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# THE CHALLENGE OF SECULARIZATION

## INTRODUCTION

Secularization is a synonym for assimilation and the antithesis of religious belief and practice. This article will analyze significant data known to me on religious trends within Anglo-Jewry during the past fifteen years. On the basis of these findings I will draw up a kind of spiritual balance sheet of credits and debits, of advances and reverses, and interpret the findings with a view discerning the strength and direction of the winds of change, if any, determining the evolving pattern of the community and its religious life.

The on-going secularization of life is, of course, not limited either in time to the past fifteen years or in space to Anglo Jewry. It is a universal phenomenon which has its roots in the humanism of the Renaissance period, gained great momentum through the French Revolution, surged forward on the impact of the teachings of Marx and Darwin in the 19th century, and reached its peak with the ascendant materialism and the mechanization of life in the present century.

For the Jewish people, this development has been accentuated by the process of Emancipation, by the mass-migration from East to West, and more lately by the rise of Israel and its intensification of Jewish nationalism, bidding fair to rival or replace religious loyalties as a principal factor to define Jewish identity. Through Jewish Statehood, the "secular Jew" has been turned from a semantic absurdity into a challenging reality, as

highlighted by the "Who is a Jew" controversy which would have been inconceivable in pre-Israel times. Mainly because of these special circumstances, the secularization of life has probably proceeded on a faster scale among Jews than among others.

## I

Within this world-wide scene, Anglo-Jewish life naturally has many general features in common with other communities. But it also shows quite a few distinct characteristics peculiar to itself and distinguishing it from current trends elsewhere. In fact, as we shall see, of all major Jewish communities today, the progress of secularization, or alienation from religion, appears to be slowest in Anglo-Jewry.

In preparing this paper, I carefully consulted the Proceedings of the previous Conference on "Jewish Life in Modern Britain" held in 1962 and published in book-form under the editorship of Julius Gould and Shaul Esh in 1964. Since then, momentous convulsions have overtaken the world and the Jewish people: the Six-Day and Yom Kippur Wars, the reawakening and large-scale emigration of Soviet Jewry, the ascendancy of Arab oil power and Third World dominance, and their effect on the economy and political realignment of the western nations.

These colossal events and developments seem to have left the main thrust of Anglo-Jewish life relatively undisturbed. In comparing the state of Anglo-Jewry as described and analyzed in 1962 with that obtaining today, I find that, while there are several startling changes in some specific areas, the overall character and orientation of the community have remained much the same. Thus, some "vital statistics" have about doubled in these fifteen years; items as diverse as the number of Jewish M.P.s (from 20 to 46) and of students attending universities* (from about

*Student estimates vary widely. Dr. Braude reported to the 1962 Conference that there were 1,750 Jewish students in 30 societies affiliated to the Inter-Universities of Jewish Federation, and that "this is less than half the number of Jewish students in this country" (*Jewish Life in Modern Times*, p. 90 f.). In other words, his estimate of the total number of Jewish students then would be below 5,000. A spokesman of the Union of Jewish Students, the successor organization to the IUJF, claims that the membership of the Jewish societies, varying between just over 2,000 and 3,000 has more or less remained constant

5,000 to 8-10,000), yeshivot (from 392 in Britain to over 800) and day schools (from some 7,000 to over 13,000, including kindergartens). The 1962 figures given here are taken from *Jewish Life in Modern Britain* mentioned above.

Other figures have sharply declined, such as the rates of Jewish marriages and of *aliyah,* which is now reduced to but a fraction of the 500 annual average listed in the early 60s.

The general condition of the community has undergone few obvious changes. Norman Cohen's assessment in 1962 that 70% are "largely indifferent" and that "the great bulk of the community has only the slightest concern with Judaism" is probably still valid, though with the important reservations to be noted presently. And Cecil Roth's pessimism on the prospects of Anglo-Jewry's future is, I dare say, still as unwarranted as it was in 1962.

