



MAX LEOPOLD MARGOLIS  
1866-1932

## MAX LEOPOLD MARGOLIS\*

A Sketch by CYRUS ADLER

MAX LEOPOLD MARGOLIS, scholar, teacher and author was born in Meretz, Government of Vilna, Russia, on October 15, 1866, the son of Isaac Margolis and Hinde Bernstein. He was a descendant of a family of rabbis and scholars, among whom the most notable was Rabbi Lipmann Halevi Heller. His own father, Rabbi Isaac Margolis, was a scholar of distinction and besides publishing two considerable learned volumes left several Hebrew manuscripts of merit. His father, although largely devoted to rabbinical studies, nevertheless had a knowledge of Latin, Greek, mathematics and science, and it was from him that Max Margolis received his earliest instruction. He was sent to Heder at the age of five but left that school and continued his instruction under his father, whilst general subjects were taught to him by the Priest of the Orthodox Church of his village. By the time he was eleven years of age he was an expert scribe and reader of the Torah and in general showed remarkable brilliance.

He was a rather jolly youth, inclined to be an athlete and even to a little mischief. He swam well, skated in the winter, was a good oarsman and, during his California days, an expert fisherman.

After he was thirteen he decided to run away from home in order to satisfy his thirst for knowledge elsewhere, but he returned after staying in Berlin for a short time, and again his father took up his instruction and even taught him trigonometry and logarithms in Hebrew.

\* In preparing this sketch, I have drawn upon my own recollections and have been greatly helped by a paper by Professor Alexander Marx published in the *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America*, 1930-32, as well as by addresses given by Professor James A. Montgomery, of the University of Pennsylvania, and by Rabbi Simon Greenberg, one of Doctor Margolis' disciples, at a memorial meeting held at Dropsie College on May 9, 1932.

In 1885, at the age of nineteen, he was sent to the Leibnitz Gymnasium in Berlin and lived while there, for a short time, at the house of his grandfather. In Berlin he distinguished himself in Latin, Greek and mathematics but nevertheless kept up his Hebrew studies.

In the autumn of 1889 he came to America and entered Columbia University where he studied Semitics under Professor Gottheil, Latin under Professor Peck, and Philosophy under Professors Butler and Catell, receiving his M. A. in 1890 and his Ph.D. in 1891. While studying at Columbia, and in order to maintain himself, he acted as Secretary to Felix Adler, by whose theories and lofty character he was at the time greatly attracted. He also worked for the Baron de Hirsch Fund and delivered a course of lectures on Amoraim and Tannaim in Dr. Adler's Summer School at Plymouth, Mass.

His first studies were talmudic, and he chose as the subject for his thesis at Columbia the value of Rashi's commentary for the preparation of a critical edition of the text of the Talmud. He wrote this thesis in Latin because at the time he had more confidence in his Latin than in his English. He had meant entirely to devote himself to this and even conceived a plan of a critical edition of the Talmud but the time was not appropriate nor was there sufficient material accessible to him. He did, however, prepare a grammar to the Babylonian Talmud, many years later. Probably it was the lack of material and probably also other causes which decided him to take up biblical studies. In spite of his rigidly trained scientific mind there was an element of mysticism in his make-up. He felt himself, in a way, a sort of successor to Samuel David Luzzatto who was called upon to carry on biblical study with the hope of continuing this Jewish influence upon all students of the Bible. It was a similar feeling that caused him to devote himself so much to the Greek versions. Margolis was a proud spirit and he wished to show the biblical scholars of the non-Jewish world that a Jew could also deal with the Greek versions, and he consistently endeavored to create among his own pupils a school, whose contributions, together with his

own, would form a real chapter in biblical study as advanced by the minute and critical analysis of everything that could be learned from these Greek versions.

However, we are running ahead of his career.

After completing his fellowship at Columbia University he was called to the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati, in 1892, where he was Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Biblical Exegesis until 1897. There, as a result of his teaching experience in Hebrew grammar, he published *Hebrew Accidence*, New York, 1893. While in that Institution he had his mind attracted to theology, and he wrote a paper on the theology of the old Prayer Book which appeared in the *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* of 1897, and on the "Theological Aspect of Reform Judaism," which appeared in the same publication in 1903.

In 1897 he accepted a call to the University of California, where he was appointed Assistant Professor of Semitic Languages and later Associate Professor. While in California he married Evelyn Kate Aronson, by whom he had three children, two of whom survive.

There is no doubt but that this particular field of general Semitic languages and indeed comparative Semitic philology and grammar would ordinarily have been his chosen and best field of work. He was essentially a grammarian and philologist, with a wide knowledge of Semitic languages and even of general linguistics; but somehow or other he could not keep away from biblical work and from Jewish thoughts, and so, when he was called back to the Hebrew Union College as Professor of Biblical Exegesis in 1905, he gladly accepted.

Here, however, through, as it were, spiritual difficulties, he found himself in conflict with the President of the College and some of his colleagues both with regard to his theological attitude, which he had greatly modified since his first stay in Cincinnati, and also with regard to the then highly mooted question of Zionism, and matters came to such a pass that Margolis felt he could not stay in Cincinnati. So he resigned and decided to devote a year abroad

to carrying out certain scientific plans and particularly the grammar of the Talmud on which he had set his heart.

It was just about the time when the Jewish Publication Society of America, which for a good many years had considered the publication of a new translation in English of the Hebrew Bible, formed a Board of Editors of six men who were to choose a seventh for Secretary of the Board and Editor-in-Chief. The choice fell upon Margolis, and he came back from Germany to take it up. He removed to Philadelphia in 1908 and carried on that work to its completion in 1917.

In the meantime, the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning had been established, and he was invited to the chair of Biblical Philology, a post which he occupied until his death. Here, something should be said of him as a teacher because he was a college teacher for upwards of forty years. He taught in Cincinnati, he taught in California, he taught in Philadelphia, he was Professor at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, and taught at the Hebrew University in that capacity. All over the world, wherever he taught, he left an impression on the students; he was a scholar, he was a researcher, but above and beyond all he was a teacher, and he left the stamp of his personality upon all the young men with whom he came in contact.

Although he was a very exact and to a certain extent dogmatic scholar, he also had the knack of popular presentation. This is shown by his little books on "The Hebrew Scriptures in the Making" and "The Story of Bible Translations," as well as by his contributions to the *B'nai B'rith Magazine*. He could be an excellent commentator as his book on Micah showed, but for the last twenty odd years of his life he threw his strength into the study of the Greek versions, particularly of the "Book of Joshua in Greek." This Book of Joshua, the first two parts of which have appeared, is described by Professor James A. Montgomery as Margolis' *magnum opus*, and rightly so. To put twenty years to the study of manuscripts and collation and arrangement, and then to rewrite the entire work in his own hand in the most

exquisite Greek and English, is an undertaking which is unparalleled in biblical study. Such a work was a remarkable piece of self-abnegation in the sense that he knew, over this long period of years, that but a very small number of scholars in the world would ever be able even to appreciate it and that the general public, even that large public that is interested in the Bible, would not be aware of the fact that such a work existed.

