self-understanding. Nevertheless, by the middle of the twentieth century, it would be adapted to address questions of religious, rather than ethnic, identity in America.

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[18] In an interview from 1972, Kallen pointed out that "cultural pluralism's time had finally come, adding that 'it's taken just about fifty years.'" Cited in Marom, Daniel. "Who's Afraid of Horace Kallen? Cultural Pluralism and Jewish Education." *Studies in Jewish Education*. 13. (2009): 283-337.

[19] A recent search on Hollis, the Harvard library online search engine, showed that the term 'pluralism' does not begin to occur in double digits until the 1950s and 1960s, and only in the 1970s and 1980s does the term start to appear in the hundreds. Subsequent to doing this quantitative analysis, I came across Nathan Glazer's similar observations with regard to the term multiculturalism. See Glazer, *We are all Multiculturalists Now*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

[20] As noted above, Daniel Greene has convincingly shown that Kallen set aside these notions as early as the mid-1920s but his critics "ignored this correction" (Greene 183).

Despite his claims to birth in the United States, Will Herberg (1901-1977) was actually born in Russia and immigrated with his parents in 1904. He held a tenured position in Judaic Studies and Social Philosophy at Drew University, even though his academic pedigree was also the stuff of fiction – he had never actually earned the college degree and doctorate to which he made claim. A person not unfamiliar to reinvention, Herberg was an avowed communist in his early life who went onto reject that ideology and embrace traditional Judaism, publishing the widely read treatise, *Judaism and the Modern Man* (1951). Despite his lack of formal training as a sociologist, his most significant contribution was his 1955 book, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*. Martin Marty has described the book as "[t]he most honored discussion of American religion in mid-twentieth century times" (Herberg vii). The book has seen multiple editions and is still a staple in contemporary college courses that address American religious life in the middle part of the twentieth-century. It also represents the next point along the twentieth century arc of sociological theories of group life in America.

Although Herberg's conclusions and predictions have been described as failing "to anticipate almost every important turn in subsequent American life" (Herberg x), the impact of his work on the American psyche was significant. Herberg adapted Kallen's notion of cultural pluralism by turning his attention away from European ethnic groups, and focusing on religious groups in America. As "an interpretation of the religious situation" in America, Herberg chose as his subject what he called the paradox of "pervasive secularism amid mounting religiosity" (Herberg 2). His explanation of this apparent contradiction was that "American religion was shallow and meretricious…To

put it into modern parlance, American religion was a 'feel-good' religion" (E. Shapiro

262). The result was that a significant percentage of the American public professed

religious beliefs but the actual rate of participation was very low. More important than

Herberg's lack of regard for the quality of American religiosity was his estimation of the

important role of religion in American life.[21]

In what might be described as a combination of Zangwill's Melting Pot and

Kallen's Cultural Pluralism, Herberg suggested that American group life had, by the

middle of the twentieth century, turned from being divided along ethnic lines to being

aligned along religious ones. In his words,

> Self-identification in ethnic terms, while it was a product of the American
> environment, was also a sign of incomplete integration into American
> life…to the American mind an ethnic group that becomes permanent and
> self-perpetuating and resists cultural assimilation – in other words, what
> the European would call a 'national-cultural' minority – would appear as
> an alien 'race'… (Herberg 37-8)

However, rather than dissolving into an entirely new and homogeneous American

Republic of Man, as Zangwill's Quixano had put it in 1909, Herberg's view was that

"while America knows no national or cultural minorities except as temporary, transitional

phenomena, it does know a free variety and plurality of religions…" (Herberg 38). In

effect, Herberg affirmed Zangwill's notion that competing ethnicities were, or should be,

melting together in the American cauldron while also holding on to a Kallen-esque sense

of boundaries, although in his case with respect to American religious, rather than ethnic,

group life.

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[21] As Kevin Schultz has observed, only the latter of these two contributions "is much remembered" (Schultz).

Building on the research of Ruby Jo Kennedy,[22] Herberg suggested that "America is indeed…the land of the 'triple melting pot,'[23] for it is within these three religious communities that the process of ethnic and cultural integration so characteristic of American life takes place" (Herberg 37). In terms that hearken back to David Quixano, Herberg continued that "in each of these communities what emerges is a 'new man' cast and recast along the same 'American' ideal type" (Herberg 37). For Herberg, Americans were defined by a shared American culture that included within it an attachment to one of three distinctive religious communities. Put simply, "[i]t is general conformity to this ideal type that makes us all Americans, just as it is the diversity of religious community that gives us our distinctive place in American society" (Herberg 37). In his description of individuals that did not identify with one of the three religions of the triple-melting pot, Herberg was unequivocal that "such people are few and far between in this country and are not even remotely significant in determining the American's understanding of himself…Not to be a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Jew today is, for increasing numbers of American people, not to be anything, not to have a *name*…" (Herberg 39-40). And again, "Unless one is either a Protestant, or a Catholic, or a Jew, one is 'nothing'; to be a 'something,' to have a name, one must identify oneself, and be identified by others, as belonging to one or another of the three great religious communities in which the American people are divided" (Herberg 40). Of course, Herberg could not have been more mistaken.

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[22] Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy. "Single or Triple Melting Pot? Intermarriage Trends in New Haven, 1870-1940." *American Journal of Sociology* 49.4 (1944). Cited in Herberg.
[23] The 'melting pot' has taken on multiple meanings over the course of the last century. As Daniel Greene has pointed out, "The melting pot meant something significantly different by mid-century than it had in 1908. In fact, its meaning had changed almost entirely. By the 1960s the connotation of the melting pot actually resembled something close to what cultural pluralism had meant during the 1920s" (Greene 182).

In the decades since the publication of *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, Herberg has been much-criticized for his (mis)characterization of what it means – and what it takes – to be an American. His overly homogeneous picture of American religious life missed the rise of Protestant Evangelicalism, which already counted close to ten million adherents by the 1950s. He also ignored the increasing religious diversity as a result of rising immigration from Asia. The fact that, like Kallen, Herberg left African-Americans out of his sociology also left him open to criticism.[24] It is also fair to assume that then, just as now, not all American Catholics, Jews, and Protestants shared Herberg's view that members of the 'other two religions' (let alone religions other than these three) were just as 'American' as they were.

Despite the scholarly shortcomings of Herberg's book, it still served as a highly influential text, selling widely and receiving positive reviews in *The New York Times* (Schultz). It also reinforced a popular theme in 1950s America that viewed the United States through the lens of the culture war with the Soviet Union. Many Americans believed that what distinguished them from 'godless-communism' was America's commitment to religion. In a sense, Herberg's book served to underline and reinforce this point and echoed President-elect Dwight Eisenhower's 1952 comment that "our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith – and I don't care what it is" (Hutchison 198).

It is also significant that Herberg's book "served as a kind of 'scientific' legitimation of the arrival of American Jews as partners on the national religious scene,

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[24] For a laundry list of shortcomings of Herberg's observations, see Shapiro, "Will Herberg's Protestant-Catholic-Jew: A Critique." Jack Kugelmass, ed. *Key Texts in American Jewish Culture*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003. 258-274.

bolstering Jewish self-respect and altering for the better the perceptions of American

Jews held by their non-Jewish neighbors" (E. Shapiro 271). A similar dynamic might be

noted with regard to Catholics who, until the election of President Kennedy in 1960,

experienced a quasi-outsider status in America. The simple fact that a respected scholar

had published a popular book about religious life in America with the words "Jew" and

"Catholic" alongside "Protestant" meant a great deal to the growing sense of comfort felt

by adherents to those religious communities.[25]

Broadening the scope, it is significant that Zangwill, Kallen, and Herberg were

each proudly self-identified members of the Jewish community. For Zangwill, using

David Quixano as his mouthpiece, the Jewish question centered around the possibility of

living a full life in America unfettered by the oppression and pogroms of Eastern-

European Jewish life. For Kallen, an immigrant from Germany who entered Harvard just

as the numbers of Jewish students allowed to enroll began to increase, cultural pluralism

became his answer to the question of how Jews might become fully integrated into

American life while still holding onto their cultural identity. For Herberg, a kind of 'born-

again' Jew who "became a passionate and articulate proponent of biblical religion"

(Schwartz 107), his concerns revolved around the quality of religious life in America. As

such, he believed that Judaism had an equal part to play alongside Protestantism and

Catholicism as a religious tradition that supported deeply held American values.

Although radically different in their formulation, each of these theories of American

group life shares in common a concern about the place of Jews in the twentieth century

American landscape. American Jews have often been seen as exemplars of the minority

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[25] Nonetheless, the title of the book still suffered from the fact that the three faiths were not listed alphabetically, suggesting that a hierarchy was still in place, at least to some extent.

experience in American society[26] and as such it should be no surprise that Jewish scholars led the way in terms of theorizing the nature of group life in America.

Although Zangwill was a novelist by trade, Kallen a philosopher by training, and Herberg a dilettante in scholar's clothing, their most lasting contributions in the American context were in the field of sociology. Zangwill's Melting Pot, Kallen's Cultural Pluralism, and Herberg's Triple Melting Pot have all held sway for decades as sociological theories of American group life. In her book *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (2009), Lila Corwin Berman has described what she calls "The Social-Scientific Turn" (Berman 34-52). Berman explained the meaning of this turn by suggesting that "[i]n the modern era…explaining – or presenting – Jewishness to non-Jews became a political necessity and an act of survival" (Berman 1). Responding to this need, Berman claimed that "[s]ocial researchers seemed to succeed…when it came to explaining Jews to the United States" (Berman 34). She went on to describe the rising interest in, and authority of, the social sciences in the twentieth century as a vehicle for American Jewish self-expression.[27] Given this important insight, it should not be surprising that sociological theories of American group life would be so heavily impacted by Jewish thinkers, with Zangwill, Kallen, and Herberg acting as early harbingers of what was to come. Ultimately, each offered a theory of American group life in a self-reflexive manner that

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[26] See, for example, Sarna, ed, *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

[27] As was already noted in chapter one, the Chicago School of Sociology played a key role in the development of the field. And, again, it was a Jewish member of the faculty – Louis Wirth – that was at the forefront, publishing his influential book, *The Ghetto*, in 1928. See Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 36-43.

had as much to do with being Jewish in America as it did with American group life in general. Predictably, Herberg did not have the last word.

One of the key figures of the social-scientific turn was Nathan Glazer. Born in New York City in 1923, Glazer, like Kallen and Herberg before him, was the child of immigrant parents. A Columbia-trained sociologist, Glazer went on to a long and illustrious career as a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.[28] One of his most significant contributions was the book he co-authored with Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (1963/1970). This text, along with Glazer's other contributions to the field, represents the next point along the twentieth century arc of social theories of group life in the United States.

Before turning immediately to Glazer's work, it is worthwhile to recall that Herberg published his *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* in 1955. At that time, American citizens were just beginning to confront many of the issues that would come to the fore in what Sydney Ahlstrom would call 'the turbulent sixties.' In 1954, the Supreme Court would declare that segregation in the public schools was unconstitutional. In the same decade, the civil rights movement would gain steam with the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, highlighted by the actions of Rosa Parks. The 1960s would bring the sexual revolution, a rising interest in the rights of Native Americans, highlighted by the occupation of Alcatraz by the activist group 'Indians of All Tribes' at the end of that decade. In addition, the Black Power Movement, the growing public face of the Nation of Islam, an increasing interest in Eastern religions, and a general anti-establishment feeling resulting

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[28] For a helpful biographical sketch, see Berman, 102-109.

from the growing dissatisfaction with the Vietnam War, would all contribute to a new

narrative about American group identity. Questions of culture, ethnicity, race, religion,

and gender would all come to the fore during this time (it would take a little while longer

for questions of sexual identity to enter the fray) and challenge all previous theories of

group life in the United States. As ethnic and cultural pride increased, suggestions that

distinct communities would melt into each other became increasingly unpopular.

American Jews were also impacted by the shifting tides of the 1960s. The most

significant event being the six-day-war of 1967, in which Israel launched a surprise attack

against its Arab neighbors who were threatening its borders. The result was a significant

boost in Jewish pride within the American Jewish community.

As soon as Herberg's *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* hit the bookstores it had, in large

part, become obsolete – at least with regard to its claims about America being a religious

triple melting pot. By contrast, Nathan Glazer offered a different description of American

group life in *Beyond the Melting Pot*, the groundbreaking work he co-authored with then-

counselor to President Richard Nixon, Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1927-2003). As Ned

Landsman and Wendy Katkin pointed out in 1998, "*Beyond the Melting Pot*…directly

challenged the validity of the older, long-entrenched assimilationist paradigm for

understanding group life in America" (Landsman and Katkin 2). In their important book,

Glazer and Moynihan challenged both Zangwill's and Herberg's picture of American

group life. While the title of their book suggested that the melting pot had been

surpassed, in reality the authors intended something different. As they outlined in their

preface to the 1963 edition of the book, "The notion that the intense and unprecedented

mixture of ethnic and religious groups in American life was soon to blend into a

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homogeneous end product has outlived its usefulness, and also its credibility…The point

about the melting pot…is that it did not happen" (Glazer and Moynihan xcvii). The

authors were not claiming simply that the age of the Melting Pot had passed; they were

challenging the notion that it had ever existed. Put differently, "[t]hey did not mean that

ethnics did not find a way to become American. They meant that becoming American did

not necessitate discarding cultural particularity" (Greene 182). Most important of all, they

had data to support their claims.

The New York City of 1963 that Glazer and Moynihan were describing was one

that not only challenged the reality of Zangwill's melting pot, but also one that

undermined Herberg's claim that the 'triple melting pot' of American life exhibited itself

in religious group identity rather than through ethnic ties. As the authors showed, New

York City's diverse residents retained ethnic, national, and religious group ties that

resulted in what Horace Kallen had called many years prior 'hyphenated-Americans.' In

fact, in the second edition of the book published in 1970, Glazer and Moynihan went

even further and observed that, in the original edition published seven years earlier "we

argued that religion and race[29] seemed to be taking over from ethnicity. Yet in the last

few years, the role of religion as a primary identity for Americans has weakened" (Glazer

and Moynihan xxxvi).[30] Their findings leveled a direct challenge both to Zangwill's

notion that ethnic group identities would melt away and to Herberg's theory of America

as a religious triple-melting-pot. Werner Sollors has suggested that "'Beyond the Melting

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[29] Although race is no longer a credible scientific category, it was still very much in use in 1970. See, for example, Fessenden, "Race." Goff, Philip & Paul Harvey, eds. *Themes in Religions and American Culture*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004. 129-161.

[30] The categories of religion, race, and ethnicity are complex and overlapping. For a useful introduction to the issues related to these categories, see Goff and Harvey, Eds, *Themes in Religion & American Culture*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Pot' was more than just the title of a book by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Its publication in 1963 marked the end of an era. It paved the way for the revival of American ethnic identification in the 1960s and 1970s…" (Sollors, *Beyond* 20). *Beyond the Melting Pot* was beginning to describe what would, by the late 1980s, come to be known in the United States as Multiculturalism.

More than twenty years after the publication of *Beyond the Melting Pot*, with ethnic revival well under way, Glazer authored the influential work, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (1997). Describing what he called 'the multicultural explosion,' Glazer presented an important overview of the rise of multiculturalism. As a theory of group life in America, multiculturalism is the next point along the twentieth century arc. Glazer correctly observed that, "[m]any terms have [] arisen to encompass the reality that groups of different origin all form part of the American population, and in varying degrees part of a common culture and society. Multiculturalism is just the latest in this sequence of terms describing how American society…should respond to diversity" (Glazer 8). In effect, Multiculturalism is prescriptive and "is a position-taking stance on the racial and ethnic diversity in the United States" (Glazer 10). Like Kallen's Cultural Pluralism, Multiculturalism rejects the notion of melting pot assimilation and affirms fixed and distinct identities. As has been shown, the melting pot implicated ethnic, national, and religious aspects of group identity and suggested that they would all melt away as newcomers would assimilate into American culture; Kallen's cultural pluralism directed its focus to European ethnic and cultural identity, ignoring racial and religious ties; and Herberg attended only to religious categories of group identity. By contrast, multiculturalism concerned itself with the full range of group identities. As a result, the

net of multiculturalism has been cast to include social groups based on gender and sexuality, as well as ethnicity and religion.[31] For multiculturalists, each of these different types of grouping represents distinct cultures that deserve to be included and protected in the United States. As such, the word 'culture' in multiculturalism should be interpreted in the broadest sense of the term.

Given the above, multiculturalism has a broader scope than does Cultural Pluralism. As David Hollinger has put it, "Cultural Pluralism as developed by Kallen and his contemporaries was exclusively European in scope; [whereas] from the perspective of multiculturalism, Europe was just one of many sources for the culture of the United States" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 100). It is also true that, as noted above, Kallen's early formulations of his theory of cultural pluralism received criticism from multiculturalists for its biological claims about identity. Nevertheless, the similarities between multiculturalism and Horace Kallen's earlier theory of cultural pluralism are striking. The fact that multiculturalism "rejects assimilation and the 'melting pot' image as an imposition of the dominant culture" and that it calls for a society "in which each ethnic and racial element in the population maintains its distinctiveness" (Glazer 10) suggests that it shares a great deal in common with cultural pluralism in its prescriptions for the legitimacy and maintenance of group life and identity in America. The forthright claim that "Multiculturalism…is a universalistic demand: All groups should be recognized" (Glazer 14) is the basis for Glazer's statement that the "new reality was once called

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[31] Although, some have suggested that "[t]he limit multiculturalism imposes on who will be recognized is set by the degree of prejudice and discrimination, or in stronger terms, 'oppression,' these groups have faced in the United States. Indeed, the opponents of multiculturalism label it 'oppression studies'" (Glazer 14). Nevertheless, even in light of this critique, multiculturalism does not discriminate between the varieties of group identities.

cultural pluralism; it is now called multiculturalism" (Glazer 97). Taking into account

both the similarities and the differences between the two concepts, it would be more

accurate to state, in agreement with David Hollinger, that "The 'cultural pluralism'

associated with the name of Horace Kallen is an important precursor to multiculturalism"

(Hollinger, *Postethnic* 11). In other words, Glazer and other multiculturalist thinkers

continued the legacy of cultural pluralism in America, albeit in expanded form and by

another name.

By the end of the twentieth century, cultural pluralism 2.0, now under the moniker

of 'multiculturalism,' had become the most widely accepted, though still hotly

contested,[32] group theory of the day. Like Kallen's concept of cultural pluralism,

multiculturalism demands the maintenance of group identity and group boundaries. It is

different from Kallen's concept in that it incorporates a wider range of groups in

American society. Another key difference between multiculturalism and cultural

pluralism is that the former also recognizes the modifying effect of American society.

Returning to *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Glazer and Moynihan's formulation represented a

modified form of cultural pluralism. They claimed that there is an "assimilating power of

American society and culture…to make them [] something they had not been, but still

something distinct and identifiable" (Glazer and Moynihan 13-14). William Newman

translated this to mean that "an Italian in Italy is different from an Italian-

American…Glazer and Moynihan explain how it is possible for both assimilation *and*

cultural pluralism to have occurred in the United States" (Newman 79). Newman

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[32] David Hollinger has written that multiculturalism is encumbered by the fact that "…its unifying
principles have proved too vague to enable its adherents to sort out their own agreements and
disagreements, and its vocabulary is not precise enough to parse the very different problems to which its
followers look to it for help" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 2).

represented this modified cultural pluralism mathematically in this form: $A + B + C = A_1 + B_1 + C_1$. In effect, the different groups in American life retain their distinct identities, but they are impacted by their exposure to 'America.' Writing almost forty years after Kallen first coined the phrase Cultural Pluralism, Glazer and Moynihan offered an updated version of his concept that accounted not only for the retention of distinct group identities, but also for the reality of social change, at least to some extent. Ultimately, this theory would also fail to accurately describe the full reality of individual identity and group life in America.

The final stop on the century-long arc of theories of group life in America comes from Historian David Hollinger. Hollinger's influential work,[33] *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*, was published in 1995, eighty years after Horace Kallen's groundbreaking essays in the pages of *The Nation* and *The Menorah Journal*. In an apparent nod to Glazer and Moynihan's 'beyond the melting pot,' the subtitle of Hollinger's book made the case for a move 'beyond multiculturalism'[34] that extended past the ideas of Kallen, Herberg, and the multiculturalists. Central to Hollinger's thesis was the question of how individuals could become members of a given social group (religious, ethno-racial, etc.) and the nature of the boundaries between different groups. As has been shown above, Cultural Pluralism, the Triple Melting Pot, and Multiculturalism each emphasized the importance of communities of descent and group

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[33] Philip Gleason and Werner Sollors have written, respectively, that Hollinger "has written a book that is analytically acute and morally courageous" (Gleason 1659) and that "Hollinger makes a convincing case, and I hope that his manifesto will be widely adopted" (Sollors 570).

[34] Other scholars writing in the same field have employed similar titles. They include Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986; Kotkin, Landsman, and Tyree, eds, *Beyond Pluralism: The Conception of Groups and Group Identities in America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998; Beneke, *Beyond Toleration: The Religious Origins of American Pluralism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; and Bender and Klassen, eds, *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

boundaries. According to those theories of group life in America, group boundaries are inherited, necessary, and sharp. As a result, individuals are limited in the identities that are available to them. Postethnicity describes things differently.

David Hollinger has stated clearly that "defenders of cultural diversity need to take a step beyond multiculturalism, toward a perspective I call 'postethnic'" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 2-3). As noted above, multiculturalism has been a hotly contested notion of group life in America since its inception. It is also a concept that has been understood to refer to multiple, and sometimes conflicting, ways "to describe the reality of minority and ethnic diversity" (Glazer 10). To highlight the tensions within multiculturalist thinking, Hollinger identified the two streams of thought that flow within it; one pluralist, the other cosmopolitan. As he has put it, "A postethnic perspective builds upon a cosmopolitan element prominent within the multiculturalist movement and cuts against its equally prominent pluralist element" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 3). Contrasting Kallen's Cultural Pluralism with Randolph Bourne's[35] important ideas about cosmopolitanism, Hollinger was able to draw a clear distinction between the pluralist and cosmopolitan elements that are present within multiculturalist thinking. Hollinger described them in this way:

> Pluralism respects inherited boundaries and locates individuals within one or another of a series of ethno-racial groups to be protected or preserved. Cosmopolitanism is more wary of traditional enclosures and favors voluntary affiliations. Cosmopolitanism promotes multiple identities, emphasizes the dynamic and changing character of many groups, and is responsive to the potential for creating new cultural combinations. Pluralism sees in cosmopolitanism a threat to identity, while cosmopolitanism sees in pluralism a provincial unwillingness to engage the complex dilemmas and opportunities actually presented by contemporary life. (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 3-4).

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[35] Randolph Bourne (1886-1918) was a progressive intellectual who was heavily influenced by Kallen. His 1916 essay, "Trans-National America" offered a rejection of the melting pot and outlined his vision for a truly cosmopolitan America.

It is these four characteristics of cosmopolitanism – voluntary affiliations, or communities of ascent (as opposed to descent); multiple identities; the dynamic and changing character of groups; and the potential for creating new cultural combinations – that Hollinger has emphasized in his theory of Postethnicity.

Unlike Kallen's Cultural Pluralism, which failed to appreciate the implications of social encounters between individuals and across groups, Postethnicity is predicated on the acknowledgement "that most individuals live in many circles simultaneously and that the actual living of any individual life entails a shifting division of labor between the several 'we's' of which the individual is a part" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 106). In effect, and in stark contrast to Cultural Pluralism, the Triple Melting Pot, and Multiculturalism, Postethnicity sees individuals as moving within and between identity groups of all kinds – ethno-racial,[36] cultural, religious, sexual, etc. – while having the capacity to identify with several at the same time.

There are two planes on which the "several we's" are experienced by contemporary Americans in the era of postethnicity. The first is the vertical plane and the second is the horizontal plane. The vertical axis relates to what Hollinger has called 'communities of descent.' To exemplify the complexity of communities of descent in Postethnic America, Hollinger presented a powerful example. Referring to Alex Haley's 1976 Pulitzer prize-winning novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, Hollinger quoted Ishmael Reed's observation that, "If Alex Haley had traced his father's bloodline, he would have travelled twelve generations back to, not Gambia, but *Ireland*…"

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[36] This is Hollinger's term.

(Hollinger, *Postethnic* 19). The point here was that even descent communities are more complex than Kallen understood, or wanted to believe. As Hollinger explained, "…Haley could choose to identify with Africa…[o]r Haley could choose to identify with Ireland…postethnicity would enable Haley…to be both African American and Irish American without having to choose one to the exclusion of the other" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 20-21). In this reality there is recognition of the complexity of communities of descent and that individuals can locate and identify with a variety of ancestral identities.

A second point that Hollinger raised about communities of descent was that they should not be thought of as determinative. As he has written, in direct contrast to Kallen,

> A Postethnic perspective challenges the right of one's grandfather or grandmother to determine primary identity. Individuals should be allowed to affiliate or disaffiliate with their own communities of descent to an extent that they choose, while affiliating with whatever nondescent communities are available and appealing to them. (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 116)

However, even as Hollinger claimed that group affiliations should be voluntary and communities of descent should not oblige one to affiliate with them, his theory of Postethnicity did not call for a complete abandonment of inherited identity/ies. Recognizing that "many of the great cosmopolitans of history have been proudly rootless," Hollinger explained that, by contrast, "postethnicity is the critical renewal of cosmopolitanism in the context of today's greater sensitivity to roots" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 5). This greater sensitivity is referred to as "rooted cosmopolitanism." In effect, "A postethnic perspective…balances an appreciation for communities of descent with a determination to make room for new communities" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 3). Whereas Kallen deemed communities of descent to be determinative, postethnicity

honors their place, but only as part of what is a complex matrix of identity. As Shaul

Magid has explained, rooted cosmopolitanism "is more respectful of ethnicity in principle

but stresses voluntarism and not birth as the root of individual and collective identity"

(Magid, *American Post-Judaism* 24). Communities of descent are neither the whole story

nor are they beside the point. They are, according to Hollinger and Magid, part of the

diverse range of voluntary identities available in Postethnic America.

On the horizontal plane, Postethnicity returns us to what Milton Gordon has

referred to as what happens 'when peoples meet' – what I refer to as *encounter*. As we

have seen, Kallen did not address the implications of social mixing between ethnic

groups. In Kallen's vision of group life in America, families of singular European descent

would live amongst their 'kin' in specific geographic locales and be protected and

defended by the law. All the while having minimal interactions with members of other

groups, thus maintaining a hyphenated American identity as pure-bred Italian-Americans,

Jewish-Americans, or Polish-Americans, etc. In his orchestral metaphor for American

group life, the wind section sticks together, the strings remain in their corner, and so on.

However, the reality for the last century has been far from Kallen's image. In postethnic

America, social mixing is simply part of the warp and woof of life, resulting in a high

volume of cross-group encounters and, as a result, in the adoption of hybrid identities.

It is to the 'horizontal encounter' of postethnic America that I would like to draw

our focused attention. While multiculturalism (or, modified cultural pluralism, as

Newman called it) reflects an understanding that contact with 'America' would result in a

modified group identity (recall, $A + B + C = A_1 + B_1 + C_1$), [37] a postethnic orientation embraces the full impact of individual encounters, not just with 'America' but, more importantly, with one another. It is worthwhile to cite Peter Berger's observation that "All the individual has to do to get out of his alleged [] destiny is to walk out and take the subway. Outside, waiting, is the emporium of life-styles, identities, and religious preferences that constitutes American pluralism" (Berger 30). Here, in simple terms, Berger gets to the heart of the nature of group life in America. At its source is the encounter. Although his personal life confirmed this reality, Horace Kallen's theoretical work did not account for the kind of cross-cultural encounters that take place, and increasingly so, on a daily basis in the lives of American citizens. [38] As Courtney Bender and Pamela Klassen have pointed out, there are a "range of daily interactions and practices of translation, interpretation, and mutual indifference that shape the lived experience of religious diversity as a shared project in pluralistic…societies" (Bender 17). To take it one step further: these interactions do not only shape the 'lived experience' of diversity, they also impact the very *identities* of those that live within a diverse society.

In his important essay, *A Critique of Pure Pluralism* (1986), Werner Sollors described the power of encounter in postethnic terms almost a decade prior to Hollinger's publication of *Postethnic America*. Sollors articulated it in this way:

> The dominant assumption among serious scholars who study ethnic literature seems to be that history can be best written by separating the groups that produced such literature in the United States. The published

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[37] See above, page 58.

[38] Kallen's own life reflected this complexity. He was a foreign-born child of Jewish immigrants who learned to navigate life as a Jew, albeit a secular one, at Harvard at the beginning of the twentieth century, where he was exposed to William James and George Santayana. These experiences, not to mention his marriage to Rachel Oatman Van Arsdale, a non-Jew, speak more to the realities and impact of encounter than to Kallen's notion of ethnic separatism.

results of this "mosaic" procedure are the readers and compendiums made up of diverse essays on groups of ethnic writers who may have little in common except so-called ethnic roots…The contours of an ethnic literary history are beginning to emerge which views writers primarily as 'members' of various ethnic and gender groups. James T. Farrell may thus be discussed as a pure Irish-American writer, without any hint that he got interested in writing ethnic literature after reading and meeting Abraham Cahan, and that his first stories were set in Polish-America – not to mention his interest in Russian and French writing or in Chicago sociology…Taken exclusively, what is often called 'the ethnic perspective' – which often means, in literary history, the emphasis of a writer's *descent* – all but annihilates polyethnic art movements, moments of individual and cultural interaction, and the pervasiveness of cultural syncretism in America. (Sollors, "Critique" 255-6)

Here, Sollors articulated the shortcomings of both pluralist and multiculturalist thinking and suggested that literature and its authors cannot be so easily compartmentalized as the product of either singular or inherited descent communities. Crucially, Sollors highlighted the source of this new understanding of identity: the encounter. For example, Farrell's "polyethnic" writing was influenced by his "meeting Abraham Cahan" and the "moments of individual and cultural interaction" that made him so much more than just an Irish-American writer. Sollors' conception of 'cultural syncretism' recognized the power of human encounters. While Kallen failed to appreciate the reality and implications of diverse human encounters, Glazer and Moynihan intuited their meaning but failed to recognize the full extent of their impact. Postethnicity is a more accurate description of this new reality.

It is important to note that there is one crucially important form of encounter that has implications for both the vertical *and* horizontal planes. As David Biale has pointed out, "Intermarriage – an inevitability in an open society – has created individuals whose very being subverts any politics of monolithic identity" (Biale 30). In a society in which

marriage – probably the most intense example of encounter between what Milton Gordon would call 'primary relationships' – across cultural, ethnic, and religious groups happens at an increasing rate and as a matter of course. One result is that the kind of cultural and ethnic purity that Kallen imagined is no longer possible. In situations where intermarriage takes place, the partners in the marriage are horizontally influenced by their deep encounter with each other and the subsequent generations of offspring are influenced on the vertical plane by their culturally, ethnically, or religiously diverse forebears.[39]

Turning to religious life in America, a postethnic trend resulting from encounters on the horizontal plane can be clearly identified. Scholars have noted the high rate of intermarriage between individuals with different religious affiliations and the impact it has had on religious identity. Robert Putnam and David Campbell have devoted an entire chapter of their book, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (2010), to the topic of "Switching, Matching, and Mixing." The subtitle of the chapter is, appropriately, "Inheriting versus Choosing Religion." They point out that "religious intermarriage rose steadily throughout the twentieth century to the point that today roughly half of all married Americans chose a partner from a different religious tradition" (Putnam and Campbell 160). Consistent with Hollinger's claims, the authors concluded that, as a result, "individual choice has become virtually as important as inheritance in explaining Americans' religious affiliations…" (Putnam and Campbell 160). Furthermore, in their conclusion, the authors observed that "*Most Americans are intimately acquainted with people of other faiths*" (Putnam and Campbell 526). Although

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[39] For a useful analysis of the influence of intermarriage on identity, see Waters, "Multiple Ethnic Identity Choices." Katkin, Wendy F., Ned Landsman, and Andrea Tyree, eds. *Beyond Pluralism: The Conception of Groups and Group Identities in America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press (1998).

Putnam and Campbell only perceived this as a source of religious *toleration*, such encounters have more far-reaching implications for identity in postethnic America.

In a postethnic reality, individuals encounter one another, leading them to reevaluate assumed identity/ies. As a mode of affiliation, identity is fluid, resulting in porous boundaries between individuals and groups. In this reality, cultural, ethnic, or religious groups are no longer distinct instruments creating harmony by playing side-by-side in a larger symphony. Instead, individuals now move from instrument to instrument, playing different tunes, and creating new forms of music as they go. The result is less classical and more jazz-fusion. In fact, the very instruments themselves are prone to being modified. To place Postethnicity and Cultural Pluralism into stark relief, Hollinger rightly acknowledged that, "It may clarify the character and significance of these preferences to point out that none of them would have appealed to Horace Kallen" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 116).

At the end of the century-long arc from Zangwill's Melting Pot to Hollinger's Postethnicity, we might conclude that Glazer and Moynihan's claim that the melting pot never happened was premature. While the great crucible that David Quixano described in Zangwill's play never materialized, and immigrants to America never melted into a single, homogenous 'new breed' of American, it is also the case that notions of 'unmeltable ethnics'[40] that became popular in the 1970s were also wishful thinking. As it turns out, postethnicity is actually closer to Zangwill than it is to Kallen. Whereas Kallen's notion of Cultural Pluralism described clear and sharp boundaries between groups as both necessary (due to descent) and desirable (in the interests of democracy),

[40] This phrase is taken from the title of Michael Novak's book, *Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics & Culture in American Life*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1972.

Zangwill's view, although misguided, did not see communities of descent as communities of destiny, nor did he suggest that individuals could not cross group boundaries.[41]

To many, Postethnicity still represents a foreign understanding of identity. As Hollinger has acknowledged, "…the notion of a postethnic America is deeply alien to many features of American and world history" (Hollinger, *Postethnic* 21). While notions of multiple and voluntary identities will sound strange to many, they are becoming more and more common, especially in the United States. A powerful example of postethnicity has become immediately recognizable in the form of Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States. In a now famous speech he delivered while still a Senator from Illinois on the campaign trail for the Presidency, Obama stated that

> I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners - an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents, and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible. (Obama)

This version of identity is increasingly the reality in the United States. The story of his life – and that of his forebears and peers – is the result of a collection of diverse communities of descent on the vertical axis, and a variety of deep encounters on the

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[41] In fact, the very romance between Quixano and Vera speaks to Zangwill's ability to imagine radical boundary-breaking.

horizontal plane. Each one has left an imprint on what can only be described as nothing less than a postethnic identity.

In the preceding two chapters I have sketched the contours of American religious historiography, outlined the shortcomings of Zangwill's melting pot and the limitations of cultural pluralism and its theoretical successors (the triple melting pot and multiculturalism), and made a case for why postethnicity has taken their place at the end of the century-long arc of social theories of group life in America. Although Hollinger will likely not have the last word, his conception of a postethnic America does acknowledge many of the important developments in American individual and group life that were ignored or under-appreciated by his predecessors. As such, a postethnic perspective is the most compelling description of the realities of group life in America in the twenty-first century. We can now turn to the case of American Judaism.