True, apathy continues to be widespread among the majority of Anglo-Jews. But collectively and organizationally, the community remains staunchly traditional and predominantly Orthodox. In contrast to most other communities, public functions violating the Sabbath or kashrut laws are virtually unknown here. All the major communal organizations, however secular, respect and work with the Rabbinate. The synagogue is still the most cohesive force, and most Jews in Britain identify themselves as such by virtue of their common religious faith rather than by any secular, national or ethnic criterion. All Jewish day schools, notwithstanding wide variations in standards and intensity, are traditionally orientated, and secular Jewish schools, such as still exist in many other countries and account for two-thirds of all schools in Israel, simply do not exist in this country.

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over the past 15 years at 25% of the total Jewish student figure, which would therefore range between 8,000 and 12,000. The latter figure (for Anglo-Jewish students) is also the estimate arrived at, on the basis of relating various student surveys to the assumed total of 410,000 Jews in this country, by Rabbi Cyril Harris and Avraham Infeld in their Memorandum on "Jewish Students in Great Britain" submitted to the Sacher Committee in February 1975. They even add a further 3,000 Israeli students, making an unlikely total of 15,000. Other observers believe that most of these figures are inflated, and that the 25% figure is at best relating to purely nominal but not active membership of Jewish student societies.

Parenthetically, the extraordinary strength of the Anglo-Jewish commitment to tradition was also demonstrated by the outcome of the "religious crisis" of the early '60s. Notwithstanding the most vehement and prolonged press campaign in the community's history, calculated to foist Conservative Judaism on Anglo-Jewry, the challenge to the "Establishment" eventually petered out, following years of turmoil and bitterness. The campaign failed not merely because Anglo-Jewry is singularly disinterested in theology (which was at the heart of the argument), nor even because the spectrum of the United Synagogue and the rest of "mainstream-Orthodoxy" is broad enough to encompass members who in America would opt for Conservative congregations. It collapsed primarily by reason of the Anglo-Jewish predilection for stability and the aversion to change, whether by way of revolution or innovation.

This trait is, of course, equally pronounced in positive forms. Whatever gauge is used to determine the rise or decline of religious commitment — synagogue membership, Sabbath or kashrut observance, mikvah attendance, some regular religious education — Anglo-Jewry is still the most stable community in the world. A survey published by the Statistical and Demographic Research Unit of the Board of Deputies in 1972 indicates that the ratio between the Jewish population and the number of synagogues in Britain has approximately remained the same between 1900 and 1970. Indeed, another survey published in 1968 estimates that during the period from 1933 to 1961 formal synagogue affiliation increased from 35% to 61%, and some 85% of these belonged to Orthodox synagogues. Of course, this dramatic rise, as the authors rightly note, is partly due to the improvement in the economic position of the community at large. They also point out that people quite often join a synagogue mainly to secure burial rights for themselves and their families.

But even with these reservations, the figures (which have not substantially changed since then) are striking enough to testify to the religious stability of Anglo-Jewry, certainly as compared to other communities. This stability is also reflected in the membership figures of the United Synagogue which have increased from 38,553 in 1962 to 41,713 in 1975.

Naturally, synagogue membership in itself is not a reliable guide to religious attitudes and practices. Synagogue attendances would be a better indicator. While no statistics are available, it is my impression that these have tended to improve in the post-War period, both at the larger synagogues in high-density communities and especially in the proliferation of smaller congregations and private *minyanim*. The degree of religious observance among regular synagogue-goers (albeit a small minority within the community) has certainly intensified, as evidenced by such varied factors as the significant increase of strict Sabbath-observers, or the striking rise in the number of *lulavim* to be seen in our synagogues on *Sukkot,* or in the constant growth in the number of private *sukkot* built for the festival. On the other hand, the consumption of kosher meat has declined (in London, for instance, by over 20% since 1967), though this is partly a reflection of the decreasing recourse to meat foods among the general population. In any event, the proportion of kosher households, variously estimated at between 40 and 60% of all Anglo-Jewish homes, is still relatively high compared to other communities outside Israel, and certainly far in excess of any other token of strict religious observance.