He undertook another piece of work, however, of an entirely different nature and one which showed the broadness of the man. It was no less than the production, with Professor Alexander Marx, of a one-volume "History of the Jewish People," a work to which Professor Marx largely furnished the material, except the biblical, but which was virtually put in shape by Margolis in the midst of other very exacting studies.

Margolis was a Zionist and a very devoted one. He acquired an almost mystical love for the land and he often said, after his return from Palestine, that no man could understand the Psalms or, indeed, the Bible who had not lived there.

While his life was to a certain extent isolated he yet enjoyed the association of his fellow craftsmen. He was an active member of the American Oriental Society, of whose journal he was editor; of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, whose journal he likewise edited; of the Oriental Club of Philadelphia, and of the American Philosophical Society, and probably of other organizations which I do not know.

To the Jewish Publication Society of America he gave a very large service. He was a member of its Publication Committee, read many manuscripts, wrote exact reports about them, and in the way that I have indicated above, through various books, contributed mightily to the output of the Society on biblical and historical subjects.

From his students one gets the impression that he had almost a passion for imparting knowledge, or rather I should say, for teaching and inspiring students themselves to become searchers after truth. He never used a secondary

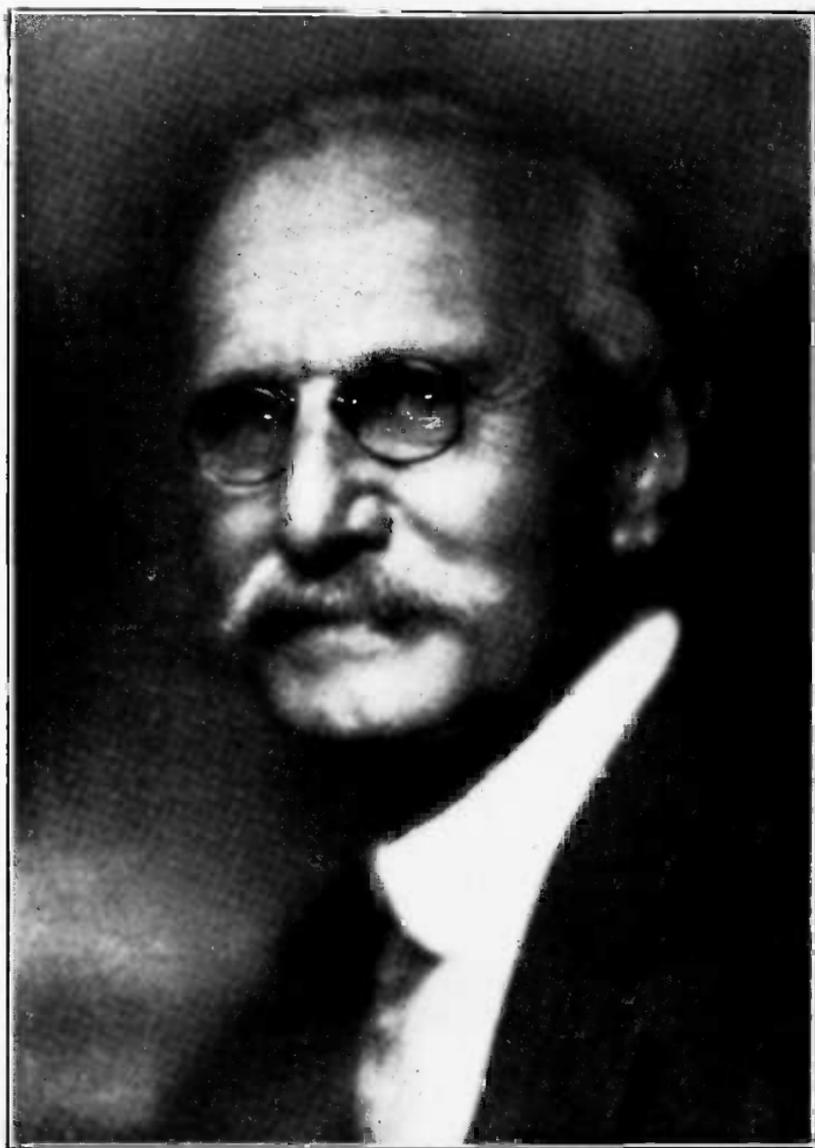
source when an original was available, and he never came into a classroom or a lecture unprepared.

He was not a man of many amusements. His athletics as a boy, I have already referred to. In his youth he played chess, but up to the end he retained a remarkable knack in the building of houses of cards which children adored. He had a shyness which gave some people the impression of hauteur, which was probably not the case. During the last year or two of his life, when his health was not good and his physicians advised a change of mental attitude, he gave somewhat less time to his chosen biblical studies and by way of relaxation read the new astronomical and cosmogonic theories.

Yet he could enjoy a good story and tell one. Altogether Max Margolis was a product of the Jewish life of the period; he grew up in an atmosphere in which normally he would have been exclusively devoted to biblical or probably to talmudic studies, yet there was that modernism in his father which gave him other languages and mathematics. The training in Berlin and afterwards in America gave him a broader field of knowledge, but so impressed was he with the primary importance of the Bible and Jewish studies that he absorbed all the new knowledge, brought it back and utilized it for that which was nearest to the Jewish soul. In a period when many were estranged from Jewish studies through the blinding light of the larger outside world, his Jewish studies were enhanced by the new light of the physical, mathematical and linguistic sciences.

He died on the Sabbath, April 2, 1932, alas, with some of his work unfulfilled.





CYRUS L. SULZBERGER  
1858-1932

## CYRUS L. SULZBERGER

By MORRIS D. WALDMAN

In the brief biographical note that the late Cyrus Leopold Sulzberger was accustomed to contribute to the *Who's Who in America* he modestly described himself as "merchant." But the wide circle of his friends and colleagues would refuse to be content with that designation of his place in public life. To them he was not only a merchant, successful in the world of business; but even more, a man of wide intellectual range and extraordinary spiritual strength. In the seventy-three years of his life he distinguished himself in many ways: as public-spirited citizen, as a benevolent humanitarian, as a communal worker, as a philanthropist, as an educator; above all as one of profound social-mindedness. He was, too, possessed of a warmly sympathetic nature and of an intimate understanding of his fellowmen. So much so, that although he assiduously shunned the limelight of public life, he was able to exert an enormous influence over many who were themselves leaders in a multiplicity of social, philanthropic and communal efforts.