Chapter Three

As Milton Gordon has shown, Horace Kallen's conception of Cultural Pluralism

failed to account for either the likelihood or the implications of contact among primary

relationships across cultural, ethnic, and religious groups in a diverse society. An

appreciation for such encounters must play a significant role in our understanding of the

complexity of group life in America and its implications for individual identity. Turning

to the American Jewish community, it will not come as a surprise that the most

significant twentieth century American Jewish theologian of religious intra- and inter-

group relations was someone whose own life had been beset by a diverse array of

encounters. While Horace Kallen is rightly seen as the founding father of the conceptual

development of pluralism as a social theory of group life in America, Irving Greenberg

deserves that title with regard to pluralism and the American Jewish community. As we

shall see in chapters four and five, however, although Greenberg employed the language

of 'pluralism,' it is a misnomer. His theology is more accurately described in postethnic

terms that affirm, *pre*scriptively, the crucial importance of encounter. Furthermore, he

challenged traditional assumptions about descent-based religious identities that are

obligatory, fixed, and singular. Rather than using the language of 'religious pluralism,' I

will refer to Greenberg's theology by the title *Hybrid Judaism*. It was through the

development of his theology of Hybrid Judaism and his practical application of that

theology that Greenberg established himself as one of the most significant figures in

American Jewish life in the second half of the twentieth century.[1] Before we turn to Greenberg's life and thought, it is important to place him in the broader context of American Jewish history. What follows is a brief outline of the development of American Judaism that is intended only to highlight the rise of denominational Judaism and the growing tensions felt within the American Jewish community. This will provide a better understanding of the American Jewish context within which Greenberg was working and give us a greater appreciation of the importance of his contributions.

From the colonial period up until the second half of the nineteenth century, the Jewish community in America was tiny. Numerically, it was not until the middle of the 19th century that the American Jewish population totaled more than fifty thousand members. The earliest American Jews were generally traditional in affiliation (if not always in practice), often originating from Spanish-Portuguese communities overseas. By 1860, there were as many as two hundred thousand Jews living in the United States and, beginning in 1880, increasing numbers of European Jewish immigrants arrived on American shores and contributed to the rapid growth of the American Jewish community. Consequently, by the very beginning of the twentieth century the population of the American Jewish community had reached more than one million members and by 1920 the number was more than three-and-a-half million (Sarna, *American* 375). One outcome of a larger American Jewish community was that, already by the middle of the nineteenth century, religious leaders could develop a greater following around what was at the time

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[1] By 1993, Greenberg had already been described in these terms: "No Jewish thinker has had a greater impact on the American Jewish community in the last two decades than Irving (Yitz) Greenberg" (Katz, "Greenberg" 59).

a fledgling American Jewish denominationalism. [2] In 1854, Isaac Mayer Wise would

establish himself in Cincinnati, Ohio, to head what would become the American Reform

movement.

The relationship between the fast-growing Reform movement and the reactionary

Orthodox community was tense. In an effort to ameliorate growing tensions, a national

conference was called in 1855 by Wise and his Orthodox counterpart, Isaac Leeser, [3] to

discuss "a common liturgy[] and a plan for promoting Jewish education" (Sarna,

American 108). Unfortunately, "Like so many other attempts at compromise in the

middle decades of the nineteenth century, this one too failed to take hold" (Sarna,

American 109). [4] More importantly, "both Wise and Leeser met with enormous criticism."

The outcome was that "…the Orthodox side…boycotted the meeting" and the recently

arrived Reform rabbi David Einhorn "opposed compromises with Orthodoxy on

principal" (Sarna, *American* 110). The result of a growing American Jewish population

with ideological leaders and a laity with increasingly strong denominational ties was

increasing division and internecine strife.

The American Reform movement grew steadily in the nineteenth century as it

actively embraced the new era. The construction of Moorish-style, cathedral-like

synagogues in major Jewish centers like Boston, Philadelphia, and New York; the

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[2] Jewish denominationalism of any kind did not appear for the first time until the second decade of the nineteenth century with the rise of early Reform Judaism in Germany.

[3] Isaac Leeser (1806 - 1868) was a German-born traditional Jew who arrived in America in 1824. He served as the cantor of Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia, was the founding editor of the influential Jewish periodical, *The Occident*, and established the first Jewish Publication Society of America, among numerous other communal roles.

[4] Leeser was at the center of prior attempts at unity. In 1841, he developed a "plan for establishing a religious union among the Israelites of America" that would include a Central Religious Council, a network of Jewish schools, and a union of congregational delegates. Shortly afterwards, Leeser championed the idea of installing a Chief Rabbi, along the line of the Anglo-Jewish community. Neither of these attempts proved successful (Sarna, *American Judaism* 103-134).

incorporation of organs and choirs to accompany the prayer services; the introduction of

family pews; and the production of a new Reform liturgy all contributed to "underscore[]

Reform Judaism's break with the past" and served

> (1) to attract younger, Americanized Jews to the synagogue; (2) to make
> non-Jewish friends and visitors feel welcome; (3) to improve Judaism's
> public image; and (4) to create the kind of solemn, formal, awe-inspiring
> atmosphere that high-minded Jews and Christians alike during this period
> considered conducive to moral reflection and effective devotional prayer.
> (Sarna, *American Judaism* 125-6)

Furthermore, the establishment of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873

and the Hebrew Union College in 1875, both in Cincinnati, provided both an

organizational arm for the movement and a training ground for new American Reform

rabbis. By the close of the nineteenth century, as Jonathan Sarna has noted, "Reform

Jewish leaders concluded that the cause to which they had devoted their lives had

triumphed" (Sarna, *American Judaism* 129).

However, despite the rapid and dramatic growth of the Reform movement

throughout the nineteenth century, things began to shift with the growing waves of

immigration. The arrival of more than two million Eastern European Jews between the

early 1880s and 1920s significantly influenced the demographic balance from "native-

born and assimilating Jews" to "East European Jews from Russia, Romania, and Austria-

Hungary" (Sarna, *American Judaism* 151). Then, the 1940s brought the arrival of strong

Orthodox leaders fleeing from the European Holocaust. Among them were Rabbi Aaron

Kotler,[5] Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson,[6] and Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.[7] As a

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[5] Kotler (1891-1962) established the Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey. It would become
one of the largest *yeshivot* (Talmudic seminaries) in the world, serving the *haredi* community.

result, the Orthodox community reasserted itself on the American Jewish landscape.

Parallel to this development was the rising influence of Conservative Judaism in the

American Jewish community.

In 1886, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) was established to

"steer a course between 'stupid Orthodox and insane Reform'" (Diner, "Antelope" 6).[8]

Their concern was that the Orthodox and Reform movements "threatened Judaism in

America, because both staked out extreme positions and forced Jews to choose sides"

(Diner, "Antelope" 6). JTS, the flagship institution of American Conservative Judaism,

was conceived to train traditional rabbis for a modern American Jewry.[9] By the middle

of the twentieth century, Conservative Judaism had overtaken both Reform and Orthodox

expressions of Judaism and had become the major denomination of American Judaism.

As Jonathan Sarna has described, "thanks largely to Americanizing East European Jews

and their children, Conservative Judaism would grow faster than any other American

Jewish religious movement" (Sarna, *American* 213).

In addition to these developments, the increasingly influential role of Mordecai

M. Kaplan[10] and his American-born Reconstructionist movement added to the twentieth

century profile of American Judaism. Reconstructionist Judaism presented an alternative,

[6] Schneerson (1902-1994) would become the leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch sect of Hasidic Orthodoxy. Under his leadership, the sect would embark on the largest intra-Jewish missionary campaign in Jewish history.

[7] Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993), a European-trained talmudist and philosopher, served for over forty years as the senior Rosh Yeshiva of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and occupied the Lieb Merkin Distinguished Professorial Chair in Talmud and Jewish Philosophy at Yeshiva University, New York. He became the most significant twentieth century Modern Orthodox leader in the American Jewish community, ordaining some 2,000 rabbis during his tenure.

[8] Quoted by Diner from an 1895 edition of the periodical, *American Hebrew*.

[9] From the establishment of the Seminary until the middle part of the twentieth century, Conservative Judaism did not consider itself, nor was it generally treated as, a separate movement from, albeit a more modern version of, Orthodox Judaism.

[10] Kaplan (1881-1983) was the founder of the Reconstructionist movement and an influential faculty member at the Jewish Theological Seminary for more than half a century.

albeit a much smaller one, to the assumed tri-choice of Conservative, Orthodox, and Reform Judaism. Later, the rise of the Havurah movement, Jewish Renewal, Neo-Hasidism, and a number of other groups would further diversify the American Jewish landscape. By the end of the twentieth century, the institutional and numeric strength that Conservative Judaism had exhibited since mid century would eventually wane while Reform Judaism remained strong and Orthodoxy continued to grow.

In the latter decades of the twentieth century, the tides also began to shift within the Orthodox Jewish community. As noted above, American Orthodoxy began to experience significant growth and strength in the 1940s, both as a result of an influx of European Orthodox immigrants around the turn of the century and the arrival of a leadership cadre of European exiles from the Holocaust. Moreover, the broader American religious context experienced a 'slide to the right' in the last third of the twentieth century that was exhibited most powerfully by the numerical and cultural resurgence of an Evangelical Conservatism that would actively and successfully challenge the cultural hegemony of more liberal expressions of American Protestantism. A similar shift, and one that provides an important backdrop to the theology of encounter articulated by Irving Greenberg, was detectable in the American Orthodox Jewish community and has been given its fullest treatment in Samuel Heilman's book, *Sliding to the Right: The Contest for the Future of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (2006). Heilman's thesis claimed that the American Orthodox community can be divided into two core groups, pluralist and enclavist.[11] According to Heilman, pluralist Orthodox Jews have "the ability to live in and be embraced by several cultures and worldviews at once" (Heilman 3). Whereas,

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[11] He also acknowledged a third group of Orthodox Jews of Middle-Eastern descent that is left out of the discussion because of their minimal role in American Orthodox life, as contrasted with Israel.

enclavist Orthodox Jews "view[] the surrounding modern world not as an opportunity but as a threat and seek[] instead to keep it at arm's length…" (Heilman 4). For enclavist Orthodox Jews, the need for a mechanism with which to negotiate diversity is less important. After all, they limit their exposure to more progressive Orthodox Jews, non-Orthodox Jews, and non-Jews as much as possible. As Heilman has pointed out, enclavists choose "separation or exclusion [and] create powerful boundaries between those who share their outlook and behavior and those who do not." Furthermore, "[i]n their chosen insularity, they reject the ideal of the melting pot and mobility…allowing almost no room for acceptance of cultural pluralism,[12] in which other ways of living can be viewed as legitimate or appropriate for Jews" (Heilman 83). According to Heilman, this has been increasingly the trend in the American Orthodox community. It is in this context that Greenberg's work and ideas in the area of intra-Jewish relations can be fully appreciated. As we shall, Greenberg resisted the 'slide to the right' in American Orthodox Judaism and was an exemplar of Heilmans' pluralist Orthodox Jew.

Heilman's categories are reminiscent of Charles Liebman's Church/Sect theory of American Orthodoxy that distinguished between Modern Orthodoxy (Church) and Sectarian Orthodoxy (Sect). Reflecting on Liebman's binary church/sect theory, Adam Ferziger has pointed out that "changes that have occurred within American Orthodoxy have resulted in a more complex and less easily categorized religious movement than that which [Liebman] described forty years ago" (Ferziger, "Church/Sect" 123). According to Ferziger, the shifts within Orthodoxy were not as singularly to the right as Heilman had suggested. Instead, Ferziger's assessment of the situation was that "hostilities have

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[12] Heilman's use of cultural pluralism here is imprecise.

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diminished and a new style of Orthodox interaction with Reform has begun to emerge"

(Ferziger, "Demonic" 56). To make his point, Ferziger listed a number of examples that

highlight changes in the *haredi* Orthodox community. One significant example is the

growing willingness of many *haredi* Orthodox outreach programs to meet and study with

non-Orthodox Jews in non-Orthodox synagogues. Moreover, the willingness of *haredi*

Orthodox rabbis to do the same with non-Orthodox rabbis is understood by Ferziger as

another indicator of the shifting tides within Orthodoxy (Ferziger, "Demonic").

In addition to Ferziger's observations, another recent challenge to claims of

American Orthodoxy's apparent 'slide to the right' came in a 2011 essay by Yehuda

Turetsky and Chaim Waxman. In the essay, entitled "Sliding to the Left? Contemporary

American Modern Orthodoxy," the authors considered shifting trends specifically in the

American *Modern* Orthodox community. Specifically addressing issues of gender and

theology, the authors cite the establishment of The Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance

(JOFA) and Edah (now defunct) in 1997, the founding of the 'open' Orthodox Yeshivat

Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School in 1999, the installation of Richard Joel as President

of Yeshiva University in 2003, the publication of the Koren-Sacks siddur in 2011, and

other items indicating a leftward trend in Modern Orthodoxy. These findings suggest that

the American Orthodox community is undergoing significant change at the beginning of

the twenty-first century. For many at the liberal and progressive edge of what is a

complex American Jewish Orthodoxy, Irving Greenberg is considered to be a pioneering

figure.

Taken together, the result of all of these changes on the denominational landscape

of American Judaism has been an increasingly diverse American Jewish community.[13]

They also meant that the denominational tensions of the nineteenth century would in

some cases increase and at other times diminish. An episode involving Mordecai M.

Kaplan is illustrative of the extent to which tensions flared. By 1945, Kaplan was already

well established as the most controversial figure in the American Jewish community.

Deemed a heretic by many in the Conservative movement and most within the Orthodox

movement, Kaplan was a radical theologian, scholar, and social theorist.[14] In 1945, the

Reconstructionist movement published a Sabbath prayer book "which reflected Kaplan's

rejection of chosenness. It also removed all references to the idea of the resurrection of

the dead and the inevitable coming of the messiah" (Diner, *Jews* 255). Each one of these

theological innovations would have been shocking to traditional Jewish ears and eyes by

themselves; presented together, they were perceived as a threat that needed to be

countered.[15] Even more shocking was the decision of a group of Orthodox rabbis to hold

a public burning of the prayer book.[16] In retrospect, this act was especially troubling so

soon after the Holocaust, when book burnings were a regular form of Nazi terror.

Although this was an extreme example, the point is clear: relationships between the

different branches of the American Jewish community in the twentieth century were often

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[13] By the end of the twentieth century, talk had also turned to questions of non-, post-, and trans-denominationalism, with a sharp rise in the number of independent (i.e. not denominationally affiliated) prayer communities being established across the United States.

[14] See Gurock and Schachter, eds, *A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

[15] Of course, each of these theological innovations had already been adopted by nineteenth century Reform Jews in Germany and America. The particularly harsh reaction to Kaplan was certainly influenced by his own ties to Orthodoxy and that movements' resurgence in America.

[16] They also "issued a *herem*, a ban of excommunication against Kaplan" (Diner 255).

as fraught with tension, if not more so, as they were in the nineteenth century. Greenberg would not be spared from similarly harsh critiques.

In the more than half a century since that episode, the relationships between proponents of the different religious denominations in the American Jewish community have become even more complicated. In 1993, Jack Wertheimer published his book, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America*, in which he concluded in his final paragraph that,

> Tensions over religious questions [] intrude into all spheres of Jewish communal life. They color social relations between Jews of different denominations and outlooks. They undermine the ability of the American Jewish community to act in concert regarding domestic issues, such as the struggle against anti-Semitism. And they exacerbate estrangement between American and Israeli Jews. It is no longer possible – or wise – to dismiss religious polarization as peripheral to Jewish life. The divided world of Judaism imperils the unity of the Jewish people in America. (Wertheimer, *People* 195-6)

Wertheimer's assessment appeared to be that, in terms of the question of unity within the American Jewish community, there was no hope in sight and that the end was nigh. However, just over a decade later, Wertheimer published a monograph entitled "All Quiet on the Religious Front? Jewish Unity, Denominationalism, and Postdenominationalism in the United States" (2005). In it, he acknowledged that "the dire predictions of an internal Jewish schism have proven wrong. If anything, overt religious conflicts have either ceased or have been pushed into the background" (Wertheimer, "Quiet" 2). However, according to Wertheimer, while things may have seemed fine on the surface, the divisive issues were still lurking below. Wertheimer suggested that the two key issues confronting

the American Jewish community were "Orthodox Exceptionalism"[17] and "Division over

Issues of Personal Status."[18] In his concluding paragraph, Wertheimer complained that, "I

should rejoice over the current spirit of cooperation…but I also lament the price exacted

for this goodwill. Beneath the facade of calm, the issues continue to fester…"

(Wertheimer, "Quiet" 26). In effect, according to Wertheimer, if one dared to look

closely enough, little had changed since the days of Wise and Leeser.[19]

It was against this backdrop of continued tension and strife that a number of

twentieth century Jewish organizations attempted to grapple with the complicated

realities of American Jewry. The four examples that best addressed the complex diversity

of the community were the Synagogue Council of America, the Jewish Welfare Board,

B'nai B'rith, and Hillel. What follows is a brief sketch of their activities. The Synagogue

Council of America (SCA) was founded in 1926 and finally met its demise in 1994. It

came into being to create a voice for the American Jewish community that could parallel

the National Council of Churches, in which representatives of the Conservative,

Orthodox, and Reform movements joined together to form the Council. It is notable that

at no point in its history were representatives of any other Jewish denominations invited

or permitted to join. Thus, as historian of the SCA, Jonathan Golden has pointed out,

despite its positive expression of communal unity and institutional solidarity, "[w]hile the

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[17] Wertheimer wrote that "For the present, Orthodox Jews are content to live in a counter-community, largely divorced from the key agencies of the larger Jewish community, mainly associating with one another and seeking services for their own institutions" (Wertheimer 19).

[18] Wertheimer described his concerns about issues of status in this way:

> The overwhelming majority of Jews affiliated with Jewish life are not Orthodox. Their way of dealing with matters of Jewish personal status will continue to bedevil communal relations. To make matters worse, their leaders have convinced themselves that they need to do nothing to bridge the differences because, in their view, questions of personal status have become irrelevant to much of the Jewish community, and the community has no interest in enforcing its boundaries. (Wertheimer 20)

[19] See above, p. 71

SCA captured the political pluralism of a federalist model, it never embraced diversity as a value in itself" (Golden 142). Furthermore, while the immediate members of the Council did interact with each other, it "created a top down organization without fully developing a natural grassroots following" (Golden 142), thus limiting its impact on the larger American Jewish community. Finally, the cross denominational make-up of the Council through the 1950s was "possible because many Reform and Conservative rabbis came from Orthodox backgrounds" (Golden 142). Taken together, the functional pluralism, top-down organizational model, and relative homogeneity of the members of the Council made it far from a representatively diverse gathering place by the middle of the twentieth century. The situation was compounded in the 1950s as a more ideologically conservative American Orthodoxy began to strengthen. As a result, the SCA confronted a "ban on contacts between Orthodox rabbis and their Reform and Conservative counterparts." The ban read in part:

> We have [] been asked if it is permissible to participate with and be a member of the Synagogue Council of America, which is also composed of Reform and Conservative organizations. We have ruled that it is forbidden by the law of our sacred Torah to participate with them either as an individual or as an organized communal body" (Sarna 19).

The ban was signed by ten prominent *haredi* Orthodox rabbis, including the influential leaders, Moshe Feinstein, Yitzchok Hutner, Yaakov Kamenetsky, and Aaron Kotler. In addition to this external rejection from the right-wing of the orthodox community, the SCA faced a challenge from within, in that, unlike in former years, "[b]y the 1950s…it faced a new cadre of leaders who lived most, if not their entire, lives within the institutions of a particular movement and did not fraternize frequently, if at all, with members of other movements" (Golden 142-3). As a result, "efforts to develop local

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branches of the Synagogue Council and to establish the kind of discourse necessary to carry out its work [were hampered]" (Golden 142-3). Therefore, just as the SCA appeared to have the opportunity to really begin to confront the religious diversity of the American Jewish community, it was undermined from within and assailed from without. Even though the ultimate demise of the SCA in 1994 was a result of financial difficulties, "few, if any, in the American Jewish community were surprised" (Golden 138).[20]

Another early twentieth century organization that sought to institutionally incorporate the various denominations in the American Jewish community was the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB). The JWB was organized out of the practical necessity of having a single group that would represent the American Jewish community before the United States government in its attempt to provide for the religious needs of troops in the United States armed forces. Impressively, the JWB's inaugural meeting included "representatives from the five most prominent rabbinical and congregational organizations, the United Synagogue, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, the Agudath Ha-Rabbonim, and the CCAR, together with the Jewish Publication Society" (Cooperman 82). Despite the desire to "chart a path between Orthodoxy and Reform, hoping that the Judaism that emerged could satisfy and unite Jews from across the religious spectrum" there was still "resistance from both Orthodox and Reform Jews uninterested in finding a compromise position between them" (Cooperman 296-7). Nevertheless, and most likely because of the

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[20] Golden reported that "Upon hearing about the expiration of the SCA, one Orthodox leader recited 'Shehechiyanu' [a blessing of thanksgiving] for the end of an organization deemed illegitimate" (Golden 138).

involvement of the United States government and the overriding need to provide for Jewish troops, the JWB did have some success.

One of the most tangible examples of its cross-denominational success was in the form of the prayer book produced by the Board. The 1984 edition of the prayer book includes thanks to the Central Conference of Reform Rabbis, the Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative), and the Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox) "for the use and adaptation of their respective liturgical texts" and acknowledges rabbis from each of the three denominations. It is noteworthy that the introduction to the prayer book states that "[i]t is intended exclusively for use by Jewish personnel in the Armed Forces" and the preface states that the "prayer book is not intended for the general use of those in the civilian community." The preface reasons that "[i]ts shortened and compact form is designed specifically for military use." One cannot avoid reading between the lines that this kind of pluralistic prayer book is only to be used 'in fox-holes,' as it were. Here again, as with the SCA, we see the appearance of engagement with diversity, but only in a very specific and limited context.

Other American Jewish organizations, rather than attempt to navigate the denominational tensions of American Jewish life, attempted to simply side-step the entire matter. B'nai B'rith, founded in the middle of the nineteenth century as a fraternal order, was a Jewish establishment organization that, according to its historian, Deborah Dash Moore, identified two central areas of focus: "the quest for leadership [of the American Jewish community] and for unity of American Jews" (Moore xii). In trying to achieve these goals, the leaders of B'nai B'rith realized early on that "[t]he debates between the nascent Reform and Orthodox partisans filled Jewish gatherings with bitterness" and that

therefore "they would have to avoid religious issues in order to succeed" (Moore 4). Consequently, "…B'nai B'rith's founders intended to 'banish from its deliberations all doctrinal and dogmatic discussions,' and framed their rituals 'to be equally unobjectionable to the Orthodox as to the Reformers'" (Moore 10).

Despite B'nai B'rith's avoidance of religious issues, one American Jewish organization that was founded under its auspices did have some success in addressing the religious diversity of the American Jewish community. In 1923, Rabbi Benjamin Frankel established a new organization over a storefront that was intended to serve the Jewish student body at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Frankel called the organization Hillel - "The name symbolized learning, tolerance, dignity, courage; Hillel, the first-century sage, a lover of learning, zealous for Jewish life, a gentle and tolerant man who bravely stood up for his convictions, was 'indisputably…the ideal symbol of the Jewish spirit'" (Moore 140). Among other activities, Frankel "conducted Reform services on Friday night [and] Orthodox services on Saturday" (Moore 138). Replicating this model across the country, Hillel would become the largest campus-based organization in the American Jewish community. According to Frankel's vision, "Hillel differed in being a nonsectarian Jewish religious organization – that is, it served young Jews from Reform to Orthodox" (Moore 139-140). Over the ninety year history of Hillel, it may well have been the most successful Jewish organization to commit to a sustained program of Jewish engagement across the denominations. Nevertheless, and despite its ongoing success, in recent decades there has been a growth in sectarian denominationalism on college campuses that has challenged the model of cooperation championed and exemplified by Hillel. The rising number of Chabad houses, other

Orthodox Jewish outreach programs, and, in some cases, the hiring of multiple rabbis at a single Hillel center to serve each denominational community raises questions about the extent to which cross-denominational encounters are actually taking place any more on college campuses.

Each of these examples – the Synagogue Council of American, the Jewish Welfare Board, B'nai B'rith, and Hillel – represent different attempts to grapple with the increasing complexity and balkanization of the American Jewish community. It is in this context that Irving Greenberg, in his role as a thought-leader and through his groundbreaking work at CLAL, confronted the diversity of the American Jewish community. In addition to dedicating more than half a century to improving relationships among Jews through a postethnic approach to intra-group relations, Greenberg also reached beyond the Jewish community and played a leading role in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement. What follows is an attempt to describe and analyze those moments of encounter in his life that have influenced the development of his theology of Hybrid Judaism.

Born on May 16th, 1933, Irving Greenberg was raised in Borough Park, Brooklyn, until he left for graduate school at Harvard in 1954. The American Jewish reality that Greenberg was born into was the result of a tumultuous prior half century. As noted above, between 1880 and 1924[21] the American Jewish population increased dramatically from as few as two hundred and thirty thousand to as many as 3.6 million (Sarna, *American* 375). At least two million were immigrants from Europe. In 1930, the Jewish population of New York was estimated at more than 1.8 million, with Borough Park

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[21] Mass immigration came to an end when the Johnson-Reed act was signed in 1924.

alone numbering 61,000 Jewish residents (Horowitz and Kaplan). The result was a rich and vibrant Jewish community that nurtured Greenberg and the devout Orthodox Jewish family he was born into.

Like many children of immigrants, Greenberg's very birth presented his parents with a cultural conflict. Presumably recalling conversations he had had with his parents, Greenberg has written that,

> when [my father] and my mother came to name their son they could not bear the thought that I should be stigmatized with a name like Yitzchak, which could label their son as outside the mainstream of American life. So they looked around for the most white Anglo-Saxon, Protestant name they could find, and they found it: Irving!" (Greenberg, "Emancipation" 48).

Greenberg's very name was a manifestation of the encounter between the old-world European Orthodoxy of his parents and the American reality in which they now found themselves. Unwilling to hold their son back, Greenberg's parents opted for a thoroughly American name.

Greenberg recalled that his first significant encounter with non-Orthodox Judaism during his childhood years occurred in the company of his father, Rabbi Elias Henry Greenberg (1894-1975). The senior Greenberg was a student of Rabbi Haim Soloveitchik (1853-1918), grandfather of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik,[22] and is remembered for his scholarship. As Greenberg recalled: "The learning was supplied by my father, who was a *talmid chacham*[23] of awesome proportions…He taught Talmud daily in an immigrant congregation" (Freedman 1). However, he was also willing to expose his son to a Jewish world beyond just his own. Greenberg recalled that,

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[22] The younger Soloveitchik would eventually be an important mentor to the younger Greenberg.
[23] Literally a "wise student." This traditional honorific is used to describe great scholars.

When I look back, certain amazing little experiences stand out. There was one Conservative congregation in Boro [*sic*] Park – Temple Emanuel. David Koussevitsky was *chazzan* there. Many times, on the way back from Beth El (my father's *shul*), my father would take me in to hear Koussevitsky. I do not think there were many other Orthodox rabbis from Boro Park who would have gone into that *shul*…going into a Conservative congregation was not standard operating procedure. By such simple, almost elementary gestures (not only taking me inside to hear the *chazzan*, but also showing respect for the service), he taught me an instinctive pluralism. (Freedman 4)

Greenberg's exposure both to Conservative Judaism and his father's respect for it took place at an early, formative age and clearly left a strong impression. In another reminiscence, this time of a story he had heard about an experience his older sister had had, Greenberg looked back to 1929 or 1930:

my sister Lillian walked by a Catholic parochial school located near my parents' apartment around 62nd St. on the border of Borough Park and Bensonhurst. A few of the students apparently harassed her…The verbal harassment included anti-Semitic slurs. When she came home, she told my father. Instead of letting this go by, my father took her hand and marched her back to the school. He went in and asked to meet with the principal who was a Catholic priest…the two of them communicated what happened, the fact that they were immigrants, and the fact that my father was a Rabbi. The principal listened respectfully. He then apologized for the boys' behavior. Moreover he called an assembly…He spoke to [the students] and explained that these were immigrants who had come to America seeking a better life. Therefore Americans should welcome them and treat them with respect and kindness. He also told the boys that my father was a Rabbi and that it was wrong to attack a Rabbi or his child with anti-Semitic slurs…my father told me the story and drew the moral from it. America was different. He said to me that in Poland the clergy themselves would have been anti-Semitic and would encourage such behaviors. He knew or had understood that in America, Christians i.e. Catholics were different. Not only could you assume that they were against anti-Semitic behavior but that one could turn to them for justice. Looking back I believe such a story sowed the seeds of my more positive attitude toward Christianity - seeds that blossomed when I became involved in Jewish Christian dialogue after the Holocaust.[24]

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[24] Personal e-mail communication, 26 May, 2013.

In this recollection, the experience was indirect, yet still powerful. Greenberg's father modelled what it meant to learn from encounters with both non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews alike.

These vignettes are reminiscent of the influence of Mordecai M. Kaplan's father, also a devoutly Orthodox rabbi who had an openness that was unusual for its time. As Kaplan's biographer has recorded, "Old Rabbi Kaplan was a tolerant man, and frequently the boys were entertained by the conversation of a rather heretical Bible scholar named Arnold Ehrlich…thus, at an early age, young Mordecai was exposed to Biblical criticism and the problems raised by a scientific study of the Bible" (Scult 46). For both Kaplan and Greenberg, their fathers were significant figures that opened their eyes to different possibilities at a very young age. [25] Although it is impossible to demonstrate the direct influence of these experiences on their later contributions to the Jewish community, it is undoubtedly the case that they had an impact.

Greenberg attended Yeshiva Etz Chaim elementary school and then went on to Yeshiva University High School, both in Brooklyn. According to Greenberg, both were "in the upper range of Modern Orthodox education in America" (Freedman 1). Following high school, Greenberg attended both Brooklyn College and Beth Joseph Rabbinical Seminary.[26] While attending Brooklyn College, Greenberg became interested in the study of history, citing Jesse D. Clarkson as a significant influence.[27] At Beth Joseph he was

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[25] Kaplan dedicated his magnum opus, *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934), to his father and credited him with being his "eyes as I wandered in the desert of confusion."

[26] Also known as Yeshiva Bais Yosef, or Novardok.

[27] Greenberg has described the impact of Clarkson in this way:

> [He] had a tremendous effect on me. Clarkson's brilliant exposition of the impact of reality on ideas (and the frequent contradiction of ideas and reality) shaped my thinking…He sensitized me to the insight that it is not sufficient that ideas be credible or

exposed to the Jewish *Musar* tradition of self-improvement that was established in the nineteenth century by Israel Salanter (1810-1883).[28] Greenberg has described his experience at Beth Joseph in this way: "Thanks to…its strong *musar* component, Bais Yosef gave me a dynamic and very different, more moving religious experience…" (Freedman 3). Taken together with the experience at Brooklyn College, Greenberg has remarked that, compared to what his experience might have been had he attended the more Americanized, yet Orthodox, Yeshiva University (where he could have received both a secular and religious education), his "religious education was much less filtered by modernity, and my college experience [] was much less filtered by Orthodoxy" (Freedman 3). His unadulterated encounter with both the academy and the *Musar* tradition provided Greenberg with two new perspectives on the world – one through secular scholarship, and the other through deep religiosity.

Subsequent to his graduation from Brooklyn College, where he majored in History, and his ordination as a Rabbi from Beth Joseph, both in 1953, Greenberg went on to graduate school at Harvard University. Harvard represented yet another set of influential encounters. Having left Brooklyn, Greenberg would now have to find a way to navigate the secular world of an elite college campus. This challenge was exemplified by the fact that Greenberg had to reconsider his custom of always wearing a *kippah*. "The classic example: when I arrived, no one told me, but I just knew that you could not wear a

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of logical construction; they have to enable people to cope with reality…These teachings were very influential on my thinking. They also shaped my life's work. I have striven to articulate and teach ideas that help us build a better world, but, following Clarkson's warning, I have sought to develop and apply these ideas in ways that upgrade the real world. (Freedman 5)

[28] Israel Lipkin (1810-1883) was popularly known as Israel Salanter to indicate his dedication to his teacher, Rabbi Zundel of Salant. Lipkin was the founder and spiritual leader of the *Musar* movement.

kippah…So I wore a hat and took it off when I went into class. As soon as I came out of class, I would put the hat on again." (Freedman 7). Greenberg was bothered by the challenges of living an Orthodox life at Harvard, ultimately deciding, in 1955, to go ahead and don his *kippah* at all times. While still attending Harvard and working with his advisor, Frederick Merk,[29] on his dissertation entitled *Theodore Roosevelt and Labor: 1900-1918*, Greenberg also served as the Rabbi of the Young Israel of Brookline from 1954-1955. He completed his studies and received his Ph.D. in American History from Harvard in 1960. During his time at Harvard, Greenberg was learning to navigate a quintessentially Modern Orthodox challenge: how to live a life as a fully committed Orthodox Jew while, at the same time, engaging fully in the modern world.

Although one is tempted to draw comparisons between Greenberg and Kallen, the contrasts are greater than the similarities. Both Kallen and Greenberg were the children of immigrant Orthodox families. They also both attended Harvard University, although separated by almost half a century. It is there that the similarities stop. Kallen studied philosophy and worked in the field of sociology, whereas Greenberg was an American historian who elected to for a career in Jewish education and activism. While both invested considerable time and energy on the question of how Jews might flourish as equals in American society, Kallen's solution embraced a purely cultural expression of Jewish identity ('Hebraism'), while Greenberg remained committed to a religious formulation. The two never met and likely knew little, if anything, of each other's work.[30]

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[29] Merk (1887-1977) was an American Historian who taught at Harvard University from 1924 until 1956.
[30] In conversations with Greenberg, he has acknowledged that he only had, at best, a passing awareness of Kallen.

In 1957, while still at Harvard, Greenberg married Blu Genauer. Genauer's later

role as the central figure in the American Jewish Orthodox Feminist movement would

also have an impact on Greenberg. As Marc A. Krell has pointed out,

> Under her influence, Greenberg became dedicated to breaking down the
> barriers between Jewish men and women, offering a serious critique of
> what he consider[ed] to be the 'authoritarianism' of his own Orthodox
> leaders and their resulting failure to be more open to women's experience
> and their participation in the covenant. (Krell 104)

Together, the Greenbergs would go on to play significant leadership roles in the

American Jewish community for more than half a century.