By far the most notably positive feature in the period under review is of course the phenomenal growth rate of Jewish day schools and institutions of higher Jewish learning. The actual increase in school enrollment from less than 7,000 in 1960 to nearly double this figure at present (now approaching 25% of all Jewish children of school age) tells only part of this remarkable story. Added to this must be the long waiting-lists seeking admission at our overcrowded schools in contrast to the many empty places seeking pupils 15 years ago. At several schools there are now four applicants for every available place.

Equally significant is the change in communal attitudes to more intensive Jewish education. Where 15 years ago day schools were still peripheral on the communal horizon and their support mainly limited to "special interest" groups, such as Right-wing Orthodoxy who pioneered such education and the Zionist Federation, they have now moved sharply towards the center of communal interest and concern.

Moreover, Jewish day school education, previously left to individual enterprise and isolated efforts, has been coordinated, at some levels at least, on a community-wide basis for the first time during the past decade. Through the establishment of the Jewish Educational Development Trust in 1972, educational planning is no longer completely haphazard and localized, and substantial assistance amounting to over half a million pounds has been given from limited communal resources both for the provision of over 1,000 new school places in various extension projects at existing schools and for some sizeable subventions to prevent the collapse of several schools, large as well as small, under the crushing burden of the present financial recession. The success of these efforts is a measure of the incipient communal recognition of the primacy of Jewish education as the principal bulwark to contain the tide of secularization.

Even more remarkable has been the education explosion at the post-school level. There are now well over 1,000 British boys and girls engaged in full-time Jewish religious studies at yeshivot and seminaries in this country, Israel and elsewhere. This figure is more than 10% of the total number of Jewish university students and is, as already indicated, at least twice as high as it was 15 years ago. Altogether, then, Anglo-Jewry has experienced a transformation little short of an educational revolution during this period.

Finally on the positive side, mention should be made of the gradual change of outlook regarding the future of the community. Given the Anglo-Jewish penchant for self-denigration, one can discern a healthy growth of at least some modest self-confidence replacing the gloom which set in during the 40s and which reached its peak during the "religious crisis" in the early 60s. The survival of Anglo-Jewry, which was then almost written off, is now no longer seriously questioned among most leaders and members of the community.

## II

Alas, with the exception of the figures relating to synagogue membership and possibly kashrut, all the encouraging signs in

the battle against secularization so far mentioned affect only a rather small minority of the community. Numerically at least, the negative factors of religious erosion seem far more significant. The two most easily quantifiable indicators showing the degree of disintegration are the figures relating to synagogue marriages (including intermarriage by inference) and to Jewish identification on the student campuses.

The number of marriages performed at synagogues has fallen drastically since 1950. Until then, the annual average rate of such marriages varied between 9.9 per thousand in the first decade of this century and 7.3 in the fifth, a rate more or less corresponding to that of the general population. Since then, the proportion of synagogue marriages has dropped to just over one-half of the general rate, amounting to no more than 4 per thousand annually between 1961 and 1965 as against 7.5 per thousand among the general population. There has been a further, though considerably less abrupt, decrease since then. Thus, marriages at Orthodox synagogues have been reduced from 1384 in 1966 to 1034 in 1975. This startling decline of the Jewish marriage rate can be attributed to three causes: a considerable fall in the birthrate; a sizeable increase in Register Office marriages among Jews; and, most disturbing of all, a substantial rise in the intermarriage rate. Unfortunately, a statistical breakdown into these three categories is not available and cannot even be estimated with any degree of accuracy. Synagogue marriages are still clearly being preferred by the great majority of Jews entering matrimony in this country. But the incidence of intermarriage, variously assessed at between 15% to 30%, is now patently a major factor in the shrinkage of the community, combined with its low birthrate and, to a lesser extent, an excess of emigration over immigration. In our context of religious alienation, the increasing recourse to Register Offices is hardly less indicative than intermarriages of a growing trend to sever the last bonds with the community and what it stands for.

Nevertheless, regarding intermarriage, the indications I have from enquiries in many of our principal congregations tend to confirm the impression that we have probably passed the peak a few years ago, and I doubt if it now exceeds 20%. Whatever

the precise figure, it is certainly appreciably lower than in America or in virtually all other western European countries — another pointer to Anglo-Jewry's relative religious stability.