This gift of his: a persuasive characteristic of kindness, tolerance and insight, must always be remembered; for it expanded the range of achievements of his own career, crowded as that was with efforts for the public weal.

Cyrus L. Sulzberger was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 11th, 1858, the son of Leopold and Sophia Lindauer Sulzberger. He obtained a secular education in the grammar schools of his native city and in its Central High School. His Jewish education was derived from the famed Philadelphia Hebrew Education Society and from home and synagogue influences that left their mark upon him throughout his lifetime.

Upon graduation from high school he entered the business world, as bookkeeper, an occupation that he followed, when, at the age of 19, he came to settle in New York City. Here he joined the firm of N. Erlanger and Company. Later he was invited to become a partner in the firm; and still later, in 1903, became its president. He resigned this position in 1929 and thereafter, until his death, was chairman of the company's Board of Directors.

Mr. Sulzberger was a successful businessman; but his business was never permitted to monopolize his full time. On the contrary, from his very earliest years in New York, he exhibited an interest in the affairs of the metropolis and in every movement looking towards progressive government and civic betterment. While still young, he joined a political club of which he served as president on two occasions. In 1903 he was invited to become the Fusion candidate for the office of President of the Borough of Manhattan. He was not elected; but several years later he directed the campaign of George McAneny for that same office, and skillfully conducted the candidacy to victory at the polls.

I recall an interesting story in this connection, illustrative at once of his utter lack of pompousness, his *Gemütlichkeit*, his constant good sportsmanship.

On election day, when he was himself the candidate for the position of President of the Borough of Manhattan, his friends were gathered at his home in anticipation of celebrating his election. A festival cake had been prepared for the occasion with iced lettering on it, bearing the words: "Cyrus L. Sulzberger, Borough President." As the news came over the telephone, it soon appeared that Mr. Sulzberger's candidacy was lost. But the hero of the occasion was in no way ruffled. Quietly he went over to the cake and without a word lifted the letter "P" from the inscription.

Those were two periods of active campaigning; but they did not circumscribe his civic activities. On several occasions he was invited by city and state officials to participate in the work of important commissions. Governor Charles E. Hughes appointed him a member of a State Commission on Congestion of Population. Governors Sulzer and Glynn named him to membership on the Board of Managers of the Reformatory for Misdemeanants. Mayor John Purroy

Mitchel drafted him for service on the Committee on Unemployment. In each case he distinguished himself, winning the admiration and respect of his colleagues and the public at large.

In the main, however, Mr. Sulzberger's public life was occupied with the economic, communal and educational problems of his Jewish fellow-citizens. To these concerns, he gave unstintingly of his time, his money, and his devotion. The influence of the great scholar, Sabato Morais, whom he knew in his boyhood days in Philadelphia, was strongly marked upon him.

Years before he attained his majority, he was active in the Philadelphia Young Men's Hebrew Association, where he published, along with Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, the *Association Review* as the organ of the associate members. He was among the first to sponsor a Young Men's Hebrew Association in New York and to help coordinate the work of all these groups in the *American Hebrew*, of which publication he was the first president.

At about the period that Mr. Sulzberger arrived in New York there began the great tide of Jewish immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. Their poverty and the oppression from which they were escaping stirred him deeply. At the same time, he saw that this flow of hundreds of thousands of newcomers provoked a complexity of problems. The immigrants had to be assisted in their economic and cultural readjustment. They had to be integrated into their new life in such a way as to permit them to make the greatest possible contribution to their own welfare and to the country that had so hospitably received them. Their problems, therefore, became his tasks, to which he devoted himself without pause the greater part of his lifetime.

One of his outstanding activities in this field of endeavor was as President of the Industrial Removal Office and as treasurer of the Galveston movement which attempted to direct the flow of Jewish immigration away from too heavy a concentration in the large cities of the Atlantic seaboard. The task was a gigantic one, requiring enormous funds of energy and perseverance as well as constructive vision of a high order. How effective its work was, can now be appraised

by consulting a copy of the *American Jewish Year Book*; here it will be seen that the distribution of Jews has been stimulated to such an extent that there are now close to 2,000 communities, extending into every state of the Union, where Jews have established themselves. In a study of the place of the Jew in American life, this achievement can hardly be over-estimated.

Mr. Sulzberger's concern with the problems of immigration was not exhausted by this effort. In his association with the work of the American Jewish Committee (to which we shall have occasion to refer later) he frequently took up the current questions relating to immigration and naturalization. When he went abroad on a vacation he made a careful study of the situation in Roumania, a country from which many Jews were emigrating in large numbers. Oscar S. Straus, one-time United States Ambassador to Turkey and member of President Theodore Roosevelt's cabinet, regarded Mr. Sulzberger as an authority on this subject and advised those who wished to study and report on the immigration question to consult with him before drawing up their conclusions.

The enormous tide of immigrants also led Mr. Sulzberger, as one of the active American Jewish leaders, to grapple with the problem of their Americanization, and with the other questions involving their cultural well-being. Furthermore, it emphasized the urgency for providing in some measure for the need to safeguard their religious and civil rights.

Partly in recognition of the importance of offering to the immigrant an Americanizing influence, Mr. Sulzberger joined a group of associates in launching the *American Hebrew*, a publication that he helped guide to perhaps the greatest period of its usefulness and prestige. He was at that time barely past his majority. "Truth tells its own story," Mr. Sulzberger set as his own motto and as the beacon light of his editorial policy.

This ideal he sought to express in the carefully edited columns of his publication. "We were animated," he told many years later, "by our zeal, our ardor, our devotion to Judaism." Fortunately this zeal was shared by the rest of the group of young, enthusiastic associates; fortunately

too, Mr. Sulzberger was gifted with a lucid pen that he did not hesitate to use at all times to advance the ideals of his religion and his country.

How capable he was in its use may be judged from the article expressive of his genuinely religious nature and deep feeling, that he wrote some years before his death and which he entitled "For Our Children's Children: A Layman's Faith."

"What chance has Judaism as a rule of life?" he inquired; and then proceeded to answer his question with the thoughtful, enlightened idealism that constituted his life's principles:

"Throughout the ages," he wrote, "there has run through Jewish history a single living thread which has served to unite those of each present generation with its predecessors; which has enabled its martyrs to die, and the greater glory of which is, that it has enabled its myriads to live. This continuous thread in Jewry, surviving until now, and, properly understood, capable of surviving forever, is the belief in One God—the God of Righteousness and Holiness. 'Be Holy, for I your God, am Holy!' is still the only eternal sanction for right conduct..."

