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Another way, another time: an academic response to Chief Rabbi
Jonathan Sacks' installation address, a decade of Jewish renewal.
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ANOTHER WAY, ANOTHER TIME

**An Academic Response to Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks'
Installation Address, *A Decade of Jewish Renewal***

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Context Statement submitted to Middlesex University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy by Public Works

School of Arts and Education
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– M. P.

ABSTRACT

Faith Against Reason – for the first time in the historiography of Anglo-Jewry – traces the increasingly stormy relationship between the British Chief Rabbinate and an increasingly polarising community, from the founding of the West London Synagogue of British Jews in the 1840s to the end of the incumbency of Immanuel Jakobovits, five Chief Rabbis and 150 years later. It examines the causes and consequences of the Reform ‘modifications’ and of the opposition to them; the genesis and spread of the subsequent secessionist movements, Liberal and Conservative (Masorti); the reasons for the growing divisions and dissension within the community; and the results of internal and external influences on all parties to the disputes.

Within that framework, the context statement, *Another Way, Another Time*, discusses the Chief Rabbinate of Jonathan Henry Sacks, who launched his tenure in 1991 with an inclusivist ‘Decade of Jewish Renewal’ – seeking to reach out, as he put it in his installation address, ‘to every Jew, with open arms and an open heart’ – and who, within a few years, was attracting calls, from opponents and supporters, for his resignation and for the abolition of his office. As will be seen, however, these latter calls date back to the election of Hermann Adler, exactly a century before Sacks’ accession, and have pursued each Chief Rabbi from that time on, as his authority and constituency continued to diminish.

First exploring Sacks’ early writings and pronouncements on the theme of inclusivism, the paper then demonstrates how, repeatedly, he said ‘irreconcilable things to different audiences’ and how, in the process, he induced his ‘kingmaker’ and foremost patron to declare of Anglo-Jewry: ‘We are in a time warp, and fast becoming an irrelevance in terms of world Jewry.’ *Another Way, Another Time* contends that the Chief Rabbinate has indeed reached the end of the road and suggests the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews – a name not unlike that of the first Reform synagogue – as the possible leader of an inclusivist, if not pluralistic, community.

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Faith Against Reason: Religious Reform and the British Chief Rabbinate, 1840–1990
[bound separately]

PREFACE

Through this writer's involvement, and place, in the British Jewish community over the last four decades of the twentieth century, *Faith Against Reason*¹ and its accompanying context statement, *Another Way, Another Time*, bring a unique perspective to – and on – a period of crisis and convulsion in modern Anglo-Jewry, tracing for the first time the increasingly stormy relationship between the Chief Rabbinate and increasingly polarising factions, from the founding of the West London Synagogue of British Jews in the 1840s to the present day. With a familial, social and professional background rooted in the infrastructure of religious life – described in the book's preface² – the author has sought to infuse into this account a freshness of approach, and breadth of vision, seldom attainable in the prejudiced, self-seeking and highly charged cauldron of communal affairs.

In his introduction to the book, Endelman raises the question 'whether intra-communal religious strife was more common in Britain than elsewhere, consuming time, energy and resources in unparalleled ways decade after decade.' This, he believes,

is difficult to answer. Jews are a fractious people ... Religious conflicts, tensions, squabbles and breakaways were common in other Western Jewish communities, especially in Germany, Hungary and the United States. Moreover, comparing peaks and troughs of quarrelsomeness is no easy task. An alternative, more fruitful approach is to ask, instead, whether the institution of the Chief Rabbinate (not its incumbents or its ideology but its very existence and structure) in some way facilitated or encouraged religious strife.³

Faith Against Reason (in the case of the first five incumbents, from Nathan Adler to Immanuel Jakobovits) and particularly the context statement (in the case of the sixth,

¹ Persoff, *Faith Against Reason: Religious Reform and the British Chief Rabbinate 1840-1990* (London and Portland OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

² Ibid, pp.xx-xxii. A member of the London *Jewish Chronicle* editorial staff from 1961 to 2000, the author was, over a period of nearly three decades, the paper's features, Judaism, arts, letters and obituaries editor, preceded by several years as reporter, sub-editor and news editor. He is a son of the late Zionist leader and communal educationist Mark Persoff, and related to two major figures in the more recent stages of this account – the late Dayan Yechezkel Abramsky, head of the London Beth Din (1935-1951), and the current head of the Federation of Synagogues' Beth Din, Dayan Yisroel Yaacov Lichtenstein.

³ *Faith Against Reason*, pp.xxv-xxvii.

Jonathan Sacks) set out to answer this point, to question assertions of Chief Rabbinical supremacy on the ecclesiastical stage, and to probe the extent to which the lay leaders – the president of the Board of Deputies (under Adler) and of the United Synagogue (until Hertz) – and the Beth Din and right-wingers thereafter, influenced the Chief Rabbis in the bitter struggle against the non-Orthodox movements.

As the preface points out, the *modi operandi* of each of these rabbis reveal much about their backgrounds, personalities, authority and effectiveness, and helped shape the verdict of history on their leadership record. These elements are successively explored in relation to the progressive sectarianism that gathered pace at crucial, and contrasting, stages in the onward march of Anglo-Jewry, and in determining the degree to which each Chief Rabbi was responsible for the diminution or perpetuation of internecine strife. In describing the ‘how’ as well as the ‘why,’ *Faith Against Reason* allows the key protagonists to speak for themselves, incorporating into the narrative hitherto neglected excerpts from their correspondence, sermons, broadsides and disputations.

In addition, an abundance of source material in both book and context statement appears through exclusive access to the private papers of three prominent figures in the later years covered by this survey – Jakobovits, Louis Jacobs and Sidney Brichto, the last two, respectively, former leaders of the Conservative (Masorti) and Liberal movements in Britain – and through patient trawling of the London Metropolitan Archives and the collections of Yeshiva University and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York. These papers, in particular, shed light on the tempestuous relationships between the opposing forces, and on the shifts in direction and emphases of the – ultimately unsuccessful – campaigns to quash the secessionists in more recent times. The narrative and analysis benefit also from this writer’s close association with the three rabbis named above, and with many other key players across the Anglo-Jewish spectrum in the convulsive events of the past several decades.

Delivering the keynote address at a conference⁴ on ‘British-Jewish historical, cultural and literary studies, past, present and future,’ Endelman discussed the frames of reference within which the community’s religious orientation moved rightwards during the tenures

⁴ *Whatever Happened To British Jewish Studies?* 15-16 July 2008, Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations, University of Southampton, supported by the Ian Karten Charitable Trust and the journal *Jewish Culture and History* (London: Vallentine Mitchell).

of Hertz and Brodie, and, citing an appraisal of this question in relation to their theological outlooks and personal characteristics,⁵ criticised what he regards as the trend in Britain to ‘divorce the history of Anglo-Jewry from the mainstream of Jewish historical writing’ and thus to ‘look inward rather than outward.’⁶

Recognising this tendency, both *Faith Against Reason* and the context paper set the domestic crises and controversies against a backdrop of contrasting schisms in Europe and the United States, helping them to achieve Endelman’s ideal of ‘a coherent, unified, transnational Jewish historical framework, or core, into which Anglo-Jewish history can be integrated.’⁷ The perilous situation facing 21st-century British Jewry – particularly in the fields of conversion and marriage, as a much-publicised High Court hearing recently bore out⁸ – is replicated, without compunction, in the courts and political corridors of the State of Israel, where this writer now resides and where, in matters of personal status, lives and families are being shattered almost daily at the drop of a black hat.

In this ongoing drama of division and divisiveness, the role and relevance of the Chief Rabbinate – whether in Britain or in Israel (the United States is free of Chief Rabbis and, until now,⁹ has managed to handle such affairs, with far greater success, on a local level) – assume vital importance. Limitations of space preclude a wider discussion within the context statement or book, but it is worth noting how the historical and contemporary parallels between the religious authorities in both countries make *Faith Against Reason* a valuable resource in unravelling the practical application of inclusivism and rejection.

In today’s troubled Jewish world, the ‘one people’ agenda, focusing on questions of personal status, has largely superseded theological complexities in the hearts and minds

⁵ Freud-Kandel, *Orthodox Judaism in Britain Since 1913* (London and Portland OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp.63, 108-109.

⁶ Endelman, *British Jewry and the Jewish Historiographical Mainstream*, pp.10-12 (transcript of lecture in this writer’s possession). Todd M. Endelman is William Haber Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of Michigan, and author of *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), and *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁷ Endelman, *British Jewry*, p.13. An admirable example of this approach is Schimmel, *Towards a Future of Sincerity and Harmony: Dutch Jews and the Appeal of Reform Judaism* (MA thesis, University of Utrecht, 2007), which discusses, *inter alia*, the rise of Reform Judaism in Britain within a wider European context.