Another disturbing phenomenon, showing how far secularist influences are felt in all circles, is the sharp rise in the Jewish divorce rate. Even the most Orthodox groups are no longer entirely immune to this assault on the solidity of the Jewish family. Figures elicited from some spiritual leaders consulted from all sections of the community and experienced Jewish social workers sadly support the suspicion that, while the ratio of divorces to marriages among the general population has reached about 1 to 4, even among Jews it may now be as high as 1 to 6 or 1 to 8 — a shocking increase over the past few decades. This grave threat to the stability of the Jewish home — once the strongest bastion of Jewish life, the pride of Jews and the envy of non-Jews — may eventually pose no less a challenge to Jewish continuity, or at least the preservation of Jewish values, than the decline in religious observance and identification.

The picture revealed by the student scene is even more dismal. As already noted, the estimates for the number of Jewish students and the Jewish societies membership figures vary widely and are definitely unreliable. But actual observations on various campuses indicate that the percentage of those actively participating in Jewish university societies now rarely exceeds 10%. In fact, it has been asserted that the academic fraternity suffers by far the highest fall-out rate of any distinct grouping within the community. In part, this calamitous intellectual drainage, which deprives Anglo-Jewry of what ought to be its most creative element, must be ascribed to the unfavorable cultural climate within the community. With a scale of values in which Jewishly ignorant men of wealth or influence take precedence over scholars and intellectuals on the communal ladder of eminence and leadership, academics are bound to feel estranged and repelled.

Two important reservations, however, must be borne in mind in evaluating this frightening drop-out rate, at least among the students: whether due to pressure of academic work or lack of interest, the most intensely committed students — and their

number is growing, though proportionately still minute — frequently isolate themselves from the rest of the student body. On the other hand, many students who completely suspend their Jewish connections and interests during their university experience re-establish their links with the community, often quite actively, upon the conclusion of their studies, provided they marry within the faith and take up residence in a Jewish area, as most of them do.

But here again, some communal response to the problem has lately begun to emerge. If the net defection rate amongst students is not even higher — given the rudimentary Jewish knowledge and commitment with which we equip the overwhelming majority to face the sophisticated secular culture and influence of the universities — due credit for this modest achievement must be attributed to the somewhat greater communal awareness of student needs in recent years. Notable examples of this increased concern are the impressive facilities now provided at Hillel Houses in London and some Provincial centers, and the two full-time chaplaincies established by the Jewish Universities Chaplaincy Board set up in 1970. Reference should also be made to the Jewish campus activities sponsored under Lubavitch and (of a rather different kind) Progessives auspices, as well. Without these services and amenities, the Jewish student community life would be virtually extinct on the campuses, as has happened in other European countries. In Switzerland, for instance, the last Jewish student society has just dissolved itself, and on some European campuses the intermarriage rate is as high as 80%. The situation in Britain, grave as it is, has happily not reached such alarming proportions, thanks to the community's belated, though still quite inadequate, interest in student affairs. The student community comprising, let us assume some 10,000 souls, requires at least the same investment of financial and human resources as is readily provided in any other community of that size. But in fact, the aggregate help rendered to the students falls woefully short of this minimum goal.

Withal, whatever Jewish activities and facilities are being provided at the universities can usually, at best, serve as a containment operation. As a fairly general rule, the university experi-

ence of itself does not significantly pre-dispose towards a weakening of Jewish loyalties. By and large, students leave the university practically with the same commitment to Judaism as they entered it; the gains and losses are both exceptional and restricted to individuals. The critical period is before, not during, the university experience. The Jewish attitudes of most are fashioned and more or less permanently determined at the secondary school age level. The educational and environmental experience during these formative years usually either make or break them as Jews for the rest of their lives.