"If it be realized that our individual conduct bears on the well-being of the world, that rightdoing advances and wrongdoing retards the advent of that righteousness for which the Power, not ourselves, is working, if we consciously feel that our every act has thus a significance to the whole moral world, we get an appreciation of what it means to Be Holy because God is Holy."

He summarized the doctrine "for our children's children" thus: "They are not alone the children of their parents. They are the children of centuries of Jewish religion and culture, religion and culture always having gone hand in hand. In all the past ages, the philosophy of Judaism was in harmony with the best thought of those ages. For this day and generation a like harmony is demanded and can be obtained."

Mr. Sulzberger was not a lone enthusiast; the contagion of his own idealism and zeal infected others. As president of the publishing company issuing the *American Hebrew* he was a bulwark of strength to its editor, the late Dr. Joseph

Jacobs. Many a scholar and writer whom he befriended has testified to the inspiration of his personality and influence. The tribute of Dr. H. Pereira Mendes contains a striking recollection of the days of his association with the *American Hebrew*: "From the very first moment of our meetings, Cyrus Sulzberger showed himself distinguished by a remarkable trait of character that was always to the front. I refer to his uncompromising, unflinching loyalty to the loftiest interests of American Jewry. His breadth of view, his remarkable power of psychological analysis, his terse and forceful language, his command of English, his love for the highest literary style, his sympathetic mind and his generous heart soon made him one of the leading spirits of that band of youthful editors."

Philip Cowen, one of the founders of the *American Hebrew*, has related in his book, "Memories of an American Jew," one episode (of many) when Mr. Sulzberger came to the defense of the good name of the Jew:

"In November, 1884, there appeared in the *Century Magazine* a chapter of "The Rise of Silas Lapham," by William Dean Howells, wherein one of the characters spoke of the decline of values in real estate that followed the entrance of Jews in the neighborhood. Sulzberger, wrote to Mr. Howells concerning the injustice of his statement and its likelihood to encourage race prejudice. In the course of the story the following conversation was given:

'Why, Silas Lapham,' said his wife, 'do you mean to tell me that this house is worth less than we gave for it?'

'It is worth a good deal less. You see *they* have got in—and pretty thick too,—it's no use denying it. And when they get in, they send down the price of property. Of course, there ain't any sense in it. *I* think it dumn foolishness. It's cruel and folks ought to be ashamed. But there it is. You tell folks that the Saviour himself was one, and the twelve apostles, and all the prophets, and I don't know but Adam was—guess he *was*—and it don't make a bit of difference. They send down the price of real estate. Prices begin to shade when the first one gets in.'

'Mrs. Lapham thought the facts over a few moments. 'Well, what do we care, so long as we're comfortable in our

home? 'And they're just as nice and as good neighbors as can be.'

"Under date of July 12, 1885, Mr. Sulzberger wrote to Mr. Howells, in part as follows:

"Dear Sir: As *The Rise of Silas Lapham* is about approaching completion, and will, I presume, soon appear in book form, I beg to call to your notice a slur (in Chapter II) upon a number of your readers and admirers—a slur as unmerited by the Jewish people as it is unworthy of the author. It is not alone upon the ignorant and uncultured of the Jews that you reflect, for neither the 'Saviour himself' nor the twelve apostles, nor the prophets, nor even Adam, were, so far as the records show, of that class which depreciated the value of property when they 'got in.' . . . The statement is violently dragged in for no other ascertainable reason than to pander to a prejudice against which all educated and cultured Jews must battle. The literary leaders of a country have so great a power in fomenting or in repressing popular prejudice, that I make bold to hope that in the permanent form in which '*Silas Lapham*' will no doubt soon appear, these objectionable lines will be omitted.

CYRUS L. SULZBERGER."

"Mr. Howells replied from Old Orchard, Me., as follows under date of July 17, 1885:

'My dear Sir: I thank you for your frank and manly letter. I supposed that I was writing in reprobation of the prejudice of which you justly complain, but my irony seems to have fallen short of the mark—so far short that you are not the first Hebrew to accuse me of pandering to the stupid and cruel feeling against your race and religion. I will not ask you to read again, in the light of this statement, the passage of my story which you object to, for I have already struck it out of my book, and it will not re-appear. In that passage I merely recognized to rebuke it, the existence of a feeling which

civilized men should be ashamed of. But perhaps it is better not to recognize all the facts.

'Perhaps, also, you owe me an apology for making an unjust accusation. I leave that to you.

Very truly yours,

W. D. HOWELLS.'

"This interesting correspondence, which was printed in the *Evening Post* as well as in the *American Hebrew*, was brought to a close by the following letter from Mr. Sulzberger to Mr. Howells:

'To Mr. W. D. Howells,  
Old Orchard, Me.

'My dear Sir: Certainly in view of your kind note of 17 inst., I do owe you an apology. Still, in justification of my own stupidity in missing the point of your irony, I may say that Silas' admission that "they" do depreciate the value of property when they get in—a fact concerning the financial accuracy of which I have some doubts—seemed to me rather an endorsement than a rebuke of what you truly called the "stupid and cruel feeling" against us.

I am glad indeed to have your assurance that the passage will not appear in the book, and still more pleased to know that the author whom I have so much admired is not to be counted among the number—unfortunately too large—of Jew-haters in America.

CYRUS L. SULZBERGER.' "

In many ways Mr. Sulzberger showed how highly he prized the educational forces in American Jewish life. Shortly after his arrival in New York he became president of the Talmud Torah of the Congregation Adereth El. He was a director of the Jewish Publication Society; a chairman of the Executive Committee of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research. He helped found the Kehilla, the organization that attempted to co-ordinate the religious and cultural activities of the Jewish community of New

York, and of the Bureau of Jewish Education. His intellectual inclinations led to his active work in the Judeans society. More recently, another cultural effort, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, engaged his sympathetic interest. For many years he was actively interested in promoting the cause of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. But his disillusionment with the passions engendered in the World War turned him against every emphasis on nationalism, so that in the latter part of his life he disassociated himself from the national elements in that movement.