⁸ (R [E] v the Governing Body of JFS and the Admissions Panel of JFS, case no. CO/7896/2007; R [E] v Office of the Schools Adjudicator, case no. CO/11587/2007, Royal Courts of Justice, Queen’s Bench Division, Administrative Court, before Mr Justice Munby, 4-7 March 2008. See below, chapter 3, note 24.

⁹ The situation in the USA has lately become clouded through the intervention of Israel’s Chief Rabbinate in the conversion process (*NJ Jewish News*, 6 March 2008, op-ed; *Jewish Week* [NY], 30 April 2008, p.1).

of both leaders and led. The High Court proceedings cited here, which sent waves through Anglo-Jewry and beyond, heard tangentially of the case of a woman converted by Israel's Special Rabbinical Court for Conversion (established by the Chief Rabbinate) who was married by an Orthodox rabbi in an Orthodox synagogue in New York and whose Jewish status was later unilaterally rejected by the London Beth Din – on the grounds that, knowing she intended to contract a forbidden marriage with a Cohen [male of priestly descent], 'at the moment of her conversion she did not accept all the tenets of Orthodox Judaism.'¹⁰

In Israel, where similar cases frequently arise, a three-man panel of ultra-Orthodox rabbis, set up by the Chief Rabbinate's High Rabbinical Court, published a ruling in May 2008 that *every* conversion performed since 1999 by Rabbi Chaim Druckman and his fellow religious-Zionist judges in courts established by an earlier Chief Rabbinate was to be retroactively annulled, on grounds not unlike the London case. Responding to their edict, a Conservative (Masorti) rabbi and professor of Jewish law commented: 'I hope and pray that the Supreme Court will overturn this mistaken and destructive ruling. I hope and pray that the State of Israel will start to appoint modern-Orthodox and other qualified rabbis as *dayanim* [judges]. If not, the Chief Rabbinate will have to be abolished, because it will have cut itself off from most of the Jewish people.'¹¹

The abolition of the Chief Rabbinate – the British version – is a theme running through much of this study, with questions of Jewish status and ecclesiastical authority following close behind. The 'cataclysmic split' which (as we shall see) some have predicted, and which Sacks suggests may have 'to some extent already occurred,' is unquestionably the most crucial issue facing today's Jewish world. *Faith Against Reason* and its accompanying paper go some way towards explaining why.

¹⁰ Neutral Citation Number: [2008] EWHC 1535/1536 (Admin), judgment handed down 3 July 2008, pp.12-14, paragraphs 36-46 (London: Royal Courts of Justice, 2008).

¹¹ Golinkin, "'Who is a Jew?' once again,' in the *Jerusalem Post*, 25 July 2008, magazine section, p.10. Two months later, Israeli Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz 'called on the High Court of Justice to accept a petition by a Danish-born convert to Judaism demanding that it overrule rabbinical court decisions nullifying the conversions, including hers, made by special courts headed by Rabbi Chaim Druckman.' In response, 'Kiryat Ono Chief Rabbi Razon Arussi, one of ten rabbis elected [on 23 September 2008] to the Council of the Chief Rabbinate, charged that the Attorney-General's legal opinion was a blatant example of illegitimate, secular intervention in a purely religious matter ... "The proper forum for debate and decision-making is within the Chief Rabbinate Council," Arussi said' (ibid, 25 September 2008, pp.1, 9). On Druckman, see Wagner, 'Rabbi Chaim Druckman: The "darling" of religious Zionism' ('People of the Year') in ibid, 26 September 2008, magazine section, p.21.

*'The greatest leader the Jewish people has ever known, Moses, trembled when he contemplated the burden of leadership, and said: 'Mi anochi, who am I?' What, then, shall I say who, until the age of twenty-five, never dreamed of becoming a rabbi, let alone a Chief Rabbi?'*¹

Five years into the Chief Rabbinate of Jonathan Henry Sacks, his principal backer, Sir Stanley Kalms – the former chairman of Jews' College, which Sacks had headed before taking up the post – publicly called for his protégé's resignation, and for the virtual abolition of Anglo-Jewry's highest ecclesiastical office. Surveying the Chief Rabbi's recent record, Kalms wrote:

He was the arch-proponent of 'inclusivism,' the widening of Jewish involvement in the issues that affect all Jews, the imperative necessity to share our culture, rather than the methodology of recording one's religious virtuosity ... On the major issue of inclusivism, as soon as he was installed he decided that, as he had twenty-five years in office ahead of him, his plans – whatever they were – should be paced over that period. Sadly, in an age of extremely fast-moving events, of single-issue movements that carry clout, and of uninhibited pluralistic influences, this was, to my mind, both an unacceptable and a dangerous policy. Leadership is about firm convictions, clean strategy and a clear, communicable action plan. Popularism and survival are not on the agenda of a true leader. They are merely the consequences, or rewards, of that commitment ...

Rabbi Sacks has great oratorical skills, but, inhibited in his outpourings, the words hardly fill the appetites of Anglo-Jewry. We are in a time warp, and fast becoming an irrelevance in terms of world Jewry ... In fairness to himself, the Chief Rabbi should consider retiring from office. He is an academic by nature, and his talents could be immeasurably better used. The United Synagogue should be happier, relieved of the heavy burden of maintaining his office on a declining membership basis. For practical purposes, the US should set up the rabbinical council on a rotation basis. Every six or twelve months, a rabbinical member would become president and be the titular religious head of the community.²

In an interview days earlier, marking his knighthood in the 1996 New Year Honours, Kalms had declared: 'I'm a great supporter of the Chief Rabbi's abilities but not of the Chief Rabbi's achievements ... One of the great roles of the Chief Rabbi was to advance inclusivism. I don't think inclusivism has budged one inch ... If he

¹ Sacks, *A Decade of Jewish Renewal*, Address Delivered on his Installation as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, St John's Wood Synagogue, London, 1 September 1991 (London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, 1991), p.1.

² *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 January 1996, p.26.

had a base, he might be more powerful. But the United Synagogue refuses to give the Chief Rabbi the power and authority to be a Chief Rabbi.³ Expanding on his statement – some twelve years later – in the context of this paper, Kalms argues that

the Chief Rabbi, as an appointed employee of the United Synagogue, is under the tight discipline and jurisdiction of the honorary officers. He deals with halachic matters under the auspices of the Beth Din, plus inconsequential communal issues, and is prescribed to the line which that organisation sets.

It is an established fact that the Beth Din has always been to the right of the community. Again, the members of the Beth Din are employees of the United Synagogue. The United Synagogue is extremely jealous of its control over its officials and allows virtually no discretion or initiative; the powers of the Chief Rabbi are therefore narrowly limited to matters of communal Orthodoxy and conventions.

If one looks back to the previous Chief Rabbi, Lord Jakobovits, he suffered similar restrictions and was denied the authority even to instigate educational initiatives outside the narrow focus of the United Synagogue's honorary officers. He was fortunate in that he gathered around him a group of wealthy Jewish philanthropists who funded his educational programme and gave him a certain degree of independence and a wider platform to express his views.

However, in his case, as in the case of the present Chief Rabbi, there has been no initiative towards inclusivism, which I interpret as widening the appeal of the United Synagogue as a communal organisation, to embrace those members of Anglo-Jewry who are more challenging in their approach to the Jewish faith.

In giving this explanation of the limitations of power of the Chief Rabbi, I am not suggesting that there are easy solutions – or, indeed, any solutions – but the fact is that Sir Jonathan Sacks is perforce locked into a static cage representing, in this modern world, an excessively narrow view of Jewish religious identity and attitude.

It is well known that the vast majority of the members of the United Synagogue do not fully practise the Orthodox lines of their synagogue, and there are many who work together with other groupings to face the crisis in the growth of Islamism and anti-Zionism/anti-Semitism that is endemic today. These facts nullify the argument that the system is not broken and should be left as it is, albeit ignoring the sticking-plaster that holds the community together.

This is not the forum to go into more serious differences that lie barely beneath the surface, but I can say with some conviction that the Chief Rabbi is under-utilised and made substantially ineffective by the narrowness of his mission statement, and by the intellectual inadequacies and visionless focus of the United Synagogue's honorary officers.⁴

³ Ibid, 12 January 1996, p.29.