This conclusion is also borne out by the bleak picture of the youth scene outside the universities. In 1962 the number of young Jews in this country aged between 13 and 22 years was given as approximately 50,000, of whom no more than 20,000 could be found in any Jewish youth organization. Of these only a small minority belonged to youth organizations, such as those functioning under religious and/or Zionist auspices, specifically serving to cultivate an appreciation of Jewish values. The rather larger membership of Jewish youth clubs is scarcely disposed, or influenced, to resist the temptations of a Jewishly carefree life. Indeed, the orientation and activities of some of these clubs are such as to promote rather than to stem the secularization of Jewish life. The youth statistics, perhaps slightly reduced, have remained basically unchanged. Compared to the student figures, they superficially indicate a somewhat higher rate of at least nominal Jewish identification among young people outside the universities. But in the light of the religiously neutral, occasionally even distinctly secularist, atmosphere at most clubs, these membership rates are unfortunately meaningless as a pointer to any religious commitment being regenerated among adolescents already lost to Judaism at the passing-out parade called Barmitsvah.

## III

The occasional comparisons with other Jewish communities made so far in this paper have generally favored Anglo-Jewry. But in three important respects comparisons are bound to be unfavorable.

First, Anglo-Jewry as a whole is Jewishly more illiterate than most other communities. The per capita production and acquisition of Jewish books, for instance, bears no comparison to the rich creativeness to be found notably in Israel and the United States.

A Readership Survey commissioned and published by the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1959 reported that, while more than half of the households interviewed had a car and 86% had television sets, only 27% had purchased any book in the previous year, and only one-tenth of these, i.e., less than 3% of the whole sample, had bought books of a religious or Jewish character. I doubt if this lamentable showing has changed materially since then, except among the committed circle of Yeshiva alumni who usually adorn their homes with impressive Jewish libraries (which are in daily use). There are now several thousand such homes in Britain, and this number is steadily growing. But very few of the books or periodicals they buy are of British origin.

The literary demand and cultural interest are simply too small to create a competitive supply. Even the valiant struggle to maintain a solitary journal like the *Jewish Quarterly* appears continually on the brink of defeat. It is hoped that the new magazine *L'Eylah* — the first such enterprise of the Anglo-Jewish Ministry ever undertaken — will prove more secure and help to expand the literary horizons of the religious community. But the difficulties encountered in soliciting print-worthy contributions from Anglo-Jewish community-workers and scholars, lay as well as spiritual, testify to the aridity of the soil to be cultivated.

Adult education, too, is not as popular nor as intensive as it is on the other side of the Atlantic and elsewhere. A comparison between the place of Jews' College in the community here and the massive impact of its sister-institutions overseas also betrays the cultural anaemia of Anglo-Jewry. Our intellectual fortifications against the assault of secularization are therefore exceedingly weak, even if the momentum (or inertia?) of traditional habits is still relatively strong.

Second, a corollary if not a cause of this deficiency is the gross imbalance in the correlation of synagogual and educational expenditures in the communal budget. The Statistical Survey pub-

lished in 1972 (to which I have already referred) estimates that during the decade concluded in 1970 new synagogues have been built or acquired to provide 26,000 seats, as against new school buildings or extensions for only 5,100 pupils — a proportion of 5 to 1 also reflected in the capital expenditure on new construction. On the assumption (now grossly distorted by inflation) that the capital cost of a "synagogue seat" is about the same as the provision of a "school desk" (in the region of £250 each), the authors conclude that during this period the community expended some £6½m. on new synagogues (corresponding to an expenditure of about £1.50 each year for each member of the community), as against £1½-2m. spent on new schools (which, deducting state-aid, probably represents under 25p. per person per year). A disproportion of such magnitude is undoubtedly unparalleled anywhere else, as is the continued lack of any adequate communal fund-raising machinery for educational purposes. In all other communities, education has been included long ago in, or alongside, the major campaigns covering the needs of Israel, and usually the principal welfare agencies as well. Attempts to correct this anachronistic anomaly have only lately started in earnest, and on their success will largely depend the quality of Anglo-Jewish life in the future.