The changing complexion of American Jewish life, resulting from the mass immigration movement led to still another of Mr. Sulzberger's communal activities; his interest in philanthropic enterprises. This work took many forms. There were problems to be solved of immediate immigrant aid. There were larger problems involving the economic regeneration of Jews on a wider scale. There were the calamities requiring special charitable effort: the pogroms and the tragic collapse of the Eastern European communities as a result of the World War. All of these efforts obtained Mr. Sulzberger's generous cooperation. A full report of the many organizations with which he was associated and of his work for each of them would far exceed the limits of this brief biographical article. But even a listing of the organizations that obtained his personal interest will throw some light on the large variety of his communal enterprises and the catholicity of his interests in Jewish life:

Mr. Sulzberger was for a number of years President of the United Hebrew Charities, of New York City, now known as the Jewish Social Service Association. He was one of the first outstanding advocates of "Federation" of Jewish philanthropic institutions, and in association with the late Nathan Bijur, Morris Loeb and Lee K. Frankel, helped to promote the idea in New York City and eventually to bring about its realization; and was a trustee of the New York Federation for the Support of the Jewish Philanthropic Societies. He was also a President of the Jewish Agricultural Aid Society; a secretary of the American Jewish Relief Committee; a member of the Executive Committee of the Joint Distribution Committee; a president of the New

York City Conference on Charities and Correction; a president of the National Conference of Jewish Charities; and a supporter of the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) movement headed by Israel Zangwill.

The disastrous pogroms in Russia that stirred the American public to a rare display of sympathy and good will, led to the formation, first, of the National Committee for the Relief of the Sufferers by the Russian Massacres in which Mr. Sulzberger played an active part; and, indirectly, to the formation of the American Jewish Committee, established in 1906. On this body he served, as a member of its executive committee, until his passing. His special concern were subjects relating to immigration and to naturalization; and he was ever watchful for the interests of the frequently attacked alien. He was one of a group of four delegates (the others being Dr. Cyrus Adler, Louis Marshall and Harry Cutler) representing the Committee, who appeared before the Committee of Immigration and Naturalization of the U. S. House of Representatives in 1910. On this occasion he prepared a carefully documented statement disproving the variety of charges and allegations made against the immigrant, and reporting in some detail how they had contributed to the economic life of their new homeland. His testimony at that time was hailed as an achievement of special effectiveness.

At one time he cleverly confounded immigrant baiters by quoting from an article by Mark Sullivan about an Anglo-Saxon community in western Pennsylvania, a community consisting almost wholly of natives, which was exposed as reeking of graft and corruption.

In general, the minutes of the American Jewish Committee meetings bear ample testimony to his active participation in its deliberations, and to the services he rendered towards the fulfillment of its work.

A word about his private life.

Several years after Mr. Sulzberger settled in New York, he met and married Rachel Hays, a descendant of one of the oldest American Jewish families, related to the famous

Peixottos and Cardozos. They had three sons, Leo, Arthur and David, of whom the last two, along with his widow, survived Mr. Sulzberger.

The biographer of a man like Cyrus Leopold Sulzberger is always at a disadvantage. At most, he can record the variety of his achievements, the organizations he established or helped, his liberality with time and money, and devotion to one cause or another. With another man that might be enough; but it is inadequate in describing the life of Mr. Sulzberger who gave, in addition, a share of his rich and high-minded personality. His keen, but genial sense of humor, his earnestness, his openmindedness and lack of personal vanity, his mental alertness and resourcefulness, his warm sympathy—all had their share in shaping events and in influencing men of ability and distinction to undertake tasks of constructive public usefulness.

The tribute paid to him by Rabbi David de Sola Pool, at his funeral services, beautifully expressed the esteem in which Sulzberger was held by those who knew him. It is noted here in part:

“It is a rare thing to find—a heart of wisdom, but Cyrus L. Sulzberger was that rare combination summed up in the vivid biblical phrase. One must search far to find united in such perfect harmony as did Cyrus L. Sulzberger the brilliant mind and great heart in one richly endowed personality.

“It is hard to think that his strong and vigorous mind is stilled. So unusual were his intellectual gifts, so unusual his powers of analysis, his forcefulness and directness of expression, so clear his vision, that, in the words of one dear friend, ‘he could have made a success of anything that he undertook.’

“Yet with all that strength, with all that wealth of mental vigor, there was nothing of the overbearing, forbidding, metallic quality which one sometimes finds in men of forceful mentality. There was always a sense of humor, a sweetly illuminating smile, a glint of humanity in the handsome, understanding, powerful eyes, that gave so distinguished a quality of alluring friendliness to his humane wisdom.

“But there was more than high intelligence, penetrating depth of mind, cosmopolitan culture, urbanity and refinement. His was the understanding heart, the heart of wisdom; the combination of the Hellene and the Hebrew. He had the Greek’s love of beauty, of truth and of wisdom, and he had also the greatest gift of humanity—the moral fervor and the passion of the heart of the Jew.

“We need men like Cyrus L. Sulzberger—those rare men who, like him, can stand up for the truth with courage and wisdom; with the Jewish love for his fellow men which he gave without thought of self, without thought of reward, with all the warmth of a loving heart.

“His public work was marked by a selflessness that was rare. Some men give themselves to public service, but stoop to cheap and tawdry tricks of self-advertisement and hope for political preferment. He abhorred such tactics. His was the self-effacing work of one who loved his fellow-men. He retired early from business that he might give himself to philanthropy.

“Cyrus L. Sulzberger was a man of superlative integrity. His heart beat true. His was a heart of wisdom, and he loved the wisdom of his ancient people. He was an intensely religious man, a man in whom religion was neither a cult nor an occasional profession of faith. It was the very fibre of his living.”

## THE SYNAGOGUE AND JEWISH COMMUNAL ACTIVITIES

BY HORACE STERN

The question to which I am addressing myself is the part the synagogue should play in the scheme of Jewish communal organization and activities. I would like also to offer a suggestion by way of remedy of existing conditions.

What *are* the existing conditions? If we are to consider the synagogue and the activities of the community with a view to bringing them into more effective relationship, it is necessary that we first survey the present situation. Therefore, let us glance for a few moments at the manner in which our communities are now organized for what I may briefly denominate "Jewish work." By that term I mean the religious, educational, philanthropic, and protective activities carried on by Jews more particularly for their own welfare and betterment, as distinguished from the general activities which they share in common with all other people in the communities in which they live. In the phrase "Jewish work" I include activities for the benefit not only of the local communities but also for Jewish national institutions and relief work of all kinds abroad.