In 1959, Greenberg joined the faculty of Yeshiva University. It was during these

years at YU that Greenberg discovered his passion for teaching and gained popularity

among the students. The 1966 Yearbook from the Yeshiva College for Men was

dedicated to Greenberg. The inscription read, in part, "We dedicate this issue of *Masmid*

to a man who is doubly unique. Professor Irving Greenberg is an extraordinary thinker

and educator…Dr. Greenberg is also an extraordinary human being…" (Masmid 5). In a

collection of reminiscences about their time at Yeshiva University, Greenberg's students

recalled that "We were [] graced by wonderful professors like Jekuthiel Ginsburg, Yitz[31]

Greenberg, and Louis Feldman," "Greenberg swept us up in the excitement of intellectual

history," "I majored in Yitz, taking a total of twenty-seven credits of his classes (nine

courses) in a three-year period," and that "He initiated me to an intellectual journey that

has continued life-long by exposing me to thinkers - Jewish and non-Jewish…" (Butler

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[31] Greenberg is fondly known by this nickname.

20, 190, 281, 286).[32] Clearly, Greenberg's impact inside the classroom and on campus was significant.

During his decade-long tenure at YU, two specific encounters stand out as being of great importance. The first took place in 1961-1962, when Greenberg served as a Fulbright visiting lecturer at Tel Aviv University. During this time, Greenberg had "an explosive confrontation with the Holocaust" (Greenberg 5). Born in the United States in 1933, Greenberg had only indirect exposure to the Holocaust during his childhood. As he has written,

> Without talking about the Holocaust openly, my parents had communicated in muffled – but deep – ways that something terrible had happened. My mother had lost five of her seven brothers; all five had stayed behind in Poland, together with their entire families, just as my father had lost one sister and her family who did not come to this country. I have dim memories, from World War II and after, of my mother crying in her room, away from the children – but we did not talk about the catastrophe openly. (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 6)

In addition to the experiences of his extended family, Greenberg also had teachers that had lived through the Holocaust. Referring to the faculty at Beth Joseph, Greenberg remembered that "half were survivors of the camps, and a third were survivors from Siberia" (Freedman 3). However, like many other children growing up in the United States during and after the war years, Greenberg did not confront the full reality of the Holocaust until much later.[33]

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[32] The students cited were, respectively, Richard M. Joel, President of Yeshiva University; Dr. Lawrence Grossman, editor of the American Jewish Year Book; Abraham D. Sofaer, George P. Shultz Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy and National Security Affairs at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University; and Charles Sheer, Jewish Chaplain and Director Emeritus of the Hillel at Columbia University and Barnard College.

[33] For a thorough discussion of the extent to which the Holocaust was discussed publicly in the American Jewish community in the years immediately following the end of the war, see Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Awe: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962*. New York: New York University Press, 2009, and Cesarani and Sundquist, eds, *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Initially, the Holocaust was not central to Greenberg's thinking. As he described it: "The week we arrived in the capital [Jerusalem] was the last week of the Eichmann trial, and an acquaintance offered to help me gain admission to the trial. I declined because we were not settled in yet. Honestly, such a direct encounter with the *Shoah* was not my highest priority." However, "Within a few weeks after passing up a chance to attend the Eichmann trial, I was caught up in a frenzy about the Holocaust" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 5-6). It is worth quoting Greenberg at length to understand the full impact of his transformative encounter with the Holocaust:

> Soon the encounter with the *Shoah* took over my days and nights…other than the hours in which I prepared for classes, I spent all my time reading about the Holocaust…increasingly, my time was spent at Yad Vashem[34]… In the winter, the building was cold; but the chill in my soul was icier. The grip of death and destruction penetrated and froze me to the bone. Shock followed shock. Outrage, humiliation, and fear took over, and soon my religious life was invaded by tormenting doubts and moral revulsion…I was drowning religiously…There were mornings when I would put on my tefillin and then sit there, overwhelmed by the horrifying sights and disturbing sounds from *Shoah* sources that flashed through my mind, unable to recite the words of the siddur. (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 6-7)

Greenberg's encounter with the Holocaust would be determinative. Many aspects of Greenberg's theology and professional career would be directly impacted by this formative experience. He offered some of the first college-level courses ever taught on the subject;[35] established a Holocaust memorial organization - *Zachor*: Holocaust Resource Center - with Elie Wiesel[36] in 1975; and served as the first director of President

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[34] The Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem.

[35] Greenberg recalled that, following his return from Israel, "After a two-year fight, I won the right to teach about the Holocaust (although I had to promise to teach the course under a different title: 'Totalitarianism and Ideology in the 20th Century')" (Freedman 10).

[36] Greenberg played a significant role in Wiesel's life. In a festschrift in honor of Greenberg's 75th birthday, Wiesel wrote that, "were it not for you, my entire academic life would not have been what it is" (Katz and Bayme 277).

Jimmy Carter's Commission on the Holocaust, beginning in 1979. The commission

would ultimately lead to the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial

Museum, of which he would serve as chair from 2000 to 2002.[37] And, as we shall see in

chapters three and four, Greenberg's encounter with the Holocaust also played an

important, although not definitive, role in the development of his theology of Hybrid

Judaism.

The second critical encounter during Greenberg's tenure at Yeshiva University

was his public confrontation with YU colleague, Aharon Lichtenstein. Like Greenberg,

Lichtenstein was born in 1933, was a student of Joseph B. Soloveitchik,[38] and would go

on to receive a doctorate from Harvard. After completing his Ph.D., Lichtenstein "taught

[English] for several years at Stern College, Yeshiva's women's division, before moving

on to a position as a star Talmudist at Yeshiva's rabbinic seminary" (Singer, "Debating

Modern Orthodoxy" 114). By the time of the confrontation, Greenberg had returned from

his Fulbright in Israel and had become a well-established and highly popular instructor at

YU. On April 28, 1966, the Yeshiva University student newspaper, *The Commentator*,

printed a long interview with Greenberg, entitled "Dr. Greenberg Discusses Orthodoxy,

YU, Viet Nam, and Sex." The controversial interview included a scathing critique of

Orthodoxy, a call for the modernization of Jewish Law, and, most importantly for our

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[37] For an excellent analysis of the establishment of the President's Commission and the founding of the Museum, see Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

[38] Greenberg came under the influence of Soloveitchik in the 1950s during his tenure as the rabbi of the Young Israel of Brookline. Lichtenstein became a student of Soloveitchik during his undergraduate years and while studying for rabbinic ordination at Yeshiva University. He would eventually become Soloveitchik's son-in-law.

purposes, an early articulation of his views on non-Orthodox movements in Jewish life and their relationship with Orthodoxy.

Almost forty years later, looking back on the interview, Greenberg recalled that "I sat in my office for hours talking with a student about my thinking on Modern Orthodoxy. I spoke unguardedly…The student never told me that he was writing up the conversation with intent to publish"[39] (Butler 184). In an attempt to quell the controversy, Greenberg submitted a lengthy clarification to the editor that was published in the next edition of the paper, on May 12, 1966. In retrospect, Greenberg acknowledged that, "I believed in what I said, but the printed words went considerably beyond what many people were prepared to hear. In my written response to the furor, I disingenuously tried to soften and minimize the implications of my words – which convinced no one" (Butler 184). Given that his clarification failed to convince his opponents, on June 2, 1966, Aharon Lichtenstein published a sharp response to Greenberg in the pages of the same publication in which he "made no secret of his belief that Greenberg's slashing attack on contemporary Orthodoxy was a calculated move intended to provoke controversy at Yeshiva and thus force a confrontation with Greenberg's religious views" (Singer, "Debating Modern Orthodoxy" 115). We will take a closer look at these documents in the next chapter. For now, it will suffice to say that this episode represented Greenberg's first experience as a controversial public figure within American Orthodox Judaism. It is also the site of some of his earliest reflections on the subject of intra-Jewish relations.

Another set of encounters began in 1965 and continued "intermittently during the second half of the 1960s" (Ackerman). Greenberg has described the origins of these

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[39] This claim was also the subject of public debate in the pages of *The Commentator*. See: http://admin2.collegepublisher.com/preview/2.2469/2.2826/1.298910#.Un-V03AqiSp

encounters in this way: "By 1965, [Rabbi] David Hartman persuaded a wealthy lay leader to underwrite a week of learning together for a group of scholars. We invited the best Orthodox thinkers we knew and – there being some money left over – invited some Conservative and Reform thinkers as well" (Butler 183). Elie Wiesel also recalled the 1965 gathering, writing that

> Rabbi David Hartman…organize[d] a 'pluralistic' Jewish conference…There were about thirty of us there: Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis and others…This is how I came to meet Maurice Friedman, Irving Greenberg, Herman Schaalman, Aaron [*sic*] Lichtenstein, Gene Borowitz, Steve Schwarzchild…and Emil Fackenheim. (Portnoff xi)

These were groundbreaking gatherings between individuals who would become leaders in the Jewish community for the next half century across denomination and discipline. Precious little has been written about these gatherings and, as Wiesel recalled, there were "no papers or lectures…Only debates on the situation of the Jewish people" (Portnoff xi).[40] These encounters were of great significance for Greenberg and they exposed him, in a deeply personal way, to thinkers outside of the Orthodox camp.

Throughout the rest of the 1960s, Greenberg participated in a number of gatherings that would expose him up close to non-Orthodox Jews. In 1966, he was invited to present a paper at the annual meeting of the Board of Editors of the respected journal of Jewish thought, *Judaism*. His paper was part of a larger symposium that addressed the question, 'Jewish Religious Unity: Is It Possible?' His very presence

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[40] However, Greenberg recalled that "At the group's first meeting in 1965, I read a first paper on the implications of the Holocaust for Judaism entitled, 'God's Acts in History" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 11). It appears that this paper had a significant impact on Emil Fackenheim, who was also present. In the preface to Fackenheim's great work of Holocaust theology, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (1970), he wrote, "I owe a fundamental debt to Irving Greenberg's concept of 'orienting experience': his stubbornly historical thinking has liberated me from some false philosophical abstractions" (Fackenheim v).

alongside the founder of the Reconstructionist movement, Mordecai M. Kaplan, Reform

theologian, Jakob J. Petuchowski, and Conservative scholar, Seymour Siegel, spoke to

his commitment to intra-group relations. Inspired by Hartman's Canadian gathering the

year prior, the symposium was led by Reform rabbi Steven S. Schwarzschild and

included Reform theologian Eugene B. Borowitz, author Inge Lederer Gibel,

Conservative rabbi Hershel Matt, instructor at the Jewish Theological Seminary Fritz

Rothschild, noted Holocaust theologian Richard L. Rubenstein, Columbia professor of

history Jacob Taubes, member of the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs J. E. Ittamar

Wohlgelernter, and Professor of philosophy Michael Wyschogord.

So exceptional were these cross-denominational gatherings that, on three different

occasions toward the end of the 1960s, *The New York Times* reported on them. In the first

article, published in May 1967 and entitled "Rethinking by Jews," Greenberg was

described as part of an "ecumenical 'underground' [that] has developed in recent years

consisting of younger rabbis and theologians from all three branches" (Fiske). The article

reported that the members of this underground movement were "about 40 in number" and

that, referring to the Canadian group that David Hartman had convened, "For the last two

years they have met at a summer camp in Quebec for a week of discussion" (Fiske).

Other participants mentioned in the article included Eugene B. Borowitz and Michael

Wyschogrod. A second article about the gatherings in Canada was published in *The New*

York Times in 1969 under the heading "3 Branches Meet in Effort to Improve Ties." This

time Emil Fackenheim, Elie Wiesel, David Hartman, Eliezer Berkovitz, and co-founder

of Havurat Shalom, Arthur Green, were mentioned as participants in the conclave. In a

final article from 1969, the newspaper reported that: "Jewish Theologians Are Reviving

an Increase in the Recovery of Traditional Customs and Teachings." Again, Greenberg was cited alongside a list of notable Jewish thinkers including Walter S. Wurzburger, Alvin J. Reines, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Arnold J. Wolf, and Emanuel Rackman. Clearly, Greenberg was spending a great deal of time during the 1960s in up-close and personal encounters with Jews from across the denominational and theological spectrum.

Greenberg did not limit his encounters only to diverse members of the Jewish community. He also became deeply engaged with thinkers and activists in the Christian world. As a direct response to his encounter with the Holocaust during the year he spent with his family in Israel, Greenberg became a significant participant in the growing Christian-Jewish dialogue movement that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1967, Greenberg published two important essays - "The Cultural Revolution and Religious Unity" and "The New Encounter of Judaism and Christianity" - on the related subjects of the Holocaust and Christian-Jewish relations. He was also "invited to participate in a major Jewish-Christian dialogue conference, organized by the Synagogue Council of America" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 12). His involvement in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement brought Greenberg into direct disagreement with his teacher and the head of Yeshiva University, Joseph B. Soloveitchik. In 1964, Soloveitchik published an essay entitled "Confrontation" in which he laid out his position that Jews and Christians could only come together to address shared communal interests, but that dialogue around theology and doctrine was out of bounds. In his words, "The relationship between the two communities must be…related to the secular orders with which men come face to face. In the secular sphere, we may discuss positions to be taken, ideas to be evolved, and plans to be formulated" (Soloveitchik, "Confrontation" 24). By engaging in

Christian-Jewish dialogue and thereby contradicting the ruling of his mentor, Greenberg challenged standard Orthodox practice and his own religious community. As a result, he was again at the center of a controversy.

As he played an increasingly active role in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement, Greenberg was a regular attendee at its conferences and gatherings. In 1970, *The New York Times* noted his participation and included a large image of Greenberg in serious contemplation in a story it ran under the headline "A Dialogue of the Faiths at Seton Hall". In the ensuing years, Blu and Irving Greenberg became close friends with Alice and Roy Eckardt, with whom they partnered to further the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement, with a particular focus on the Holocaust. In 1974, Greenberg participated in the International Symposium on the Holocaust, held at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, in New York City. His contribution was, influential paper, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," was published in 1977 in the edited volume *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* It presented a harrowing and detailed description of the horrors of the Holocaust and their theological implications and established Greenberg as a leading Holocaust thinker alongside the likes of Eliezer Berkovits, Emil Fackenheim, Richard Rubenstein, and Elie Wiesel.[41] It also positioned him as a leading figure in the growing Christian-Jewish dialogue movement.

Greenberg also made a great many contributions to institutional Jewish life in America. During the first half of the 1960s, Greenberg played a leadership role with the

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[41] For an excellent introduction to the full breadth of Holocaust theology, see Katz, Biderman, and Greenberg, eds, *Wresting with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Orthodox campus organization, Yavneh.[42] From 1960-66, Greenberg served as chair of the National Advisory Board of Yavneh, "an independent Orthodox student-run national collegiate organization serving primarily undergraduates in the United States" (Kraut 20). As Greenberg recalled in his contribution to a collection of retrospective essays, "I became the spiritual guide to the founders of Yavneh, a pioneering organization serving Orthodox students on general college campuses, by dealing with the challenges of Torah confronting modernity" (Butler 180). Greenberg's commitment to Yavneh was borne of his belief that "the tradition had the capacity to cope with the toughest questions – even in a university's 'no holds barred' atmosphere" (Butler 180).[43]

Greenberg's involvement with Yavneh was not his only engagement with student activism. Reflecting the spirit of protest that was so prevalent in the 1960s, in 1969 Greenberg joined the North American Jewish Students NETWORK in their protest of the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds in Boston, Massachusetts. Taking over the main plenary, the group called for the allocation of greater funding for Jewish education. Although Greenberg did participate in the protest in Boston, he was less actively engaged in the various social issues of the 1960s than many of his peers. It is clear from his many publications during that decade that Greenberg was certainly attuned to the issues that were swirling in the American public square. At the same time, his attention was always focused on the responsibilities of, and the implications for, the American Jewish community.

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[42] For an engaging history of the organization, see Kraut, *The Greening of American Orthodox Judaism: Yavneh in the 1960s*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2011.
[43] A significant portion of Greenberg's writing in the 1960s addressed the challenges of being Jewish on the college campus. For his most explicit statement on the subject, see Greenberg, "Jewish Survival and The College Campus." *Judaism* (1968): 259-281.

In his controversial *Commentator* interview from 1966, Greenberg, presumably inspired by President Lyndon B. Johnson's signing of the Poverty Bill in 1964, addressed the subject of the 'war on poverty.' Identifying the ills of America with a lack of self control, Greenberg declared that "Once society has learned to control its passion for consumption, it could give buying power to Appalachia, to the chronic poor and to the Negro" (Goldberg 10). Therefore, Greenberg opined, "Jews are obligated to proclaim the value of self control…Jews must demand that the manipulators be mastered, for they cause the consumption ethos. In short, Jews must offer a merciless critique of the materialism, success ethic and complacency of our age…" (Goldberg 10). In the same interview, Greenberg also addressed the issue of the war in Viet Nam. Earlier that same year, he participated in a conference convened by the Synagogue Council of America to address the same topic. The name of the conference was "Judaism and World Peace: Focus Viet Nam" and Greenberg's paper addressed the topic "Judaism and the Dilemmas of War – An Essay in Halachic Methodology." In both instances, Greenberg framed questions about the war in Viet Nam in the context of the *halachic* (Jewish legal) parameters that dictate when and how a Jewish army may engage in war. Somewhat naïvely, he hoped that, while "Only Jews are bound to observe *halachah*, to base their views and actions about the Viet Nam war upon *halachah*," it was possible that "in the spirit of a democratic society, we can suggest that others accept our attitudes and follow our actions" (Goldberg 10). In a 1967 lecture entitled "Jewish Tradition and Contemporary Issues," Greenberg expanded on many of the social issues he addressed in his interview in *The Commentator*. He also shared a story about an Orthodox rabbinic colleague that had "participated in the Selma, Alabama demonstrations" (Greenberg,

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"Jewish Tradition" 15). The power of the story for Greenberg was that "the

act…was…an intensification of identity and a genuine Jewish experience" (Greenberg,

"Jewish Tradition" 15). Although Greenberg was clearly willing to engage issues related

to American society in general, it would be inaccurate to compare him to the likes of

Abraham Joshua Heschel, for whom political activism on behalf of the civil rights

movement and in opposition to the war in Viet Nam were defining charactersitics of their

leadership. It would be fair to say that, during the 1960s and throughout the rest of his

career, Greenberg's interest in broader social concerns was informed by his primary

interest in the state of the Jewish community and the various issues that impacted it

directly.[44]

Although Greenberg was not a civil rights activist, one of the key tensions in the

early part of his career was still the pull between scholarship and activism in the Jewish

community; between the academy and the rabbinate. From 1965 to 1972, Greenberg

served as the senior rabbi at the Riverdale Jewish Center synagogue, in the Bronx. He

also participated in the 1969 Jewish Studies Colloquium held at Brandeis University and,

as a result, served as a member of the founding advisory committee that established the

Association for Jewish Studies (AJS).[45] Due to the demands of his pulpit, Greenberg's

teaching load decreased and ultimately led to his departure from Yeshiva University in

1972. Ironically, rather than staying in his rabbinic post, he accepted an invitation that

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[44] Although, it must also be acknowledged that Greenberg's basic theological premise that being created in the image of God inheres within all human beings the three fundamental dignities of infinite value, equality, and uniqueness has implications for the rights and quality of life of all human beings. For example, see p. 130, below.

[45] The papers from the first colloquium "dealing with problems of the field and exploring future needs" were published in 1970. See Jick, ed, *The Teaching of Judaica in American Universities: The Proceedings of a Colloquium*. Association for Jewish Studies & KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1970.

same year to become the founding chairman of the Department of Jewish Studies at the City College of the City University, New York (CUNY). While at City College, "together with Elie Wiesel and Stephen Shaw, he founded the National Jewish Conference Center (NJCC), which eventually evolved into CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership" (Katz and Bayme 61-62). CLAL became an independent organization in 1976 and Greenberg gave up his tenure position at City College in 1979 to become its full-time director. CLAL became Greenberg's institutional platform and, under his leadership, it became the most influential force in American Jewry for adult Jewish education, leadership development, and intra-Jewish relations for the next two decades.

After stepping down as Director of CLAL in 1997, Greenberg took up the position as the founding President of mega-philanthropist Michael Steinhardt's Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation. Under his leadership the foundation oversaw the creation of Birthright Israel[46] and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE),[47] among other projects. All the while, Greenberg managed to publish a great many essays, monographs, popular articles, and books,[48] as well as maintaining a busy speaking schedule. Greenberg formally retired from public life in 2007 and has focused his attention on completing a number of books for publication.

Each of the projects that Greenberg has undertaken in his intellectual and professional career have been informed by the lessons learned through his encounters in the early part of his life. The combination of his father's example of scholarship and

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[46] Birthright Israel is a program that was established in 1994 to provide free, ten-day trips to Israel for young Jewish adults.
[47] PEJE was created in 1997 to support the establishment of Jewish day schools throughout North America.
[48] Greenberg's collected papers are held in the Judaica Collection at the Harvard University library.

mentschlichkeit,[49] his experiences at Brooklyn College, Harvard, YU, and CUNY, his

crushing encounter with the Holocaust and subsequent dedication to the Christian-Jewish

dialogue movement have all played a critical role in the development of his theological

system. Together, they exposed Greenberg to a reality beyond the Orthodox Judaism in

which he was raised. It is in the collective response to these encounters that we can

identify the seeds of Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism.

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[49] A Yiddish word referring to the qualities of a good person.

Chapter Four

In the previous chapter, I surveyed the key encounters in Greenberg's life that

profoundly influenced his thinking and also established him as one of the leading figures

in the American Jewish community for over half a century. The combination of his

groundbreaking Jewish communal work with CLAL and his post-Holocaust inter-faith

work positioned him as the foremost American Jewish proponent of pluralism in the

second half of the twentieth century.[1] Greenberg has also had a significant intellectual

legacy, publishing a great many essays, papers, monographs, articles, and books. His

devotion to Jewish professional life and scholarship represent his dual contribution to the

American Jewish community. As Marc A. Krell has rightly observed, "The combination

of his father's example and his exposure to the *Musar* movement at the yeshiva [Beth

Joseph] influenced Greenberg's lifelong tension between intellectual pursuits and

grassroots community service" (Krell 104). This tension meant that, despite beginning to

write about pluralism in the early 1960s, Greenberg was not able to devote the time to

systematically develop and articulate his theology of encounter until the late 1980s and

1990s.[2] The reason for the delay was at least in part due to his obligations as a synagogue

rabbi, his involvement in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement, and his leadership of

a national organization dedicated to strengthening intra-group relations in the American

Jewish community (NJCC/CLAL).

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[1] As already noted above, the central claim of this thesis is that Greenberg's thinking moved beyond
pluralism towards a postethnic theology of encounter that I call Hybrid Judaism; however, because he used
the language of pluralism himself, I will sometimes still use that term from time to time.
[2] See "Towards a Principled Pluralism" (1986) and "Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism: In the
Image of God and Covenant" (1997). We will consider these two essays in depth in the next chapter.

In this chapter I will focus on Greenberg's early intellectual explorations that would contribute to the development of his theological commitment to individual encounters. Together with chapter five, this first systematic treatment of Greenberg's theology of encounter will explore the full extent of its implications. Greenberg's ideas will also be considered in the context of the twentieth century arc of social theories of group life in America, with the goal of locating his work in relationship to the Melting Pot-Cultural Pluralism-Postethnicity schema. Once accurately located, I will ask whether Hybrid Judaism has currency in a postethnic American Jewish context. I will approach the development of Greenberg's theology in two parts: In this chapter, I will consider his early contributions to the subject from the 1960s. This will provide a useful framework for his more systematic treatment of religious pluralism from the later stages of his career, which will be covered in chapter five. Finally, in chapter six, I will consider Greenberg's ideas in light of other Jewish and non-Jewish theorists and theologians of pluralism.

As noted in chapter three, the 1960s were crucially important years for Greenberg. During this time, he established himself as a controversial Orthodox thinker, an activist that was willing to break new ground, a sought-after public intellectual, and a widely published academician. Between 1962 and 1969, Greenberg would publish essays in a number of different publications, including *Yavneh Studies*, *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, *Judaism*, *The Jewish Observer*, *Religious Education*, *Tradition*, and *Response*. The contents of Greenberg's essays reflected the consistent focus of his attention. Even though he received his doctorate in American History from Harvard, working under the

Americanist Frederick Merk[3] and completing his dissertation on the subject of *Theodore Roosevelt and Labor: 1900-1918*, everything Greenberg published in the 1960s – with the exception of one review of Lloyd P. Gartner's book, *The Meaning of History* - focused primarily on issues related to the American Jewish community.

Although his scholarly interests remained singularly focused, his title and the biographical notes that accompanied his various publications from this period reflected his changing roles in the community. Navigating between the academy and American Jewish life, in academic journals he was identified as "Dr. Irving Greenberg, Associate Professor of history as Yeshiva University," while in the Yeshiva University student newspaper, Greenberg was also "rabbi at the Riverdale Jewish Center in The Bronx, New York." Finally, in his 1967 essay "The Cultural Revolution and Religious Unity," Greenberg was described as a member of the "Faculty of the Canadian Center for Advanced Jewish Scholarship."[4] As I have shown in the previous chapter, the overlapping complexity of the Modern Orthodox world of Yeshiva University, the affluent Modern Orthodox synagogue where he served as rabbi, and the interdenominational conclaves he attended in Canada all played important roles in Greenberg's unfolding communal roles as Orthodox thinker, educator, activist, and, from the perspective of his critics, gadfly.

In his early writings from the 1960s, Greenberg began to explore many of the themes that would receive sustained attention from him over the course of the next five decades. These themes include his grappling with the meaning and implications of

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[3] For a useful sketch of Merk's life and scholarly contributions, see Blum, "A Celebration of Frederick Merk (1887-1977)." *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. 54.3 (1978): 446-453.
[4] This is a reference to the Canadian gatherings that Greenberg organized with David Hartman. See above, p. 94-97.

modernity, the Holocaust, and the 'open society' for American Jewry. Additionally, he began to develop his understanding of the meaning of the biblical notion that human beings are created in the image of God. During this period, Greenberg would also begin to broach the subject of intra-group relations within the American Jewish community, offering strong critiques of the state of American Orthodox Judaism and sympathetic appreciation for non-Orthodox denominations. He would also publish his first major works on Christian-Jewish relations in the 1960s, initiating a long career of engagement in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement. [5] In Greenberg's writing throughout the 1960s, each of these areas of exploration held implications for the other. Although it would take another thirty years for Greenberg to articulate what he understood to be the full nature of the relationship between each of these areas of interest and present a systematic theology of religious pluralism, the seeds of his thinking can be clearly identified in these early writings.

Greenberg's first published essay was the text of a speech he delivered at a Yavneh convention. As former Yavneh member, its historian, and Greenberg devotee, Benny Kraut[6] recalled, "The speech he delivered to the third annual national Yavneh convention September 2, 1962, 'Yavneh: Looking Ahead, Values and Goals,' with idealistic passion outlined a blueprint for future Yavneh activities" (Kraut 41). The text of the speech appeared in the pages of the first edition of the journal, *Yavneh Studies: A Jewish Collegiate Publication*, published in the fall of 1962. Already, in this very first

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[5] See Greenberg, "The Cultural Revolution and Religious Unity." *Religious Education* (1967): 98-103, 224, and "The New Encounter of Judaism and Chrisitianity." *Barat Review* (1967): 113-125.
[6] In the 'Personal Postscript' to his history of Yavneh, Kraut noted that he was "infused with the vital effervescent spirit of Irving Greenberg" (Kraut 167).

essay, when he was just 29 years of age, Greenberg addressed the question of intra-

Jewish relations head on.

The essay opened with Greenberg's tantalizing question: "Have you ever

wondered what would happen if Mashiach [the messiah] came?" (Greenberg, "Yavneh"

46). After a whimsical and somewhat cynical narrative describing the presumed

responses to the arrival of the messiah,[7] Greenberg suggested that, in all seriousness, "We

are living in Messianic times yet our motto seems to be 'business as usual'" (Greenberg,

"Yavneh" 47). According to him, the arrival of the messianic era was the result of two

historical events that resulted in the destruction of traditional European Jewish life. The

first event was "the Emancipation and westernization which washed away the Torah

centered community framework of our life as a people" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 47). The

second event, even more crucial to the arrival of the messianic era, was the tragic

destruction of European Jewry. Referring to "…World War II and the extermination of

six million Jews…" Greenberg inquired, "I wonder if you realize what a watershed this

experience is in our lives." The result of this historical event was that "It has demolished

all our established conventional positions and put us under the stern necessity of

rebuilding our lives – if we are courageous enough to face up to it honestly…"

(Greenberg, "Yavneh" 47). The original text includes the ellipsis at the end of the

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[7] For example, Greenberg wrote:

> Ed Sullivan wires an offer of a $50,000 fee for exclusive rights for the first appearance of
> Mashiach on television…After an all night session of the Ecumenical Council, chaired by
> the Pope and closed to the press, the Vatican announces the following decision of the
> Church: 'The reputed Messiah is to be stopped at once and asked the following question:
> Is this his first or second coming? If it is his second, he is to be allowed to proceed and
> greeted with hosannas in Jerusalem. If it is his first, he is a fraud. (Greenberg, "Yavneh"
> 46-7)

sentence, as if to communicate that there are not enough words to describe the new, post-Holocaust reality.

Offering a strident critique of modernity, Greenberg made it clear that the Holocaust had "revealed the bankruptcy and insufficiency of Western civilization by itself and shown up its claim of moral progress and that man was being perfected by modern culture…Tragically enough it has taken this catastrophe to give us insight into the limitations of contemporary civilization" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 47). In response to the tragedy, Greenberg introduced a tension that would recur in his writings throughout the 1960s and beyond. Even while he expressed deep suspicions about the modern world, Greenberg did not respond with complete rejection. Instead, he wrote that "We, the survivors, now have to work out a new relationship of communication with a culture whose goodness and achievement we appreciate but whose evil and limitations we have experienced" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 47). In no uncertain terms, Greenberg presented the implications of these events and this new realization:

> It has radically changed being a Jew – even for the assimilated. Being Jewish is no longer merely a discrimination or disadvantage one is born into. It is a serious identification for which a person may have to die [God forbid]…The point is that every Jew must now face up to the fact and ask himself: is it worth it? He must make something of it or face the ultimate absurdity of risking his life for something meaningless to him. (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 47-8)

Greenberg stated that the advent of modernity and the Holocaust presented nothing less than an existential challenge to those that were still alive in their aftermath. He concluded his essay with the assurance that,

> If we will only see the true condition of our times and grow to meet the challenge, then we will be for all time the generation of rebirth and redemption. Then mankind will know that in our times too,

> while evil men were engaged in destruction;
> while foolish men were engaged in business as usual;
> while the world was engaged in crisis and fear,
> The Holy One, Blessed be He, was engaged in preparing the light of the
> Mashiach. (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 53)

Ultimately, Greenberg saw a coming redemption in spite of the destruction of Jewish life that resulted from the European Emancipation and the Holocaust. Rather than a retreat from western civilization, Greenberg called for "a new relationship" and urged the Jewish community "to meet the challenge." In the intervening pages of the essay, he described what he believed the Jewish community had to undertake if it were going to realize the messianic promise of the moment.

Speaking at the Yavneh convention meant that Greenberg was addressing Orthodox students predominantly on secular college campuses. Having established the grave importance of modernity and the Holocaust as defining historical events, he turned to their meaning for those present. Focusing specifically on the Holocaust, Greenberg claimed that there were "entirely new dimensions to being an Orthodox Jew. Firstly, [the Holocaust] has revolutionized our relationship with G-d. How can we serve Him conventionally ever again? How can we bear the infinite weight of the sorrow of our brothers?" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 48). Greenberg's answer was that "the revival must start with learning, for Torah is the source of living contact with G-d and His rejuvenating holiness" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 49). In effect, Greenberg identified Yavneh's mandate as an organization for the furtherance of Jewish education as a direct response to the Holocaust.

Greenberg suggested two additional "new dimensions to being an Orthodox Jew." Drawing on the pain and destruction of the Holocaust, he declared that

It has challenged us to broaden our philosophy and understanding of Torah. We simply dare not shut out a single Jewish experience from our understanding. Can we embrace the agony and suffering of six million Jews? Can we keep them alive? Can we find balm for their wounds and cover their nakedness with our love? If we fail [God forbid], only then will they die again and finally. The experience of every one of then – the Tsaddik,[8] the Bundist, the Zionist and the assimilationist, the moral and the mean, must be incorporated into our understanding of Jewish history and seen in their pointing the way to the Kingdom of G-d. (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 48)

In this passage, Greenberg described what he understood to be the sacred responsibility of the Orthodox community: to expand its understanding of Torah[9] to incorporate a more inclusive canon of acceptable ideas and to include every variety of Jew that previously would have been seen as beyond the pale as "pointing the way to the Kingdom of G-d" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 48). After the Holocaust, Greenberg suggested, the old religious worldview would not suffice.

As revolutionary as his claims may have been, Greenberg drew support from classical Biblical and Talmudic sources to make his case for a new 'Torah' that would encompass "the Tsadik, the Bundist, the Zionist and the assimilationist," etc. In these texts, Greenberg identified the precedent for a more expansive 'Torah' in the fact that a variety of characters are incorporated into those texts, too. As he put it,

The lives of the Fathers[10] and the behavior of the Meraglim[11]; the happiness of Purim and the suffering of Tisha B'Av[12] – all must be seen in framework of divine pattern. The behavior of Avraham and the behavior of Lot – by showing what is right and showing what is wrong – must be understood. (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 48)

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[8] The Hasidic Master.

[9] Here, 'Torah' refers not to the Five Books of Moses, but rather to the more expansive sense of the Orthodox religious worldview.

[10] The biblical patriarchs from the book of Genesis: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[11] The biblical spies that were sent by Moses to survey the land of Canaan. See Numbers 13:1 – 14:45.

[12] The 9th of Av – the annual fast day that commemorates the destruction of the first and second Temple in Jerusalem.

Here, Greenberg's words betrayed a simplistic dualism of right and wrong, contrasting the biblical patriarchs with the spies in the desert, the joyous celebration of Purim with the mournful commemoration of the destruction of the Temple, and the hospitality of Abraham with his nephew Lot's misadventure in Sodom. Furthermore, the implicit suggestion was that at least some among "the Tsaddik, the Bundist, the Zionist and the assimilationist" were comparable to the spies, Tisha B'Av, and Lot (all negative representations). Nevertheless, despite this regrettable association, Greenberg's intention was clearly to be more inclusive rather than less so.

Greenberg also perceived in the events of the Holocaust the moral imperative to acknowledge those who were murdered, regardless of their particular Jewish attachments, and to include them in the sacred narrative of the Jewish people. Greenberg declared that survivors of the Holocaust[13] were not only obligated to incorporate the experiences of the full diversity of the Jewish people into their understanding of Jewish history, but that, in doing so, those that were murdered would be in some way saved from total demise. Realizing the enormity of this responsibility, he acknowledged that "Someone jokingly told me that in view of Yavneh's goals of Jewish study and excellence in college, of professional growth and maturity, of revitalizing Judaism and Jewish life, each member would have to live seven lives" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 52). Responding seriously, Greenberg wrote that, "Ever since I have seen the full tragedy of our people, I have believed that this is true. Every Jew must live not only for himself, but for the little children who never were given a chance to grow up. We must experience deeply for the millions who were not allowed to do so" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 52). For Greenberg, the

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[13] Greenberg used this terminology to refer to all Jews living in the post-Holocaust era.

events of the Holocaust obligated those members of the Jewish community that had survived to reorient their understanding of Jewish history and Jewish religious experience, and to live their lives on behalf of those that had perished.