Third, the nature of assimilation is different in this country from its counterparts, especially across the Atlantic. The fully assimilated British Jew is completely integrated in his non-Jewish environment, and on opting out from the community his Jewish identity often remains at best of a purely residual kind. When Jews stand for Parliament, for instance, their religion is scarcely known in public and even more rarely turned into an election issue. In ethnically more conscious America, where every citizen is a hyphenated American, such religious anonymity is both unattainable and inconceivable. Hence, the toll of assimilation among Anglo-Jews, once they are lost to the community, is more final; they can and do reach the point of no return more easily than American Jews who will usually continue to identify themselves and their children with some form of Jewish life even after their religious bonds have been completely severed.

## IV

The foregoing catalogue of mounting credits and debits clearly indicates the strength of the polarizing forces which continue to increase the distance between the committed and the uncommitted, and which gradually erode the hard-core center of the "moderately" committed, the grouping which used to constitute the bulk of the established community. The fairly homogeneous, almost monolithic character of Anglo-Jewry was long ago transformed into a pluralistic society, especially with the heavy refugee influx before, during and after the Second World War. But the cohesion of "mainstream-Judaism" as the broad heartland encompassing the vast majority of "average" Anglo-Jews had been preserved until more recent times. During the past fifteen years, however, this pattern has changed quite radically and with increasing speed, as the centrifugal forces gain momentum.

To a minor extent, this change is reflected by the steady but slow growth of the Progressive element on the Left and the rather faster expansion of the "Separatist" congregations on the Right. But these accretions of strength at the opposite poles of the religious spectrum are numerically far too insignificant to challenge the hitherto almost unassailable hegemony of the "Establishment" congregations in the Center. The membership figures of the United Synagogue and kindred congregations in the Provinces are still at or near their peak, and therefore unaffected by any appreciable drainage either to the Right or to the Left. What is happening to accentuate the polarization of the community is caused by factors both within and transcending the institutional divisions comprising the synagogue community. The process is rather more complex than a shift of allegiance from one congregational segment to another.

Much more significant than the membership fluctuations are the gradual shifts in outlook and direction which have occurred in each of the three major synagogue constellations — Right-wing Orthodox, Center Orthodox (mainly United Synagogue), and Progressive. At several important levels, the gulf between the first two is gradually narrowing, as the Right-wing group begins to shed its rigid insularity on the one hand, and an im-

portant segment of the Center group moves steadily towards the Right on the other. Illustrations of these trends can be found not only in the outgoing activities of a movement like Lubavitch, but in the slowly growing awareness of the responsibility towards the wider community by "Independent Orthodox" institutions. Teachers, some communal workers (notably in the Torah Corps), and occasionally even rabbis are now increasingly drawn from the ranks of Yeshiva alumni, while several of their schools now draw sometimes more than half of the pupils from United Synagogue homes. Correspondingly, there is now even less to distinguish a Dayan, sometimes a rabbi, and often a member of the United Synagogue from his counterpart in the Right-wing camp, as far as his religious commitment is concerned.

On the Left, too, there has been a certain realignment or shift of direction, especially during the past decade. Not only have the Progressive congregations moved firmly into the Zionist camp since 1967 and increased their partnership with others in communal concerns which do not impinge on religious differences; they have also searched for some more traditional norms and practices.

Yet the overall effect of these diverse shifts, mostly veering towards the Right, has been to widen the gap between the religious-secularist poles and to attenuate the Center in between. For instance, within the United Synagogue and its Provincial counterparts, the children of members will now often either wear *kippot* and be likely recruits for enrollment in Jewish day schools and even yeshivot or seminaries, or else lounge around at coffee bars and eventually wear off their Jewish identity to the point of complete disengagement from Jewish life and values. In other words, they are likely to become either strongly more committed or very much less committed than their parents; they are unlikely to maintain the compromise position held by most of the past generation.

It is the very intensity of the newly resurgent Jewishness of the growing minority which repels the indifferent majority who are not prepared to subject themselves to the increasingly rigorous disciplines of the committed. Conversely, it is the very drift

of the majority towards completely non-Jewish patterns — and aberrations — which stimulates the minority to resist the incursions of ignorance and assimilation with far greater resolution and enthusiasm than their parents did in a bygone age sustained by mere reverence for tradition. And so the gap between the extremes is growing both wider and emptier, as the opposite poles each charge their magnetic fields and mutually both strengthen and repel each other.