How are our communities now organized to carry on such work? Notwithstanding the popular belief held by the world around us that we are a clannish folk, that we work at all times in unison and with well-defined purpose, that we are not only knit together sentimentally but well-organized practically, that we are an outstanding example of the force of racial solidarity—I say notwithstanding such an estimate entertained by our non-Jewish neighbors, we ourselves know only too well that we are one of the most individualistic and least organized peoples in the world. We are separated from one another by the same differences

that exist among the individuals and the groups that make up other peoples, races, and nations—the ordinary differences of education, wealth, and political, economic, and social viewpoints—but in addition to these we have internal differences peculiar to ourselves. We who live in this country have come from various lands, or our ancestors have so come, and in those countries our forefathers lived under varied conditions which engendered quite amazing differences of outlook upon the world and of individual and group psychologies. In addition to this the individual Jew has always had a mind of his own, and usually a very active one. Our people have never submitted blindly and automatically to leadership. We are extremely critical and analytical. Historic conditions have made us sceptical in the sense that we take little for granted. We have never had a secure or snug position in the world. We have always had to watch the ground under our feet and to move warily among hostile surroundings. We have had to look out sharply for ourselves in order to preserve our existence both individually and as a people. This has made us self-reliant, and a self-reliant man is better timber for a general than for a private in the ranks. Even Moses, great leader that he was, found his leadership no sinecure, and the autocracy that has prevailed generally and at all times throughout the Orient obtained little foothold in the self-governing commonwealth of the Jews in Palestine, as Judge Sulzberger so interestingly pointed out in his "Polity of the Ancient Hebrews." Be these things as they may, the fact is clear that we do not readily lend ourselves to mechanical organization. Indeed, it is the chronic lack of organization, the inability to unite for common ends, that divides the Jews in some of the East European countries into an absurdly great number of parties and thereby makes it difficult for them to insist effectively upon the civic and economic rights to which they are entitled.

Coming back to the concrete situation presented in our communal life in our own country, we find no basic or comprehensive system whatever in our communal organization; indeed we *have* no communal organization. It is true that annually we improvise in more or less hasty fashion a sporadic and emotional campaign for local philanthropic

purposes, but even in this matter, which is the source of our greatest pride, we have no really stable, permanent mechanism for obtaining in systematic and well-ordered fashion the charity contributions which should be regularly forthcoming from each and every member of the community. The religious school work of the community is carried on in still more chaotic fashion. It is largely a disorganized mass of unit institutions. There may be Talmud Torahs grouped together in a general association; there may be Sunday Schools similarly united; there may be local religious educational associations trying to bring order out of chaos, but as a general rule and a prevailing condition each of the congregational as well as the other schools goes its solitary way; thousands of children in the community get no religious education whatever; there is no standard curriculum; there is no general provision for the preparation of teachers, and there is, in short, no communal organization planned, equipped, and adequate to cope with those problems that exist in all of our larger cities today.

If these statements be true as to local conditions, how much more disconcerting is the situation with reference to the organization and maintenance of our national institutions! Anyone who is connected with them as an officer, trustee, or worker in any capacity knows that it is impossible to obtain support for them, either financially or by way of general enlistment of interest, other than by mere occasional and haphazard pleas here and there to so-called communal leaders to lend themselves to a special and usually hectic campaign for those purposes. And so-called communal leaders are usually tired people, who, if I may paraphrase from non-Jewish literature, having been faithful over a few things have been made by an inconsiderate community ruler over many things. If, therefore, such an organization as the Jewish Publication Society, or such an enterprise as the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, or such a body as the American Jewish Committee, or any of many other bodies that might be named, wishes to raise funds for support or to obtain members or subscribers, it must beg and implore here and there some individual, suspected of being kindly disposed, to attempt to organize in his particular

city a movement for such support, and since no real support can be consistently maintained in any such manner, the result is that our best institutions languish woefully and American Jewry is disgraced by reason of its failure properly to maintain and enlarge its most worthwhile projects, although that failure is probably due almost entirely to lack of organization rather than to lack of interest on the part of our people when properly and efficiently approached.

There is another result of our lack of organization which takes the form of duplication of efforts and impingement of the work of one organization upon that of another. This causes not only a weakening in the results accomplished but frequently involves embarrassing and humiliating situations in which the Jew is placed in an awkward light in the world at large. If some incident occurs of an anti-Semitic nature, several institutions may rush forward to be the first to meet the situation, and they are not apt to be deterred by the fact that thereby they sometimes gain the front page of the newspapers and impress constituents with the alertness of action on the part of the officers of their organization. Not infrequently a lack of harmony and coordination on their part nullifies the common effort.

Finally there is another aspect of the situation to which I have incidentally alluded, namely, that in the great communal tasks of religious and educational work, philanthropy and all the other special problems of Jewish life, instead of each member of the community taking a definite part and being given either—as one may choose to regard it—the duty or the opportunity to serve in a designated and specific capacity for the common good, there are a few individuals in each community who are asked and required to do nearly everything, a great many who are never sought out and asked to do anything, and a great majority who are expected and urged to do something but without clear direction as to when, why, and how that something is to be done, and without providing that the things that are to be done shall be properly and fairly divided among the workers. To start a campaign in our communities for the beneficent purposes in which Jews have their major interest nowadays requires the task of developing new units of organization, requires time and laborious effort,

results in much straggling and confusion, and even if success be attained the work of organization will be but temporary and will die with the cause which it sponsored.

In short, what I have attempted thus far to emphasize is the obvious truth that there exists among us at present no effectively organized communal life for the kind of work which we are here discussing; that there is much duplication of individual and institutional effort; that our most important organizations are insufficiently and only sporadically maintained, and that such work as is done is very unevenly distributed among the individuals in the community. Can we get a better, a more logical, a more permanent, a more practical form of communal organization for the management of our communal activities? Can the synagogues offer the means for such a better form? To answer these questions requires that we take a glance at the role now played by the synagogue in our communal life.

We all know that the synagogue of today is vastly shrunken in its activities as compared with periods previous to the present. The synagogue was formerly the centre of all Jewish life. Abrahams says that the medieval Jew not only prayed in the synagogue, he lived in it. It was the common meeting place and in it the communal life expressed itself. In the synagogue were carried on all the activities which were shared in common—study for child and for adult, charity, religious worship, social life. Today the synagogue is a place in which to pray and to hear occasionally a sermon or a lecture. Attendance at divine service tends to become something merely incidental, like going to any other place of meeting or diversion. It is true that some synagogues have so-called "centres" or community houses attached to them, where there are gymnasiums and even swimming pools, and assembly halls where brotherhoods and sisterhoods and Sunday School alumni have dinners and receptions and dramatic and vaudeville performances and lectures. These kinds of entertainment are not to be condemned nor criticized, but on the other hand their religious and ethical value should not be exaggerated in the minds of those who sponsor and those who enjoy them. A lecture on Chaucer or on Sovietism or on

the Einstein theory of relativity is no different when given in a synagogue than in a university, except that it is not apt to be as scholarly or profound. A concert is no different in a synagogue than when given by a great symphony orchestra in a public concert hall, except that it is not apt to be as good. There is nothing distinctively Jewish about these things and no particular reason why the members of synagogues should listen to them in the synagogue centres when they can be so easily and so much better obtained in the larger communal life. Be this as it may, however, the point for our present purpose is that, whether there be "centres" and community houses attached to the synagogues or not, they do not function in serving as units of Jewish communal activity. And for this change over former days there are many reasons, which we must frankly face in order that we do not blink facts and build our plans upon impossible foundations.