In his third and final 'new dimension to being an Orthodox Jew' precipitated by the events of the Holocaust, Greenberg turned from the past to his contemporary Jewish reality. He wrote that,

> we must relate ourselves anew to non-religious Jews who - it took Hitler to remind and teach us – are our brothers in life and in death. The knowledge of our common destiny must prevent us from abandoning them or self righteously writing them off. It must spur us until we bind our lives to theirs and draw them with bands of love and sympathy ever closer to Torah. (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 48)

Here we have Greenberg's first explicit statement on what, to his mind, the relationship should be between Orthodox Jews and the rest of the Jewish community. In this early articulation of his 'call for unity' as a response to the Holocaust, Greenberg teetered between affirmation and condescension. In this passage, he reminded his readers that they shared a "common destiny" with non-Orthodox Jews and cautioned them not to "self righteously write them off." Moreover, Greenberg's Orthodox audience was told not to abandon them (the non-Orthodox) and to "draw them with bands of love and sympathy ever closer to Torah," echoing the mishnaic statement attributed to Hillel that Jews should act like the disciples Aharon and "love peace, pursue peace, love our fellow creatures and draw them closer to Torah."[14] His words implied (possibly unintentionally) that 'they' (non-Orthodox Jews) were 'far from Torah' and that they needed a kind of benevolent proselytizing to bring them back. Later on in the essay Greenberg asked,

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[14] Mishnah Avot 1:12.

"Who among us will help us understand how Mashiach is being brought closer by the very apikoros[15] who is stripping a Jewish teenager of his tradition and turning him into a secular idealist or, all too often, into a street corner 'hood'?" and called on his audience "to restore the broken unity and wholeness of Israel" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 49). Here again Greenberg sent mixed messages, using condescending language (apikoros) while also affirming non-Orthodox Jews, even radicals, as part of the *telos* of Jewish history.

This section of the Yavneh essay links Greenberg's ideas to those of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), the celebrated mystic who served as the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of British Mandatory Palestine in the early part of the twentieth century. Like Kook, Greenberg's approach sought to be inclusive of those Jews that were considered deviant by the Orthodox community. In a footnote to his reference to the "street corner 'hood,'" Greenberg cited Kook's statement from *Orot Ha-Kodesh*[16] that "The arrogance (*chutzpah*) at the time of the footsteps of the Messiah stems from the longing for the holiness of the ineffable – and it will eventually attain its true direction and goal" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 54). This unusual statement by Kook drew on the mishnaic declaration that "In the period preceding the coming of the Messiah, arrogance (*chutzpah*) will increase."[17] Taking his inspiration from this early rabbinic teaching, Kook described his generation's revolutionary youth in these terms: "A generation like this, which is willing to die bravely for what, to its mind, are noble ideals, among them the sense of righteousness, justice, and knowledge that it feels within it, can't be lowly. Even if its goals may be utterly wrong, its spirit is exalted, great and awesome" (Mirsky

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[15] Heretic.
[16] *Lights of the Holy* was Kook's magnum opus, edited by his disciple, David Cohen (Kagan), Ha-Nazir (Mirsky 181).
[17] Mishnah Sotah 9:15.

59). As Kook's biographer has written, the *chutzpah* exhibited by the younger generation was perceived by Kook as a harbinger of more than just the messianic era. In Mirsky's words,

> This revolt against authority is more than a sign of messianic apocalypse. To Rav Kook, many young people disrespected authority because they had somehow risen above it, and the absence of an intellectual program to match their unbounded moral passion was the source of their confusion, bitterness, and cynicism. (Mirsky 59)

For Greenberg, too, speaking to his Yavneh audience, there was a realization that they needed something more. The power of Kook's ideas combined with Greenberg's educational vision led to his proposal of a lofty educational program that, among other things, included "the Mercaz HaRav Kook study-in-Israel program" (Kraut 39) that would take American Jewish college students to study in the seminary founded by Kook himself where the students were dedicated to the study of his religious philosophy.

Looking back, Greenberg acknowledged that "Rav Kook has certainly had an influence" on his thinking (Freedman 272). In an ironic observation that could be understood to be just as descriptive of his own vision of religious pluralism as it was of Kook's contribution, Greenberg suggested that "Looking back, we can say that his native optimism sometimes reads as naïve optimism" (Freedman 272). His training as an historian led Greenberg to distinguish himself from Kook's "palpable sense of cultural progress" that "sometimes strikes me as excessive." "Nevertheless," Greenberg commented, "I was moved by Rav Kook's teachings and inspired by his model, especially his hope" (Freedman 272). Although Greenberg would only rarely turn to Kook's writings in his later works, the influence was undeniable.

Returning to Greenberg's Yavneh essay, it is clear that his early instincts were toward greater inclusivity of the full diversity of the American Jewish community. In what was his earliest exposition on the subject of intra-group relations, it is significant that Greenberg was already positing a direct relationship between the events of the Holocaust (and, to a lesser extent, the advent of modernity) and the necessity of a new approach to intra-group relations in the Jewish community.

In the next section of the essay, Greenberg returned to the question of the messianic era. Drawing on traditional midrashic sources, [18] he reminded his reader that "at all times when disaster has been met by unquenchable Jewish will to rebuild, G-d has been there 'engaged in preparing the light of the Mashiach'" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 49). Greenberg described Yavneh itself as playing a critical role in the rebuilding of Jewish life and suggested that it could embody a response to the Holocaust, both as an institution and as an orientation. The very name of the organization represented an explicit identification with the center of learning that developed in the town of Yavneh (Jamnia) in the wake of the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in the first century of the Common Era. In Greenberg's words, "Then, too, at a time of terrible destruction, the seeds of rebirth were planted…We believe that now, as then, the revival must start with learning" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 49). For Greenberg, the rebirth and revival following the Holocaust would be manifest through a program of Jewish educational activities for the Yavneh membership to engage in as a response to the Holocaust.

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[18] Specifically, *Genesis Rabba*, ch. 85.

In his association of the Holocaust and the advent of Modernity with the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem, Greenberg suggested that these modern events also represented a historical and theological rupture.[19] In similar fashion to the rabbinic tradition that interpreted the destruction of the second temple to represent a historical and theological turning point for the Jewish people, Greenberg saw Modernity and the Holocaust and representing another momentous shift. This claim would be the basis of much of his work for the next fifty years and any comprehensive understanding of Greenberg's work must be attentive to this central point.

Ultimately, each of Greenberg's major contributions to Jewish thought and communal upbuilding in the subsequent half century since the publication of this essay have represented his further attempts to respond, as an American Jew, to the advent of modernity and the horrors of the Holocaust. In this, his very first publication, one can already see the influence of these events on his thinking and orientation. The Yavneh essay also reflected the early vintage of Greenberg's thinking with regard to intra-group relations in the Jewish community. Although he was not yet using the language of pluralism, this essay is clearly the starting point for an understanding of Greenberg's thinking on the subject. As Benny Kraut has rightly observed, the Yavneh speech "foreshadowed Greenberg's own future Torah-centered but pluralist agenda, which he later took with him to CLAL (National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership) and other institutional settings" (Kraut 41).

In 1965, Greenberg published his first academic paper in a scholarly journal. The paper, entitled "Adventure in Freedom – Or Escape from Freedom?" was published in the

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[19] Elsewhere, Greenberg has referred to the rupture as an 'orienting experience,' a '*touchstone* of theology,' and a "*ceasura*."

pages of the *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*. The premise of the paper was that the

Jews have apparently 'made it' in America, but that their *Judaism* may not be quite as

fortuitous. At the outset, Greenberg observed that "The occupational and income

distribution of Jewish household heads and their median incomes are the highest of the

three national religious groupings"[20] and that "Jewish [formal] educational achievement

is the highest of all religious groups collectively." Furthermore, "Over 87 per cent of

Jews live in the urban centers which are the shapers and leaders of American culture

today" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 5-6). He went on to list the presence of Jews in the

professional and academic realms, their representation in the mass media empires, and

the popularity of American Jewish literature. Finally, Greenberg acknowledged the

decline in anti-Semitism. Following his laundry list of statistics that demonstrated the

success of American Jews, Greenberg addressed the question of Jewish group life in

America.

In the very midst of the 'social-scientific turn,'[21] Greenberg drew on a wide-range

of demographic studies and sociological works from the likes of Milton Gordon, Nathan

Glazer, and Marshall Sklare, to inform his understanding of the American Jewish

situation. Following the familiar narrative, Greenberg described "the shattering of the

traditional American self-image – the unself-conscious white Angle-Saxon Protestant

cultural image which had dominated American life, public school education and culture"

(Greenberg, "Freedom" 8-9). The historical movement was that,

> Up until the late nineteenth century, the bulk of immigrants were
> assimilated to this ethos with no serious modifications of the image. Now,
> in the widely disseminated formulation of Will Herberg, the picture was

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[20] Presumably, Greenberg was referring to Catholics, Jews, and Protestants.
[21] See above, pp. 51-52.

restructured to that of a tri-faith culture, Protestant, Catholic and Jew. (Greenberg, "Freedom" 9)

In this excerpt, Greenberg charted the movement from Anglo-conformism to tri-faith America. In doing so, he also located his consideration of the changing nature of American Jewish identity squarely in the context of the century long arc of social theories of group life outlined in chapter two above. Greenberg continued and suggested that, despite all appearances, the results would not be positive for American Jewry. In his words:

> as far as the Jews are concerned, we are not 'beyond the melting pot.'[22] The organic identity which the Jews in Eastern Europe tended to take for granted has been shattered. And for American Jews, the essential element which makes possible the life and continuity of a group, - an integrated identity, a distinctive self image of the individual and the group – has been seriously weakened. It is true that a group identity of sorts has persisted but the life style of the American Jew indicates that he is a quintessential middle class American secularist in faith, culture, and practice. (Greenberg, "Freedom" 10-11)

Here, Greenberg expressed his fear that the triple-melting pot had undermined the future of the American Jewish community, ultimately transforming American Jews into so many 'middle class Americans.' However, even as Greenberg's words were reminiscent of Kallen's call for the maintenance of distinct group identities, he was also critical of the "pluralistic ideological liberalism of intellectuals" that "evokes mellow images of variety, respect for differences, and nonconformity." Ultimately, according to Greenberg, "the pluralists' self-congratulation is as premature as the Jewish community's 'success' ethos" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 10). As we have seen, in postethnic America, his prediction appears to have come true.

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[22] Greenberg was almost certainly referencing Glazer and Moynihan's work of the same title, published two years earlier.

The source of Greenberg's concerns regarding the "tri-faith culture" that Will Herberg described was the encounter. Greenberg perceived the social mixing that was becoming more prevalent in American society as the cause for what he described as the 'shattering' and 'weakening' of American Jewish identity:

> The decline in anti-Semitism and increasing acceptance of Jews reduces the ethnic closed environment. Isolation is fast shrinking as constantly increasing forms of communication, values indoctrination and personal contact grow. There is simply no place to hide to preserve ethnic or other commitments from outside contact. Passive identification falls easy victim of the mere encounter with the majority culture which is, after all, different or it yields to the dynamic in various forms of modern culture. As Walter J. Ong puts it, "The medieval types and other primitive types of coexistence by isolation, with their consequent pluralisms based on geographical divisions, are no longer acceptable…The very lack of effective communication which lent plausibility to isolationism was a temporary condition, destined to be liquidated…" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 14)

Greenberg understood that the open society meant that encounters between Jews and those identified with other ethnic, cultural, and religious groups that constituted the triple-melting pot[23] were increasing in both number and intensity, thus presenting a threat to Jewish identity and affirmation. Shockingly, there was even the hint of a lamenting tone in his observation that there was a "decline in anti-Semitism and increasing acceptance of Jews."[24] Greenberg was unequivocal in his concern that 'isolation is fast shrinking,' that there are 'increasing forms of communications,' and that there is 'simply no place to hide.' It is clear from these statements that Greenberg perceived a frightening reality in which American Jews had no choice but to interact with non-Jews, ultimately leading to their demise as a distinct community. Turning to Walter J. Ong, Greenberg found support

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[23] Of course, there were more than three ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in America at the time.
[24] In a discussion of Greenberg's essay published in the same edition of the journal, Marshall Sklare described Greenberg as "depressed and depressing." See Sklare, "Discussant." *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*. (1965): 32-36.

in his suggestion that a brand of pluralism that is predicated on ethnic separation – i.e.

Horace Kallen's brand of cultural pluralism – was no longer viable in contemporary

American society. At this point, Greenberg perceived the encounter between individuals

across social groups as a threat.

As is clear, the issue of interaction with other social groups (religious, ethnic, etc.)

was central to Greenberg's concern for American Jewry. As we have already seen in

chapter two, the key aspect of Milton Gordon's critique of Horace Kallen was that he

failed to appreciate that 'encounter' must be a part of any theory of group life in America.

Greenberg did not make the same mistake. However, what was also clear in this early

essay was that his embrace of encounter had not yet outpaced his concerns for the future

of American Jewry.

Greenberg suggested that the college campus was where the threat of contact was

greatest. He pointed out that "College…is increasingly the major area of socialization and

marriage…The college setting is highly destructive of vestigial Jewish loyalties [where]

proximity to non-Jews is highest" and that "All this takes on stark significance when one

considers that 80 per cent of eligible Jews go to college and the rate is rising"

(Greenberg, "Freedom" 14-16). Greenberg identified the college experience as presenting

a significant existential threat to the Jewish community. As he put it bluntly, "In this case

the vulnerability is heightened by contact with the active proselytizing faiths with a

mission which dominate[s] such groups. I refer, of course, to the religion of the

Enlightenment, Americanized…" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 16). Greenberg's suspicions

regarding the 'Americanization' that was taking place on college campuses generated

from what he described as "the naturalism whose faith is in the rational order of efficient

causation; whose method is science, whose morality is humanism and whose messianic hope is the redemption of mankind through man's self-understanding and rationality" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 16). In effect, Greenberg thought of the American college campus as the continuation of the European Enlightenment, with all that it entailed for Jewish life.[25] For him, the result of the sum of these forces was unequivocal: "To put it in a nutshell: third generation status, rising wealth, higher education, suburban residence, academic-governmental-intellectual occupations, more social contact with non-Jews, all correlate positively with a higher intermarriage rate" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 18) and, in effect, departure from the Jewish community.[26] For Greenberg, the open society – exemplified in its purest form on the college campus - posed a grave existential threat to Jewish life in America.

Greenberg lamented that American Judaism was the victim of American Jews' success. His description of Jewish life in America, supported by copiously cited sociological studies, indirectly suggested that Horace Kallen's conception of cultural pluralism, in which groups are free and equal, but unthreatened by contact with each other, was nothing more than wishful thinking. In Greenberg's estimation, technological advancements and geographic mobility paired with the upward-mobility of American Jews created a mid-twentieth century reality in which Jews and non-Jews were destined to have direct encounters with each other that could only result in a weakening of Jewish identity and affirmation.

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[25] Recall that Greenberg wrote that "the Emancipation and westernization [] washed away the Torah centered community framework of our life as a people" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 47).

[26] The American Jewish community in the 1960s was much less welcoming to intermarriage than it is today. As such, the correlation between intermarriage and estrangement from the Jewish community was assumed.

In one of the few optimistic moments in Greenberg's essay,[27] he wrote that "there are a number of Jewish groups which are seeking an integrated, mature Jewish individual and group identity" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 19). Not surprisingly, in the footnotes Greenberg cited the 'Yavneh Movement,' of which he was still a key figure, as an example of such a Jewish group.[28] In contrast to his critique of encounter, Greenberg suggested that these groups "seek to assimilate American experience and culture critically rather than merely adjusting Judaism passively as a Kultur-religion or reshaping the Jewish image in a non-Jewish world" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 19). Reading this section in light of the rest of the essay, one is struck by the tension inherent in Greenberg's thinking. He was at the same time both fearful of and open to encounters across social groups. On the one hand he perceived propinquity to non-Jews and intermarriage with them as the death-knell of American Judaism. While on the other, he was clearly aware of new trends in American Jewish life and encouraged his readers to be open to the best of American society and to assimilate those aspects.

This tension was also apparent in the Yavneh essay where Greenberg ignored concerns about the encounter between the Orthodox Jews he was addressing and the non-Orthodox Jewish world. Rather, he urged the Yavneh members to "relate ourselves anew to non-religious Jews…until we bind our lives to theirs and draw them with bands of love and sympathy ever closer to Torah" (Greenberg, "Yavneh" 48). Presumably, the non-religious Jews that Greenberg referred to in the Yavneh article would be just as

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[27] Over the course of a twenty-page essay, Greenberg devoted less than one page to perceived positive developments in American Jewry.

[28] Greenberg also referenced "traditionalist groups," a Reform Jewish "new theology group," the Leaders Training Fellowship (LTF) of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and the Conservative movement's Ramah summer camps.

threatening to Jewish identity and affirmation as the non-Jews he discussed in "Adventure in Freedom." After all, surely the "non-religious Jews" that Greenberg referred to in the earlier essay were similar to the "middle class Americans" he was wary of in the latter. To underline the creative tension present in both essays, at no point did Greenberg call for greater separation and isolation from non-Orthodox Jews or non-Jews, nor for a rejection of the open society. Rather, Greenberg embraced the tension and concluded "Adventure in Freedom" with these words:

> It remains to be seen whether the history of American Jewry will culminate in a renewal which retroactively will show its experience to have been a great adventure in freedom of the mind and heart of Jewry, or whether it will end with an escape from freedom into dissolution. (Greenberg, "Freedom" 21)

It would take a number of years before Greenberg would be able to resolve this tension and provide a rationale for his abiding commitment to the open society despite the apparent danger that he perceived it posed for the American Jewish community.

Greenberg's next major appearance in print would be in the pages of the Yeshiva University student newspaper, *The Commentator*. The 1966 interview, published under the title "Dr. Greenberg Discusses Orthodoxy, YU, Viet Nam, & Sex" would put Greenberg on the map as a one of the most progressive thinkers in the American Orthodox Jewish community. As the title of the interview suggests, Greenberg discussed a number of hot-button issues, especially for an Orthodox rabbi and member of the faculty of the history department at Yeshiva University. The topics he addressed included a wide ranging critique of Orthodoxy that, in similar fashion to "Adventure in Freedom," called on his readers to "not necessarily accept all of America, but at least we should explore its attitudes and integrate those that illuminate and deepen our traditional Jewish

framework" (Goldberg 6). Among other subjects, he also called on Orthodoxy to "train a body of scholars in the new fields of study, especially in Biblical criticism," to embark on a "thorough re-examination of the *Shulchan Orach*,"[29] and the need to develop "new *halachot* about sex" (Goldberg 10). Addressing any one of these topics would have made Greenberg stand out; addressed together in one interview reflected just how far he had moved from the narrow confines of the Orthodox world.

When asked the question "What do you believe is the essential element in Jewish theology?," Greenberg answered, "The covenant idea, the belief that an infinite G-d is concerned for man and will enter into a personal relationship with him…Ideally, the Jew performs this function by accepting the covenants of Abraham and Moses – by fulfilling their *halachic* obligations to man and G-d" (Goldberg 6). This initial response could have been uttered by any traditional Orthodox Jew. However, in a radical re-interpretation of the traditional covenant idea that each Jew is obligated to abide by Jewish law (*halachah*), Greenberg added that, "I believe that the definition of a Jew is one who takes the covenant idea seriously, who struggles to find its vitality in his own life. It doesn't matter to me whether one calls himself Reform, Conservative or Orthodox." (Goldberg 6). In this answer to the first question in the interview, Greenberg immediately broached the subject of how Orthodox Jews should relate to the other denominations in the American Jewish community. His disregard for denominational labels was significant and reflected a deeper interest in the religious lives of individual Jews, articulated in his greater concern for whether or not they 'take the covenant seriously.' It would be decades

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[29] Lit. 'The prepared table.' This is the name of the sixteenth century work of Jewish law, authored by Josef ben Ephraim Karo (1488 – 1575).

before similar non-denominational orientations would take hold more broadly in the American Jewish community.

When his interviewer followed up with the question, "Do you feel the categories 'Reform,' 'Conservative,' and 'Orthodox' have any meaning?," Greenberg further clarified his position:

> The main reality in these categories is an institutional one. But too often the three classifications only blind one's vision. Today Judaism intellectually is shattered in a thousand different directions, and when we admit this, we'll be able to begin struggling with the real problems facing the American Jewish community. These classifications make it seem that any problem which arises can be neatly fit into three boxes, each one representing a denominational view. But this is just not true. (Goldberg 6)

While the interview did not provide Greenberg the space to go into detail, he clearly suggested that there was a need for a more nuanced way of thinking about the American Jewish community that would go beyond the familiar denominational tri-partite division. Although his comment about the intellectual shattering of Judaism was most likely a reference to the Holocaust, it is noteworthy that Greenberg did not mention the Holocaust explicitly at any point in the lengthy interview.[30] Instead of the Holocaust, Greenberg turned to Modernity as the catalyst for re-thinking intra-group relations. When asked, "What is the primary problem facing today's Orthodox community?," Greenberg responded that

> Orthodoxy refuses to come out of the East European ghetto psychologically…Orthodoxy refuses to show sympathy to those who respond authentically to the fact that Orthodoxy has lost all connection with modern life. Conservative and Reform have taken the risk and dealt seriously with the problem of Judaism's relevancy to modern life. (Goldberg 6)

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[30] In his follow-up article that was published the following month, there was a single reference to the Holocaust in which Greenberg stated that, "the crucial area for our concern…is the challenge of the meaning for our destiny of the European Holocaust…" (Greenberg, "Clarifies and Defends" 9).

As David Singer has commented, "Greenberg's slaps at Orthodoxy were matched by praise directed at Conservative and Reform Judaism" (Singer, "Debating Modern Orthodoxy" 117). In his answer, Greenberg lauded the willingness of Conservative and Reform Judaism to respond to the challenges posed by the modern world, while Orthodoxy refused to do the same. Nevertheless, Greenberg did offer a strong critique of Conservative and Reform Judaism, stating that "…I believe that they came up with the wrong answers," and that "Too many time [*sic*] the Conservative movement changes *halachah* because popular opinion demands the change. I believe that changes in *halachah* should not be the result of popular opinion, but the result of deliberate consideration by the *gedolim*"[31] (Goldberg 6). Even as he disagreed with aspects of Conservative and Reform Judaism, Greenberg honored and valued what he saw as their responsiveness to modern life. As with Greenberg's 1962 Yavneh essay, while the interview did not begin to describe a systematic theology of religious pluralism, it did provide some indication of Greenberg's early thinking and his openness to non-Orthodox denominations of Judaism.

There was a strong backlash immediately after the interview was published. According to one report, "The ink had barely dried on Greenberg's interview when a furious reaction set in" (Singer, "Debating Modern Orthodoxy" 117). As a result, Greenberg felt forced to respond in writing in the May 12th edition of *The Commentator*. Both the original interview and his clarification elicited a harsh critique from his

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[31] Lit. The Great Ones. This was an uncharacteristic affirmation of the Orthodox view that certain rabbis are empowered by their stature in the community to effect changes in Jewish law. Here, Greenberg's critique of the Conservative movement was most likely in reference to the controversial 1950 decision of the Conservative Movement's Law Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly, which permitted driving to synagogue on the Sabbath.

colleague and fellow Yeshiva University faculty member, Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein, in the June 2nd edition. As David Singer has correctly noted, "Lichtenstein came down hard on Greenberg," criticizing both the content of his ideas and the manner in which they were articulated (Singer, "Debating Modern Orthodoxy" 118). Lichtenstein expressed concern regarding "the fundamental posture implicitly assumed throughout the article," suggesting that "there are matters about which you and I have no business issuing manifestos altogether" (Lichtenstein 7). Lichtenstein rejected many of the assumptions that informed Greenberg's comments in the original interview. His opinion of what the relationship should be between the Jewish community and the open society highlighted the key difference in their thinking: "I do not think that we should immerse ourselves in American society to the extent that you seem to advocate" (Lichtenstein 8). Furthermore, Lichtenstein was clear that his posture also applied to intra-Jewish relations: "I would similarly disagree with your tactical approach towards Conservative and Reform Judaism" (Lichtenstein 8). From this point of view, it only followed that Lichtenstein would challenge Greenberg's ideas with regard to biblical criticism, the re-examination of Jewish law, the covenantal relationship of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews, and the extent to which Orthodoxy was out of touch with the modern world. David Singer aptly summarized the difference between Greenberg and Lichtenstein in this way: "A key marker of Lichtenstein's centrism was his willingness to set limits to cultural openness, something that Greenberg refused to do" (Singer, "Debating Modern Orthodoxy" 124).

Forty years later, Greenberg made reference to the original debate in a retrospective piece he wrote for the same publication. It will suffice to quote this short

reminiscence from Greenberg's 2006 essay: "…I was orienting myself to a *Klal Yisrael* community of Orthodox-Conservative-Reform rabbis, whereas the religious leadership of Yeshiva was still insular and inward-looking…" (Butler 184). In this honest admission, Greenberg acknowledged that the Orthodox community was not ready to embrace his open, *Klal Yisrael* orientation.[32] His reminiscence here also highlighted the fact that he was navigating his own place in the Jewish community. Given that the *Commentator* interview took place during the first year after his initial involvement with David Hartman's cross-denominational Canadian Center for Advanced Jewish Scholarship, it is not surprising that Greenberg's comments betrayed the fact that he was undergoing a personal religious transformation.

Prior to the publication of *The Commentator* interview, Greenberg participated in a symposium-discussion hosted by the journal *Judaism*. The event was held in the winter of 1965 and was inspired by David Hartman's Canadian gatherings earlier that year. At the gathering, Greenberg declared that denominational categories had limited utility and that there is "ambiguity in all of these groupings" ("Toward Jewish Religious Unity" 153). Turning to the subject of the Holocaust, he declared that "I personally feel that after Auschwitz we should be embarrassed to use the words 'Orthodox,' 'Conservative,' or 'Reform'" ("Toward Jewish Religious Unity" 156).[33]

No longer satisfied with Orthodoxy encompassing the full extent of his Jewish identity and communal affiliation, Greenberg was becoming part of a new cross-

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[32] *Klal Yisrael* might be best translated as Jewish Peoplehood, suggesting that all members of the Jewish community are connected in some way. Solomon Schechter (1847-1915) is credited with coining the English phrase, Catholic Israel, to mean the same thing (although it has fallen out of common usage).
[33] This appears to be an early formulation of Greenberg's oft-quoted quip that "it doesn't matter what denomination you are, as long you are ashamed of it."

129

denominational Jewish community, even as he was part of its creation. As a result of his intimate encounters with a diverse cross-section of Jewish thought leaders, Greenberg was adopting a new identity as both an Orthodox Jew and as a member of "a *Klal* Yisrael community of Orthodox-Conservative-Reform rabbis." The impact of Greenberg's interview in *The Commentator* was significant in that it alerted the mainstream Orthodox community to the fact that he was a boundary-breaking thinker and activist, a reputation that he would live up to for the rest of his career.

Among the many other topics that Greenberg addressed in the 1966 interview was a passing reference to the image of God, a concept that would become central to his entire understanding of Judaism. In the course of his lengthy answer to the question, "What are some contemporary problems to which we could apply *halachic* principles and laws, but don't?" Greenberg cited "the war in Viet Nam and the American attitude toward the welfare of our society" (Goldberg 8). Specifically with regard to 'the welfare of society,' Greenberg drew on classical sources and opined that

> The central moral principle of the Torah is the belief that man is created in the image of G-d, and this implies that any act or policy which humiliates or 'shrinks' a person is an act of desecration of the Divine image. Belittling man drives the Divine presence out of the world. Thus, Jews are required to eliminate those conditions – physical or psychological – that humiliate people. (Goldberg 8)

Throughout his writings in the 1960s and beyond, Greenberg would return again and again to the notion that human beings are created in the image of God. Although this idea has its origins in the Hebrew Bible,[34] Greenberg can be credited with bringing the idea

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[34] Genesis 1:26 – "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness…" and Genesis 5:1 – "These are the generations of man. In the day that God created man; in the image of God He made him."

into the fore in the twentieth century and establishing it as a central meta-value of

Judaism.

By 1969, Greenberg's image of God idea was more richly developed and was

playing a more central role in his thinking. In a lecture delivered at the Wurzweiler

School of Social Work at Yeshiva University in 1967,[35] Greenberg revisited the image of

God concept. The published version of the speech opened with a question posed by

Greenberg: "What is the fundamental value in Jewish tradition?" (Greenberg, "Jewish

Tradition" 1). In constructing his answer, Greenberg turned to a classic Midrashic text[36]

that recorded a supposed discussion between Rabbi Akiva and Ben Azzai, scholars of the

early second century of the Common Era. To the question of what the fundamental value

of the Jewish tradition is, Akiva, somewhat predictably, suggested "Love your neighbor

as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). Ben Azzai, however, opted for a somewhat less well-known

biblical verse: "These are the generations of man. In the day that God created man; in the

image of God He made him" (Gen. 5:1). Greenberg elaborated on Ben Azzai's selection

and wrote that "the Talmud draws some of the implications of the concept that man is in

the image of God" (Greenberg, "Jewish Tradition" 1). The implications being that "each

reproduction of the image of God is unique" and that "since man is in the image of God,

he has infinite value" [37] (Greenberg, "Jewish Tradition" 1). In light of the dual

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[35] The lecture was later published under the title "Jewish Tradition and Contemporary Problems."
Relationships Between Jewish and Contemporary Social Issues. New York: Yeshiva University, 1969. 1-
19.
[36] Sifra Kedoshim, b. Nedarim 30b.
[37] Greenberg's basis for the claim to uniqueness and infinite value are both found in Mishnah Sanhedrin
4:4. *Uniqueness:*
> …man was created alone to teach you that whoever destroys a single life from Israel is
> considered by Scripture as though he destroyed an entire world; and whoever preserves a
> single life from Israel, is considered by Scripture as though he had preserved an entire.
> Furthermore, [Adam was created alone] for the sake of peace among men, that one might

implications that all human beings are unique and of infinite value, Greenberg echoed his

comment from *The Commentator* interview and continued, "there are actions which

'extend' or 'expand' the image of God and there are actions which 'shrink' it…Any act

that humiliates, denigrates, or hurts is seen as a form of desecration of the divine image

and a reduction of God's presence" (Greenberg, "Jewish Tradition" 2). For Greenberg,

the image of God idea established parameters for the way human beings are expected to

treat one another. The implications of the image of God idea for both inter- and intra-

group relations were significant, although Greenberg had not yet made the explicit

connection in this early articulation.

In 1988, Greenberg and Shalom Freedman would publish a lengthy collection of

'conversations' entitled *Living in the Image of God: Jewish Teachings to Perfect the*

World. By then, Greenberg's thinking regarding the image of God idea was fully

developed and he acknowledged that "The central anchor of my thinking and of my life is

the concept that the human being is created in the image of God" (Freedman 31). In its

most complete articulation, the image of God idea would ultimately incorporate *three* key

characteristics. Putting the final piece in place, Greenberg described it in this way:

> Because humans are in the image of God, they are endowed by their
> Creator with three intrinsic dignities: infinite value (the image of God is
> priceless); equality (there can be no preferred image of God; that would
> constitute idolatry); and uniqueness (images created by humans from one

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> not say to his fellow: My father was greater than yours, and that the heretics might not
> say: There are many powers in heaven [and each created a man]. Also, to teach the
> greatness of the Holy One, Blessed is He; when a man casts many coins from a single
> mold, they all resemble one another, but the Supreme King of kings, the Holy One,
> Blessed is He, fashioned each man in the mold of the first man, yet not one of them
> resembles another.

Although the Mishnah here refers to 'a single life from Israel,' Greenberg applied it to all human beings.
Infinite value: "In civil cases, one can make monetary restitution [for judicial errors] and thereby effect his
atonement, but in capital cases, he is held responsible for the blood [of the one accused] and the blood of
his [potential] descendants until the end of time…"

> mold resemble each other, but God creates images from one couple or mold, and each is distinct for every other). All of society – economics, politics, culture - must be organized to respect and uphold these three fundamental dignities. (Freedman 31)

The complete expression of Greenberg's image of God idea included within it a messianic vision for humanity. The call for "all of society" to orient its collective actions and attain a state in which they would recognize the three intrinsic human dignities of infinite value, equality, and uniqueness represented nothing less than a vision for a perfected world.

As noted in the previous chapter, already at an early age, Greenberg's exposure to *Musar* and the example set by his father had made a defining impact on his religious worldview. In retrospect, Greenberg was able to see the influence of these formative experiences on the development of his image of God idea. In his conversations with Shalom Freedman, Greenberg recalled that

> In my study years at Bais Yosef [], the yeshiva stressed character-building and ethics. The students studied *musar* writings [], including Salanter's own writings. A powerful central theme in Rabbi Israel Salanter's thinking was that you express your relationship to God in your obligations to your fellow human beings. (Freedman 33)

The *musar* teachings of Israel Salanter were of great import to Greenberg. So much so that, in the 1960s, he would establish a Jewish day school in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, named SAR Academy, an acronym for 'Salanter-Akiba-Riverdale.' Moreover, in a brief entry in the 1972 edition of the Encyclopedia Judaica, Greenberg was described as "a leading exponent of the Musar movement"[38] (Bernstein). Reflecting on his father's example of caring for people in a way that affirmed their intrinsic value, Greenberg wrote

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[38] The 2007 edition of the Encyclopedia Judaica has an updated entry on Greenberg that makes no mention of the *Musar* movement.

that, "I feel that this model gave me the psychological freedom to think in terms of pluralism. When I see Reform Jews doing their service on *Shabbat*…my father's model enables me to not have the instinctive feeling – which most Orthodox Jews feel – of anger or rejection" (Freedman 35). The influence of his father and the *Musar* tradition reflect the fact that Greenberg's formative encounters laid the groundwork for the development of his theology.

As I have already noted, Greenberg's early writings betrayed his conflicted thinking about cross-group encounters. On the one hand, he expressed a concern that the encounter with 'America' would lead to an existential threat to the Jewish community. On the other hand, he was in favor of finding a way "to assimilate American experience and culture critically" (Greenberg, "Freedom" 19). He also called for deeper encounters between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews, apparently without fear of a threat to Orthodoxy. Towards the end of the 1960s, Greenberg expanded his exploration of encounter and published his first two essays addressing the relationship between Christians and Jews. The two essays, entitled "The Cultural Revolution and Religious Unity" and "The New Encounter of Judaism and Christianity," were published in 1967 and written for both Jewish and Christian audiences. It was in these essays that he would bring together his concept of the image of God, outlined above, and his concerns about the open society that were first expressed in "Adventure in Freedom." The two essays express similar ideas in their treatments of the open society in light of the image of God idea.[39]

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[39] All citations in this section will be from "The Cultural Revolution and Religious Unity."