⁴ Lord Kalms to this writer, 17 June 2008. Sixteen years earlier, at the outset of Sacks' tenure, the Kalms report on 'The Role of the United Synagogue in the Years Ahead' had referred to the organisational and management structure of the Chief Rabbinate in these terms: 'There is broad support for the idea of trying to bring greater clarity and coherence to the Chief Rabbi's role within the United Synagogue, within the wider Jewish community, and within the wider UK community. For historical reasons, there is an ambiguity, in practice, in terms of the "ownership" of the Chief Rabbinate. This stems from the role of the Chief Rabbi as the spiritual head of the United Synagogue and of the United Hebrew Congregations ... The ambiguity remains for two reasons. The senior lay leader in the Chief Rabbinate structure is the president of the United Synagogue. This is not unreasonable in a situation in

Similar concerns were expressed in the 1992 Kalms report, *A Time for Change*, regarding the relationship between the Chief Rabbinate and the London Beth Din:

In our view, it is essential that, within the parameters set by *halachah* [Jewish law], the Beth Din represents the religious ethos of the United Synagogue as a whole. It is answerable in this respect to the Chief Rabbi as Av [head of the] Beth Din, and the Chief Rabbi himself is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the religious policy of the United Synagogue continues to be one of Orthodox inclusivism ...

The Chief Rabbi should ensure that regular and meaningful consultations are held between the Beth Din and the rabbinate, as well as the Beth Din and lay representatives, to ensure that there is continual communication regarding the reasoning behind individual matters of religious policy, and so that the Beth Din is informed of the reactions and sentiments of the United Synagogue membership as a whole.⁵

The relationship between the Chief Rabbi and his Beth Din – and with other ultra-Orthodox rabbis outside his sphere of authority – lies at the heart of this paper and is crucial to an understanding of the shift in United Synagogue orientation, and its ambivalent stand on the issues of pluralism and inclusivism, both before and within 21st-century Anglo-Jewry.

* * * * *

In the run-up to Sacks' election, Kalms had bankrolled a raft of activities aimed at securing his candidate's success. The most prominent was an international conference, styled 'Traditional Alternatives: Orthodoxy and the Future of the Jewish People,' one of whose primary tasks was to address, in Sacks' words,

the growing rift between Orthodoxy and Reform ... [It constitutes] my attempt to set the scene for the tense and intense drama that is Judaism's contemporary dialogue between its commanding past and its as-yet uncharted future.⁶

which the vast majority of the funding comes from the United Synagogue, but it does blur the sense of independent identity that might come from a separation of roles. The United Synagogue is also ultimately responsible for the Office of the Chief Rabbi, including salaries ... The way forward must be to develop the existing organisational structure towards a more national concept of the Chief Rabbinate ... encompass[ing] the full range of its responsibilities and reflect[ing] the relationship of the Chief Rabbi with the constituent organisations who recognise and support his office' (*A Time for Change*, Stanley Kalms, chairman; London: Stanley Kalms Foundation, September 1992, pp.85, 94).

⁵ Ibid, p.87.

⁶ Sacks, *Traditional Alternatives: Orthodoxy and the Future of the Jewish People* (London: Jews' College Publications, 1989), pp.1, 9.

In a publication introducing the event, the future Chief Rabbi quoted the warning of another perceived aspirant to the post, Reuven Bulka, of Ottawa's Congregation Machzikei Hadas,⁷ that 'if present trends remain unchecked, the policies which prevail within Reform Judaism, and the commensurate reactions which they will surely evoke within the Orthodox camp, may well result in a cataclysmic split within the North American Jewish community.' To some extent, Sacks commented – with British Jewry clearly in mind – 'this has already occurred.'⁸

At the conference itself, held in London in May 1989, Bulka – a nephew by marriage of the then Chief Rabbi, Lord Jakobovits⁹ – opined that 'modern Orthodoxy should not become a movement but act as an internal lobby. It should be positive and take the bull by the horns in trying to find solutions within Jewish law to such issues as the plight of the *agunah* – a woman unable to marry because her husband refuses her a *get* (religious divorce).' Kalms, however, it was reported, 'appeared to favour a more aggressive stand. He referred to the United Synagogue as a "movement" whose centrist philosophy stood in contrast to "Jewish fundamentalists."' ¹⁰ For his part, Sacks told the 1,000-strong audience, gathered from across the communal divide:

Links between religious and secular, Orthodox and Reform, have grown increasingly fragile in the last few years, to the point where only crisis brings us together. Thus a formidable responsibility lies with Orthodoxy, a responsibility of leadership towards the entire Jewish people ... The Orthodox world has been too preoccupied with small details of ritual observance, at the expense of larger issues.

The laws of Torah are compassion and kindness and peace in the world. Where is that Torah today? This conference is not about right, left or centre, but about smallness and greatness. Will Orthodoxy see itself threatened by assimilation and secularisation? Will it retreat yet further into its protected enclaves, while the rest of the Jewish world falls to pieces? Will it build an ark for itself, while the rest of the Jewish world drowns? Or will it see itself challenged by this unique moment to lead the Jewish world?¹¹

Warm and sustained applause, observed the *Jewish Chronicle*, greeted Sacks' address. "It was overwhelming," remarked Reform rabbi and Jewish studies don Dr Nicholas de Lange.'

⁷ 'Speculation about the next Chief Rabbi has been rife in the community for some time, although no clear favourite has yet emerged. Names mentioned include ... Rabbi Dr Reuven Bulka, who has been brought over from Canada to give a lecture in London tomorrow night, organised by the United Synagogue' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 28 October 1998, p.1).

⁸ Sacks, *Traditional Alternatives*, p.1.

⁹ Bulka's wife, Naomi, was a daughter of George – one of the Chief Rabbi's younger brothers – and Sessi Jakobovits, of Montreal. She died in May 2001.

¹⁰ *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 May 1989, pp.8-9.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.8.

Four months after the conference, Kalms ‘stunned his colleagues by announcing his resignation from his communal posts’ – the chairmanship of Jews’ College and the Chief Rabbi’s Jewish Educational Development Trust – asserting that he had ‘been involved in communal leadership long enough.’¹² While rumours abounded as to his motives, including reasons of health and lack of support, Jakobovits was nearest the mark when hinting that ‘relations between us were not always of the best ... He was [however] an exceptional and valued partner, despite our occasional differences.’¹³ These differences have never been publicly aired, but correspondence between the two suggests that they included disagreement over the role and future of the Chief Rabbinate.¹⁴

Overriding their quarrels, Jakobovits openly welcomed Sacks’ appointment when the Chief Rabbinate Conference, meeting in London on 1 April 1990, voted him into office as its sole candidate. ‘I greet his election with particular delight,’ said the outgoing Chief Rabbi, adding that Sacks’ record of leadership and scholarship provided ‘every promise of a richly blessed incumbency.’¹⁵

Anticipating the outcome, the author and communal commentator Chaim Bermant wrote: ‘Kalms, who has a gift for picking winners, had alighted on Sacks as the next Chief Rabbi not only because of his intrinsic ability, but because he thought that Sacks might redress the rightward shift which had been inspired by Lord Jakobovits. The very title “Traditional Alternatives” reads like a proof of Sacks’ intentions.’¹⁶

These intentions Sacks made clear – or so his constituents believed – when he was inducted into office by his predecessor some eighteen months later, having expressed a wish to spend much of the intervening period in Israel ‘immersed in the atmosphere of Torah learning.’¹⁷ Addressing ‘with affection my dear and revered successor,’ Jakobovits had declared:

If you were to pose the questions, ‘How can I, as the newly installed Chief Rabbi, triumph over the lurking dangers, pitfalls and challenges, how can I assert myself to leave the distinctive mark of my leadership upon this great community, and how can I be certain that I will enter *b’li pega*, without mishap, and emerge without

¹² Ibid, 1 September 1989, p.1.

¹³ Ibid, 8 September 1989, p.12.

¹⁴ Kalms to Jakobovits, 9 May, 15 June, 18 July, 28 September 1988; Jakobovits to Kalms, 17 June, 29 September 1988, Jakobovits Papers, London. Kalms addresses some of these differences in his remarks to this writer (p.7 above) and in *A Time for Change* (see note 4).

¹⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 April 1990, p.48.

¹⁶ Ibid, 2 March 1990, p.24.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.1.

mishap, to celebrate a yomtov at the end of my career?’ then the two words *chazak ve'ematz*, addressed to Joshua, say it all: ‘Be strong and of good courage’ ...