One reason for the sloughing off of communal activities in the synagogue is the fact that our synagogues, at least in the larger cities, are no longer neighborhood affairs. At one time the people lived in the very shadow of the synagogue building; to-day the residences of a congregational membership are scattered from end to end of the city. Then again, there is a far greater complexity than formerly in the communal work to be done. Take, for example, the matter of charity. It once consisted of gathering comparatively small sums of money and distributing them to the poor to be used by the latter as they pleased. Nowadays the amounts necessary to meet the wants of the needy are enormous, and the disposition of the money raised, utilized as it is for constructive and intelligent relief, requires technically trained students and workers in a way that would be quite impossible unless it were all managed and organized in a secular and community-wide federation. There is no doubt that even the religious schools of the congregations would be improved if federated and managed by a central organization just as in the case of our public schools; a much better grade of professional supervision would be thus obtained.

Another reason for the decline in synagogal activity is the fact that in trying to retain the loyalty of its members,

synagogues are now obliged to compete with numerous physical, social, and educational institutions and instrumentalities that tend to divert the people, such as automobiles, golf clubs, radios, bridge parties, extension lectures, and the proceedings of various learned and pseudo-learned societies. There is also to be considered, of course, the general circumstance that religion, at least in its organized forms, has to an appreciable extent lost its hold upon the present generation.

Such being the conditions that prevail, it would seem well, before we attempt to ascertain whether there is any method by which the synagogues can overcome these adverse conditions and become again in some form the centres of communal activity, to consider whether from the standpoint of the synagogues themselves it is desirable in this day and age that such result should be accomplished. Is it desirable that the synagogue should be an institution of active Jewish work, or should it confine itself to being a house of prayer and a source of spiritual inspiration? There would seem to be anything but unanimity in the opinions of those who have given thought to this question. Some think that the synagogue should be a place that is wholly unworldly, a place in which the mystical should be the paramount influence upon those who worship therein, a place in which ethics and high and noble standards of living should be taught but the practice of such teachings be left to the contacts with the world without, and that the value and holiness of meditation, communion with the divine, prayer, worship and adoration of God, should not be confused with the mere pragmatic expression of character in good deeds in the worldly relations of life. Persons of these views would urge that just as a school furnishes an education the practical utilization of which is for life beyond the school walls, so the synagogue should furnish the spiritual stimulus and the ethical education which will enable its members to acquit themselves as religious and God-fearing persons in the world in which they move. On the other hand, there are those, especially among the youth, who insist upon seeing the immediate practical results of religious teaching, and who feel that mere prayer and devotion do not justify themselves with sufficient

obviousness unless the synagogue, by and in itself, shows by its own organized work that its members are carrying their high impulses into concrete action. Such persons would argue also that the carrying on of communal activities within the synagogue would tend to give to such activities a direct religious sanction; that it would emphasize Judaism as the vital force of Jewish life instead of allowing the present tendency of secularization in Jewish work to progress; that it would bring about the maintenance of a healthy interest in the synagogue, especially on the part of the young; that it would indeed be a visible and continuous justification of the synagogue in their eyes, and that on the whole it would bring organized religion into better accord with the spirit of the age in which we live. If to these contentions there be added the reasonable expectation that, as I hope to show, by making the synagogues foci of communal activity a more efficient and better organized system for the carrying on of Jewish work will result, it would seem that the weight of the argument is in favor of at least an experimental attempt to restore the synagogue in part to its former position as a centre of communal activities.

In any scheme of communal organization for the purpose which we are considering, it is obvious that there are three chief desiderata: (1) to have a permanent form of organized Jewish life in each community, not so much for the purpose of its being ready upon occasion to spring into action on behalf of Jewish causes, as rather of having it continuously working for them; (2) to have every member of the Jewish community interested in Jewish work by being actively engaged in some form of it most congenial to him, and incidentally thereby to have that work distributed as fairly in the community as possible; and (3) to interest especially the young people in the solving of Jewish problems and the performance of communal work.

I propose that in every synagogue—I am referring more particularly at present to Reform and Conservative Synagogues of the prevailing American type—the body of the membership shall be organized for the purpose of active Jewish communal work. Thus I would have a

group in each such organization devoted to the cause of the local charitable work, the hospitals, the relief agencies, the federations, etc. I would have a group devoted to the cause of national charitable organizations. Another group would concern itself with national educational institutions, such, for example (merely by way of suggesting illustrations chosen at random), as the Jewish Publication Society, the Hillel Foundations, the Jewish Welfare Board, and many others that might be mentioned. Then there would be a group studying and promoting the activities of national institutions engaged in religious training, the theological seminaries and colleges in New York and Cincinnati, and institutions of religious purpose like the United Synagogue of America and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. There would be a group on foreign relief work, engaged in cooperation with such an organization as the Joint Distribution Committee. Still another group would concern itself more particularly with the work concerning Palestine, the Jewish Agency, the Zionist organizations, the Hādassah, the Hebrew University, and so on. Another group would cooperate in the work of the protection of Jewish rights at home and abroad as carried on by the American Jewish Committee, the B'nai B'rith, or the American Jewish Congress, and would also interest itself in affairs at Geneva in connection with the minority rights established in post-war treaties. Then there would be a group working on the problem of local education as represented by the Hebrew Sunday Schools, the Talmud Torahs, the congregational religious schools, the teachers' institutes, and other bodies with whom cooperative study and effort would be maintained, but it is not necessary to multiply illustrations.