In Greenberg's discussion of the open society, he highlighted a specific aspect of the Cultural Revolution that he called "the universalization of culture" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 98). According to Greenberg, the source of this revolution was,

> The technological and transportation revolution that has made 'thy neighbor' a universal concept; the industrialization and new mobility that have led to extraordinary interchange of population; the mixing in the urban technopolis – all are multiplied a thousand fold in their impact by vicarious, but real, total encounter with others through communication media. (Greenberg, "Revolution" 98)

For Greenberg, the total encounter was more than just "a mere product of technological forces." As he put it, "It is an expansion of human consciousness. In Biblical terms, it constitutes an encounter and recognition of the 'image of God' found in all men" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 98). In other words, Greenberg presented a new understanding of the meaning of the open society that was based in a theology of encounter. Put simply, the American open society, as no other society before it, increased the opportunity for encounters with other images of God. For Greenberg, the result of these encounters would be "The appropriation and internalization of the sacredness and reality of the other [that] forces a new theological and human encounter with him" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 98). Recall that, according to Greenberg, 'the image of God' is shorthand for what he believed to be the divinely-endowed equality, infinite value, and uniqueness of each human being. As such, "This encounter leads to the demand that the image of God be freed and restored where it has been enslaved or defaced" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 98). In this new orientation toward, and embrace of, the open society, Greenberg perceived a messianic opportunity to treat all humans justly.

135

In this image-of-God-intoxicated reality, Greenberg suggested that the assumptions that informed religious communities in the past were no longer viable. In his words, "The permeability and interaction of contemporary cultural settings are rapidly destroying the three most powerful ancillary supports of the religious community of the previous era" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 99). The first of the old 'supports' that Greenberg claimed were being destroyed by the open society was that of separation. The new reality "yields to new human encounter which shows that the other is fully human and makes us experience his moral and/or religious integrity" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 99). For Greenberg, the new encounter resulted in an affirmative appreciation for others that replaced the "sense of intrinsic apartness of the faithful." The second support was described as "the caricature of Gentile thought." To Greenberg this meant that, in the new reality "the restriction of information or encounter with [the other] is shaken by contact with the multifaceted reality of the other" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 99). As such, stereotypes that Christians once held about Jews "are inevitabley vulnerable to the reality of face-to-face encounter with the living synagogue or Jew" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 99). The same would be true for Jewish stereotypes about Christians and, although Greenberg did not make this point explicitly, presumably for all encounters between individuals and across group lines. Finally, Greenberg offered that the new reality had undermined "the socially closed inner circle of one's own culture or faith" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 100). In effect, "the openness of society…orients the individual toward the universal group. Thus it weakens, or makes only conditionally valid, the group indoctrination of most men" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 100). Taken together, each of

these three supports[40] represented different sides of the same issue: that, in the open society, we are compelled to encounter the fullness and integrity of the other, to challenge our stereotypes, and to step outside of our own individual communities into the larger society. The combination of all three of these new conditions created a new reality in which Greenberg has suggested that the fullness of the image of God (i.e. the inherent value of each human being) can be encountered.

Rather than reject this new reality, Greenberg called on his readers to respond to it: "We need new images to express and guide our new combination of commitment and full encounter with the other" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 100). Instead of hearkening back to a Kallen-esque semi-isolationist brand of cultural pluralism, Greenberg saw the open society as a call for religious communities to find ways to come into even deeper encounter with each other. As a result of this new orientation, Greenberg urged his readers that religious education needed to "not only be open to the world, but [to] systematic[ally] shun[] the easy victories of internal apologetics," and that "It means the painful redoing of textbooks and scholarship to eliminate the caricatures of the other" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 101). He also called for "a greater focus on rationality and understanding – an agnosticism toward the use of faith or submission in pedagogy" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 99). In their new reality, people would rely upon "freedom and voluntarism" as the basis of religious affirmation, meaning that commitment could no longer be demanded on the basis of simple faith or submission. As such, Greenberg took seriously the implications of the open society for the way that religious groups would

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[40] Greenberg actually offered "the death of a *fourth* ancillary support: the popular orientation to God as the supplier of daily fishes and loaves" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 99). In other words, Greenberg detected a decline in piety.

need to re-evaluate the role of education to help navigate the new terrain. Greenberg also suggested that the removal of stereotypes would result in the need for "a fixed policy of deepening love of one's own faith rather than the easy highlights of contrast with the straw man of the other" (Greenberg, "Revolution" 101). Essentially, Greenberg's prescriptions underlined the need for each individual and group to develop a more sophisticated religious worldview that he believed was both a product of, and would serve as protection from, the encounter with the open society.

Greenberg's conception of the image of God provided the theological basis for his willingness to engage the open society. But it was his actual encounters with non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews that generated the need for theological justification. Despite his concerns for the future of American Jewry, the power of his own experiences meant that he was unwilling to reject the new reality of the open society. For Greenberg, the opportunity to encounter the other – and therefore the image of God – was of paramount importance. As he wrote, almost forty years later, "According to my nascent theology, truly knowing the other translated into experiencing the intrinsic human dignities found in every image of God – infinite value, equality, and uniqueness" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 10). For the new encounter to succeed, Greenberg called for a shift in religious thinking that would be reflective of and responsive to what he described as the new cultural revolution.

In 1968, Greenberg published what would be his only essay in the pages of *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*. Similarly to his essay in *Yavneh Studies*, this publication was primarily intended for an Orthodox readership. It would also be his most explicit treatment of pluralism in the 1960s and one that would lay the

groundwork for his future explorations of the subject. The essay, entitled "Jewish Values

and the Changing American Ethic," revisited many of the themes Greenberg had already

addressed in "Adventure in Freedom." It opened with a description of the widespread

success of American society, pointing to a level of affluence that "is literally

unprecedented in history" (Greenberg, "Values" 42). Greenberg saw in this affluence a

grave danger. Once again channeling his training in the *Musar* tradition, Greenberg railed

against what he described as "the gradual emergence of a hedonistic affluent society"

(Greenberg, "Values" 43) in which consumption and what he called the "fun syndrome"

had become the guiding values in American society.

Greenberg warned that the combination of an increasingly hedonistic affluence

and a rapidly changing social structure in the form of the open society held significant

implications for group life in America. He first described the situation in these terms:

> The new affluence has gone hand in hand with increasing concentration of
> population in large cities and with steady expansion of the mass media of
> communication and inter-class, inter-cultural exposure. Urbanization and
> industrialization alike dictate a new impersonality, emphasis on
> technological efficiency, sophistication and pluralism of perception,
> values and relationships. Universal concerns and awareness of differing
> cultures and value systems are constantly broadcast in every medium and
> individualized by people. The old provincial or particularistic cultural
> settings are crumbling before this communications explosion. (Greenberg,
> "Values" 42)

In this new 'American Ethic,' Greenberg saw a crashing of people and ideas into one

another. As a result of urban development and the rise of "mass media and

communication,"[41] people from different classes and different cultures were increasingly

exposed to one another, resulting in the end of provincialism and particularism. In almost

prophetic terms, Greenberg articulated his understanding of the meaning of the changes

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[41] Reading this from a 21st century point-of-view, Greenberg's picture seems almost quaint.

that were taking place in the open society all around him. Striking a revolutionary note in

his analysis of the changes that were afoot in the new social reality, Greenberg wrote that,

> The result is clearly the overthrow of an older ethos and the emergence of a new American (soon to be, world wide) ethic. Broadly speaking, the earlier ethic was particularistic, normative, with an ascribed identity for the individual (a product of the homogeneous and relatively isolated cultural condition) and anti-hedonist or ascetic in its flavor (a product of the scarcity and need for high productivity and investment levels of the economy). The new ethic is more universalist, relativist, self and pleasure oriented." (Greenberg, "Values" 42-43)

Greenberg claimed that the very nature of identity was undergoing change in the wake of

the 'overthrow' of the old ethic. In his description of the changes that were afoot, he

approximated, descriptively, the shift from Cultural Pluralism to Postethnicity. According

to Greenberg, in the older ethic, identities were particularistic, i.e. distinct from one

another. More importantly, he suggested that they were 'normative' and 'ascribed' –

echoing Horace Kallen's famous statement that "Men may change their clothes, their

politics, their wives, their religions, their philosophies, to a greater or lesser extent: they

cannot change their grandfathers" (Kallen, "Democracy"). By direct contrast, in the new

ethic, Greenberg anticipated something akin to David Hollinger's postethnic America

where identity is "universalist" and "relativist." In that, previously distinct and fixed

identities were now available to all. Whereas identity was previously ascribed, it was now

up for grabs. Greenberg saw in the new ethic of the American open society a fundamental

change in the nature of individual and group identity as a result of the increasing

opportunities for encounters between people.

This changing social reality was not just a threat to the old ethos in general, but

also to the Jewish community in particular. Greenberg wrote that "As it stands now,

140

Judaism is bleeding to death in America. Many of its best sons and daughters are constantly attracted to the new ethos and feel that they must abandon the old to embrace the new" (Greenberg, "Values" 50). Given this pessimistic diagnosis, one would not be surprised if Greenberg were to call for a retreat. After all, how could the American Jewish minority stand up to the tidal wave of the changing American ethic that Greenberg so powerfully described? The options were clear: "There are two major types of response that can be given to this crisis. One possibility is a withdrawal from the culture which is saturated with the new values to a cultural and religious island (perhaps, one should say, ghetto) within" (Greenberg, "Values" 50). Greenberg's parenthetical reference to the ghetto betrayed his bias that this option represented a march backwards into a pre-Enlightenment era, when Jews were physically cut off from the general society.[42] Alternatively, "The other choice is to try to accept, refine and ultimately master the new environment and ethic" (Greenberg, "Values" 50). For this option to succeed, Greenberg stated that it "would require new conceptions, techniques and emphases" (Greenberg, "Values" 50). For Judaism to rise up from its moribund state and prosper in the new American ethic, it would have to undergo significant change.

Greenberg considered both options. Pointing out the difficulty of withdrawal, he anticipated Peter Berger's image of the Lubavitcher Hasidim who "construct[] an artificial *shtetl* for its followers" only to "walk out and take the subway. Outside, waiting, is the emporium of life-styles, identities, and religious preferences that constitutes American pluralism" (Berger 30). In Greenberg's words, it would be difficult to be

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[42] This has been attempted in a number of cases. Possibly the most far-reaching example is that of New Square in Rockland County, NY. New Square is a village inhabited almost entirely by adherents to the Skverer Hasidic sect.

"hermetically sealed off in a society such as ours. The mass media reach everywhere. Ours is a highly porous society, culturally speaking" (Greenberg, "Values" 51). In addition, Greenberg offered three more challenges to the option of withdrawal. The first, the weakest of the arguments, was that "It could lead to a situation where the withdrawn Orthodox Jew learns the worst [] rather than the best aspects of American life" (Greenberg, "Values" 52). Second, such a move would result in "writing off millions of Jews to total assimilation" (Greenberg, "Values" 52). Finally, and most powerfully, Greenberg declared that "withdrawal reflects not only simplicity of faith but perhaps also a poverty of imagination. It sees Judaism as possible only in a certain cultural setting and ethic" (Greenberg, "Values" 53). This was unacceptable to Greenberg, whose theological commitment to Judaism demanded that "If it is divine, surely it can outlast the wreckage of an earlier ethos. If the voice from Sinai crystallized for one glorious moment in Roptchitz and Berditchev, can it not crystallize again in Rockaway and Boston?" (Greenberg, "Values" 53). In other words, Judaism must be able to withstand the open society without having to retreat from it.

Instead of opting for withdrawal, Greenberg called for direct engagement with the new ethic. At the outset, Greenberg repeated his warning about the combination of the affluence of American society (read: hedonism) and the changing social structure in which different people encountered each other unlike any time before in history. Given his suspicions about withdrawal and his belief that Judaism could flourish in an open society, it followed that what required renewed attention was the hedonism that was so pervasive in American society. As a result, Greenberg posited that Judaism could respond to the materialistic tendency in the new American ethos, not by rejecting materialism out

of hand, but rather by recognizing that "Holiness in mainstream Judaism involves sanctifying the secular and experiencing it in value oriented ways" (Greenberg, "Values" 54).[43] The result would be openness to the new ethic that would be guided by an orientation that attempted to place limits on the hedonism that had resulted from the great affluence of American society.

But what of the dangers of encounter? In response to the changing social reality in which different people have no choice but to encounter one another, Greenberg expressed an early articulation of his theology of intra- and inter-group encounter. In the open society, he identified two parallel realities: "On the one hand, liberal universalism tends to assume the disappearance of all particular groups. Thus, in the name of freedom, the right to exist differently is challenged or undermined" (Greenberg, "Values" 55-6). In this reality, group identity is undermined by the values of liberal American society. Whereas, "On the other hand, the new respect for all men and the openness and interchange lead to the possibility of true pluralism" (Greenberg, "Values" 55-6). In this second reality, there was an opportunity to reassert identity. As we have already seen from Greenberg's essay, "The Cultural Revolution and Religious Unity," this would not be achieved by withdrawing from the open society; instead, it would be arrived at though the direct encounter with different people. In this formulation, Greenberg presented an innovative understanding of pluralism that was predicated on 'openness' and 'interchange' instead of isolation and withdrawal. It is this second reality that Greenberg affirmed.

Here, for the first time, Greenberg employed the language of 'pluralism' to refer to an affirmative model for American Jews to navigate the changing American ethic. As

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[43] Greenberg would later refer to this as 'Holy secularity.' For more on the concept, see Greenberg, "The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History." *Perspectives* 1981: 1-26.

he put it, "true pluralism" means "genuine acceptance of the Jew for the first time and a willingness to recognize his right to be a Jew – not by acting like a Gentile but in being himself" (Greenberg, "Values" 56). Greenberg critiqued the popular melting pot version of American society in which all distinctions melt away and instead saw an opportunity for greater commitment to particular identities. He continued, "Brotherhood activity in America has been marked by the emphasis on the similar or identical nature of all religions. Implied here is the reason why men are brothers" (Greenberg, "Values" 56). Rejecting the 'brotherhood' approach to unity that flattened out differences, Greenberg suggested that "This mode is now being superceded [*sic*] by a search for a pluralism that respects differences" (Greenberg, "Values" 56). He discerned that "The will to encounter the other in his own terms opens up the possibility that Judaism can speak in its own authentic categories and yet be heard." (Greenberg, "Values" 56). In this articulation Greenberg presented a vision of pluralism that claimed that American Jews could reassert their identity in the context of the changing American ethic and that a Judaism that "can speak in its own authentic categories" should welcome the open society and the opportunity for new encounters. To be clear, Greenberg recognized an opportunity in the changing American ethic that was hard-wired for diverse encounters. Rather than a threat to Jewish identity, Greenberg saw it as a goad to strengthening identity in the face of encounter.

A shortcoming of Greenberg's vision in the 1960s was that it suggested that one could have their cake and eat it, too. At this stage in his thinking, Greenberg imagined a Judaism that could develop "new conceptions, techniques and emphases" that could withstand the open society. It would take him a number of years to fully appreciate the

144

additional possibility of a transformation of identity. Nevertheless, even at this early stage, Greenberg's vision was prescient. Already in the 1960s, he intuited and welcomed the unfolding of a proto-postethnic America. He also began to conceptualize a theologically-charged model for individual and group life in America that was radically different from, and more ambitious than, Horace Kallen's cultural pluralism ever was. While Kallen imagined a "federation or commonwealth of national cultures" (Kallen 108) living side by side with precious little interaction, Greenberg called for nothing less than "the will to encounter the other" (Greenberg, "Values" 56).

Irving Greenberg produced a significant number of publications in the 1960s while also navigating a career that took him from the faculty of Yeshiva University to the pulpit of the Riverdale Jewish Center. His involvement with the campus-based group Yavneh and his participation in the Canadian group led by David Hartman established him as a leading figure in both the Orthodox and *Klal Yisrael* communities. His publications and various public speaking engagements during the decade gave him ample opportunities to work out his ideas on a range of topics that would become central to his intellectual legacy. During these years, Greenberg explored questions of intra-Jewish and Christian-Jewish relations and began to develop his theology of religious pluralism. Although his most significant work on Holocaust theology would come in the 1970s and 80s, some early thinking on the subject can be found here also. It was also during this decade that he developed his image of God idea that would be central to so much of his work throughout the rest of his life and also provide the basis for his commitment to engaging the open society. It would be years, in some cases decades, before any of these areas of intellectual pursuit would receive systematic attention. What is clear, however, is

145

that they were issues that were already of great import to Greenberg while he was still in his late 20s and early 30s and that he began to lay the groundwork for them in the heady years of the 1960's.

Chapter Five

Irving Greenberg's life had taken on new dimensions in the 1970s. No longer

working as a history professor at Yeshiva University or as a synagogue rabbi at the

Riverdale Jewish Center, by 1972 he had shifted his academic career to become the

founding chairman of the Department of Jewish Studies at the City College of the City

University, New York (CUNY). While at CUNY, and working alongside Steven Shaw

and Elie Wiesel, "he founded the National Jewish Conference Center (NJCC), which

eventually evolved into CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership."

Greenberg would go on to direct that organization on a full-time basis after he gave up

his position at City College in 1976 and would serve as its director until 1997 (Katz and

Bayme 61-2). During the more than two decades as the director of the NJCC and then

CLAL, Greenberg would dedicate a significant portion of his writing and activism to the

subject of intra-Jewish relations. The ideas that he only began to explore in the 1960s

would receive fuller attention in his publications in the 1970s and beyond, with his most

systematic work on the subject of pluralism coming in the 1980s and 1990s.

In 1986, Greenberg's organization, CLAL, published a special edition of its

periodical, *Perspectives*. This edition of *Perspectives* included two important and

provocative contributions from Greenberg. The first, inspired by Reuven Bulka's *The

Coming Cataclysm: The Orthodox-Reform Rift and the Future of the Jewish People*

(1984), was entitled "Will there be One Jewish People by the Year 2000?" It would

become one of the most influential essays on American Jewish identity in the last quarter

of the twentieth century. The second essay was entitled "Towards a Principled

Pluralism." Both essays were written for Jewish audiences with a foreboding vision of impending doom resulting from the changing demographics within the American Jewish community.[1]

Despite the title of Greenberg's second essay - "Towards a Principled Pluralism" – he failed to present a clear and systematic definition of *Principled Pluralism*. Attempting a definition, Greenberg wrote that "Pluralism means more than allowing others to do and believe things which one cannot accept" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 25). Here, Greenberg implicitly distinguished pluralism from tolerance. As Wendy Brown has defined it, tolerance "Like patience…is necessitated by something one would prefer did not exist" (Brown 25). As a result, "tolerance checks an attitude or condition of disapproval, disdain, or revulsion with a particular kind of overcoming – one that is enabled either by the fortitude to throw off the danger or by the capaciousness to incorporate it or license its existence" (Brown 26). However, the examples Greenberg cited in support of this claim only served to undermine the very distinction he was trying to make. For example, he wrote that "…in a democracy…[t]he majority restricts its authority over the minority" such that while "A majority of Americans would undoubtedly prefer restricting pornography[, t]hey control themselves for the sake of a greater good and for fear that such intervention will lead to a fundamental loss of liberties" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 25). His second example was that "…a majority of Americans would not at all mind some greater 'Christianization' of American public life. However, they restrain themselves either by accepting fundamental

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[1] Greenberg cited, among other items, denominational differences in terms of conversion to Judaism, Jewish status as a result of patrilineal descent, and *mamzerut* (halakhically illegitimate children) as evidence for the 'coming cataclysm.' See below, p. 164ff.

constitutional limits or by self-limiting political behavior…" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 25). Both examples were nothing if they were not "allowing others to do and believe things which one cannot accept." As such, Greenberg's first attempt at a definition failed to distinguish pluralism from tolerance.

In his conclusion to the essay, Greenberg offered a different approach:

> Pluralism implies a willingness to recognize shared values and goals and to appreciate the positive motives that drive each of the groups. This will pave the way for discovering tactical solutions that narrow differences or reduce intensity of problems. Ultimately, such models will lead to the possibility of meeting the fullness of the needs of the others without surrendering principles. (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 31)

This second definition of pluralism describes a state of social harmony that is based upon mutual respect and a desire to overcome divisions. Recalling that Greenberg was writing for and about an American Jewish community that he perceived to be at a crisis point, the call for "tactical solutions" that would "narrow differences or reduce intensity of problems" should not come as a surprise. Greenberg's closing suggestion that pluralism should allow for a "meeting of the fullness of the needs of the others without surrendering principles" is reminiscent of Horace Kallen's orchestral metaphor in that it called for harmony without change. As we will see, however, his vision extended beyond just a desire to create a harmonious social environment and instead sought to fully engage the transformative power of encounter.

Before we turn to Greenberg's theology of encounter, we must first consider for a moment the source of his desire even for the type of social harmony described above. After all, and as I have shown in chapter three, plenty of American Jews were reconciled to the fact that some divisions were unassailable. What was it that propelled Greenberg to

reject the divisions in the Jewish community and call for greater togetherness? Sandra B. Lubarsky has correctly observed that, "The starting point for Greenberg's activism and intellectual work, including his approach to religious pluralism, is the Holocaust" (Lubarsky 113). As we shall see, the Holocaust does figure prominently in Greenberg's call for greater harmony within the Jewish community; however, it was by looking at Jewish history through a covenantal lens that Greenberg was ultimately able to move beyond the Holocaust as the basis for his commitment to intra-Jewish pluralism.

There are two aspects to Greenberg's covenantal theology. The first draws upon the ideas of his teacher, Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and the second represents Greenberg's original contribution to the field of Holocaust theology. They are: 1) The Call to Unity and 2) The Maturation of the Covenant.[2] As we have seen, the notion that the Jewish people should hear a call to unity in the wake of the horrors of the Holocaust was clearly expressed already in Greenberg's first published essay in *Yavneh Studies*.[3] Finding a theological basis in the writings of his teacher, Joseph B. Soloveitchik,[4] Greenberg

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[2] In "Towards a Principled Pluralism," Greenberg offered two additional rationales for his commitment to greater harmony in the Jewish community. He referred to them as 'The Halachic Way" and 'There is no Willful Heresy Today.' Each of these arguments is significantly weaker than Greenberg's other theoretical bases for pluralism and will not be considered in depth here. In short, in the first argument, Greenberg tried to reinterpret non-Orthodox Judaism in a halachic light, suggesting that, for example, "It can be argued that Reform has not dropped the halacha but has given exceptional halachic weight to factors which historically were given less weight" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 30). By his own admission, "To make this concept of halachic continuum credible, Reform and Reconstructionists will have to rethink their self-images" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 31). As is clear, Greenberg was calling on non-Orthodox movements to see themselves as something that they are not. Greenberg's second argument drew on the halachic ruling of the Chazon Ish that stated that "in this era there are no *apikorsim* and the ancient laws vis-à-vis heretics do not apply" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 31). Here Greenberg acknowledged that, in the modern world, traditional religious assumptions are less obvious and that, rather than dismissing 'heretics' out of hand, "it is up to us to bring them back with bonds of love" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 31). The condescension in this suggestion is clear. Neither of these arguments represents the best of Greenberg's thinking on pluralism.
[3] See above, pp. 107-117.
[4] For more on Greenberg's relationship with Soloveitchik, see Greenberg, "A Lifetime of Encounter with the Rav." 26 March 2007. *The Commentator.*

expanded the idea of the call to unity in "Towards a Principled Pluralism." Drawing on Soloveitchik's influential treatise, *Fate and Destiny: From the Holocaust to the State of Israel,*[5] Greenberg declared that "In the Holocaust, all Jews learned that their fate was one…Rabbi Soloveitchik rules that traditional Jews share the covenant of fate with all Jews" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 27). In his essay "Will there be One Jewish People by the Year 2000?," Greenberg made the point in even more stark terms: "There were no distinctions in the gas chambers" (Greenberg, "One Jewish People" 6). The covenant of fate represented one side of Soloveitchik's covenantal theology. Turning to the second part of Soloveitchik's covenantal schema – the covenant of destiny – Greenberg claimed that "[The State of] Israel represents Jewish unity. It was built by religious and secular Jews alike" (Greenberg, "One Jewish People" 6). As Michael Oppenheim has pointed out, "the connection between the Holocaust and the State of Israel runs very deep for Greenberg" (Oppenheim 198). Taken together, Greenberg fumed that "Theologically, the separation of the Jewish people is an outrage. We live after the Holocaust and the rebirth of Israel. Clearly, the overwhelming message of those two events is the unity of the Jewish people…" (Greenberg, "One Jewish People" 6). Here, Greenberg's appeal that the Jewish people should feel a sense of unity was driven by a deep emotional response to the horrors of the Holocaust and the euphoric achievement of the establishment of the State of Israel.

As has been shown, the impact of the Holocaust on Greenberg's thinking was seismic. However, looking back, Greenberg has suggested that an important shift in his thinking had taken place that reflected a move beyond his categorization as a Holocaust

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[5] The book was based on an address that Soloveitchik gave at Yeshiva University in 1956.

theologian. While acknowledging that, "From the sixties on, people had generally classified my thought as Holocaust theology," Greenberg has admitted that "in truth, I was never pleased with that designation." Concerned that too narrow a focus on the Holocaust "seemed to turn the *Shoah* into the God of the system," Greenberg came to the realization that "the *Shoah* was the occasion – the adventitious, personal stimulation – but not the essential cause of the needed shift in religious thinking" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 29). As a result, Greenberg turned his focus to the development of a broader theology of the unfolding covenant between God and the Jewish people.

In his 1981 essay, entitled "The Third Great Cycle of Jewish History," Greenberg presented his description of an unfolding covenantal myth-history[6] that also provided a second source for his commitment to pluralism. This new emphasis placed Greenberg in a long tradition of Jewish covenantal thought that began in the Hebrew Bible and continued in rabbinic and theological literature throughout Jewish history.[7] In his consideration of Jewish myth-history, Greenberg suggested that Jewish history had unfolded in three stages. In the first stage, the world of Biblical Judaism was one in which God's role was dominant and the Biblical personalities were largely passive. He described it in this way: "During the Biblical era, the covenantal relationship itself was

[6] I refer to Greenberg's covenantal theology as myth-history for two reasons: First, because it narrates a version of Jewish history that is periodized into three broad stages that are less than historically rigorous. Second, because it references mythical biblical events in the same narrative sweep as verifiable historical events such as the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. None of this undermines Greenberg's schema as a theological system; it would simply be inaccurate to describe it as purely 'historical.'

[7] The Jewish idea of covenant (*brit*) has its origins in the Hebrew Bible. There are multiple biblical covenants (pl. *britot*) between god and biblical characters, including Noah, Abraham, and at the theophany at Sinai. The Talmud offers its own covenantal theology that includes multiple and sometime contradictory conceptions of the covenant between god and the Jewish people. In the modern period, thinkers such as David Hartman and Eugene Borowitz and, of course, Irving Greenberg, have taken up the mantle of covenantal thought. For a useful overview of classical and more modern manifestations of covenantal thought, see Cooper, *Contemporary Covenantal Thought: Interpretations of Covenant in the Thought of David Hartman and Eugene Borowitz*. Boston: Academic Studies Press (2012).

marked by a high degree of divine intervention…it is very clear that God is the initiator, the senior partner, who punishes, rewards and enforces the partnership if the Jews slacken" (Greenberg, "Third Great Cycle" 3-4). Analyzing Greenberg's system, Michael Oppenheim has added that, "In the biblical period God was perceived as the sole redeemer and the covenant was a contract between unequals. God was the adult, the actor in history, and the Jewish people, his children, remained loyal to the covenant primarily by being obedient" (Oppenheim 195). In this stage of Jewish history, the Jewish people are likened to a child who is wholly dependent upon his or her parents.

Greenberg then contrasted the biblical era with the period of Rabbinic Judaism, in which he perceived the development of a greater level of partnership between God and the Jewish people. He illustrated the difference in this way:

> In the Biblical period, God's presence was manifest by splitting the sea and drowning the Egyptians. In the Second Temple siege, God did not show up…to save the day. God had, as it were, withdrawn, become more hidden, so as to give humans more freedom and to call the Jews to more responsible partnership in the covenant. (Greenberg, "Third Great Cycle" 5)

According to Greenberg, catastrophe accompanied the Jewish people from the first stage of the covenant to the second. Oppenheim described it in this way:

> In response to this catastrophe, the Rabbis rethought some of the basic concepts of Judaism. They recognized that God no longer directly intervened in history, which left the stage open to human initiative and responsibility. The covenant form was reconfigured to reflect a more equal partnership. (Oppenheim 195)

As Oppenheim has pointed out, in the wake of the destruction of the second temple, there was also a rebuilding of Jewish life in the form of Rabbinic Judaism. It was through these acts of human initiative, creativity, responsibility, and rebuilding that Greenberg saw the

arrival of the second stage of the covenant. According to Greenberg's schema, this second stage of the covenant lasted for almost two thousand years.

Turning to the modern period, beginning with the European Enlightenment and Emancipation that began in the eighteenth century, the third stage of the unfolding of the covenant was underway. Greenberg was guarded in his assessment of the Enlightenment: "Judaism's first confrontation with modernity can be analyzed as an initial attempt to enter a third era" (Greenberg, "Third Great Cycle" 7). However, "in retrospect, we see that this initial attempt to enter a third era of Judaism was stillborn and did not change the fundamental Jewish condition. The Holocaust showed that Jewish powerlessness had not changed in the modern period" (Greenberg, "Third Great Cycle" 8). Ultimately, it would take another catastrophe, the Holocaust, and another rebuilding of Jewish life, this time with the establishment of the State of Israel, to finally begin the third era in earnest.[8] As Oppenheim has described it,

> In turn, the Holocaust demarcates the end of the rabbinic paradigm and the beginning of a new stage…History and the movement toward redemption is now given over to human efforts to an even greater extent. Correspondingly, the Jewish people have become the 'senior partner' in the covenantal enterprise. In Greenberg's words; 'God now acts primarily, at least on the visible level, through human activity – as is appropriate in a partnership whose human participant is growing up.' (Oppenheim 195)

In this third and final stage, "the implications of the covenant are being realized in the fullness of human responsibility" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 29). The result is

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[8] It should not go unmentioned that Greenberg's covenant theology has the potential to transform the catastrophes of the destruction of the Temple and the Holocaust into redemptive acts. The religious and moral problems inherent in this possibility should not be lost on the reader. A parallel observation can be made regarding the establishment of the State of Israel. As has been documented, the establishment of the State of Israel resulted in the mistreatment of many indigenous inhabitants living in Palestine prior to the declaration of independence in 1948. As a result, Greenberg's theology also allows for the possibility – indirectly, to be sure - that their suffering was, in some way, a necessary part of the unfolding of the covenant between God and the Jewish People. Any serious consideration of Greenberg's covenantal theology will have to take these questions into consideration.

that "No longer intimidated by instant punishment or controlled by overt rewards, human beings are free to act out of love and internalized vision…" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 30). This final stage, what Greenberg described as the maturation of the covenant, represented the culmination of Greenberg's tri-stage covenantal theology.

The central conceptual innovation in Greenberg's covenantal theology was his idea of the Voluntary Covenant.[9] In "The Third Great Cycle," Greenberg made a passing reference to this critical aspect of the third stage of the covenant. He wrote that there had been a "reformulation of the covenant into a voluntary covenant" and that, in light of the horrors of the Holocaust, "There can hardly be any punishment, divine or human, that can force Jews into the covenantal role when it is obviously far more risky to choose to be Jewish" (Greenberg, "Third Great Cycle" 18). In this brief section, Greenberg unveiled his most far-reaching theological innovation. Recognizing that the notion of the voluntary covenant needed further attention, in 1982 Greenberg published the essay, "Voluntary Covenant," in which he presented the idea in greater detail. In a key section of the essay, subtitled "The Shattering of the Covenant," Greenberg described his understanding of the meaning of the destruction of Jewish life during the Holocaust. He posited that, as a result of the Holocaust, "The crisis of the covenant runs deep; one must consider the possibility that it is over." Greenberg continued:

> morally speaking, God must repent of the covenant, i.e. do *teshuvah*[10] for
> having given his chosen people a task[11] that was unbearably cruel and

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[9] It is beyond the scope of this work to describe Greenberg's conception of covenant in full. It will suffice to state that, for Greenberg, covenant is the method by which God and humanity partner in the achievement of redemption. For a useful discussion of covenantal theology that addresses Greenberg's work secondarily, see Cooper, *Contemporary Covenantal Thought: Interpretations of Covenant in the Thought of David Hartman and Eugene Borowitz*. Boston: Academic Studies Press (2012).

[10] Repentance.

[11] I.e. the task of upholding the covenant.

dangerous without having provided for their protection. Morally speaking, then, God can have no claims on the Jews by dint of the covenant…It can no longer be commanded…If the Jews keep the covenant after the Holocaust, then it can no longer be for the reason that it is commanded or because it is enforced by reward or punishment. (Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant" 34-5)

Putting it bluntly, Greenberg concluded, "What then happened to the covenant? I submit that its authority was broken" (Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant" 35). His suggestion that the covenant was broken was a radical rejection of traditional Jewish belief. It was also a powerful example of the transformative impact of his encounters in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement.

As Greenberg has recalled, "In 1976, Zachor, the Holocaust research Center branch of CLAL, ran a conference for Jewish and Christian scholars titled 'The Work of Elie Wiesel and the Holocaust universe.'" (Greenberg, "For the Sake" 26). Reflecting back on the conference, Greenberg wrote that "one paper jolted me to the core: Roy Eckardt's[12] 'The Recantation of the Covenant?'" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 26). In short, Eckardt claimed that, because the Holocaust was the price the Jews paid for being party to the covenant with God, "the only acceptable *teshuvah* for God would be to recant the divine covenant and thus remove the Jews from the extreme danger they were in" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 26). The impact of Eckardt's thinking on Greenberg was profound: "That night, I tossed and turned in my bed, blistered by the searing force of Eckardt's statement…" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 26-7). After what Greenberg described as years of searching, "at last I came to a realization that reconciled the conflicts that were tearing me apart. Roy Eckardt was absolutely right…But his prophetic insight was

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[12] Arthur Roy Eckardt (1918-1998), professor of Religion at Lehigh University and a clergyman of the United Methodist Church, was a leading figure in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement.

'off' in one way. The Abrahamic-Sinaitic covenant was not finished – but the *commanded stage of the covenant* had come to its end" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 27). Greenberg's profound encounter with Eckardt through the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement led him to one of his most significant theological breakthroughs.