In your new exalted office, your first task will be to preserve the Torah, to keep intact our traditions, to interpret Jewish teachings as you find and understand them. *Chazak* – for this ‘be strong!’ If you will sometimes encounter enormous pressures, to bend a little here, to modify there; if some will seek to subject you to their dictates, telling you what you may say and what you may do, then ‘be strong.’ In matters of principle and conviction, resist at all costs, assert your freedom of action and of speech to ensure that you are never deflected from what you deem to be right. Thus you will be respected ...

Secondly, *ve'ematz*, ‘be of good courage,’ *bema'asim tovim*, regarding good deeds in the community. Anglo-Jewry has a peculiar penchant for self-denigration. It delights in running itself down, stressing failings, magnifying scandals, while ignoring or belittling successes and achievements. A community that does not believe in itself cannot flourish. It will not attract its best sons and daughters to community service – for who wants to invest in failure?¹⁸

Responding, Sacks called on his flock

to join with me in renewing our *ahavat yisrael*, our categorical commitment to the love of every Jew. We must reach out to every Jew, with open arms and an open heart. If we must disagree, and sometimes we must, let us do so with love and dignity and respect. We can prove the Torah’s greatness only by inspiration, not by negation. We are a divided community. But let us work to lessen those divisions by coming closer to one another and to God. We have suffered enough from anti-Semitism. Let us practise philo-Semitism. We have suffered enough from the assaults of others. Let us never inflict them on ourselves.¹⁹

Before exploring Sacks’ own successes – or failures – in his professed attempts to ‘lessen those divisions,’ it is necessary to re-examine his predecessors’ records along the paths that led to their creation and escalation.

¹⁸ Jakobovits, *Address Delivered at the Installation of Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth* (London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, 1991), pp.2-3.

¹⁹ Sacks, *A Decade of Jewish Renewal*, p.9.

*'We have an unparalleled capacity to travel hopefully ... But do we have the capacity to arrive? That is the single most crucial question facing Jewry today.'*¹

Faith Against Reason tracks the last 150 years of Anglo-Jewry's 'hopeful' travels; it suggests, however, that the hoped-for destination – unity without uniformity – is as distant as ever, is possibly little more than an unattainable dream. As Sacks, the United Synagogue's present spiritual leader, has noted,² the concept of inclusivism was endorsed in the very title of that organisation when, at its foundation in 1870, it adopted the Hebrew name *Knesset Yisrael* ('Congregation of Israel'). The title – which, its founders observed,

was felicitously chosen for the Amalgamated Body – is one fraught with great and solemn reminiscences. It embodies aspirations for unity, harmony, and concord in the future, together with recollections of a great, glorious, and imperishable past. May it typify results commensurate with the feelings of which it is the symbol!³

Two of its earliest constituents – the Hambro' and New Synagogues – were both offshoots of the Great Synagogue, 'but their interests were considered to be so divergent that originally they declined to be governed, even in spiritual affairs, by the same ecclesiastical authorities. Each Synagogue had its own Rabbinical Chief, exercising authority over his own congregants, and enjoying independent jurisdiction. The first advance towards conjoint action was effected in 5518–1758, when the Great and Hambro' Synagogues appointed one Chief Rabbi [Hart Lyon], with ecclesiastical jurisdiction over both congregations.'⁴

On the death of his successor, David Tevele Schiff, in 1792, the Hambro' decided that it was 'unnecessary' to perpetuate the position, but 'the highly gifted and worthy'⁵ Solomon Hirschell, Lyon's son, was nevertheless elected. Following the imposition of the *cherem* (excommunication, or 'caution,' as the rabbinate called it)

¹ Sacks, *A Decade of Jewish Renewal*, p.4.

² Sacks, *A Time For Renewal: A Rabbinic Response to the Kalms Report, 'A Time For Change'* (London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, 1992), pp.6-7.

³ *Bye Laws of the Constituent Synagogues* (London: United Synagogue, November 1881), pp.xix-xx.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp.xi-xii.

⁵ *Laws of the Congregation of the Great Synagogue, Duke's Place* (London: J. Wertheimer and Co., 5623–1863), p.v.

against the Reform seceders,⁶ and Hirschell's subsequent demise, the Hambro' added a telling rider to its schedule of laws:

Concord, which is the foundation of social happiness, is only to be preserved by the adoption of such regulations as are conducive to the general welfare. Laws are therefore necessary for the establishment of good order; and that the same may be preserved, it is necessary that we implicitly observe such Laws framed for the support and benefit of the Congregation. The inefficiency of Laws to regulate our Congregation has been long felt by those who have had the management of its affairs; for although all those laid down for religious observances are clearly deduced from sacred sources, yet the government of Assemblies for the worship of God requires certain rules and orders to be followed, in order that the eccentricity of individuals may not disturb the general harmony.⁷

Thus it was that, on the publication of Nathan Adler's *Laws and Regulations*⁸ three years later, general approbation greeted his recommendations; and that, in 1863, the Great Synagogue was moved to declare: '... it is a source of the highest gratification at the present time to testify how much the Congregation and the Jewish community at large are indebted for their spiritual welfare to the learning, zeal and ability of the present Chief Rabbi ...'⁹ These sentiments were consolidated within the 1870 Jewish United Synagogues Act in its undertaking to contribute 'with other Jewish bodies to the maintenance of a Chief Rabbi and of other ecclesiastical persons.'¹⁰

⁶ On the *cherem*, its consequences and its revocation by the Sephardi authorities, see the prologue and chapter 1 of *Faith Against Reason*.

⁷ 'Hambro' Synagogue: Extract from the Introduction to the Edition of the Laws Published in 5605–1844,' in *Bye Laws of the Constituent Synagogues*, pp.vii-viii.

⁸ Adler, *Laws and Regulations for all the Synagogues in the British Empire* (London: John Wertheimer and Co., 5607–1847).

⁹ *Laws of the Congregation of the Great Synagogue, Duke's Place*, p.xiii.

¹⁰ An Act for confirming a Scheme of the Charity Commissioners for the Jewish United Synagogues [33 & 34 Vict., Ch. cxvi], 14 July 1870, p.2. Alderman points out (*Modern British Jewry*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, pp.88-89): 'The United Synagogue scheme, as originally drafted, had spoken of "the Chief Rabbi," under whose authority and control all religious matters were to fall. Gladstone's Liberal Government objected to the legislative underpinning of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in this way: the clause had to be modified. Nathan Adler did not therefore become, by the authority of statute law, "the Chief Rabbi," a British equivalent, so to speak, of a Continental *Landesrabbiner*. But he did become, under the scheme scheduled to the Act, "a Chief Rabbi.'" Joseph Jacobs writes (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1925, p.172): 'In the charter [of the United Synagogue] an attempt was made to give the Chief Rabbi autocratic powers over the doctrines to be taught in the Jewish communities throughout the British Empire. But Parliament, which had recently disestablished the Irish Church, did not feel disposed to establish the Jewish Synagogue, and the clause was stricken out.'

The United Synagogue's *Deed of Foundation and Trust* states (Clause 2): 'One of the objects of the Institution called the United Synagogue shall be the contributing with other bodies to the maintenance of the Chief Rabbi, and of the Ecclesiastical Board; and the Scheme shall be read and construed as if, in the fifth clause thereof, the words "the maintenance of the Chief Rabbi, and of the Ecclesiastical Board," were substituted for the words "the maintenance of a Chief Rabbi and of other Ecclesiastical persons.'" The Deed granted the Chief Rabbi powers of supervision and control over forms of worship, religious observances, and religious administration (Clause 3); and over the appointment of preachers,

The emergence of Reform Judaism in Britain came in the wake of, though was largely distinct from, the progressive approach adopted by Israel Jacobsohn at Seesen in Hanover, and Gotthold Salomon in Hamburg, ‘to whom the old-fashioned synagogue service, with its lack of grace and dignity, was utterly distasteful, but who could see no alternative except in the church, which was even more distasteful.’¹¹ Largely untouched by the *haskalah* (‘Enlightenment’) movement sweeping across Europe, the Judaism of Reform’s proponents in England ‘remained completely of the old type’;¹² ‘not a breath of criticism of the Jewish theology underpinning the synagogue service’¹³ was seen to emanate from their ranks.