Perhaps by way of epilogue to an era that is fast disappearing, it might be added that umbrellas, formerly Anglo-Jewry's favorite implement or symbol, simply are no longer large enough to cover the growing diversity of the community or strong enough to shelter its members against the current storms of change. To my mind, they will have to be replaced by the rather stronger and more storm-resistant materials used in school construction if what can be salvaged of the next generation is to be secure against the buffetings of the times and not swept away by the raging tempests drowning those left outside this shelter.

## V

A few observations may here be added on Anglo-Jewry's "external" relations and concerns. In his paper on "The Anglo-Jewish Community in the Context of World Jewry" at the 1962 Conference, Cecil Roth listed three significant contributions made by British Jews in modern times to Jewish history as a whole: Their ability to combine complete emancipation with maintaining "in full measure their Jewish allegiance and their attachment to the synagogue"; their pioneering in inter-communal organization, which provided a model for other communities; and "the implementation if not evolution of Zionism in its modern sense." But in other spheres the community had been singularly unproductive. "Throughout its history," he added, "Anglo-Jewry has had as it were a satellite existence at least so far as its spiritual and intellectual life was concerned, reflecting to a great extent the attitudes, activities and moods of one of the great Continental groups," and he doubted whether Anglo-Jewry would supply these desiderata in future, though the need

was rendered all the more urgent by the devastation of European Jewry in the Holocaust. In his view, "the influences making for utter secularization are becoming increasingly strong. There can be no doubt that they are discernible in a growing measure in Anglo-Jewry as well, hitherto the most synagogacentric community of the western world."

What would be his verdict today, fifteen years later, on Anglo-Jewish contributions enriching the contemporary Jewish scene at large? Although he was my teacher, I cannot resurrect his thinking from the grave. For my part, I believe Anglo-Jewry has rendered several distinct services to Jewish life beyond its confine within the past two decades:

(1) Anglo-Jewry has become the focal point of, and now plays a major role in, European Jewish life. Its "entry" into Europe, leading the reconstruction and consolidation of Jewish life on the Continent, was initiated with the formation of the Conference of European Rabbis in 1957 under the on-going leadership of Chief Rabbi Brodie. The process was further accelerated by Britain's entry into the Common Market in 1974. In the religious sphere, this development has had such ramified effects as to turn Britain into Europe's largest center of Torah learning, and to make London the seat for the co-ordination of *shekhitah* affairs and defense within the Common Market countries.

(2) Anglo-Jewry largely initiated, originally through student activism, the now world-wide campaign for Soviet Jewry, whereby this has become the second item on the Jewish agenda, next to Israel.

(3) Anglo-Jewry has pioneered, and continues to sustain, some religious institutional enterprises which are unique, ranging from the United Synagogue founded 107 years ago to the Jewish Marriage Education Council established in 1948 and still without peer in any other community, not to mention the Chief Rabbinate, the London Beth Din and the Ministry. All of these have no exact parallel anywhere else, partly in influence and authority, and partly in character and organization. In this age of turmoil and rapid trans-

formation, these solid achievements are bound to have some stabilizing affect on Jewish life the world over.

## VI

The picture which emerges, then, is a mixture of some light and many shades — perhaps threatening clouds with silver linings would be a more accurate simile. But I must preface the principal conclusions, as I see them, with an overriding proviso.

Spiritual assets are by their very nature largely intangible. Jewishness or religiosity cannot easily be measured or quantified. A Jew who prays three times a day and spends the rest of his time preying on his fellow-men by unethical conduct may be more addicted to materialism — the ultimate product of secularization — than a relatively non-observant Jew who dedicates his time to the service of the community in faithfulness and who sanctifies the Divine Name as a model of integrity and righteousness. Between the Jew in London who keeps a kosher home, attends the synagogue regularly and sends his children to a Jewish school, and the Jew in Moscow, completely estranged from Judaism, who yet risks his freedom, his livelihood and his academic standing because he seeks a Jewish life for himself and his children — who is the more religious, and who in the final analysis will contribute more to Jewish survival and revival?