Critically, Greenberg could not accept Eckardt's conclusion that the covenant had come to an end. In his formulation, the end of the period of the commanded stage of the covenant was not the end of the covenant. Turning again to the establishment of the State of Israel, Greenberg wrote that the Jewish people, now "released from its obligations, chose voluntarily to take it on again" (Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant" 35). In the post-Holocaust age of the Voluntary Covenant, Greenberg has suggested that, as a result, all Jews are veritable converts to Judaism, choosing to live as Jews in an era in which they are no longer obligated to do so. The implications of the stage of the voluntary covenant were significant for Greenberg's emerging theology of intra-Jewish pluralism. Describing the meaning of this new reality, Steven T. Katz has pointed out that

> in an age of voluntarism rather than coercion, living Jewishly under the covenant can no longer be interpreted monolithically, that is, only in a strict halakhic fashion. A genuine Jewish pluralism, a Judaism of differing options and interpretations, is the only legitimate foundation in the age of Auschwitz. Orthodox observance, no less than Reform, Conservative, or 'secular' practices are voluntary – none can claim either automatic authority or exclusive priority in the contemporary Jewish world. (Katz, "Greenberg" 71)

In Greenberg's own words:

> In the age of the voluntary covenant…all who opt to live as Jews automatically state their readiness for martyrdom, not only for themselves but for their children and grandchildren as well…In the new era, the voluntary covenant is the theological base of a genuine pluralism. Pluralism is not a matter of tolerance made necessary by living in a non-Jewish reality, nor is it pity for one who does not know any better. It is a

recognition that all Jews have chosen to make the fundamental Jewish statement at great personal risk and cost. The present denominations are paths for the covenant-minded all leading toward the final goal. (Greenberg, "Voluntary Covenant" 38)

Greenberg's innovative contribution to post-Holocaust covenantal theology provided a basis for his claim that all expressions of Judaism and Jewish life were equally valid. As he wrote in his first reference to the voluntary stage of the covenant, "Pluralism is also the theological consequence of the reformulation of the covenant into a voluntary covenant…Given the voluntary nature of Jewish commitment, there cannot be one imposed standard of Jewish loyalty or excellence" (Greenberg, "Third Great Cycle" 18). In the new era, Greenberg suggested, "A fuller covenantal role, properly understood, implies that God must allow human responsibility to be exercised responsibly…Under this approach, all movements have in common covenantal motivation and commitment" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 29). Plugging his pluralistic vision back into the covenantal model, Greenberg wrote that,

> In earlier biblical times, prophets could not legitimately contradict one another because God spoke authoritatively; therefore, in cases of prophetic conflict, one of the contenders had to be a false prophet (see Jeremiah 28). In talmudic times, the increased level of human participation in articulating Torah meant that the Rabbis were authorized to use their personal judgment to ascertain God's will. Consequently, Rabbis could disagree on the law, and conflicting positions could both be right. Now, in a post-*Shoah* world where humans have been invited to even greater and more responsible partnership in the covenant, the range of pluralism must be extended even more widely. (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 30-1)

For Greenberg, the maturation of the covenant holds within it an inherent theological basis for the recognition of the validity of the widest range of expressions of Judaism.

The reactions to these claims were harsh. Greenberg recalled that, "Many devout

Jews and Christians were alarmed by this concept of a voluntary covenant. They feared

that the concept surrendered the classic religious dimension of obligation" (Greenberg,

For the Sake 28). The result was that, by the time Greenberg would publish "Towards a

Principled Pluralism," in 1986, the language of the voluntary covenant had disappeared

and instead he referred only to his more sweeping covenantal theology that would cover

the three stages of Jewish history. It would not be until the 2004 publication of his

collection of essays, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between*

Judaism and Christianity, that Greenberg would revisit the concept of the voluntary

covenant, at which time he would reaffirm it. By that time, Greenberg would fully

envelop the idea of the voluntary covenant in his larger covenantal schema. In his words,

"…the covenant model always pointed toward the idea that humanity would one day

mature into full responsibility" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 28) such that they would be

empowered to voluntarily affirm the covenant.[13]

Greenberg's call to unity and his covenantal theology each present a different

basis for his desire for greater harmony in the Jewish community and his commitment to

pluralism as defined in "Towards a Principled Pluralism." The call to unity appealed to

the fact that Jews were united in the destruction of the Holocaust and the establishment of

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[13] Simon Cooper has pointed out that Greenberg's covenantal theology "…is very similar to Hartman's presentation of *tsimtsum* [divine contraction], although Greenberg does not use that kabbalistic term" and that "One can only assume that Greenberg is uncomfortable with the kabbalistic connotation of *tsimtsum*, or that the concept itself has found its way into his thinking organically without the term normally used to describe it" (Cooper 188). In fact, Greenberg does make an explicit reference to "*tzimtzum*" in the context of his covenantal theology in the introduction to *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth*. Greenberg wrote that, "Finally, in the current post-Holocaust era, God's further *tzimtzum* (self-limitation) summons humans to full responsibility for the outcome of the divine plan" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 30). Moreover, in an unpublished manuscript of his forthcoming *magnum opus*, Greenberg fully embraces the language of *tzimtzum* in place of 'voluntary covenant.'

the State of Israel. One shortcoming of this argument was that Greenberg failed to distinguish between the *extremis* of two of the most significant events in modern Jewish history and the prosaic nature of day-to-day life in the American Jewish community. It is much easier to unite when one is either fighting for survival (as in the Holocaust) or rebuilding after destruction (the establishment of the State of Israel), than it is when one is living in relative peace and prosperity, as in the contemporary American Jewish context. The call to unity also placed the Holocaust and the State of Israel at the very center of American Jewish identity, a relationship that is currently being significantly renegotiated by American Jews in the twenty-first century.[14] All the while, Greenberg's concept of the voluntary covenant proved too controversial for many others.

Although the call to unity and the maturation of the covenant both reflected deeply held and thoughtfully developed arguments for the essential validity of a positive conception of pluralism, they largely failed to take hold. There were no policy changes on the part of the Conservative or Reform movements in response to "One Jewish People" and the American Orthodox Jewish community generally ignored Greenberg's ideas, or worse, vilified him for them.[15] Furthermore, the call to unity and Greenberg's covenantal theology also fell short of articulating the fullness of Greenberg's theology of inter- and intra-group encounter. In fact, his vision went further than just a validation of Jewish

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[14] For example, see Magid, "Dogmas and Allegiances in Contemporary Judaism." *Sh'ma*. 40:669 (2010) 3-4.

[15] However, it must be acknowledged that Greenberg did have an impact on the laity. As Steven Bayme has pointed out,

> Through various CLAL programs and venues – classes, retreats, publications, etc, – it became primarily a vehicle for adult Jewish education. Federations across the country enrolled current and future leaders in CLAL programs and classes…The net effect of his teaching and influence upon federation leadership was to challenge Jewish organizations to take tradition seriously, think in Jewish terms, and, most important, to raise the profile of Jewish education among communal priorities" (Katz and Bayme 7-8).

diversity, as per his prescriptions in "Towards a Principled Pluralism." It was not enough that Jews would express their Judaism in different ways in the new era, or that those expressions would be defended as valid in the age of the voluntary covenant. Greenberg also called for profound encounters among Jews and between Jews and non-Jews out of a desire to develop a greater appreciation for the image of God. It is to this subject that we turn next.

As I have already noted above, Greenberg's thinking about intra-Jewish relations was deeply influenced by his participation in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement. Following his life-changing encounter with the Holocaust while serving as a Fulbright scholar in Israel in 1961, he "found numerous Protestant neo-Orthodox writers who yielded up fundamentalist literalism but restated the central claims of the faith with greater sweep and evocative power than before."[16] As a result, "Their sophisticated approach gave the tools and vocabulary to articulate an intellectually credible version of Jewish Orthodoxy for myself" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 5). As Greenberg recalled, following their year in Israel, "Blu [Greenberg's wife] and I decided that upon our return to America we would join the Jewish-Christian dialogue" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 8). The goal was clear: "We felt that the only way Christianity would change its traditional 'teaching of contempt' for Judaism and Jewry would be if the dialogue dealt with theology" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 14). Greenberg understood that the power of the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement was that the parties could influence each other in significant ways. As Mark Krell has pointed out, "Greenberg is one of the first twentieth-century Jewish theologians to attempt a reconfiguration of Jewish and Christian identities

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[16] Greenberg identified Reinhold Niebuhr as the most influential of the Protestant neo-Orthodox thinkers he encountered.

that takes into account their historical and theological interdependence" (Krell 129-30).[17]

The source of this reconfiguration was undoubtedly Greenberg's direct and sustained

encounter with Christian thinkers who were also grappling with the meaning of the

Holocaust for Christianity.[18]

　　As already mentioned above, in describing the transformative nature of these

encounters, Greenberg has written that "none affected me as profoundly as Alice and Roy

[Eckardt]." As Protestant theologians struggling to understand the meaning of the

Holocaust, the Eckardts offered an impassioned critique of Christianity. To Greenberg,

"Their model broke through my neat categories" and "thanks to them, I began to

vicariously grasp the Christian worldview and experience it without the covert

assumptions of superiority and moral judgment that were endemic in Jewish tradition"

(Greenberg, *For the Sake* 19). Thus, the encounter with the Eckardts, and others,

provided an opportunity for Greenberg to reflect on, and refine, his own understanding of

Christianity.

　　Greenberg's participation in the Christian-Jewish dialogue would not only

influence his understanding of Christianity, but it would also provide direction for his

unfolding ideas about intra-Jewish relations. Taking his lead from the dialogue

movement, on more than one occasion Greenberg lamented the fact that "the Jewish

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[17] Of course, Greenberg was neither the first nor the only active participant in the dialogue movement. For example, prior to his involvement, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) and Marc H. Tanenbaum (1925-1992) played key roles during the Second Vatican Council. For an introduction to the fullness of the Christian Jewish dialogue movement, see Fisher, Rudin, and Tanenbaum, *Twenty Years of Jewish-Catholic Relations*. New York: Paulist Press, 1986; Bristow, *No Religion is an Island: The Nostra Aetate Dialogues*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1998; Frymer-Kensky, Novak, Ochs, Sandmel, and Signer, *Christianity in Jewish Terms*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.
[18] For a thorough treatment of Greenberg's reconfiguration of Jewish and Christian identities in light of the Holocaust, see Krell, *Intersecting Pathways: Modern Jewish Theologians in Conversation with Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 103-130.

community developed three organizations to insure continual dialogue with Christians[19] while it has only the Synagogue Council [of America] for intra-Jewish religious contact" (Greenberg, "Emancipation" 62). Writing in the pages of the journal *Conservative Judaism* – itself an example of the kind of cross-denominational encounter he was calling for – Greenberg declared in his 1976 essay, "The End of Emancipation," that

> The community needs many places where rabbis and scholars can come together in serious fashion. Every time there is a crunch on religious or halakhic matters, the participants line up along denominational lines because there has been no serious bridge-building or alliances between the groups…the lack of mechanism for dialogue becomes a major obstacle to the movement and constitutes a spiritual and moral threat to the renewal of Judaism.

He went on to suggest a radical proposal:

> One might propose that nobody should be allowed to practice in the rabbinate after leaving The Jewish Theological Seminary or Hebrew Union College or Yeshiva University, unless they first study together in a center that crosses party lines…Here and in a host of areas where the tradition needs reform, the sociological question of contact is as crucial as the intellectual, philosophical question of what is possible. (Greenberg, "Emancipation" 62)

Greenberg was explicit in his call for greater contact between members of the different denominational streams of Judaism. His identification of the relationship between 'contact' and 'reform' is especially important. In this articulation of his thinking, Greenberg acknowledged that the encounter between members of the different movements would be influential in achieving change. In this statement, Greenberg distinguished his ideas from the Kallen-esque brand of Cultural Pluralism which called for the maintenance of group identity in the midst of diversity without an appreciation that something happens 'when peoples meet.' Drawing nearer to Hollinger's postethnic

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[19] Greenberg did not list the names of the organizations. Two of the organizations he was likely referring to were the National Council of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) and the National Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee.

conception of overlapping identities, Greenberg recognized and embraced the influence that sustained encounters would have on the participants. Influenced by his own experience in the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement, Greenberg called not only for contact, but also for the realization of new possibilities as a result.

Returning to the essay "Will there be one Jewish people by the Year 2000?," it is evident that, according to Greenberg, the American Jewish community was on the verge of a split. The demographic data related to issues of personal status – conversion to Judaism, patrilineal descent,[20] and *mamzerut*[21] - suggested that the American Jewish community was on the verge of what Greenberg described as "a cycle of alienation, hostility, and withdrawal that will lead to a sundering of the Jewish people into two religions or two social groupings, fundamentally divided and opposed to each other" (Greenberg, "One Jewish People" 2). In response – and indicating that little had changed over the course of the decade between the publication of "The End of Emancipation" and "One Jewish People" – Greenberg returned to the example of the Christian-Jewish dialogue as a goad to action: "American Jewry must establish a systematic religious dialogue among the Jewish denominations on the scale of the Jewish-Christian dialogue of the past fifty years…" (Greenberg, "One Jewish People" 7). Greenberg went on to enumerate three levels on which the intra-Jewish dialogue should take place:

> There should be a high-level dialogue encompassing systematic theology and studies in *halacha* which respectfully acknowledge divisions between

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[20] Contrary to the millennia-old traditional Jewish practice of basing Jewish status on the identity of the mother, on March 15th, 1983, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the organizational arm of the American Reform rabbinate, adopted a position that would accept the children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as Jews. See Hyman, *"Who is a Jew?": Conversations, not Conclusions*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998.

[21] The Jewish legal (*halachic*) status of a child born to an adulterous or incestuous woman, or the descendant of such a person.

the groups…In addition, we need middle-level dialogue in which the rabbis and practitioners, as well as the lay leadership of each movement, are brought into systematic and regular contact for learning, for better mutual understanding, and for finding common solutions to common problems…Finally, there must be a popular level, modeled on the 'living room dialogue' of the Jewish-Christian experience. Through such dialogues, people overcome stereotypes. They learn there is real commitment in the other groups to values which they also respect and desire. (Greenberg, "One Jewish People" 7-8)

In this plan, no-one would be exempted from the direct encounters that Greenberg called for. In addition to a call for encounters between theologians, rabbis, and practitioners, Greenberg specifically used the Christian-Jewish dialogue movement as his example when he suggested that lay Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews should meet in each other's homes.

Greenberg also addressed the importance of intra-Jewish dialogue in "Towards a Principled Pluralism." The essay opened to a lengthy section subtitled "Objections to Dialogue" and made a direct connection between what Greenberg referred to as *principled pluralism* and intra-group encounters in the form of dialogue. His analysis advanced beyond the more cautious attempts to define pluralism cited above and began to express the fullness of his vision. In a subsection, entitled "The Essence of Dialogue," Greenberg pointed towards the more far-reaching implications of his conception of pluralism. Trying to mitigate concerns at the outset, Greenberg reassured his reader that, "Dialogue does not require indifferentism. Nor is it a political renegotiation involving tradeoffs of practice or principle. In dialogue, there are no *a priori* demands; neither does one waive principles or standards" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 26). Rather,

The essence of dialogue is to enter with openness. Each side presents the fullness and uniqueness of its own position, but it also listens and is willing to discover the concrete particularity and distinctiveness of the

other. Such discoveries can lead to greater rejection and even greater hatred between groups. But it is a chance worth taking. In fact, the usual outcome is a new appreciation for the integrity, coherence, and, sometimes, validity of the other side. The typical result is the discovery of the vitality and power in the other group. (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 26)

Rather than a cautious description of tolerance, here Greenberg advanced his argument for dialogue with full recognition of the impact of direct encounter between different parties. But Greenberg went further than just "a new appreciation…of the other side," extending his understanding of the impact of dialogue for those involved. He continued, "Each side tends to learn from the other, and incorporates some of the insights of the other without giving up its own values" (Greenberg, "Principled Pluralism" 26). Although it is unclear precisely where the line is between one side not 'giving up its own values' even as it 'incorporates some of the insights of the other," the recognition of the transformative power of encounter is unmistakable. In effect, Greenberg suggested that pluralism is what happens when people enter into dialogue with a willingness to embrace the possibility that a transformation may, and likely will, take place.

We have already seen how Greenberg relied upon a dual understanding of the covenant to provide a theological basis for his call for greater social harmony in a diverse Jewish community.[22] But what was the basis for his call for dialogue? What theological support was there for his more far-reaching call for transformative encounters? As I have described in the previous chapter, Greenberg's early writings in the 1960s developed the image of God idea as a validation for Jewish encounters with the open society. It is this

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[22] I.e the Call to Unity and The Maturation of the Covenant discussed above.

idea that is at the heart of Greenberg's theology. And it is at this point that his system

extends beyond pluralism and demands a new name.

In 1997, the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* published Greenberg's final full-scale

treatment of pluralism. As the title, "Seeking the Religious Roots of Pluralism: In the

Image of God and Covenant," suggests, Greenberg returned to the two bookends of his

theology: the image of God idea and his covenantal theology.[23] Having already

considered Greenberg's covenantal theology, I will turn specifically to his idea of the

image of God. At the beginning of the essay, Greenberg acknowledged that many

religious adherents had suspicions about pluralism. As he put it, some perceived

pluralism as "a modern value imposed by cultural pressure on classic religions"

(Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 385-386). While others saw it as a threat to the absolute

claims that 'authentic' religions make. Finally, Greenberg acknowledged that yet others

would raise concerns that "pluralism is correlated with a loss of intensity of religious

spirit" and that, as a result, "the mainstream liberal traditions [] are not growing"

(Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 385-6). In responding to these concerns, Greenberg made

the case that not only is pluralism defensible, but that "in fact pluralism is grounded in

the deep structures of Judaism and of religious life" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 385-

6). Returning to his familiar trope, Greenberg wrote that "pluralism is grounded in the

fundamental principle of Judaism. (Rabbi) Ben Azzai states that the human being as

created in the image of God is the *clal gadol*, the central category of Jewish tradition"

(Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 386). As we have seen, Greenberg's application of the

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[23] By then the Holocaust did not receive a single mention and provided no basis for his theological system.

idea that human beings are created in the image of God teaches that they are endowed with three fundamental dignities: infinite value, equality, and uniqueness.

Greenberg went on to explain that, "In the past, these dignities have been obscured by various cultural processes" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 387). Specifically, Greenberg pointed to 'stereotyping' and '*othering*' as the methods by which people used to deny the image of God that, according to him, inheres within all people. He continued that, "In the past, most value systems (including religion and culture) created and functionally transmitted their values by establishing an inside group…its own values and its own religious claims were superior" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 387). Therefore, as a result of this "inside/outside dichotomy…The outsiders were inferior, of little or no value" and "This view was reinforced by the cultural stereotypes that naturally follow when you begin with the assumption of insider superiority and sustain it by having little contact with others" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 387). Here, the crucial point comes into focus. Separation facilitates the kind of 'stereotyping' and '*othering*' that Greenberg saw as a barrier to realizing the full (i.e. infinite) value of one another. As such, the solution to the denial of the image of God was clear: images of God must encounter one another.

Greenberg wrote that "Modern culture made an initial sociological contribution to the growth of pluralism and the undermining of absolute (superiority) claims. Modern culture differentially created urban settings where everybody mixes. There the other is encountered, not as a stranger…" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 387). It is through contact, Greenberg posited, that human beings can recognize the image of God in each other. Given the fact that the American open society had created an unprecedented

168

opportunity for different peoples to encounter one another, the result was that "this has

evoked a recognition of the other as no longer *other* but as the image of God"

(Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 388). For Greenberg, the direct human encounter would

be the key to transforming our understanding and appreciation of each other.

Having established the theological importance of encounter, Greenberg postulated

that "Pluralism is the natural outgrowth of this experience. First comes the encounter,

followed by the recognition and then by affirmation of the uniqueness and equality of the

other" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 388). Turning specifically to the question of

religious plurality in the open society, Greenberg observed that "In the modern condition,

coming to know the other faith frequently occurs without the conquest of one's own []

religion" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 388). This is contrasted to past encounters

between members of different religions in which one religious group would almost

always have to succumb to the other (or choose the alternatives of death or exile). In

coming to appreciate the image of God in different religionists, Greenberg made his most

far-reaching claim:

> The result is the coexistence in the believer's mind and experience of two
> (or more) religious systems whose claims and expressions are experienced
> as vitally (perhaps, equally) alive and valid. This gives rise to the plurality
> of affirmations. (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 388)

The importance of this claim cannot be overstated. Greenberg is unequivocal in his

interpretation of the potential power of encounter. A religionist, as a direct result of his or

her full encounter with, and recognition of, another person's inherent value as an image

of God, could come to appreciate that person's faith as an equally valid and valuable

169

religious system and, as a result, affirm the truth of that faith in addition to his or her own.[24] The result is nothing short of a postethnic understanding of religious identity.[25]

The meaning of Greenberg's postethnic theology of encounter can be further illustrated with an episode from his own life. In 1986, Greenberg published the essay "The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model." In the essay, Greenberg suggested that "Jesus should be recognized not as a 'false messiah…[that is,] one who has the wrong values …' but as a 'failed messiah,' that is '…one who has the right values, upholds the covenant, but [ultimately] did not attain the final goal'" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 32). Greenberg's claim represented a radical new appraisal of Jesus from a Jewish perspective. Recalling the reactions to his claim, Greenberg wrote that

> to grant any pluralist legitimacy to Christianity was beyond the pale for most Orthodox colleagues…this latest development added incendiary fuel to the Orthodox community's smoldering anger at my public validations of the Conservative and Reform movements…taken together, my interfaith actions and this new denunciation led to my being brought up on charges of heresy and violation of Orthodox disciplines before my rabbinic organization, the Rabbinical Council of America. (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 33)

Ultimately, the heresy charges were dropped and no punitive action was taken. What is most relevant for our purposes is Greenberg's retrospective description of his response to

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[24] Greenberg never explicitly makes the jump from the affirmation of the validity of another religion to the realm of practice – i.e. asserting that after discovering the validity of a given ritual in another faith, one should adopt it; however, the possibility of such a transformation is implicit in the system.

[25] In "Religious Roots," Greenberg proceeded to distinguish this from 'relativism,' which he described as "the conclusion…that all claimed truths are equally true or untrue." Instead, Greenberg claimed that pluralism "leaves room to say 'no' to other religious faiths and moral value systems. Pluralism does not mean that there cannot be genuine disagreement and conflict between faiths. Pluralism does not rule out as legitimate the conviction that the other faith system incorporates serious errors or mistakes. Pluralism includes the possibility that some value systems and some religious systems are indeed not legitimate; therefore, they should not be legitimated within the framework of pluralism" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 389).

170

the controversy. Given the opportunity to refute claims that he had accepted Jesus as the messiah, Greenberg accepted the invitation to reply to the accusations in *Jewish Action*, the magazine of the Orthodox Union. Due to the word limit and his concerns that his reader would have "no familiarity with the subtleties of thought in this subject," Greenberg confessed many years later that he "had no choice but to explain away any possibility that my thinking was in any way Christological. In the end, I was forced to play down many of the innovative appreciations and nuanced theological insights that I had attributed to Christianity" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 34). Although Greenberg felt straitened by political considerations, leading him to downplay the influence of Christianity on his thinking, nothing could have been further from the truth. As Greenberg recalled, "I minimized the original and daring elements in the essay, stressing the most palatable interpretations that would cause the least dissonance in the Orthodox community" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 34). Even though Greenberg felt obliged to publicly soften the full extent of his ideas, he acknowlegded in his introduction to *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth* that, "despite what had just happened, I still dreamt of reshaping the Orthodox community, hoping to regain its understanding and help move it back toward the rest of the Jewish community and towards Christians and society at large" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 34). In these admissions, Greenberg acknowledged that his claims *were* radical and he implicilty affirmed the influence of Christian theology on his own thinking. Although Greenberg's critics were mistaken in the full extent of their accusation, it was certainly the case that he was engaging in much more than simple inter-faith ecumenism.

One way of understanding this controversy from the perspective of Greenberg's accusers is that they were looking at the situation from the perspective of Cultural Pluralists. From their point of view, religious groups should have distinct boundaries and steer clear of each other, except when necessary to maintain social harmony. Given this worldview, Greenberg clearly had crossed a line and needed reigning in. From Greenberg's postethnic perspective, however, he was simply negotiating the open society, and living up to his own theology of encounter. To be clear, Greenberg would surely have denied, in all sincerity, that he was both a Jew and a Christian. At the same time, the very designations 'Jew' and 'Christian' represent a Cultural Pluralist set of distinctions that may no longer be useful in postethnic America. What is clear is that, as an someone identified with the Orthodox community, Greenberg's theology also reflected the deep influences of both the non-Orthodox and non-Jewish worlds.[26] For him, nothing less could be desirable in the era of the new encounter.

In a short piece that was published in the pages of the journal *Sh'ma* in 1999, Greenberg returned to the theme of encounter and reasserted his point. In his submission, entitled "The Principles of Pluralism," Greenberg wrote that,

> In appreciation of an open society and of the equality and uniqueness of others, I come to affirm the value of living and of teaching in the presence of other truths and systems. Other approaches teach me the limitations of my own views – preventing an imperialist extension of my truth/faith beyond its legitimate sphere into realms where it becomes a lie or is wrongly applied. And while I may come to refute or reject some

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[26] Here, I am in disagreement with Sandra Lubarsky's claim that Greenberg "does not address the possibility that pluralism may result in new forms of traditions" (Lubarsky 128). She writes that "Intermarriage and the identity issue raised by the emergence of hybrid religious identities (such as Jewish-Buddhists) have not been addressed as issues related to religious pluralism. Both issues challenge the essentialism of traditions in a direct way, clearly violating boundaries…thus far, Jewish thinking about religious pluralism has assumed boundaried entities." I am suggesting that Greenberg's theology of religious pluralism does precisely what Lubarsky calls for.

contradictories, I may also learn from others' insights and may even integrate them, thus improving my own system. (Greenberg, "Principles of Pluralism" 5)

Here again, Greenberg extended the image of God idea to affirm the adoption of ideas from other systems as a way of improving one's own.[27] It is in this statement that Greenberg presented the fullness of his theology of religious encounter. As he put it, "in our era of pluralism, we are living in an age of great religious breakthroughs" (Greenberg, "Religious Roots" 394).[28] Finally, in an unpublished manuscript from 2014, Greenberg has written that,

> This is a time when every human story is being told openly and shared with everyone who cares to listen. Anyone can embrace any narrative – or be troubled by it. Anyone can learn from it or adapt from it to their own constellation of meaning. In the open society, religious memes circulate freely. (Greenberg, *Partnership for Life* 2)

This last citation, from what is intended to be Greenberg's culminating work serves to further reinforce the far-reaching implications of his theology of Hybrid Judaism.[29]

Irving Greenberg's theological system is mistakenly described (by him and others) as a theology of religious pluralism. As is now clear, his understanding of pluralism is radically different from Horace Kallen's conception of Cultural Pluralism. In

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[27] Although the focus of Greenberg's attention was directed primarily toward the Jewish and Christian communities, his active participation in the delegation of Jews that travelled to Dharamsala, India in 1990 to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama reflected the extent of his commitment to transformative encounters. See Kamaentz, *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994.

[28] In the same edition of *Sh'ma*, there are also essays on the subject of pluralism by Harold Shulweis and Eugene Borowitz. Shulweis describes a pluralism that "will enable us to address an assemblage of Jews with different minds," while Borowitz calls for Jews to "warmly reach out to one another and seek new means of enhancing our Jewish family solidarity." Both of these, while laudable, are a far-cry from Greenberg's revolutionary conception of religious pluralism. See S*h'ma*. 29:561 (1999).

[29] These last two citations raise the question of limits. It is clear from Greenberg that if "the tradition ha[s] the capacity to cope with the toughest questions" (Butler 180) and that "If [Judaism] is divine, surely it can outlast the wreckage of an earlier ethos" (Greenberg, "Values" 52) then he is confident about the future of Judaism. Nevertheless, Greenberg has acknowledged that "the transformation as a result of encounter has no guarantees" and that "selfishly, if someone 'left' it would be a greater loss to the Jewish people, ultimately, as long as they are covenant-minded, it is OK" (Greenberg, Yarnton Interview 2014).

Kallen's sociological model, the United States is a diverse country made up of a wide range of distinct ethnic groups. What makes American democracy so powerful, according to Kallen, is that it allows for these different groups to live side-by-side without having to abandon their identity to either Anglo-conformity or a melting pot of homogeneity. By comparing America to an orchestra, Kallen imagined that each of these ethnic groups would retain their own identity and remain distinct from the other groups, even as they participated in the symphony of American democracy. As Werner Sollors has written, Kallen demanded that "…the stable quality of each instrument must be preserved" (Sollors, A Critique of Pure Pluralism 260). In his conceptualization of Cultural Pluralism, Kallen failed to account for the impact of social mixing amongst the different ethnic groups. By contrast, and shifting from Kallen's focus on ethnicity to the realm of religion, Greenberg's theology of religious pluralism is based on the assumption that, in an open society, people will necessarily interact with each other as equals. His willingness to accept the implications of such encounters locates him not in the pluralist camp, but rather at the very cutting edge of postethnic thinking. As such, Greenberg's system is better described as a theology of Hybrid Judaism.

Parallel to Rooted Cosmopolitanism,[30] the name Hybrid Judaism fuses the multiple with the singular. In this context, hybrid is intended to refer to "Anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous elements" (OED Online). By linking Judaism to hybridity, I am indicating Greenberg's preference for a primary, rooted, group identity (= Jewish) while acknowledging that, in a postethnic reality, one is attached to, and influenced by, more than any one single identity group. To

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[30] See above, pp. 61-62.

echo David Hollinger, Irving Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism would not have "appealed to Horace Kallen."

It is useful at this point to return to David Hollinger's conception of Postethnicity to fully appreciate the parallels with Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism. Hollinger described Postethnicity in this way:

> Postethnicity prefers voluntary to prescribed affiliations, appreciates multiple identities, pushes for communities of wide scope…and accepts the formation of new groups as a part of the normal life of a democratic society. (Hollinger, *Postethnic America* 116)

Greenberg's perspective with regard to religious groups anticipated much of Hollinger's postethnic framework. Like Hollinger's postethnic preference for voluntary affiliations, Greenberg's covenantal theology identified the contemporary moment as the era of the voluntary covenant. The postethnic appreciation for multiple, overlapping identities also has resonance with Greenberg's theology. As we have seen, Greenberg's image of God-based conception of pluralism certainly allowed for what he has referred to as 'a plurality of affirmations.' While it is clear that Greenberg would prefer that Jews remain rooted in Judaism and the Jewish community, it is also fair to suggest that Greenberg's conception of Hybrid Judaism contained within it the potential for Jews to adopt more than one religious identity. After all, as members of a given religious community begin to integrate insights (and practices) from other denominations or religions, the lines dividing one identity group from another become porous. Next, the postethnic push 'for communities of wide scope' is parallel to Greenberg's eager willingness to engage the open society and enter into dialogue with non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews alike. Finally, the postethnic acceptance of the formation of new groups is implicit in Greenberg's

covenantal theology. If the covenant can no longer be commanded in the wake of the

Holocaust, then any expression of Judaism, old or new, is theologically valid. These are

the full implications of Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism.

Chapter Six

Now that Greenberg's theology of Hybrid Judaism has been fully unpacked and his ideas have been located at the postethnic end of the century-long arc of theories of individual and group identity, we can consider his system in light of other theorists of religious pluralism. Of course, Greenberg is but one theologian of pluralism (read: Hybrid Judaism) – albeit the most significant American Jewish thinker to have addressed the topic. Other thinkers have presented their own responses to the increasing diversity of religious life in the United States and beyond. In this chapter, I will consider a wide range of ideas from scholars of religion, to rabbis and educators writing in the Israeli and British Jewish context, to Christian theologians. The different thinkers I will survey here span the twentieth century. Together, they will serve to shed further light on the distinctive quality of Greenberg's ideas and also reflect a richer spectrum of thinking about the meaning of religious identity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Possibly the most well-known academic figure engaged in work related to the study and advancement of pluralism is Diana Eck. Eck is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard Divinity School. In 1991 she, along with students and other members of the faculty, established The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, which she has directed since its founding. The founding mission of The Pluralism Project was "to help Americans engage with the realities of religious diversity through research, outreach, and the active dissemination of resources" (The Pluralism Project). The fourfold aims of the project are described on the group's website:

1. To document and better understand the changing contours of American religious demography, focusing especially on those cities and towns where the new plurality has been most evident and discerning the ways in which this plurality is both visible and invisible in American public life.

2. To study the religious communities themselves - their temples, mosques, gurudwaras and retreat centers, their informal networks and emerging institutions, their forms of adaptation and religious education in the American context, their encounter with the other religious traditions of our common society, and their encounter with civic institutions.

3. To explore the ramifications and implications of America's new plurality through case studies of particular cities and towns, looking at the response of Christian and Jewish communities to their new neighbors; the development of interfaith councils and networks; the new theological and pastoral questions that emerge from the pluralistic context; and the recasting of traditional church-state issues in a wider context.

4. To discern, in light of this work, the emerging meanings of religious "pluralism," both for religious communities and for public institutions, and to consider the real challenges and opportunities of a public commitment to pluralism in the light of the new religious contours of America. (The Pluralism Project)

Eck and her team have attempted to fulfill the aims of The Pluralism Project by organizing a variety of activities spanning a wide range of academic and hands-on initiatives.[1] Through her work with the project, Eck has positioned herself as a leading spokesperson on the subject of religious pluralism in America and beyond.

The guiding principles of The Pluralism Project were addressed in detail in Eck's award-winning book, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (1993). The book's premise is grounded by the recognition that "While the interpretation of religious difference and pluralism has long been a question, the close proximity of

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[1] For a complete list, see the 'current initiatives' page on their website.

people of many races, cultures, and religions in urban environments has decisively

shaped our response to this question today" (Eck 167). Like Greenberg, Eck

acknowledged that the increased level of contact that has resulted from rising

urbanization (read: the open society) has had a significant impact on our understanding

of, and response to, diversity. Eck considered three possible responses to the new reality

she perceived: the exclusivist response, the inclusivist response, and the pluralist

response; we will only consider the last of the three.[2]

      Eck's ideas with regard to the pluralist response are reminiscent of Greenberg's.

She wrote that "People of different religious traditions do not live apart, but are in

constant interaction and need, if anything, to be in more intentional interrelation" (Eck

190). Like Greenberg, she did not call for a retreat from the open society, but rather

encouraged more and deeper encounters between different religionists. For Eck,

pluralism is the preferred method for navigating the diverse American religious

landscape. She suggested that there are five components to pluralism. The first is that

"*Pluralism is not the sheer fact of plurality alone, but is active engagement with*

plurality" (Eck 191). In this first principle of pluralism, Eck clarified that she was not

employing pluralism in a purely descriptive sense; instead pluralism dictates a certain

type of behavior. In this case, "Religious pluralism requires active positive engagement

with the claims of religion and the facts of religious diversity" (Eck 192). The second

component of the pluralist response is that "*Pluralism is not simply tolerance, but also*

the seeking of understanding" (Eck 192). While Eck acknowledged that "Tolerance is, of

course, a set forward from active hostility," she also complained that "Tolerance alone

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[2] For Eck's treatment of all three responses, see Eck, pp. 166-199.

does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another by building bridges of exchange and dialogue" (Eck 192-3). The third aspect of Eck's theory of pluralism: "*Pluralism is not simply relativism, but assumes real commitment*" (Eck 193). Here, Eck embarked on a discussion of various forms of relativism and identified two specific strains – 'nihilistic relativism'[3] and 'relativism that lacks commitment' – that, according to her, prevent the individual from participating in pluralism. As she put it, in contrast to relativists, "The pluralist…stands in a particular community and is willing to be committed to the struggles of that community, even as restless critic" (Eck 195). The fourth component of Eck's definition of pluralism is that "*Pluralism is not syncretism, but is based on respect for differences*" (Eck 196). Here, Eck defined syncretism as "the creation of a new religion by the fusing of diverse elements of different traditions" (Eck 196). Finally, like so many other proponents of pluralism, Eck proposed that it should have a programmatic aspect that "*is based on interreligious dialogue*" (Eck 197). Taken together, the five components of Eck's conceptualization paint a detailed picture of her vision for pluralism.