Politically, Britain’s 25,000 Jews were well off compared to their Continental counterparts, able to settle where they pleased, to engage in business, lease land, and vote in parliamentary elections. In the decades leading up to the 1842 secession, calls for change had centred almost exclusively on issues of congregational decorum and administration. Dismissing the minority view expressed in an earlier petition for ‘such alterations and modifications as were in line with the changes introduced in the Reform synagogues in Hamburg and other places,’¹⁴ the service at the West London Synagogue initially retained considerably more Hebrew, as well as prayers for the return to Zion and the coming of the Messiah – though not for the restoration of the

readers and ‘others performing religious duties,’ who required the Chief Rabbi’s certification ‘under his hand that he is a fit and proper person to perform the same’ (Clauses 7 and 9). Clause 11 stipulated that ‘Any synagogue to be hereafter erected and founded under the sixty-fourth clause of the Scheme shall previously to, and as a condition of, its admission as a constituent synagogue be consecrated by or with the sanction of the Chief Rabbi’ (*Recorded Minutes of the First Meeting of Elected Members of the Vestry of the United Synagogue*, London, 11 January, 1871, pp.1-7; and *Deed of Foundation and Trust*, signed, sealed and delivered by Sir Anthony de Rothschild, Baronet; Lionel Louis Cohen; Sampson Lucas; Solomon Schloss; and Assur Henry Moses, in the presence of Algernon E. Sydney, Solicitor, 46 Finsbury Circus, London, EC, 13 January, 1871, pp.1-4). On the development of the role and powers of the Chief Rabbinate, see Sharot, ‘Religious Change in Native Orthodoxy in London, 1870–1914: Rabbinate and Clergy,’ in the *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XV, No. 2, December 1973 (London: William Heinemann), pp.167-176; and A Special Correspondent, ‘The British Chief Rabbinate,’ in the *Jewish Monthly*, No. 2, May 1947, pp.23-33. On ‘Resolutions on Matters Relating to the Office of the Chief Rabbi, passed at Meetings of the Several Metropolitan and Provincial Congregations’ in February 1843, see Appendix I below (reprinted from the *Voice of Jacob*, 3 March 1843, pp.121-123).

¹¹ Simon, *Jewish Religious Conflicts* (London: Hutchinson’s University Library, 1950), p.118.

¹² *Ibid*, p.120.

¹³ Leigh, ‘Reform Judaism in Britain (1840–1970),’ in *Reform Judaism*, ed., Dow Marmur (London: Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1970), p.21.

¹⁴ Gaster, *History of the Ancient Synagogue of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (London: privately published, 5661–1901), p.171. The petition was submitted to the *mahamad* (Elders) of Bevis Marks on 4 December 1836 by a small number of members, who were opposed by the majority of the congregation, fearful of ‘a demand for radical reform.’ This latter view prevailed – ‘and the Elders concurred with them entirely.’

sacrificial cult.¹⁵ The format followed the wording of a resolution adopted in April 1840 at the inaugural meeting of the proposed congregation: 'That a revised service be there performed in the Hebrew language in conformity with the principles of the Jewish Religion, and in the manner best calculated to excite feelings of devotion.'¹⁶

'It must be clear to everyone,' wrote the West London's senior minister, Morris Joseph, some seventy years later,

that if our founders had adopted the radical standpoint of German Reform, their movement would have been very short-lived. The Anglo-Jewish community of their day was not prepared for any save the most moderate changes, and the original programme of my synagogue represented the limits of the outlook and the needs of the average Liberal Jew in England at that time. Had it gone beyond those limits, the West London Synagogue would probably not have come into existence. German Reform was notoriously far more drastic than English Reform has ever been. I have before me the original Prayer-Book of the Hamburg Temple, issued in 1819, and it contains a large proportion of hymns and prayers in the vernacular. At this very day, on the other hand, the service in my synagogue includes only one English prayer – the prayer for the King.¹⁷

As in Germany, however, the essence of reform was a repudiation of rabbinical authority, with a rejection of the mishnaic and talmudic laws on a level with those contained in the Torah. Nor, suggests a future Chief Rabbi, was this 'rabbinical authority' any less contemporary than it was historical:

In contrast to the situation in other countries, Britain's Chief Rabbi was never *primus inter pares*. He was neither a chief minister nor a chief rabbi presiding over colleagues of equal qualifications or rank, however locally limited their jurisdiction. In fact, he was – or sought to be – the only recognised rabbi in his realm, with the Beth Din serving as ecclesiastical 'assessors' to 'advise' him on matters of Jewish law ... This was obviously conducive to the disproportionate influence of the British Chief Rabbinate, in the absence of rivals or a diffusion of power. But inevitably there was also an obverse side to this rigid system of centralised control

¹⁵ *Forms of Prayer, used in the West London Synagogue of British Jews, with an English Translation. Volume I – Daily and Sabbath Prayers*, ed., D. W. Marks (London: Wertheimer and Co., 1841). Of the liturgy contained therein, Marks wrote in his introduction: 'Many portions of the common ritual, by their holy dignified tenor, afford every Israelite the opportunity of joining cordially in the worship of his brethren wherever he meets them in the house of prayer, and thus form a valuable bond of union amongst all Hebrew congregations. These sublime portions we trust we shall be found to have carefully preserved; and we hope to have strengthened rather than weakened the bond of union which they constitute, by blending in our ritual the varying form of the Portuguese [Sephardi] and German [Ashkenazi] Liturgies, and striving to give, on all occasions, the preference to the superiority of intrinsic merit alone' (ibid, p.x).

¹⁶ Minutes of the inaugural meeting 'of those who finally organised the reformed congregation' – twenty-four members of the Bevis Marks and Great Synagogues – held at the Bedford Hotel, Russell Square, London, on 15 April 1840, and cited in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 January 1892, p.17.

¹⁷ Joseph, 'The English Reform Movement,' letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 May 1909, p.12. See also Schimmel, op. cit., pp.45-47.

and the suppression of challenges to authority within the Establishment. The system encouraged centrifugal forces of dissent and secession. In Anglo-Jewry, the separatist congregations – whether of the Reform and Liberal on the left, or the *Austritt* variety on the right – arose primarily against the monolithic power structure of the officially ‘authorised’ community. Disaffection was generated by repulsion from the centre rather than by attraction to the extremes; the factors leading to secession were institutional rather than ideological.¹⁸

Discussing the results of schism and reform during Adler’s incumbency, Sacks has argued:

What made Anglo-Jewry different is that, by the time crisis occurred, strong communal leadership was already in place ... The existence of a Chief Rabbinate in Britain was a vital force for restraint in a period when, throughout most of Europe and America, the citadels of tradition had been overrun by radical secularism or reform ... Anglo-Jewry was fortunate in being led by a figure of the stature of Adler ... [H]e brought to his leadership not only the unimpeachable authority of his scholarship but also a robust and far-sighted approach to communal organisation.¹⁹

... Whether it was the good fortune of conditions in England or the wisdom of his leadership, he made the decision to create in Britain a Jewish community that would resist the twin temptations of being Orthodox but exclusive, or inclusive but non-Orthodox, but would instead be faithful to one of Judaism’s most majestic ideas, *Knesset Yisrael*, the community of all Jews standing before God. It took an unlikely combination of skills and circumstances for him to succeed, and naturally he did not do so completely. But he and Commonwealth Jewry did so more effectively than anywhere else, and their achievement has lasted for more than a hundred years ...

Modern Orthodoxy is concerned with ideas, Inclusivism with people. Modern Orthodoxy is about content, Inclusivism about constituency. Modern Orthodoxy, like Maimonides’ *Guide for the Perplexed*, is an answer to the problems of an intellectual élite. Inclusivism is concerned with Jews as a whole, learned and unlearned alike. When Modern Orthodoxy succeeds, it creates a philosophy. When Inclusivism succeeds, it creates a community. That is what Nathan Marcus Adler did, and it makes his contribution to modern Jewry no less significant than that of [Samson Raphael] Hirsch.²⁰

Faith Against Reason has highlighted the fallacies in this argument, the weaknesses in both Adler’s character and approach, the damaging effects of his frequent

¹⁸ Jakobovits, ‘The Evolution of the British Rabbinate Since 1845,’ in *The Timely and The Timeless* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1977), p.269. On similar lines, Shaftesley writes: ‘The forms of religious controversy in Anglo-Jewry have been more often administrative or personal than theological, and they have arisen chiefly out of the structure of the community: a voluntary establishment whose religious head, to most of the Jews and to the outside world, has been the Chief Rabbi. Each Chief Rabbi has had his authority conferred on him, by the terms of his appointment, by the majority of the Orthodox community; and each had to contend with challenges to that authority, some of them along uncannily parallel lines’ (‘Religious Controversies,’ in *A Century of Anglo-Jewish Life, 1870–1970*, ed., Salmond S. Levin, London: United Synagogue, 1970, p.93).

¹⁹ Sacks, *Community of Faith* (London: Peter Halban, 1995), pp.80-83.