My thought would be that each and every member of the synagogue, and as far as possible each and every adult member of his family, be requested to align himself with such one of the groups I have suggested as may most appeal to him, and that every person hereafter becoming a member of a synagogue be similarly placed in one of such groups according to his selection. That is, he would sign up, so to speak, for local or national charity work, or local or national educational and religious work, or foreign relief

work, or protective work, as the case may be. There would soon develop, I am sure, a public opinion such that any member who did not, unless for good personal reasons, take his place in the scheme of work as thus suggested would be looked upon by the other members of the synagogue with the same disfavor as is now visited upon any member of the community who shirks his obligations to local charities. The various groups to which I have referred would specialize in their respective subjects. They would have meetings and discussions, invite to address and inform them those most qualified in such subjects; they would also do such clinical work as the nature of the subject made possible; that is, they would steadily work for the causes covered by the group subject. For example, they would familiarize themselves, according to the group they were in, with let us say, the work of the Jewish Publication Society, or with that of the local federation, or with that of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, or with that of the Jewish Agency, or with that of the American Jewish Committee. They would in turn instruct the public generally on behalf of the causes in which they would thus be interested; they would labor for such causes by arousing public interest therein, by seeking funds if need be, by building up their memberships, by spreading the benefits of their work. Of course, all of this would be done in conjunction and cooperation with the similar specific group covering that special line of endeavor in each and every synagogue in the community. In this way every Jewish cause would be represented by a group in each synagogue in each community. On the other hand, the sum total of the annual efforts of the organization in each synagogue would represent the contribution of that synagogue for that year to the common Jewish welfare, thus enabling such a synagogue to say at the end of any year: "This is what we have actually done during the year to translate the teachings of our synagogue into practical and beneficent action so far as concerns the interests of our own people; we have obtained so and so many members in our city for such and such societies; we have brought about such and such reforms and improvements in our local religious schools; we have accomplished

such and such results for the local Y. M. H. A. or for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; we have cooperated in such and such manner for foreign relief work," and so on. These concrete attainments would be the answer to those who are cynical as to the influence of the synagogue upon its membership, particularly upon its youth. Let us pause for a moment to observe what benefits and desired results would be the product of such a system.

First: There would be a healthy congregational rivalry in the pursuit of definite accomplishments.

Second: Every member of a synagogue would align himself with at least one subject of Jewish interest, and instead of confused, haphazard, and unequal distribution of the common burden—or of the common happiness, as one may choose to regard it—there would be a systematic and orderly organization with each and every member of the synagogue participating in some measure.

Third: Every one of our institutions would have, in such synagogal groups, nuclei or cells of permanent organization for cooperative purpose. Thus if, let us say, the Jewish Welfare Board wished to lay its cause before the Jewish community of Pittsburgh or St. Louis, instead of trying for months, and usually in vain, to obtain some exhausted communal leader in one of these cities to sponsor its cause, and with the probability that, even if it should be successful in securing such leadership, the work would be done with a minimum of enthusiasm and in a mere spirit of obligation to conscience—I say instead of such a method of approach, there would be permanent committees or groups in the synagogues of those cities, who would be familiar with the work of the Jewish Welfare Board (I might, of course, have selected for illustration any other worthwhile Jewish institution) who would be constantly in touch with it and who would be the ones to start any desired local movement in support of it in those communities. In short, as already pointed out, all of our organizations would have permanent local committees made up of those who themselves selected the particular organization as a subject of their interest and of their communal activity.

Fourth: The members of the synagogue would take

more interest in Jewish work if given a definite part and a definite responsibility in regard to a specific cause or causes assigned to them.

Fifth: The aspiration and natural desire of youth to express religion in actual deeds and with concrete results would be satisfied, and the young people, whose slogan is apt to be: "Religion is as religion does," would become less critical as to the justification of the synagogue and more attracted to it for all purposes.

Sixth: The members of the community would become better educated as to Jewish institutions, needs, and problems. They would tend to become specialists in the various Jewish causes and thus to fit themselves for service as directors and executives of communal organizations.

Seventh: The synagogal organization would become the liaison between the pulpit and the outer world; it would be the lay arm of the synagogue, representing Jewish principles and ethics in action for the communal welfare; it would be the tie-up between the synagogue and the life of the community.

Eighth: The synagogue would be restored to its natural and deserved primacy as the centre from which would emanate all worthy communal work, and the sanction of religion would be directly placed in back of such work.

Is this picture too alluring? Of course many will say that, however lovely as an academic proposition, it is not practical; that it will not and cannot work. Thus to think, and, being of such thought, to dismiss the proposition from mind, is the easiest way to dispose of the suggestion. There is nothing easier than to say that the members of the synagogue would not be interested in such a program; that the interest of the young people, even if initially secured, would not be maintained; that the people would balk at listening to discussions of religious, charitable, and educational work, and especially at active participation in such work. It may also be objected that even if the proposed plan becomes effective and proves successful, there are so many Jews who are not members of synagogues that it would furnish at best but a partial organization in any given community upon which the various Jewish

causes and institutions could rely for their support. I am sure that there are other doubts and criticisms which might suggest themselves. Nevertheless, I am confident that the suggestion is practical and indeed vital if we really wish to do effective and comprehensive work in our philanthropic, religious, and educational activities, and to develop and maintain the interest of the Jewish youth of today in the synagogues. The fact that so many of our people do not belong to synagogues and therefore that the proposed plan would not be all-embracing in the community would not militate against the benefits that would accrue to the synagogues themselves, and certainly the communal work would be improved at least to the extent to which the proposed synagogal groups were formed. As for the fear that the synagogue membership and more particularly the young people would not remain long interested in such work, I believe that it is an unjustified apprehension. Of course, if the rabbi be lukewarm or lackadaisical in regard to Jewish communal activities and the support of Jewish organized work, little could be hoped for from the synagogue in which he officiates; but if he should really attempt, with enthusiasm, to organize his synagogue in the manner proposed, and interesting meetings and discussions were arranged, there is no reason for any pessimistic ideas concerning the practicability and likelihood of success of the movement. It must be remembered that the work would be part of a concerted whole, which would be far more attractive than where it is purely casual and without definite relationship to the activities of the community as a totality. When each group is working with all others, and with the wholesome synagogue rivalry that would arise, there is no reason why such a permanent form of organization could not be gradually developed, until finally it would be accepted by all as the recognized basis upon which every synagogue should operate.

If our people are satisfied with the present disorganized conditions of our community life and are disposed lazily to tolerate them; if they are satisfied with the gradual retrenchment and shriveling up of our synagogues so far as direct communal activity is concerned; if they are satisfied with the loss of interest of the new generation in organized

religion; if they are satisfied to allow our synagogues to become mere theological shells stripped of their former communal glories, prestige, and dominance; if they are satisfied with the continual struggles that must be made by our important Jewish organizations and causes to gain support in our various communities—in short, if our people are satisfied with ineffectiveness, wastefulness of effort, and with passive submission to the drifting away of our youth, then of course no effort need be made in the direction of galvanizing the synagogue into communal activity. But if the Jewish people feel that it is important, that it is vital, that our communal work be effectively and worthily performed; that our communities be permanently organized for such work; that each and every member of the synagogue should play his part in such work; that the synagogue should be made a living and active force in enriching Jewish life through proper support of the organizations and institutions which exist for that purpose; that our youth should be attracted to a dynamic synagogue of accomplishment in Jewish causes—then it is worth while that at least there should be tested out the possibilities of the suggestion which I have thus attempted to formulate.