Like Greenberg, Eck's definition of pluralism can be distinguished from Kallen's Cultural Pluralism in that he that did not imagine active engagement across different social groups. Eck saw pluralism not as merely a way for different groups to maintain their distinct identity in a larger pluralistic context, but rather as a call to each group to communicate, learn from, and understand each other. However, at the same time, Eck wanted to hold on to the same clear lines of distinction between groups that are present in Kallen's theory of cultural pluralism. Her demand that pluralism not be confused with

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[3] Eck suggested that this brand of relativism "denies the very heart of religious truth"

relativism or syncretism, and that it be grounded in what she called 'real commitment' and 'respect for differences' underlines her abiding commitment to a Kallen-esque version of group identity, even as she called for greater contact.

At one and the same time, Eck called for religious distinctiveness while she also embraced religious mixing in a manner that must result in a blurring of the very lines she was trying to draw. As a result, her vision of pluralism betrayed a deep contradiction. In the final chapter of her book, Eck wrote that,

> Were I asked to describe the religious situation of the world today…it would be virtually impossible to do so by focusing on each tradition as a separate entity, for the histories of all of the religious traditions are intertwined despite the fact that they are often treated as separate chapters in books on "world religions." Korean Christians both distance themselves from and are shaped by the shamanistic and Buddhist traditions of Korea. In Japan, Christians struggle with how to venerate ancestors, a matter of such critical importance that the Roman Catholic church has prepared guidelines on the veneration of ancestors for Japanese Catholics. Hindus in India are undergoing a new period of self-definition in relation to Muslims and Sikhs. Muslims in North America are developing a new form of religiousness shaped by the denominational structure so typical of American Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious life. Native American people struggle with the appropriation of Native American symbols, rituals, and language in the context of Christian churches and in the context of the New Age movement. Buddhism is developing distinctive forms and lineages in North America, with many of its teachers women and many of Jewish origin. (Eck 211)

Eck concluded her description with the observation that "Our religions are not complete, not finished, not able to pass on a finished 'product' to the next generation. Our traditions are not isolated, but interrelated and interdependent" (Eck 211). Even as Eck called for a brand of pluralism that would not threaten religious boundaries, she recognized that religious traditions are undergoing change constantly, influenced by the cultures and religions they encounter throughout their history. Apparently, she was unaware of the

contradictory nature of her position. After all, what are the examples she cited other than her syncretistic "creation of a new religion by the fusing of diverse elements of different traditions?" (Eck 196).

As an influential spokesperson for pluralism, Eck has undoubtedly achieved a great deal for the advancement of religious harmony through her Pluralism Project. Nevertheless, her thinking on the subject displays crucial inconsistencies. As Pamela Klassen and Courtney Bender note,

> The goal of deep pluralism across difference, as articulated by…Eck, is an attractive and even laudable goal in many ways. However, the doctrines and programs of pluralism that dominate contemporary academic and public conversations do not constitute a theory of understanding religious interactions as they take place in the world. (Bender 12)

In fact, in the case of Eck, they constitute contradictory theories.

In 2005, Robert Wuthnow, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University, published *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*. At the outset of the book, Wuthnow observed that, "More Americans belong to religions outside of the Christian tradition than ever before…Their presence greatly increases the likelihood of personal interaction across these religious lines" (Wuthnow 2). Given this increase in encounters across religious lines, Wuthnow asked: "How have we responded to the religious diversity that increasingly characterizes our neighborhoods, school, and places of work?" (Wuthnow 3). In chapter ten, entitled "How Pluralistic Should We Be?," Wuthnow made it clear that "diversity and pluralism are not the same." Like Eck, he posited that "Pluralism is our response to diversity – how we think about it, how we respond to it in our attitudes and lifestyle, and whether we choose to embrace it, ignore it, or merely cope with it" (Wuthnow 286). Not content to settle for

"shallow responses to diversity," Wuthnow called for an engagement with "what we might refer to as *reflective pluralism*" (Wuthnow 289). For Wuthnow, "Reflective pluralism…involves acknowledging how and why people are different (and the same), and it requires having good reasons for engaging with people and groups whose religious practices are fundamentally different from one's own." (Wuthnow 289). In offering a 'case for cooperation,' Wuthnow cited a laundry list of "good reasons." They are: the desire to prevent conflict between religions, the enhancement of goodwill between religionists; the fact that "religions command resources that can be deployed more effectively for common purposes"; the ability to respond to "the growing threat of secularism"; an opportunity for religionists to "enrich[] their own faith"; and, finally, Wuthnow suggested that "another argument for interreligious cooperation is that understanding of the human condition itself is at stake" (Wuthnow 294-5). Wuthnow was singularly concerned with the practical question of social harmony and failed to offer a cogent theory of change that accounts for what actually happens when members of different religions interact with each other in a substantive manner.

In these versions of pluralism Eck has imagined that different religious groups could maintain their distinct group identities while at the same time being exposed to others in substantive ways, while Wuthnow simply failed to consider the issue. The postethnic critique of pluralism challenges this scenario. Both Hollinger and Greenberg have recognized the real-world implications of the open society both for group interaction *and* identity. With respect to Eck and Wuthnow, Horace Kallen would likely question the practical possibility of their brands of religious pluralism. While Kallen understated the extent to which groups would necessarily interact in the United States, Eck and Wuthnow

183

overstated their ability to engage in such encounters without anticipating significant change. This comparison further emphasizes the distinctive quality of Greenberg's postethnic theology of encounter and clearly distinguishes him from theorists of pluralism like Kallen, Eck, and Wuthnow.

Although Greenberg was not the only personality to address the issue of pluralism in the American Jewish community, he was certainly its most outspoken voice. While he could always find partners across the denominational aisle in the likes of Eugene Borowitz, Harold Schulweis, and many other non-Orthodox thinkers, Orthodox communal and thought leaders were more often critical of Greenberg and his theology of religious pluralism than they were supportive. Moreover, those that comprehended the full implications of Greenberg's thinking were vocal and sustained in their disagreement. One notable exception was David Hartman.

As I have already described in chapter three, Greenberg participated in Hartman's gatherings in Canada in the 1960s and they remained close friends until Hartman's death in 2013. As Simon Cooper has correctly observed, Greenberg "shares the same mid-century American intellectual background as…Hartman," his "Orthodox education under Soloveitchik mirrors that of Hartman" (Cooper 187) and that the "similarities with Hartman's thought are marked" (Cooper 188). Hartman's 1999 book, *A Heart of Many Rooms: Celebrating the Many Voices within Judaism*, expressed a multiculturalist orientation in the title and called on Jews to 'celebrate' their differences. In part three of the book, entitled "Celebrating Religious Diversity," Hartman posed the problem that "It has often been claimed that belief in revelation and divine election is incompatible with religious pluralism" (Hartman, *Heart* 153). He then asked, "Given the competing claims

184

of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam[4] being the true heir to Abraham's legacy, the crucial

concern of faith must be: Which faith community mediates God's vision for history?"

(Hartman, *Heart* 153). Approximating Greenberg, Hartman answered that "The

messianic dream [is that] of a world in which all human beings realize that they were

created in the image of God, that they owe their existence to God, and that therefore all of

life is sacred" (Hartman, *Heart* 163). Hartman described a vision of redemption that, like

Greenberg's, began with the creation of human beings in the image of God. Between the

bookends of creation and redemption come the stages of revelation and election, thus

outlining the four stages that provided the framework for Hartman's conception of

religious pluralism.

Proceeding to the stage after creation (in the image of God), Hartman wrote that a

belief in revelation could also permit an expansive pluralism. He suggested that

"Revelation is not addressed to humanity in general, but to a particular individual or

community. And because of this inherent particularity, it need not invalidate the faith

experience of other religious communities" (Hartman, *Heart* 164). Echoing Greenberg's

understanding of Christianity as a parallel covenant,[5] Hartman rejected the notion that

revelation in the Jewish tradition exhausted the opportunity for other revelations. Then,

moving from revelation to election, Hartman addressed the concern that the Jewish

people was in some way 'chosen' for a special role, thus effectively 'demoting' other

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[4] Hartman did not consider any other religions in his treatment of religious pluralism. In a footnote to another essay, Hartman wrote that "From a Jewish viewpoint, pluralism in the broader sense as including the other major world religious necessarily raises the question of idolatry, since those other religions do not acknowledge exclusively the God of Israel" (Hartman, "Possibilities" 101).
[5] Greenberg has written that, "In my view, Christianity itself is another one of the particular covenants that God has called into being in order to engage more and more humans in the process of *tikkun olam* [repairing the world]" (Greenberg, *For the Sake* 44).

religions to a lower status. To address this concern, Hartman distinguished between two

aspects of the divine. He wrote that,

> Election represents a particularization of God's relationship to humankind by virtue of divine involvement in history, without the implication that there is only one exclusive mediator of the divine message. Consequently, theologians who claim that worshipping the universal God is incompatible with election are making a "category mistake." The universal God is the God of creation. But it is God as the Lord of history who enters into specific relationships with human beings and who is therefore loved in a particularistic manner. All intimate relationships claim exclusivity by their very nature. (Hartman, "Heart" 164)

Hartman's distinction between the 'the universal God' and 'the Lord of history' allowed

him to make a claim for the universal and the particular at the same time. The result was

that, "The distinction between creation and history enables biblical faith to admit the

possibility of religious pluralism without neutralizing its passionate commitment to the

biblical Lord of history" (Hartman, "Heart" 164). Returning to the theme of creation,

Hartman made the implications of his system explicit:

> …the concept of creation, not the concepts of community and history, must nurture the dream of a universal ethical awakening of human consciousness. The Jew, the Christian, and the Muslim are all one, insofar as they are creatures of God. One thus acknowledges the sacredness common to all human beings irrespective of their ways of life and modes of worship.[6] (Hartman, "Heart" 165)

This brief sketch of Hartman's approach to religious pluralism highlights the similarities

between Greenberg's and Hartman's thinking. In another parallel to Greenberg, this time

on the practical plane, Hartman would also engage in sustained cross-denominational

work in the Jewish community through the Shalom Hartman Institute in Israel, which he

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[6] Of course, it is here that the narrow treatment of only Christianity, Islam, and Judaism becomes most problematic. Hartman refers to the 'sacredness common to all human beings' but limits his observations only to those of the three faiths under consideration.

established after emigrating there in 1971. In many ways, Hartman and Greenberg were two sides of the same coin; one based in the United States and the other in Israel.

Hartman represented one of the few prominent Jewish intellectuals still associated with Orthodoxy to express support for religious pluralism.[7] More often, the response of Orthodox rabbis and community leaders was one of rejection. One of Greenberg's most articulate Orthodox rejectionists was the former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Jonathan Sacks. Sacks served as Chief Rabbi for over twenty years (1991-2013) during which time he became a significant public figure and, due in part to the many books he published, established himself as a thought leader in the Jewish world and beyond. In his role as an Anglo-Jewish communal leader, Sacks regularly found himself embroiled in controversy, often taking very stringent positions on questions of intra-Jewish pluralism. The most public of these controversies was what has become known in Anglo-Jewry as 'The Hugo Gryn Affair.' Gryn was a survivor of Auschwitz who eventually made it to Britain to become the senior minister of the Reform movement's West London Synagogue. According to *The Independent* newspaper, Gryn was "probably the most beloved rabbi in Great Britain" (Persoff 91). Gryn passed away in 1996 and, to the disdain of many, Sacks failed to attend the funeral. After months of conflict over the issue, and Sacks' decision to attend a subsequent memorial service for Gryn, the *Jewish Chronicle* newspaper published a leaked copy of a damning letter that Sacks had written to Chenoch Padwa, then head of the Jewish court of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. The letter reassured Padwa that Sacks was not giving

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[7] Although, it must be noted, Hartman was treated with similar disdain to Greenberg by the centrist and *haredi* communities. It is also the case that Hartman was based in Israel where denominational politics play out in a very different manner than in the United States.

credibility to Reform Judaism by participating in the memorial service for Gryn hosted

by The Board of Deputies of British Jews. In Sacks' words:

> The leaders of Reform, Liberal and Masorti movements know that they have no enemy and opponent equal to the Chief Rabbi, who fights against them intelligently and defends the faith in our holy Torah in his writings, articles and broadcasts; that he has in this respect achieved considerable standing in non-Jewish eyes; and that he does not accord them any gesture of recognition…There would be no greater victory for Reform and for pluralism that that there should be two Chief Rabbis, one Orthodox and one Reform, at every ceremony and national or communal gathering. If such were to be the situation, then in the eye of the whole community time after time the impression would emerge that there are two kinds of Torah, two kinds of faith, two kinds of rabbi, that they are equal in their standing in the eyes of non-Jews and the community, and there is no greater shame and falsehood that that. My sacred task is to prevent this absolutely, and thankfully we have succeeded thus far… (Persoff 105)

Sacks' opposition to both non-Orthodox Judaism and pluralism was unmistakable.[8] But

what was the philosophical basis of Sacks' opposition? A Cambridge-trained

philosopher, Sacks was certainly more than equipped to address this question, and did so

in the pages of his book, *One People?: Tradition, Modernity, and Jewish Unity* (1993).

Writing seven years after the publication of Irving Greenberg's "Will there be

One Jewish People in the Year 2000?," Sacks addressed a similar topic. Like Greenberg,

Sacks noted the radical influence of Modernity, the Holocaust, and the establishment of

the State of Israel. According to Sacks, the impact of these events on Judaism included,

among other things, the development of the concept of 'Jewish peoplehood.' He wrote

that,

> Jewish peoplehood has emerged as a key component of identity…Its adherents are 'Jews who seek to be Jewish through identification with the Jewish people as a corporate entity, its history, culture and tradition, but

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[8] For a complete analysis of the 'Hugo Gryn Affair' and other aspects of Sacks Chief Rabbinate, see Persoff, *Another Way, Another Time: Religious Inclusivism and the Sacks Chief Rabbinate*. Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2010.

without necessarily accepting the authoritative character of halakhah [Jewish law] or the centrality of halakhah in defining their Jewishness.'" (Sacks 10)

For Sacks, the notion of peoplehood, so popular in recent decades,[9] was not native to Judaism. Instead, Sacks claimed, it was a response to the Jewish encounter with Modernity, and the seismic events of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, rather than a traditional commitment to Jewish norms as prescribed by Jewish Law. As such, peoplehood's attendant desire for Jewish unity was also a foreign element. As Sacks put it,

> Recent history – the Holocaust, and the sense of involvement that most Jews throughout the world feel in the fate of Israel – has convinced us that the Jewish destiny is indivisible. We are implicated in the fate of one another. That is the substantive content of our current sense of unity. But it is a unity imposed, as it were, from outside. Neither antisemitism nor anti-Zionism, we believe, makes distinctions between Jews. But from within, in terms of our own self-understanding, the Jewish people evinces no answering solidarity. External crisis unites Jews; internal belief divides. (Sacks viii)

In this telling, the Jewish call to unity was a negative one (in the sense that it was reactionary) that resulted either from the historical tragedy of the Holocaust or from the uncertain fate of the State of Israel. However, when these negative motivators were removed, Sacks suggested that what remained would be a fundamental division between traditional Judaism and a Judaism that embraced Modernity. Rather than offer a case for overcoming these divisions, Sacks presented a manifesto as to why they were necessary. Ultimately, Sacks claimed that "both tradition and modernity have adequate ways of resolving conflict, but *that they systematically exclude one another*" (Sacks ix).

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[9] For example, see The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education. http://jpeoplehood.org/

Sacks' orienting understanding of Modernity was similar to Greenberg's in its recognition of the postethnic nature of the open society. Sacks began by describing what he referred to as 'traditional societies' in this way:

> In traditional societies, the individual is identified by his or her membership of a variety of social groups and by occupancy of a set of roles. In a stable and long-standing culture, these roles – of spouse, parent, child, occupation, social class, and so forth – carry with them established duties and responsibilities. The scope for individual choice, sometimes even with respect to marriage partner, is relatively circumscribed…in such traditional communities 'the moral life does not spring from the consciousness of possible alternative ways of behaving.' Instead, 'we acquire habits of conduct in the same way as we acquire our native language.' The self is largely defined by society. (Sacks 154)

In this context, one's identity is linked to one's role in society. Choice is limited and the range of options even more so. Individuals are born into socially determined responsibilities. According to Sacks, this traditional society is to be contrasted with our modern reality in which

> the individual in the contemporary urban setting typically occupies a series of roles that are experienced as not given but chosen. Nor are they definitive of personal identity. Sociologists have observed that modern identities are peculiarly 'open-ended, transitory, liable to ongoing change.' As a result, 'biography is…apprehended both as a migration through different social worlds and as the successive realization of a number of possible identities.' Religious or ideological commitments too become forms of role of which we may choose several, successively or simultaneously. No longer universes we inhabit, they become positions we adopt. (Sacks 154)

Here, writing two years prior to the publication of *Postethnic America*, Sacks anticipated Hollinger precisely. Identity is no longer circumscribed or fixed; it is voluntary and variable. Furthermore, individuals are free to 'try-on' different identities in this new open society. According to Sacks,

> This mode of discourse and consciousness collides with classic Jewish assumptions at several points. First there is the constitutive idea of

> Judaism itself, that Jews are *born into obligations…* Secondly, within Judaism itself there are *distinctions* of obligation which follow from birth rather than choice…Thirdly, the specificities of Jewish law conflict with what, on liberal assumptions, would be deemed to be matters of personal choice…[10]So modernity and Jewish tradition seem to conflict in their deepest assumptions about the self. (Sacks 156)

For Sacks, speaking presumptively on behalf of Orthodoxy,[11] the postethnic assumptions of modern society were in direct opposition to traditional Jewish commitments. It is birth and not choice, law and not the self, that are at the center of one's identity in Sacks' traditional Jewish reality. Put simply, "Tradition postulates an objective order…while modern ethical theory makes the self its own legislator" (Sacks 156). While Greenberg welcomed the realities of the open society, Sacks rejected them outright.

Turning specifically to the question of pluralism, Sacks sketched an historical backdrop to the rise of the denominations in nineteenth century Germany. Listing off the impacts of the European Emancipation and Enlightenment, and the impact of secularization – or privatization – of religious life in Western Europe, Sacks recounted the origins of German Reform and Positive Historical Judaism.[12] Turing to the American Jewish context, Sacks offered that "Reconstructionist, Reform, and Conservative Judaism were all responses not to secularization as such but to the particular form in which it confronted Jews: economic and cultural integration into newly open societies" (Sacks 30). Sacks referred to the innovations of non-Orthodox Judaism that resulted from their cultural integration as "the accommodationist strategy" which "accepts one of the most striking features of modernity, what sociologists have described as the 'plurality of life

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[10] Sacks offered homosexuality and intermarriage as two such examples.
[11] Orthodox Judaism has no formal spokesperson as does the Catholic Church, although the office of Chief Rabbi does command some respect, even if more from the non-Jewish community than the Jewish.
[12] The progenitor of American Conservative Judaism.

worlds'" in which the "lifestyles and beliefs are vastly different from his own [and] are accessible to him if he chooses to adopt them" (Sacks 30). Even though, as Sacks put it: "he may choose not to; but then his own lifestyle is the result not of necessity but of choice" (Sacks 30-1). Here we see the application of Sacks' understanding of the open society to the unfolding of Jewish denominationalism: "The denomination is the institutional equivalent of this consciousness. It announces itself as one way, but not the only way, of being religious; in this case, of being Jewish" (Sacks 31). This conclusion was unacceptable for Sacks and, for him, any portrayal of "Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reform, and Reconstructionsism…as the four denominations…imports *pluralism* into Judaism," (Sacks 31) something that Sacks could not bear, as he made clear:

> Orthodoxy does not, and cannot, make this accommodation. It recognizes pluralism along many axes. It recognizes at least some other faiths as valid religious options for non-Jews. [13] It recognizes, within Judaism itself, different halakhic traditions: Ashkenazi and Sephardi, for example, or Hasidic and Mitnagdic. Beyond halakhah, it legitimates a vast variety of religious approaches: rationalist and mystical, intellectual and emotional, nationalist and universalist, pietist and pragmatic. But it does not recognize the legitimacy of interpretations of Judaism that abandon fundamental beliefs or halakhic authority. It does not validate, in the modern sense, a plurality of denominations. It does not see itself as one version of Judaism among others. (Sacks 31)

Sacks made his ironic point in unequivocal and unself-conscious terms: there is only one type of Judaism that can rightly claim that title, and that is Orthodoxy, *in all its varieties* (!). Sacks devoted a chapter to the question of why Orthodoxy should be able to maintain an internal pluralism even as it rejects all expressions of Judaism external to it. For him, the abiding commitment to 'fundamental beliefs' and Jewish law are the key factors that

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[13] Interestingly, Sacks has himself been called a heretic and his books have been put under the ban by orthodox rabbis who have seen his openness to religions other than Judaism as going too far. See Shapiro, "Of Books and Bans." *The Edah Journal*. 3:2 (2003) 1-16.

are shared across all versions of Orthodox Judaism and that undermine sectarianism in the Orthodox community. A key weakness in Sacks' treatise is precisely on this point. Even as he affirmed an internal pluralism within the Orthodox community, he drew a line between what he considered to be within the bounds of Orthodoxy and those approaches that fell without. Sacks made the limits of his internal (Orthodox) pluralism explicit by positioning Irving Greenberg as the external boundary marker.

In *Living in the Image of God*, the collections of his conversations with Shalom Freedman, Greenberg recalled a brief episode with Sacks. According to Greenberg's recollection, "On my 1987[14] trip [to the UK], Jonathan Sacks, who had been a good friend, invited me to speak at Marble Arch Synagogue.[15] This took some guts, since Rabbi Jakobovits[16] had decided that no chief rabbinate institutions should give me a public forum" (Freedman 150). Evidently, Greenberg's reputation as a radical thinker and activist had reached the shores of Anglo-Jewry. Two years after the visit to speak at Marble Arch synagogue, Greenberg was invited and then uninvited to a conference on the future of Orthodoxy due to pressure from a member of the faculty of Yeshiva University. Greenberg pointed out that "Sacks was somewhat apologetic because he realized that he was collaborating with those who were delegitimating [*sic*] me…Unfortunately, Sacks was under political pressure. He was running for the Chief Rabbi's post" (Freedman 151). Greenberg's assessment that Sacks was bowing to political pressure may have been too generous.

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[14] Sacks had not yet been elected to the office of Chief Rabbi.
[15] This was the synagogue where Sacks served as rabbi prior to taking the post of Chief Rabbi. Unfortunately, the topic of Greenberg's speech is not on record.
[16] Immanuel Jakobovits (1921-1999) was Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1967 to 1991.

By the time *One People?* was published, four years after the episode recounted

above, Sacks seemed to have not only succumbed to political pressure, but also to have

reevaluated Greenberg's place in the Orthodox community.[17] Sacks discussed Greenberg

a number of times in the book, specifically with regard to his Holocaust-influenced

covenantal theology and its implications for pluralism. While Sacks went to great lengths

to make the case that there is great latitude within the Orthodox community, Greenberg

was left on the outside looking in. In what is a very telling implicit statement in the book,

Sacks never once referred to Greenberg by the title rabbi; something he did for every

other 'mainstream' Orthodox rabbi. In this act of omission, Sacks subtly placed

Greenberg in a separate group from centrist Orthodox figures such as David J. Bleich,

Norman Lamm, and Joseph B. Soloveitchik, each of whom is referred to by the title

'rabbi' every time they are mentioned in the book and in their listing in the index.

Turning to Sacks's specific treatment of Greenberg's ideas, he began by

summarizing the three stages of his covenantal theology.[18] At the end of the summary,

Sacks wrote that "Greenberg's thought involves a radical secularization of the key terms

of Judaism. The idea of covenant between God and Israel remains, but it has been

transposed into a new key" (Sacks 38). Most troubling for Sacks was the idea that,

"Religious pluralism necessarily follows. As long as one could speak of theological

certainties, there could be Orthodoxy on the one hand, heresy on the other, but after the

Holocaust there are no certainties. The very basis of covenant has become voluntary"

(Sacks 38). As we have already seen, this result - a postethnic orientation towards identity

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[17] This claim is possible because it is fair to conclude that, had Sacks originally understood Greenberg's
ideas in the terms he later outlined in *One People?*, it is hard to believe that he would have invited him to
speak at Marble Arch Synagogue in the first place.
[18] See, above, pp. 152-155.

- was unacceptable for Sacks. Not only did these ideas place Greenberg outside of

Orthodoxy but, according to Sacks,

> Its revolutionary thrust is unmistakable. It is far more radical that, for
> example, Reform or Conservative Judaism. For while they concede that
> Orthodoxy is a viable contemporary option, it follows from Greenberg's
> premises that Orthodoxy is strictly speaking impossible in a post-
> Holocaust world. Religious *certainty* and halakhic *authority*, the key
> categories of rabbinic Judaism, are cognitively and socially unavailable to
> the modern Jew. (Sacks 38)

Here, Sacks made explicit what was only implied in Greenberg's covenantal theology

and he concluded that it was thoroughly outside of Orthodoxy, because it denied

orthodoxy in its literal sense. Recalling Sacks's two key factors that unite all forms of

Orthodox Jewry – "fundamental beliefs" and "halakhic authority" – Greenberg's third

great cycle of Jewish history, in which the Jewish role in the covenant is voluntary and

any expression of Judaism is valid, would necessarily be at odds with Sacks's conception

of Orthodoxy. Put simply, "…Orthodoxy cannot subscribe to pluralism in the

contemporary sense, for Orthodoxy is the decision to continue to understand tradition *in

the traditional way*, as objective truth and external authority" (Sacks 148). In effect,

while Greenberg's theology of religious pluralism acknowledged and embraced the open

society, Sacks' rejected it as unpalatable to the traditional Orthodox Jew. In Sacks's

words: "Pluralism, then, proposes a mode of the Jewish unity acceptable to modern

consciousness. But it is *ipso facto* unacceptable to Orthodoxy. It succeeds only if the

terms of Orthodoxy are false" (Sacks 151). In this way, Greenberg was determined by

Sacks to be other than Orthodox and his ideas unacceptable to Orthodox Judaism.

Ultimately, Sacks rejected pluralism outright and proffered 'inclusivism' in its

place. In Sacks's definition,

> Inclusivism understands the present alienation of many Jews from Torah as neither a mandate to fragment the covenant (pluralism) nor justification for a clash of competing exclusive truths. Instead it is evidence of the overwhelming force of a secular culture in which many of Judaism's truths are unstable. It does not accord this culture the status of revelation. But neither does it regard it as non-existent. Judaism demands of Jews, now as always in the past, that they go against the current of the times. (Sacks 215-6)

Underlining his rejection of the open society, Sacks concluded that "Pluralism conceives Jewish unity in terms of modern consciousness. Inclusivism conceives it in terms of traditional consciousness" (Sacks 167). For Sacks, pluralism is a function of Modernity while (Orthodox) Judaism, by contrast, is a rejection of Modernity.

Sacks is but one example of the Orthodox thinkers that have rejected both pluralism and Greenberg as wholly un-Orthodox. As Michael Berenbaum correctly observed in 1991, "Only two current thinkers, Irving Greenberg and David Hartman, present a case for religious pluralism. Both are publicly identified – though not necessarily accepted – as part of Orthodox Judaism, and both seem to define its limits. The fate of either thinker may well determine the boundary of the movement" (Berenbaum 111). Little has changed since those words were written at the end of twentieth century and even as Greenberg and Hartman have grappled with theologies of pluralism that would call for greater inclusivity they have themselves been treated as outsiders by many in their own Orthodox community.[19]

Undoubtedly, the subject of pluralism has been grappled with by thinkers across the religious and scholarly spectrum. As we have seen in the first chapter, it would be American Jews that would produce some of the most significant works of sociology,

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[19] One is reminded of the biblical story of the high priest that becomes impure in the very act of sacrificing the red heifer to purify the nation.

addressing theories of group life in an increasingly diverse America. However, non-Jewish scholars and theologians in Europe and America would make some of the most important contributions to theories of religious pluralism. It is useful to look at some of these theories in their own right as well as opportunities for additional foils through which to consider Greenberg's theology of religious pluralism. For this purpose we will consider four scholars of religion who have contributed to the discourse on religious pluralism: Ernst Troeltsch, Wilfred Cantwell-Smith, Peter Berger, John Cobb, and John Hick.

It will be useful to begin by setting the context for these thinkers. Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, social life in many Central and Western European nations underwent significant upheaval.[20] From the perspective of European Jewry, the

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[20] Scholars have debated the beginnings of modernity for European Jews. Some date it as far back as the false messiahship of Shabbetai Zevi (Gershom Scholem), others the French Revolution and the European Emancipation (Simon Dubnow), and yet others the first large scale mobilization of Jews to the land of Israel in the early eighteenth century (Ben-Zion Dinur). Emphasizing the impact of the enlightenment on Jewish thought and identity, I am in agreement with Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891) that Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was the first modern Jew and thus that the middle of the eighteenth century is a good place holder for the beginning of the modern period of European Jewry. Amos Elon powerfully narrates the apocryphal moment thus:

> In the fall of 1743, a fourteen-year-old boy entered Berlin at the Rosenthaler Tor, the only gate in the city wall through which Jews (and cattle) were allowed to pass. The boy had arrived from his hometown of Dessau, some on hundred miles away in the small independent principality of Dessau-Anhalt. For five or six days he had walked through the hilly countryside to reach the Prussion capital. We do not know whether he was wearing shoes; it is more likely that he was barefoot. The boy, later famous throughout Europe as the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, was frail and sickly, small for his age. Early years of poverty had left him with thin arms and legs, an awkward stutter, and a badly humped back. ...The gatekeeper's task, according to one report, was "to stop and register all incoming Jews, keep an eye on them during their stay, and expel the foreign ones" as soon as possible…The gatekeeper's surviving log for 1743, the year Mendelssohn trudged through the Rosenthal Gate, includes this notation: "Today there passed six oxen, seven swine, and a Jew." Several versions of what transpired during Mendelssohn's interrogation have been passed down. According to one, the gatekeeper teased the young hunchback, suspecting him of being another peddler. "Jew, what are you selling? I may want to buy something from you." Mendelssohn is said to have responded, "You'll never want to buy anything from me." "Out with it! Tell me what you deal in," the gatekeeper insisted. "In r…r…reason!" the boy stuttered. According to

197

two most significant events were the European Emancipation and Enlightenment. From

the earliest beginnings of the European Emancipation, Jews were permitted to leave their

ghettoes and allowed to live alongside their Christian neighbors.[21] As Eugene Borowitz

has described it,

> With the European emancipation of the Jews, beginning about the time of
> the French Revolution, the lengthy medieval era of the Jews came to an
> end. Imposed segregation ceased and…the ghetto walls came down. The
> Jew was admitted into society as an equal and given full rights as a citizen.
> That, in theory, was what the Emancipation meant. (Borowitz 6)

The impact of the Emancipation was not only felt by the Jewish community. It also

suggested something about other religionists (primarily, Christians) in European society.

Implicit in this new, more equitable social reality was the suggestion that the differences

between these two religious groups might not be so significant after all. This implication

was further supported by the increasing secularization of many European countries that

removed the state sanction of 'one true religion.'

On the Enlightenment side of the ledger, the impact was just as significant.

Borowitz has suggested that the five key intellectual challenges of the Enlightenment

were (and, for many, still are) the encounter with science, history, democracy, culture,

and progress. Beginning with science, Borowitz wrote that

> The Emancipation brought the Jews from a world of Talmudic or
> medieval Aristotelian assumptions into an era rapidly building on the
> science of Galileo and Newton. It contradicted classic Judaism on matters
> of fact, like the age of the earth, or in the likely understanding of nature,
> like the evolution of humankind, and made the demonstration of God's

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> another account, Mendelssohn was asked what he wanted in Berlin. His answer: "To
> learn." (Elon 1-2)

[21] The emancipation of European Jewry took place over the course of centuries, beginning in France and
Holland in the late eighteenth century, continuing until the early twentieth century in places such as
Romania and Russia.

power by miracle seem mythological…Any modern Jew would have to come to terms with science. (Borowitz 20)

The power of the scientific challenge has been manifested in the ongoing challenges posed by the scientific contradiction of traditional religious beliefs that are still affirmed in contemporary society. For example, twenty-first century debates over the teaching of evolution in American public schools continue to make the headlines.[22]

As much as the development of the sciences presented a direct challenge to traditional religious beliefs, so too did the rise of the scientific study of history. In the pre-modern period, as Borowitz has accurately described,

> tradition had implied, and most Jews believed, that Jewish life had changed little since biblical times. It seemed natural that an eleventh-century French Jews, Rashi, living in a Christian setting, should be the authoritative commentator on the Talmudic discussions edited in a Parthian, Zoroastrian setting (early in the sixth century) of the Mishnah which was compiled at the end of the second century by Judah the Prince, who lived under Roman rule in a country many of whose inhabitants were idolators. (Borowitz 20)

By contrast to this rather flat assessment of history, the modern study of history "took change to be the basic law of history" (Borowitz 20-1). The most significant outcome for traditional Judaism was the suggestion that "When examined like any other text of its time, the Torah appears to be a compilation and harmonization of a number of different traditions about Israelite religion and origins." Furthermore, the claim that the Jewish people were 'chosen' came under question once Jewish history was "set in the context of human history generally," suggesting that "the development of the Jewish people, its religion and institutions, is similar to that of other peoples" (Borowitz 21). The

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[22] For one recent example, see Rich, "Texas Education Board Flags Biology Textbook Over Evolution Concerns." *The New York Times*. 22 November 2013.

development of the Documentary Hypothesis and the challenge to the unique status of the

Jewish people are just two examples of how the study of history impacted traditional

religious communities.

Moving to democracy, Borowitz identified the "new opportunities for Jews to

determine the social order in which they lived…They were challenged to effectuate their

social ideals and their messianic hopes more directly than by performing commandments

and waiting for God's saving action" (Borowitz 21). Mordecai M. Kaplan suggested that

this was the key distinguishing factor separating the modern period from that which

preceded it. As he wrote in *Judaism as a Civilization*, "Before the enlightenment the one

dominant concern of human beings was their fate in the hereafter. Salvation meant to

them the fulfillment of their destiny in the life beyond the grave" (Kaplan 6). The modern

period, by contrast, was a reality in which, according to Kaplan, "salvation has come to

mean self-expression in industrial, commercial, artistic or social endeavor" (Kaplan 13).

In effect, the new democratic reality had placed the means of 'salvation'[23] within the

orbit of human achievement and not as an outcome of religious devotion.