²⁰ Ibid, p.109-110. On Hirsch, see *Faith Against Reason*, pp.xix, 4-6.

ambivalence, and the slow but steady erosion of Chief Rabbinical authority and influence over the wider community. It has demonstrated, in particular, that the ‘tepid, slight and limited’²¹ advance of British Reform had little to do with Adler’s ‘skill’ or ‘wisdom,’ and even less with claims of Adlerian ‘Inclusivism.’ As Roth puts it, with half an eye on future battles:

Surveying the schism after a long interval of years, it seems in some ways rather insubstantial. The Reformers, though they did not reject the Oral Law as drastically as their critics alleged, were impatient of the Rabbinic development of Judaism and tended to omit much that was poetic in Jewish worship and beautiful in Jewish ceremonial, simply because it had no biblical authority.

They could not realise that the intellectual world was entering upon a phase when, precisely in their own advanced religious circles, the attitude towards the Bible would change and they would be driven back to a conception of an ever-developing evolutionary Judaism, interpreted in each era by its religious leaders – ‘every generation and its seekers, every generation and its teachers’ – a conception nearer by far to that of the rabbis of the talmudic age than of the Reformers of 1840.

As for the minutiae of worship and the manner of conducting divine service, which a century ago seemed to be the crux of the dispute, improvements were easily and insensibly incorporated, little by little, in the usage of most English congregations, the Great Synagogue generally leading the way. Within a very few years, some of the revolutionary proposals of the secessionists had become almost a commonplace. A little more patience, a little more imagination, and the schism would have been unnecessary.²²

Adler’s contemporary, the chronicler Picciotto, similarly avers: ‘What is certain,’ he wrote in 1875, ‘is that most of the reforms asked for by the so-called seceders have been introduced in our days into the Orthodox congregations.’ The Reformers, he points out, had said that they would have returned to ‘the ancient Synagogue,’ even after their own place of worship had been opened, if ‘very moderate concessions’ had been made to them, ‘and if certain acts which they had characterised as harsh and unjustifiable had not been perpetrated.’ Of the wider conflict, he adds: ‘Time, the great healer of wounds, has meanwhile effected its work. Calm reflection could not fail in the end to remind all parties that discord, with its train of evil consequences, has caused great national disasters, and that Israel, at the present age, needs more than ever union and concord in its onward march towards its glorious future destinies.’²³

²¹ *Faith Against Reason*, chapter 4.

²² Roth, *History of the Great Synagogue, 1690–1940* (London: Edward Goldston & Son, 1950), pp.256–258.

²³ Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History* (first published in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 1872–1875; published in book form, London, 1875; reissued, ed., Israel Finestein, London: Soncino Press, 1956), pp.379–380.

Arthur Barnett, one-time minister of the ‘benevolently neutral’ Western Synagogue,²⁴ writes:

Looking back impartially, one may justifiably assert that what was happening was, in no sense, a revolution in Jewish theology but merely an adventure in Jewish aesthetics. Within a very few years after the establishment of the Reform Synagogue in West London, practically all the changes sought by the seceders had become the common practice of the congregations under the ecclesiastical authority of the Chief Rabbi. What was really a storm in a teacup only later developed into a raging conflict of angers and resentments.²⁵

Latter-day observers find few actions to commend in Adler’s record. ‘There is little evidence,’ argues Aubrey Newman, the United Synagogue’s official historian, ‘of any independent authority being exercised by Nathan Adler ... On occasion he did intervene, either to be very firmly put in his place or else to find that others were already doing what he would have wished on his behalf.’²⁶

In sum, Finestein contends, ‘he managed to satisfy no party entirely, and still less himself. There is a touch of tragedy about his Chief Rabbinate (from which he was happy to retire in 1880), a recovery from whose effects was to await the twentieth century.’²⁷ His vision was not matched by his power; his notional authority exceeded the resources which were made available for its full exercise.²⁸

In a double-edged summation of Adler’s tenure, Endelman comments:

By centralising religious authority and preventing the emergence of an independent, native-born rabbinate, Adler and his lay supporters helped to guarantee the institutional hegemony of Orthodox Judaism in Britain ... However, this achievement was not without its downside. The stifling of religious innovation robbed communal life of the intellectual ferment that accompanied the debate about Reform in more open, pluralistic communities and that stimulated the creation of scholarship and religious thought across the denominational spectrum.²⁹

²⁴ Roth, in his preface to Barnett’s history of the congregation (see note 25), writes: ‘At all times of communal strife, it persisted in observing a benevolent neutrality between the warring communal organisations, whether East or West, “Right” or “Left” of it, without surrendering or imperilling its own conservative independence’ (p.xiv). Roth is the author of *Records of the Western Synagogue, 1761–1932* (London: Edward Goldston, 1932), to which is appended a reprint of Matthias Levy’s *The Western Synagogue: some materials for its history*, originally published in 1897.

²⁵ Barnett, *The Western Synagogue Through Two Centuries, 1761–1961* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1961), pp.177–178. On the Western’s opposition to the *cherem* and to the Chief Rabbinate’s edict that it be proclaimed by ‘the secretaries of the principal Metropolitan Synagogues ... from their respective reading desks,’ see *Faith Against Reason*, pp.16–17.

²⁶ Newman, *The United Synagogue 1870–1970* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p.56.

²⁷ – temporarily, it might be added.

²⁸ Finestein, *Anglo-Jewry in Changing Times* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1999), p.17.

²⁹ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p.120.

It was the growth of such scholarship and religious thought during the ensuing decades that was to help change the face of the increasingly fragile and fragmented Anglo-Orthodox community, and of the Chief Rabbinate at its core, and to hasten the 'revolution in Jewish theology' that threatened to tear them both asunder.

* * * * *

Another factor accelerating this change, and coinciding with the closing years of Adler's (by then ineffectual) rabbinate – and the even less respected incumbency of his son, Hermann – was the migration of Jews 'who set forth from their lands and homes to other countries and continents [and who] decisively changed the probable course of Jewish history.'³⁰

As far as Britain was concerned, 'the peaceful calm of Anglo-Jewry was shattered ... by the immigration of thousands of Russian and Polish Jews. They outnumbered the existing small community, which, in consequence, underwent a profound change both in structure and in character,'³¹ leaving, in Alderman's words, 'a Jewry – or, more accurately now, a series of Jewries – quite different from that which had existed but a quarter-century before:

These differences were not merely religious and social; they were also cultural, political and idealistic. In London, moreover, an entirely new synagogal body had been called into existence, which gave expression to these differences, and articulated them both internally and to the wider world. In response, as it were, the already established community erected mechanisms of its own to preserve an identity and an outlook suddenly under attack.'³²

United Synagogue opposition followed the establishment of this body, the Federation of Synagogues, in 1887, and of the Chevrat Machzike Hadath ('Society of Upholders of the Religion') four years later. Questioning their *raison d'être*, the US council declared: 'At a time when the desire of the community is to unite as much as possible its various organisations, and to make further provision for the religious requirements of the poor in the East of London, it surely seems inopportune to create and extend a body whose policy must inevitably tend to disunion and

³⁰ Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870–1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), p.15.

³¹ Homa, *Orthodoxy in Anglo-Jewry 1880–1940* (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1969), p.7.

³² Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.151.

disintegration.³³ But disenchantment with the younger Adler's 'inability to resist the growing encroachments on Orthodox custom that were constantly being demanded and introduced'³⁴ – as well as with the 'near absolutism of the Chief Rabbinate,' the 'wholly decorative' powers of the Beth Din, and the 'sorry status' of the immigrant rabbi³⁵ – led in time to the election as a full-time dayan of the Federation's Moshe Avigdor Chaikin, a product of some of the greatest yeshivot in the Pale of Settlement and the first of a succession of East European rabbis (another was Shmuel Yitzchak Hillman) who would exert a growing hold on the Chief Rabbinate and its court.³⁶ Chaikin's appointment, however, was destined to await the death of Hermann Adler who, on his election as Chief Rabbi, had 'made it clear that he was not prepared to accept any limitation' on his powers, nor 'even be bound to consult the Beth Din.'³⁷

The passing of the years, and the establishment of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (Adath) – an attraction to those even within United Synagogue ranks

wishing to intensify Orthodoxy – [led to] a cry commonly heard that the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din had fallen into the hands of the 'Ultras' who were exerting in consequence an influence that their numbers alone did not warrant. In some respects, of course, this was true ... All this was an aspect of the Chief Rabbinate with which the honorary officers could not deal, and the result was to make any differences between them the more difficult to heal. He [the Chief Rabbi] could legitimately turn to other Jewish organisations for support, even when, paradoxically, they did not recognise his official status, whereas the honorary officers could turn for support only to the customs and traditions of the United Synagogue itself.³⁸

Anxious as they were to uphold those traditions – and despite an increasing tendency by Adler's successor, Joseph Herman Hertz, to lean on his Adath son-in-law Solomon Schonfeld – the honorary officers made much of the term 'progressive conservatism' coined by Hertz himself in 1923.³⁹ In their preface to the bye-laws of

³³ Minutes of the United Synagogue council, 18 February 1890, quoted in Gartner, op. cit., p.204. The meeting was reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 February 1890, pp.8-9.