Moreover, the dynamics of Jewish history have never been governed by logic or logistics. Any perceptive observer of the desolate Anglo-Jewish scene immediately after the Second World War would have reacted with utter incredulity to a forecast that by now, a generation later, flourishing Jewish life and learning, more intense than ever in the community's long history, would strike expanding roots on British soil, just as the wondrous upsurge of the yearning for Jewish identification in the Soviet Union has confounded the experts who only twenty years ago had, with perfect logic, wrote off Soviet Jewry as debilitated beyond the hope of resuscitation after three generations of spiritual attrition.

If nevertheless I rely mainly on tangibles which can be expressed in statistical or otherwise concrete terms in an attempt

to assess current trends and prospects characterizing the Anglo-Jewish condition, it is only because no other criteria are available to me.

Jewish survival is assured by faith transcending rational calculations; but who and how many will survive to have a share in the Jewish future is subject to our forsight, dedication and exertions.

The present indications lead me to the following main conclusions:

(1) Great as are the inroads of secularization on an individual level, as a community Anglo-Jewry continues to manifest a strongly traditional character, and this feature seems secure for the foreseeable future. There are no signs of "fatigue stress" in the predominantly religious structure of the community or in any of the principal institutional units supporting it.

(2) Orthodoxy will continue to maintain the allegiance of most synagogue members and its commanding religious influence over the community's principal institutions. It seems highly improbable that either Conservative Judaism or "secular Judaism" will be established on the Anglo-Jewish scene as a viable alternative, or addition, to the existing components of the organized community.

(3) In common with trends throughout the Jewish world today, the polarization of Anglo-Jewry is proceeding at an accelerated pace. The majority is drifting further from its Jewish anchorage( except in terms of synagogue membership and occasional attendances) in a mounting toll of assimilation and intermarriage, whilst a growing minority tends towards far more intensive Jewish living and learning than did the preceding generation.

(4) Numerically the odds would be heavily in favor of the drifters, were it not for one crucial factor militating against the continuous shrinkage of the community to the point of eventual extinction: The indifferent majority is self-liquidating by compounding the losses through defection with an exceedingly low birth-rate, whereas the determined

minority combines immunity to spiritual erosion with a relatively prolific birth-rate.

(5) In demographic terms, this inexorable process is likely to reduce the overall size of the community, perhaps to a mere 300,000 identifying Jews, within the next generation. But since the religiously fittest will be the main element to survive as Jews, the community of the future will probably gain in intensity what it loses in numbers.

(6) Increasing polarization will produce other dramatic effects, too. The Anglo-Jewish predilection for the "middle-of-the-road" under the "umbrella" of moderation is bound to be squeezed into gradual disappearance by the converging pressures of intensified commitment from the Right and of rampant secularization, sometimes via various progressive half-way houses, from the Left.

(7) If, as now seems feasible, the proportion of Jewish pupils attending Jewish day schools can be brought up to or above 30%, their impact on the regeneration of Jewish life may well be such as to reclaim many of the remaining 70% as well towards some greater Jewish identification. Such a broad spiritual power-base may also in time create conditions conducive to a religious renaissance and cultural revival. It would certainly encourage the most intensely committed element gradually to modify the insularity bred by its lack of self-confidence constraining its relations with, and influence on, the wider community for fear of submersion in a secular culture to which it is at present afraid to expose its members.

(8) If, on the other hand, the 30% target cannot be reached, for lack of communal support and the failure to revise budgetary dispositions in favor of educational priorities over all but Israeli causes, the religious element may become even more defensive and inward-looking, protecting its integrity by self-imposed barriers of isolation from the rest of the community in the ghetto-like fastness of vibrant Torah-life it has so successfully built up within, and yet apart from, Anglo-Jewry as well as in most other major communities in Israel and elsewhere.