Employing the category of 'culture' loosely, Borowitz's fourth aspect of

modernity pointed to the challenges posed by "The social sciences [that] radically

changed the common perception of humanhood and social criticism [which] explored

every aspect of contemporary existence." He suggested that "Aesthetically, human

creativity was celebrated in ways that went far beyond anything the Jewish community

had known" (Borowitz 22). In addition, "The culture also encouraged recreation, play

and enjoying oneself, for it had an intuition of human fulfillment substantially different

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[23] In Kaplan's humanistic system, salvation was no longer a theological category, but rather a Maslow-vian form of self-actualization.

from that found in the preemancipation Jewish community" (Borowitz 22). The new

cultural reality opened up avenues of living beyond those prescribed by traditional

Judaism.

Finally, Borowitz pointed to 'progress' as the central notion of modernity. He

wrote that,

> Above all, the nineteenth-century civilization into which the liberated Jew
> came centered about the idea of progress, especially that which might be
> achieved through the use of human reason…Discoveries concerning
> disease not only affected people's longevity but gave them added self-
> confidence that human beings would master the world. (Borowitz 22)

The result was that "Instead of relying on God to save them in this world or compensate

them in the one yet to come, people felt that they themselves could radically improve

things" (Borowitz 22). The impact of human progress, together with the rise of science,

history, democracy, and culture, on traditional Judaism was significant. As Borowitz

summarized it, "By definition, being modern means adopting stands in opposition to the

God-given truths of traditional Judaism and the way of life which enshrines them"

(Borowitz 22-23). Although more can be said about the various characteristics and

implications of modernity,[24] these five areas provide some context for our understanding

of the implications of the European Enlightenment for religion in general, and Judaism in

particular, in the West.

Returning to Greenberg for a moment, it should come as no surprise that the

enlightenment and emancipation are synonymous with the qualities of the open society

that drew so much of his focused attention. As such, it would be accurate to state that the

challenges of modernity that were encountered by Jews in Central and Western Europe in

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[24] For example, the rise of Western philosophy and Nationalism both had a considerable impact on Jewish
life and thought. Borowitz addressed these aspects of modernity elsewhere in his book.

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were transposed to the American Jewish context in the second half of the twentieth century.

Each of the scholars we will consider below recognized that the onset of modernity had a seismic impact on religious life in the modern era. While there are certainly others, like Jonathan Sacks, who have rejected modernity, the remaining thinkers that I will consider are examples of those that have grappled with the new reality and suggested innovative responses to it. Each of these thinkers focused on a specific aspect of modernity that they perceived as the root of the new orientation and offered distinct responses to the question of what action should be taken in response. I will consider both the roots of, and the responses to, modernity in the writings of each of these figures. In brief, the different approaches presented by these thinkers can be classified respectively as historical, sociological, and theological in orientation. Beginning with the historical approach to understanding the meaning of modernity for religious pluralism, I will focus on the writings of Ernst Troeltsch and Wilfred Cantwell Smith.

As will be evident, the historical approach is really at the core of each of the three approaches we will consider, even as the sociological and theological approaches move beyond it. As Borowitz has pointed out, the scientific study of history that developed in the modern period has had a revolutionary impact on religious thinking and belief. Scholars that have affirmed the notion of religious pluralism have often located the core of the challenge posed by modernity as emanating from the modern academic study of history.

Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) was one of the earliest Christian thinkers to acknowledge this development.[25] Troeltsch was a renowned theologian and philosopher who served as professor on the faculties of the Universities of Bonn, Heidelberg, and Berlin and, according to Paul Knitter, "was among the first to recognize the reality of religious and historical pluralism and to feel painfully how it clashed with what he had learned about the nature of Christianity" (Knitter 23). Troeltsch identified history as the root of the modern challenge to Christianity in his ironically titled work, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions* (1901). In this book, Troeltsch identified what he called "the modern idea of history" as "something new in principle, a consequence of an expanding of men's horizons both backward into the past and laterally across the entire breadth of the present" (Troeltsch 46). Troeltsch understood the modern idea of history as one that "depends on critical source-analysis and on conclusions derived from psychological analogy" which result in "the history of the development of peoples, spheres of cultures, and cultural components" (Troeltsch 46-7). He contrasted this with both antiquarian and Catholic approaches to history that were either rudimentary in nature or that gave priority to religious dogma. The result was that "It dissolves all dogmas in the flow of events" (Troeltsch 47). In light of the modern idea of history, Troeltsch recognized that the new methodology undermined traditional religious assumptions.

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[25] Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) recognized the implications of the study of history for the development of *religionswissenschaft*, the scientific study of religion, a full century prior to Troeltsch. As Arie Molendijk observes, it was "Schleiermacher's account of religion [that] established a revaluation of the historical character of religion…" and his "views were of great importance to the rise of the scientific study of religion, because they awakened the awareness that religions are to be studied in their own right…" (Molendijk and Pels 4).

Troeltsch made the revolutionary claim that the modern study of history

necessitated a new way of understanding Christianity in particular and religion in general.

Put bluntly, this new way of understanding meant "the end of dogmatic conceptualization

which hypostatizes naïve claims to validity with a few comparatively simple notions such

as revelations or truths of natural reason" (Troeltsch 46). In essence, Troeltsch claimed

that, in light of historical scholarship, Christianity could no longer make unsupported

dogmatic claims. Instead, each claim now had to be put to the test of history. In other

words, Troeltsch suggested that each and every truth claim of Christianity was open to

being disproven by its subjection to historical scrutiny. The reason for this claim was that

Troeltsch perceived the modern study of history as contextualizing all claims by placing

them *in* history. The implications of this for Christianity were immense and should not be

understated.

As Troeltsch demanded, "[t]he Christian religion is in every moment of its history

a purely historical phenomenon, subject to all the limitations to which any individual

historical phenomenon is exposed, just like the other great religions" (Troeltsch 85). This

realization highlighted what Troeltsch saw as the fundamental flaw in Christianity that

imagined that "…the church was conceived as a supernatural institution that stands

within history but does not derive from history" (Troeltsch 47). Instead, Troeltsch

declared that Christianity was no different from any other religion in terms of being an

historical object of study. As a result, notions of Christian absoluteness and universality

could have no meaning because they derived from an ahistorical, or extra-historical,

worldview. For Troeltsch, proponents of Christianity needed to recognize its limitations

as a product of history which "…knows no universal principle on the basis of which the

204

content and sequence of events might be deduced [and] knows no values or norms that coincide with actual universals" (Troeltsch 67). For Troeltsch, the academic study of history was at the very root of the challenge of modernity to traditional Christian thinking.

In Paul Knitter's *No Other Name?: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (2002), he termed Troeltsch's historical understanding of Christianity and religion *historical relativism*. Knitter suggested that, "As committed a critical thinker as he was a Christian believer, Troeltsch was among the first to recognize the reality of religious and historical pluralism and to feel painfully how it clashed with what he had learned about the nature of Christianity" (Troeltsch 23). Despite conflating relativism with pluralism (Troeltsch was a proponent of the former, not the latter), Knitter's analysis is useful.

In *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions*, Troeltsch claimed that, even while the modern study of history places all religions in historical context, Christianity still retained its singular importance. In his words,

> Christianity must be understood not only as the culmination point but also as the convergence point of all the developmental tendencies that can be discerned in religion. It may therefore be designated, in contrast to other religions, as the focal synthesis of all religious tendencies and the disclosure of what is in principle a new way of life. (Troeltsch 114)

At that point, despite the significant influence of historical thinking on his theology, Troeltsch still saw Christianity in absolute terms. Crucially, Knitter has cited a lecture that Troletsch was scheduled to give at the University of Oxford but, due to his untimely death, was never heard. In that speech, entitled "The Place of Christianity among the World Religions," Troeltsch "admitted that he had been wrong in what he said about the

superiority of Christianity and its place as the point of convergence for all other religions" (Knitter 29). Taking his historical understanding to its logical end, Troeltsch recognized that "his 'empirical' arguments for the superiority of Christianity had been influenced and determined by his own historical and therefore limited context and culture" (Knitter 29). In these claims we encounter the full extent of Troeltsch's historical relativism. Rather than suggest that all religions were valid or legitimate – in good pluralistic form – Troeltsch suggested that they were all a function of their own historical circumstances and cultural contexts and, thus, equally limited in their ability to make absolute claims.

An alternative to Troeltsch is represented by the influential scholar of religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000). A former professor of Comparative History of Religion at Harvard University, Smith also served as the director of the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions. His approach also recognized the influence of the modern study of history on religion as decisive. At the heart of Smith's claim was the acknowledgment of the power of the study of history to undermine religious claims. Taking Islam as an example, he has written that,

> …many Muslim believers today…think…Islam is a transcendent truth, stable, free from vicissitudes and contingencies, and it includes a law (*shari'ah*)…[However], on the basis of modern research historians can today point out a time when 'Islam' did not include this law. By this I mean that the Islamic cumulative tradition as an evolving historical phenomenon can be seen to have developed from a point where it was constituted by several phenomena of which the *shari'ah* as an elaborate legal system was not one… (Smith 163)

Here, Smith used the example of *shari'ah* law and posited that the notion held by many Muslims that it has been a part of Islam since its very founding is simply mistaken and

that it can be demonstrated by subjecting Islam to historical criticism. Anticipating that

some will protest that the belief in *shari'ah* is a 'transcendent truth' that is of revelatory

origin and therefore beyond historical criticism, Smith stated in no uncertain terms that

"[i]t is a…failure of either information or honesty on the part of a believer [] not to

recognize how different religiously was the situation in which the crucially important

legal thinker al-Shafi'i grew up, from what has subsequently come to be known as

Islamic" (Smith 163). According to Smith, faith claims in any religious tradition have no

place where historical evidence is available to the contrary.

The changing nature of Islam over the course of history provided the backdrop of

Smith's second argument. Beginning with a genealogical analysis the term 'religion,'[26]

he described its changing meaning over the course of centuries as "a long-range

development that we may term a process of reification: mentally making religion into a

thing, gradually coming to conceive it as an objective systematic entity" (Smith 51).

Smith considered this to be a fallacious conclusion and suggested the same problem

existed for specific religious designations also. As he put it, "…one has to do not with

religions, but with religious persons" (Smith 153). His critique, informed by the study of

history, was rooted in the recognition that,

> Neither the believer nor the observer can hold that there is anything on
> earth that can legitimately be called 'Christianity' or 'Shintoism' or
> 'religion' without recognizing that if such a thing existed yesterday, it
> existed in a somewhat different form the day before. If it exists in one
> country (or village), it exists in somewhat different form in the next.
> (Smith 142)

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[26] For a more recent treatment of the subject, see Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Moreover, "The concepts ['Christianity,' 'religion,' etc.] were formed before the

ruthlessness of historical change was recognized, in all its disintegrating sweep" (Smith

142). While Troeltsch claimed that the study of history undermined the absolute claims of

any one religion, Smith's position was that, recognizing the historical constant of change,

there is simply no single thing as religion, or Christianity, or Judaism, etc. Smith made

this point explicit and personal when he wrote that

> My faith is an act that *I* make, myself, naked before God. Just as there is
> no such thing as Christianity (or Islam or Buddhism), I have urged, behind
> which the Christian (the Muslim, the Buddhist) may shelter, which he may
> set between himself and the terror and splendour and living concern of
> God, so there is no generic Christian faith; no 'Buddhist faith,' no 'Hindu
> faith,' no 'Jewish faith.' There is only my faith, and yours, and that of my
> Shinto friend, of my particular Jewish neighbor…There is nothing in
> heaven or on earth that can be legitimately be called *the* Christian faith.
> There have been and are the faiths of individual Christians, each personal,
> each specific, each immediate…There is no ideal faith that I ought to
> have. There is God whom I ought to see, and a neighbor whom I ought to
> love. (Smith 191-2)

Given the impossibility of a general concept of 'religion' to describe the kind of religious

individualization that Smith described, he proposed the adoption of two different terms to

more accurately describe the historical diversity of what is implied in that term. He

suggested that the terms 'cumulative tradition' and 'faith' should replace 'religion.' By

"cumulative tradition," Smith referred to

> the entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit,
> as it were, of the past religious life of the community in question: temples,
> scriptures, theological systems, dance patterns, legal and other social
> institutions, conventions, moral codes, myths, and so on; anything that can
> be and is transmitted from one person, one generation, to another, and that
> an historian can observe. (Smith 156-7)

Alongside cumulative traditions, Smith employed 'faith' to refer to "personal faith…[,]

an inner religious experience or involvement of a particular person; the impingement on

him of the transcendent, putative or real" (Smith 156). Smith's focus on individual

religious experience meant an utterly personalized and individuated understanding of

'faith.' Just as each 'cumulative tradition' exists in a particular historical context, so too

'faith' is encapsulated in each individual person's unique religious experience.

Describing the religious person, Smith wrote that "His faith is new every morning. It is

personal; it is no more and no less independent of his mundane environment (including

the religious tradition) than is his personal life at large" (Smith 187). In this thinking,

'cumulative traditions' are collections of historical, and therefore relative, responses to,

and articulations of, 'faith' experiences. Like Troeltsch, Smith was also an historical

relativist, although of a different flavor.

    As is clear, the historical approach of both Troeltsch and Smith shatters any

claims to religious absolutism and extends beyond pluralism into relativism. For

Troeltsch this was because history undermined all absolute truth claims, while for Smith

the challenge was rooted in the acknowledgement that there are, effectively, no religions,

only individual religious experiences encapsulated in particular, historical, contextual

cumulative traditions. Troeltsch was unequivocal in his declaration that "the historical

and the relative are identical" (Troeltsch 85). Put in theological terms, Knitter has written

that "It can be said that for Troeltsch God is *coterminous with history*" (Knitter 25). For

both Troeltsch and Smith, the modern study of history reconfigured their understanding

of religion. Although Paul Knitter described Troeltsch and Smith as historical relativists,

they can also be understood as quasi-postethnic in similar terms to Greenberg. Their

historicized understanding is one in which no one religion, whether in Treoltsch's

collective or Smith's individualized sense, can be absolute. Inherent in this understanding

is the genesis of a voluntary basis for religious affirmation. Furthermore, Troeltsch even

explored a theological defense for religious mixing when he claimed that one

> need not be alarmed if he discovers elements related to Christianity in
> Buddhism or Zoroastianism; if he finds in Plato, Epictetus, or Plotinus
> religious ideas and powers that are actually or apparently parallels and
> anticipations of Christianity. God is alive and manifest in them, too, and it
> is clearly evident that their religious powers have flowed into the Christian
> belief in God and into the Christian idea of personality and greatly
> augmented their growth. (Troeltsch 127)

Although it would be a stretch too far to suggest that Troeltsch and Smith were postethnic

thinkers, there is no doubt that their conceptualizations extended far beyond simply

pluralistic treatments of religious diversity.

The second approach to understanding the roots of, and responses to, the

challenges modernity posed to religion is the sociological approach. A useful example of

this approach can be found in the writings of leading American sociologist and

sometimes theologian, Peter Berger (1929 -). Like Troeltsch and Smith, Berger expressed

a recognition of the meaning of history for religion in his important book, *The Heretical*

Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmations (1979). In no uncertain

terms, Berger wrote that "Human life and thought is always situated in history" (Berger

5). However, he was less concerned with the implications of the modern *study* of history

and more in the modern *situation* of history.

For Berger, the situation of modernity,

> has plunged religion into a very specific crisis, characterized by secularity,
> to be sure, but characterized more importantly by pluralism. In the
> pluralistic situation, for reasons that are readily visible to historical and
> social-scientific observation, the authority of all religious traditions tends
> to be undermined. (Berger xi)

Elsewhere, Berger has contended that "Modern consciousness…has a powerfully relativizing effect on all world views" and that "Modernity is…perceived as a great relativizing cauldron" (Berger 10). For Berger, pluralism describes the state of modernity, while relativism is the outcome. Modernity relativizes not because of the rise of the modern academic study of history, as Troeltsch and Smith saw it, but rather because of the new encounter between diverse peoples in a pluralistic society. These new encounters have exposed people to a range of choices that were simply not available to those living in more isolated pre-modern societies.

Berger highlighted this claim in the title of his book, *The Heretical Imperative*. The title pointed to a specific aspect of modern society that Berger suggested is defining of the modern experience and that is rooted in a precise understanding of the word heresy. Tracing its etymology to the New Testament, the author reminded his reader that the root of the word heresy was associated with the human freedom to choose; in the biblical case, to choose one's religious identity. According to Berger, modernity was different because, "*For premodern man, heresy is a possibility – usually a rather remote one; for modern man, heresy typically becomes a necessity*" (Berger 28). By which he meant that, in the situation of modernity, each person is free to establish their own religious commitments (or lack thereof) from the wide range of choices that are available to them. Thus, modernity is no longer limned by predetermination or the perception of absolute truths and, as such, must be navigated through human agency. For Berger, this

new 'heretical' reality applied to everyone in society. As I have already cited above,[27] he

used the example of Orthodox Jews to illustrate his point:

> In the situation of the ghetto, as in the *shtetl* of eastern Europe, it would
> have been absurd to say that an individual *chose* to be a Jew. To be Jewish
> was a taken-for-granted given of the individual's existence…The coming
> of emancipation changed all this. For more and more Jews it became a
> viable project to step outside the Jewish community…All the individual
> has to do to get out of his alleged Jewish destiny is to walk out and take
> the subway. Outside, waiting, is the emporium of life-styles, identities,
> and religious preferences that constitutes American pluralism. (Berger 29-
> 30)

In this example Berger illustrated the modern necessity of encounter with the *other* that

has made religious choice a distinctive quality of the contemporary situation.

In response to the recognition of 'the heretical imperative,' Berger presented three

religious responses to the modern situation. He called them the deductive, reductive, and

inductive possibility. Berger associated the deductive possibility with neo-orthodoxy and

levelled a sharp critique against it: "The problem is contained in the insidious

connotations of the little prefix 'neo.' The tradition is affirmed *anew*, after an interval

when it was *not* affirmed. The problem is, quite simply, that is it very difficult to forget

this interval" (Berger 68). Therefore, he described the deductive possibility as a

rejectionist position and characterized it as a "denial of reality" (Berger 87). In his

words,

> The deductive option is to reassert the authority of a religious tradition in
> the face of modern secularity…the individual who takes this option
> experiences himself as responding to a religious reality that is sovereignly
> independent of the relativizations of his own sociohistorical
> situation…The deductive option has the cognitive advantage of once more
> providing religious reflection with objective criteria of validity. The major

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[27] See p. 63, 141.

disadvantage is the difficulty of sustaining the subjective plausibility of such a procedure in the modern situation. (Berger 61-2)

In essence, the deductive possibility attempts to 'put the genie back into the lamp,' as it were; something that Berger deemed impossible in the modern situation.

By contrast, Berger outlined what he called the 'reductive possibility' as a capitulation to modernity such that "the tradition [i]s no longer affirmable except by way of a comprehensive translation into the categories of modern consciousness" (Berger 97). Rather than an attempt to deny the implications of modernity, as in the deductive possibility, the reductive possibility "is the precise opposite of the orthodox or neo-orthodox one: *Everything* has happened" (Berger 97). Berger cited Nietzsche, Thomas Altizer, and the 'death of God' movement as only the most radical examples of the reductive possibility that "show the extreme forms possible in the wake of the perception that the modern situation has changed everything for religious experiences and religious thought" (Berger 98). Between the two poles of the deductive and reductive possibilities is Berger's third way, the inductive possibility.

The inductive possibility is intended to place religious *experience* as the central orienting factor of religion in the modern context. As Berger wrote,

> The term 'induction' is used here in its most common sense – arguing from empirical evidence. This means two things: taking human experience as the starting point of religious reflection, and using the methods of the historian to uncover those human experiences that have become embodied in the various religious traditions. (Berger 127)

In the modern context, all that is left, according to Berger, is the possibility of religious experiences that are "literally, 'beyond this world' – beyond, that is, the world of ordinary, everyday existence" (Berger 41). Drawing on Schleiermacher's

213

phenomenological understanding of religion, Berger posited that "The essence of religion

is neither theoretical knowledge nor practical activity (such as moral actions) but a

particular kind of experience" (Berger 133). Echoing Schleiermacher's notion of

religious experience, Berger concluded that "The core of the inductive model is, quite

simply, the assertion that a specific type of human experience defines the phenomenon

called religion" (Berger 136). In this way, 'religion' becomes highly individualized in

much the same way as with Wilfred Cantwell's Smith's conception of religion as

'cumulative tradition' and 'faith.'

In the modern context, Berger acknowledged, there are fundamental questions

regarding the certainty with which one can lay claim to a religious experience. Put

differently, an understanding of religion that is rooted in individual religious experience

must acknowledge that "implicit in this definition is the *plurality* of revelations, thus

immediately challenging the 'once and for all' self-understanding of every kind of

orthodoxy" (Berger 131). For, after all, "[w]hat is one to do with the fact that seemingly

identical experiences are reported by individuals whom one would readily call

saintly…and individuals whose lives were morally reprehensible in the extreme?"

(Berger 180). As Berger pointed out, religious experiences apparently do not discriminate

between different people. Recognizing the challenge to absolutism, Berger conceded that

"[t]here is no better phrase than "mellow certainty" to describe the fundamental attitude

of liberal theology at its best" (Berger 153). In effect, the meaning of modernity for

religion is that certainty must be abandoned in place of humility. This approach to

understanding the challenge that modernity poses to religion is rooted in the sociological

recognition of the new encounter with, and freedom to choose from, a range of lifestyles and religious expressions that undermine the claims of any religious orthodoxy.

But Berger went further than simply acknowledging the implications of encounters between individuals from diverse communities in an open society. His treatment also extended beyond the merely descriptive and made a prescriptive claim. Berger called for a deep and sustained engagement across religious groups. Referring to this engagement as 'contestation,' Berger pleaded that,

> *Contestation means an open-minded encounter with other religious possibilities on the level of their truth claims.* Put differently, one seriously engages another religion if one is open, at least hypothetically, to the proposition that this other religion is true. Put differently again, to enter into interreligious contestation is to be prepared to change one's own view of reality. [Emphasis in the original] (Berger 167)

Berger echoed Greenberg's call in "Jewish Values and the Changing American Ethic," written a decade earlier, in which he called on Jews to engage the open society. Like Greenberg, Berger acknowledged that "*…once this contestation is entered, it is unlikely that its participants will remain unchanged*" [Emphasis in the original] (Berger 168). Finally, in terms that are reminiscent of Greenberg's desire for encounters between the full range of human images of God, Berger concluded that "*The old agenda of liberal theology was the contestation with modernity. That agenda has exhausted itself. The much more pressing agenda today is the contestation with the fullness of human religious possibilities*" [Emphasis in the original] (Berger 183). Like Greenberg, Berger advanced past pluralism and skirted with a postethnic understanding of identity in the open society.

The third approach to understanding the roots of, and responses to, the challenges modernity poses to religion in general and Christianity in particular is the theological approach. This approach is best represented in the work of theologians John Cobb (1925-) and John Hick (1922 – 2012). Both Cobb and Hick have held positions on the faculty of the Claremont Graduate School, and both have written extensively on the subject of religious pluralism. Although Cobb's and Hick's understandings of modernity are theological in orientation, they are also sensitive to the historical and sociological approaches considered above. In fact, it is only from *within* the context of the historical and sociological realities described that the theological approach is developed. At their core, Cobb's and Hick's ideas represent the application and extension of these notions into the realm of theology.

In similar fashion to Greenberg, John Cobb has offered a theological understanding of religious pluralism that is grounded in a commitment to dialogue. In Cobb's important book, *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (1982), he asserted the importance of inter-religious dialogue and, at the same time, the need to move beyond dialogue. As Cobb has recounted, Christianity, both in its Catholic and Protestant variations, had, over the course of the twentieth century, changed in its programmatic and theological understanding of non-Christian peoples and faiths. Citing the changing understanding of the role of the Christian missions, the rise of the World Council of Churches (Protestant) and the impact of the Second Vatican Council (Roman Catholic), Cobb identified "the point at which dialogue became, for both the WCC and the Roman Catholic church, a major imperative" (Cobb 29). Moving beyond ecumenism, Cobb saw in the call to dialogue the possibility

of recognition of the salvific nature of religions other than Christianity. Taking Vatican II as an example and citing Paul Knitter, Cobb has written that "it follows from the Catholic understanding of religion not only that all religions posses 'elements of goodness and truth' as the council affirmed, but also that they are legitimate ways of salvation" (Cobb 30). Without such recognition, Cobb has suggested that "There is a fundamental tension between the imperative to dialogue and the insistence on already possessing the one absolute religion" (Cobb 30). For Cobb, to enter into dialogue is to acknowledge that one's own religion is not absolute and that other religions contain within them the possibility of salvation.

Cobb's starting point was the basic historical affirmation that "religions are all in the process of change throughout history" (Cobb 40). Building on that basic assumption, he has suggested that dialogue alone is not enough. More importantly, for Cobb, it was essential that a dialogue would develop that allowed for the mutual growth of each religion from the encounter with one another. As he put it in his introduction, "To hear in an authentic way what the other has to teach us is to be transformed by that truth. Once we have heard the truth of Islam [for example], our Christian witness cannot remain what it was" (Cobb ix). Put differently, Cobb has written elsewhere that "Christians who enter the dialogue wholeheartedly must be prepared to change their views and commitments with respect to Christology as well as on other topics" (Cobb 36).

Cobb's theology declared that modernity entailed a dual challenge. The first is the realization that Christianity can no longer make absolute claims or, to put it differently, that all religions potentially share a salvific path. The second challenge grows out of the first and demands that, as a result, each religious tradition be open to others, not only in

217

service of ecumenism, but to more fully realize those aspects that are truly salvific and then to incorporate them into one's own religious tradition. In other words, each tradition is deficient if it is not open to the transformative encounter with other traditions. For Cobb, this transformation is inherent in the dialogic encounter. As he has described it, "authentic dialogue changes its participants in such a way that new developments beyond dialogue must follow" (Cobb 47). Cobb's notion of 'authentic dialogue' is parallel to Greenberg's conception of the transformative encounter of one image of God with another. Cobb's suggestion that "*Beyond* dialogue [] lies the aim of mutual transformations" (Cobb 48) aligns with Greenberg's acceptance of a 'plurality of affirmations.' Thus, Cobb, like Greenberg, also expresses something akin to a postethnic theology of encounter.

Another important theological understanding of religious pluralism is that of philosopher of religion and theologian John Hick. Unlike Cobb, Hick did not see encounter and dialogue as the root of the need to develop a new theological understanding of the relationship between Christianity and other religions. For Hick, the call for religious pluralism was rooted in soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. At the core of Hick's theology were a number of faith claims. The central faith claim of Hick's system of theological pluralism was his understanding of the purpose of religions and religious life. For Hick, religious life is intended to achieve salvation; however, the traditional Christian notion of salvation was no longer viable for, as he has written, "If we define salvation as being forgiven and accepted by God because of the atoning death of Jesus, then it is a tautology that Christianity alone knows and teaches the saving truth that we must take Jesus as our lord and savior…" (Hick 16). Instead, Hick has pointed out

that "this circle of ideas contradicts our observation that the fruits of the Spirit seem to be as much (and as little) evident outside of the church as within it" and that "Jesus was clearly more concerned with men's and women's lives than with any body of theological propositions that they might have in their minds" (Hick 16-7). Here, Hick called on human experience as a guide to understanding the salvific qualities of all religions. To quote Hick at length:

> …by coming to know individuals and families of [] various faiths it has become a fairly common discovery that our Muslim or Jewish or Hindu or Sikh or Buddhist fellow citizens are in general no less kindly, honest, thoughtful for others, no less truthful, honourable, loving and compassionate, than are in general our Christian fellow citizens. People of other faiths are not on average noticeably better human beings than Christians, but nor on the other hand are they on average noticeably worse human beings. We find that both the virtues and the vices are, so far as we can tell, more or less equally spread among the population, of whatever major faith – and here I include Humanism and Marxism as major (although secular rather than religious) faiths. At any rate I have to record the fact that my own inevitably limited experience of knowing people who are Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, including a few remarkable individuals of these religions as well as more ordinary individuals and families, both in the United States and Europe and also in India, Africa, Sri Lanka, and Japan, has led me to think that the spiritual and moral fruits of these faiths, although different, are more or less on par with the fruits of Christianity… (Hick 13-4)

As Hick made explicitly clear, Salvation is identifiable by "its moral fruits" and, as such, is "something that is of central concern to each of the great world faiths. Each in its different way calls us to transcend the ego point of view, which is the source of all selfishness, greed, exploitation, cruelty, and injustice, and to become re-centered in that ultimate mystery for which we, in our Christian language, use the term God" (Hick 17). Such was the foundation of Hick's theology of religious pluralism. As a result, "several

religions [] seem to be soteriologically more or less on par" (Hick 28). As such, according to Hick, Christianity is now but one of many paths to salvation.

Hick's theology of religious pluralism is problematic because it begins from the assumption that there is a universal salvific value in all faith traditions that can be identified by their 'moral fruits.' Drawing on the Christian Bible, Hick referenced the verse "'You will know them by their fruits,' said Jesus, asking 'Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?' (Matt. 7.16)" (Hick 16). In this way, Hick's view of other faith traditions was fundamentally Christological in nature. Certainly, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all non-Christian religions see 'moral fruits' as the primary measure of their adherents' faithful activity. This is true even when 'moral fruits' is interpreted expansively as a "pretty squashy criterion" or as "a soft rather than hard criterion, in that it does not deal in anything that can be precisely measured" (Hick 76-7). The shortcomings of 'moral fruits' as a measure for salvation can be illustrated by taking Orthodox Judaism as an example. The meticulous observance of the law (*halachah*) is at the center of the religious life of Orthodox Jews[28] and, as such, the 'moral fruits' may be perceived as outcomes but not necessary as the *telos* of Orthodox Jewish religious life.[29] In effect, even as Hick attempted to be inclusive, his Christological orientation for assessing other religions served to undermine his project to some extent.[30]

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[28] Granted, not all self-identified Orthodox Jews are themselves meticulous in their observance of the law.
[29] For a twentieth century treatment of a deontological orientation to religious life, see Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1983.
[30] Undoubtedly, a similar critique can also be leveled at Greenberg, who orients his own theology of religious pluralism from the perspective of the Talmudic understanding of the image of God idea and a myth-historical understanding of the covenant between God and the Jewish People.

Notwithstanding this shortcoming, Hick's claim remains that all religions appear (at least to him) to be of potentially salvific value. He then advanced his argument by suggesting that all the world's religions are constituted by people whose religious experiences must be taken seriously. In his words, each religion represents a response to "a transcendent reality that is impinging upon them" (Hick 101). Here, Hick echoes Wilfred Cantwell Smith's description of 'faith' as "…an inner religious experience or involvement of a particular person; the impingement on him of the transcendent, putative or real" (Smith 156). The meaning here for Hick is that all religions point to the same transcendent reality, what he calls the *Real*. Essentially, Hick's theology represents a move from Christo-centrism, which is exclusive and absolutist, to theo-centrism, which is inclusive and pluralistic.

Like Greenberg and Cobb, Hick was also an advocate for inter-faith dialogue. As I have shown, Greenberg saw inter-religious dialogue as an encounter that that could lead to a 'plurality of affirmations.' While remaining rooted in one's own religious tradition, Greenberg recognized the possibility of acknowledging the truth of other religious traditions and even incorporating them into one's own system. In similar fashion, Cobb imagined religious dialogue resulting in the mutual transformation of those religions and religionists engaged in the dialogue. Hick was more conservative than both Greenberg and Cobb when he suggested that "change has to come from within a religious tradition" (Hick 121). Hick's religious pluralism derived from his assessment that different religions bear 'moral fruits' and that all religious people act in response to the same entity – i.e. the Real. Like Eck, Hick imagined a pluralistic reality in which different religionists would encounter each other through dialogue but that their religious doctrines would not

be influenced by the encounter. Also like Eck, Hick's prescription went further than Kallen's idea of Cultural Pluralism, while it fell short of Greenberg's postethnic theology of Hybrid Judaism. Both Eck and Hick failed to appreciate the transformative power of encounter. It is in the full appreciation of the implications of encounter that Greenberg distinguished himself as a breakthrough theologian of postethnic proportions.

Conclusion

Irving Greenberg stands as one of the most significant American Jewish theologians and communal activists of the past half century. His willingness to consider the full implications of modernity, the open society, inter- and intra-faith encounters, the Holocaust, and the State of Israel for American Jewry set him apart from his Orthodox peers and established him as a boundary-breaking thinker and public figure. Raised by Eastern European Orthodox parents and a recipient of the best of American secular education, Greenberg has inhabited a liminal space in American Jewish life between the pull of tradition and the call of the open society. As twenty-first century American Jewry continues to welcome the fruits of the enlightenment and emancipation in ways that are radically redefining what the American Jewish community looks like,[1] Greenberg's ideas are just as relevant today, if not more so, than when they first began to appear over half a century ago.

The dual claim that all human beings, created in the image of God, are endowed with the three fundamental dignities of infinite value, equality, and uniqueness, and that pre-modern theological assumptions about the divine-human relationship can no longer be upheld, assure him an abiding place in the twenty-first century renegotiation of religious identity. In an age when Jews finally have the freedom and security – at least in the United States of America – to face outward to the larger society to give and receive the best of their respective cultures, Greenberg has provided a direction for engaging in just such activity.

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[1] For a 'portrait' of this phenomenon, see *A Portrait of Jewish Americans*. Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center (2013). http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/10/jewish-american-full-report-for-web.pdf

Greenberg's ideas, like David Hollinger's, point out the shortcomings of pluralism as an operative prescription for life in twenty-first century America. Despite using the term pluralism to describe his ideas, Greenberg clearly reached beyond pluralism into a postethnic theology of religious identity that emphasized the power of encounter. His insight, and Hollinger's, challenges scholars of religion to revisit their surveys of religious history in America as well as their works on individual religious communities. The reality of religious life in America is significantly more complex than Kallen's image of an orchestra of different religions neatly sitting side-by-side on the stage. Given the present American religious landscape of multiple and overlapping identities, Greenberg's prescience is unmistakable.

Hybrid Judaism offers a theological and sociological justification for the kind of social mixing that has become increasingly the norm in the United States in the twenty-first century. While this movement has not advanced at the same pace in every corner of the country, it has undoubtedly become increasingly prevalent in many locales. Greenberg welcomed such encounters, but also hoped that each participant would enter grounded in their own primary identity community. Such grounding, for Greenberg, should be manifest through deep knowledge of the wisdom and traditions of (in this case) Jewish life. From there, Greenberg believed, the encounter between Jews and equally rooted Jews and Christians could result in meaningful transformations. Although Greenberg wrote specifically about Jews and Christians, it appears that his ideas can clearly be extended to all people created in the image of God. Just as in his first published essay in *Yavneh Studies*, his vision was nothing short of messianic, calling on people to encounter one another with the fullness of their being. In an age where prejudice,

alienation, and war are still so prevalent, Greenberg's words should resonate with anyone who reads them.

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