³⁴ Homa, op. cit., p.10.

³⁵ Gartner, op. cit., pp.191, 207.

³⁶ 'On the motion [before the United Synagogue council] of Mr A. H. Jessel, KC, who referred to his eminent qualities, Rabbi Avigdor Chaikin was unanimously elected a Dayan, it being understood that he should continue as Minister of the Federation of Synagogues' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 10 November 1911, p.27).

³⁷ Newman, op. cit., p.93. On the circumstances leading to Chaikin's appointment, see Alderman, *The Federation of Synagogues 1887-1987* (London: Federation of Synagogues, 1987), pp.35-41, and the *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 June 1928, p.11.

³⁸ Newman, *ibid*, pp.107, 109.

³⁹ 'Progressive conservatism – the synthesis of the best citizenship and the broadest humanitarianism with the warmth and colour, the depth and discipline of the olden Jewish life' (Hertz, *Opening Address*

the United Synagogue published thirteen years later, they wrote of their ‘acceptance of Tradition as a living force and not as a dead weight’ in the following terms:

The spirit which imbues the whole code of bye-laws is that of the Progressive Conservatism which the United Synagogue itself exemplifies, rejecting on the one hand the clamour of those who, in the desire for constant change, would recklessly cast aside Tradition; and on the other, the invitation of those who regard all things as settled, deluding themselves with the pretence that time and environment and circumstances are factors of no account, as though our lives and our mutual relationships are not susceptible to change.⁴⁰

When change came, however, it tended to diverge from that envisaged. A year earlier, Yechezkel Abramsky, spiritual head of the Machzike Hadath and a ‘fierce fighter in the wars of Hashem [God],’⁴¹ had assumed the leadership of the London Beth Din. His appointment was greatly to advance the shift to the ‘Ultras’ begun by Chaikin – ‘his towering personality and commanding influence [wrote Jakobovits of Abramsky] extended primarily to ... moving the Beth Din’s previous “middle-of-the-road” course strongly and irrevocably to the right’⁴² – and was a major factor in the creation of the Reform Beth Din in 1948, particularly in light of the progressives’ independent action in the fields of marriage, divorce and conversion.⁴³

* * * * *

The founding of the Jewish Religious Union in the opening years of the twentieth century introduced a radical and polarising element into the battle between the forces

by the Chief Rabbi, Conference of Anglo-Jewish Preachers, London: Oxford University Press, 1923, p.19).

⁴⁰ *Bye-Laws Made by the Council of the United Synagogue* (London, United Synagogue, July 1936), p.i. Ironically, as described in *Faith Against Reason* (p.303), this paragraph was invoked by the rebellious honorary officers of the New West End Synagogue in 1964 in their attempt to reinstate Louis Jacobs as minister of the congregation, following the Chief Rabbi’s refusal to grant a ministerial certificate.

⁴¹ Sorasky, *Melech Beyofyo [A King in His Glory]*, Vol. I (Jerusalem: published privately, 2004), p.393.

⁴² Jakobovits, ‘The Evolution of the British Rabbinate Since 1845,’ p.271.

⁴³ For an elaboration of this view, see Romain, ‘The establishment of the Reform Beth Din in 1948: a barometer of religious trends in Anglo-Jewry,’ in *Jewish Historical Studies*, Vol. XXXIII (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1995), pp.249-262; and the same writer’s *The Reform Beth Din: The Formation and Development of the Rabbinical Court of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1935–1965*, PhD dissertation, University of Leicester, 1990. Adath marriage certification dates back to 1919 (Homa, op. cit., p.28), and its rival Beth Din to 1935, following Abramsky’s appointment to the London Beth Din (*Jewish Chronicle*, 4 January 1935, p.10). The Federation of Synagogues’ Beth Din was established on 25 August 1959 (Alderman, *The Federation of Synagogues, 1887–1987*, p.98), and that of the Liberals – its Rabbinic Conference – in April 1966. British Masorti’s Beth Din is under the umbrella of the European Masorti Beth Din, affiliated to the Conservatives’ Rabbinical Assembly.

of tradition and reform. Questions began to be raised – and challenges thrown out – regarding core concepts of Judaism that had hitherto remained untouched in the study halls and synagogues of Anglo-Jewry, precipitating the theological controversies that have embroiled it ever since.

The initial successes of the Jewish Reformers in early nineteenth-century Germany were soon hampered by the refusal of the Prussian government to recognise them if they broke away from established form. One result was the emigration of a number of potential leaders to the United States, German Jews whose religious views were as liberal as their politics.

In the synagogues and institutions (most notably the Union of American Congregations and Hebrew Union College) established by such men, these rabbis easily obtained positions commensurate with their abilities and, before long, transplanted there a Reform Judaism with a distinctly American flavour. Among them was the charismatic Isaac Mayer Wise (1819–1900), an Orthodox-trained rabbi whose arrival in Cincinnati – a city with a large and cultured Teutonic community – presaged the declarations of 1855 (Cleveland), 1869 (Philadelphia), 1885 (Pittsburgh) and 1889 (Detroit) as the recognised platforms of Reform in America,⁴⁴ instituting what they termed ‘the mission of Israel’ to disseminate the theology of their movement among the Jews of their adopted land. Across the Atlantic, this missionary zeal was to find its foremost exponent in Claude Montefiore, a scion of the West London Synagogue and the creator, with Lily Montagu, of the Jewish Religious Union’s godchild, Liberal Judaism. ‘If,’ he was to declare in 1912,

we differ from Conservative⁴⁵ Judaism as regards the miracles recorded in the Bible, as regards the doctrine of inspiration, as regards the perpetual validity and authority of the ceremonial law, this is because of, or this has led up to, positive doctrines, no less important and definite, and (as we believe) nobler and truer, than the doctrines held by our Conservative opponents. Indeed, Liberal Jews are, on the whole, more disposed than Conservative Jews to regard a consistent body of doctrine – a systematic theology – as necessary and important. Liberal Judaism is, therefore, quite as positive and affirmative as Conservative Judaism; its own affirmations are as essential to it as other affirmations are essential to Conservative Judaism, its rival.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, new edn. (New York: Macmillan, 1931), pp.353-358.

⁴⁵ Then denoting ‘Orthodox.’ On Solomon Schechter’s use of the term, see pp.60-61 below.

⁴⁶ Montefiore, *Outlines of Liberal Judaism* (London: Macmillan, 1912), p.284. On equating the terms ‘Conservative’ and ‘Orthodox’ Judaism, see Montefiore’s introduction to *Outlines*, p.8, and his Jewish Religious Union sermon, ‘Religious Differences and Religious Agreements’ (quoted in *Faith Against Reason*, pp.137-138).

A decade earlier, following his spiritual and physical journey from Finsbury Square⁴⁷ to Berkeley Street, Morris Joseph had been more circumspect on the subject:

Apart from a few leading ideas, the Jewish Creed has always been in a fluid condition, and Judaism leaves us free to construct our own theology, so long as we do not trench upon certain easily recognised principles which, because they are wrought into the very fabric of the religion, could not be discarded without destroying the religion itself ... We must not take our Religion wholly on trust; we must satisfy ourselves of its truth by bringing it to the test of reason. 'How do I know that there is a God?' is a question that is not only natural but commendable. It is the glory of Judaism that it encourages such questions, that it invites us to free inquiry into the grounds of our religious belief.⁴⁸

Treading in the academic footsteps of Montefiore, Joseph and Hochman⁴⁹ – and, indeed, of the Adlers, Hertz and Brodie (emulated, in time, by Sacks) – the yeshivah-trained Louis Jacobs was but one of many clerical figures in Anglo-Jewry whose exposure to 'the wisdom of objective scholarship' resulted in a meeting of the 'two worlds'⁵⁰ of traditional Torah studies and Higher and Lower Criticism of the Pentateuch.⁵¹ Unlike his Chief Rabbinical colleagues, however – at least in their publicly declared stance – Jacobs arrived at the conclusion, 'eschewing obscurantism, religious schizophrenia and intellectual dishonesty ... that a synthesis is possible between the permanent values and truth of tradition and the best thought of the day.'⁵²

Towards the end of his life, enlarging on this thesis in relation to the concept of *Torah min hashamayim* ('Torah from Heaven'), Jacobs wrote:

⁴⁷ The first home of the Orthodox-orientated Jews' College, where in 1863 Joseph won the Judith Lady Montefiore award, 'the most valuable of all the scholarships within the gift of the College' (Hyamson, *Jews' College London, 1855–1955*, London: Jews' College, 1955, pp.29-30). See also Harris, *Jews' College Jubilee Volume* (London: Luzac, 1906), pp.clxxxviii, cxciii.

⁴⁸ Joseph, *Judaism as Creed and Life* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1903), pp.33-34.

⁴⁹ On Joseph Hochman, see *Faith Against Reason*, chapter 9, and p.58 of this paper in relation to his opposition to the Chief Rabbinate as an institution.

⁵⁰ Jacobs, *Helping With Inquiries: An Autobiography* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1989), pp.78, 80.

⁵¹ An early manifestation of Jacobs' reformist tendencies appears in 'Organic Growth vs. Petrification' (*The Jewish Spectator*, Vol. XVII, No. 10, New York, November 1952, pp.9-11), regarding an attempt by the Manchester Association of Rabbis and Ministers, headed by the Communal Rabbi, Dr Alexander Altmann, to implement changes in the liturgy and ritual, as a means of improving synagogue decorum. Responding to a protest by what he describes as 'a small but highly vociferous group calling itself "The Committee To Fight Reform," the members of which were well-known zealots in the Manchester community,' Jacobs (then 'Rov' – his terminology – of Manchester's Central Synagogue and a member of the Association) writes: 'This Manchester episode is symptomatic of two trends in Orthodoxy today. The point at issue is this: can there be change in Judaism, or does loyalty to Orthodoxy commit us to a petrification of our religious life? ... The way of the moderate traditionalist can never be without difficulties. But moderation and tolerance are needed today in the religious life of Jews as never before, and those who are prepared to tread the middle path and to face the vituperations of the extremists on either side are performing a notable service to the cause of Judaism.'

⁵² Jacobs, *We Have Reason to Believe* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1957), p.11.

... modern knowledge and scholarship have made it impossible to accept the traditional view that God 'dictated' to Moses, word for word and letter by letter, the whole of the Pentateuch (the Torah). My argument runs that, while such a doctrine of verbal inspiration is now untenable, the traditional doctrine that the Torah is from Heaven can and should still be maintained. To put this in different words, God is the author of the Torah (conceived of as the sum total not of the Pentateuch alone but of Jewish religious thought through the ages), but, as in His creativity of the world, He co-operated with His creatures in producing the Torah, through human beings reaching out to Him. There is thus a human element, as well as a divine element, in what we call the Torah.⁵³

In refutation of this argument, Israel Brodie forty years earlier had cited the view of former Jews' College principal Isidore Epstein when justifying Jacobs' exclusion from the ministry of the New West End Synagogue. Referring to 'the kind of halachah which has begun to make its appearance of late in certain quarters which do not recognise the divine origin of the Bible,' Epstein had declared:

By favourite tricks they play with the Bible, which they regard as partly divine and partly human – it being left to individual judgment to disentangle the divine elements from the human – they rob life's pilgrimage of the sole reliable signpost pointing the way wherein sojourners must walk 'when turning to the right and when turning to the left,' and thus render life pathless. In other words, by rejecting the absolute authority of the Bible, without being able to replace it by anything else, they encourage the most reckless individualism in religion, an individualism full of contradictions and vagaries, leading as often away from God as it does to God.

Thus we come to the real divergence of, for want of any other name, we may call the Orthodox halachah from any other kind of halachah, such as that emanating from the Conservative no less than Reform schools – the question of authority. The difference of attitude with regard to authority goes further than the mere difference in matters of ritual, practice and so forth. The fatal and inherent weakness of those who deny the divine origin of the Bible, even if their personal religious behaviour conforms to the highest standard, lies in the lack of any valid objective authority for what they teach or affirm. Apart from private judgment and individual opinion, they have no objective criterion or authority for what they tell people to do or believe, thus depriving their halachic pronouncements of all validity.⁵⁴

This charge of 'reckless individualism in religion' underpins the controversies that have wracked Anglo-Jewry from the 1840s Reform secession to the Sacks Chief Rabbinate – upon whose unfinished business the spotlight now falls.

⁵³ 'A Retrospect of the "Jacobs Affair,"' in *ibid*, fifth expanded edition (London and Portland OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), pp.viii-ix.

⁵⁴ Epstein, *The Place of Halachah in Jewish Life and Thought*, Paris: Conference of European Rabbis, 1961; reproduced in Brodie, *Statement by the Very Rev. the Chief Rabbi, Dr Israel Brodie* (London: United Synagogue, 1964), p.6.

*'I will make mistakes, but I will learn from them. I will have failures, but I will try again, another way, another time.'*¹

No stranger to controversy himself, Sacks has addressed the topic in much of his writings; indeed, one of his books (in its American incarnation) is entitled *Arguments for the Sake of Heaven*.² In it, he asserts:

... when there is no immediate solution to problems facing the Jewish people, the most important religious imperative is to engage in what the sages called 'arguments for the sake of Heaven.' One of the themes of the present study is a plea for recovery of what I call 'tradition as argument'³ ... The question that has become suddenly urgent is whether the current conflicts within Jewry can be incorporated within this model of 'argument for the sake of Heaven.' If so, there can be dialogue. If not, there can only be confrontation. The one creates community, the other destroys it. Why, then, has dialogue between Jews become so difficult in the twentieth century? Why is it so often replaced by mutual delegitimation? If even Reform and secular Jews have turned, in recent years, towards tradition, why has there not been a revival of rabbinic Judaism's greatest tradition: the tradition of argument, tradition *as* argument?

Because, Sacks believes, 'the *brit yi'ud*, the covenant of Torah, has not yet been renewed.

Jewish attitudes have become more 'traditional' without yet returning to tradition. The inability of Jews to communicate across the ideological divide is a measure of the extent to which Jews still stand 'between two covenants.'⁴ ... If [argument] proceeds through a debate informed by text, precedent and interpretation, it becomes part of Torah. It becomes part of the commentary each generation of Jews writes to the covenant. But if it proceeds through political pressure, mutual delegitimation and violent confrontation, there is no real argument. There is a search for victory, not truth. The clash of opinions becomes secularised. Judaism, instead of providing the means for handling conflict, fuels the flames of conflict into conflagration. The great tradition of 'argument for the sake of Heaven' comes to an end. That has happened in our time. It is a process that must be reversed.⁵

¹ Sacks, *A Decade of Jewish Renewal*, p.13.

² Published in 1995 by Jason Aronson, of Northvale, New Jersey, the book was the North American version of *Traditional Alternatives: Orthodoxy and the Future of the Jewish People* (see chapter 1, note 6 of this paper).

³ Sacks, *Arguments for the Sake of Heaven*, p.ix.

⁴ Ibid, pp.206-207.

⁵ Ibid, p.215.

Following the Traditional Alternatives conference, and his subsequent election, Sacks posed the fundamental question: ‘How shall Orthodox Jews relate to Jews who do not share their commitment to *halachah* or the classic terms of Jewish faith? Liberal, Reconstructionist, Reform and Conservative Judaism represent significant challenges – not perhaps to Orthodoxy itself, but to its claim to be the one valid interpretation of Judaism.’⁶ In several of his works, he attempted to answer the question in terms of inclusivism: ‘The most urgent task of Orthodoxy in modernity,’ he wrote in 1990,

is to think a way forward to recovering the substantive reality of *Knesset Yisrael*, the Jewish people as a single entity standing before God ... If Orthodoxy is to act responsibly toward the whole Jewish world and not simply toward its own immediate constituency, there are deep dilemmas to be faced about its relationship with secular and non-Orthodox Jews. It cannot embrace pluralism, the view that a secular or non-halachic reading of tradition is legitimate. But it cannot withdraw altogether into segregation without abdicating the responsibilities of religious leadership.⁷

In his classic work on the theme, written two years into office, Sacks went further:

The inclusivist attaches positive significance to the fact that liberal Judaisms have played their part in keeping alive for many Jews the values of Jewish identity, faith and practice – movements which have served to retain Jews within Jewry who might otherwise have drifted into another faith or no faith at all ... Every Jew today who, after the tragedy of the Holocaust, the attacks on the State of Israel, and the ravages of assimilation, chooses to stay a Jew and have Jewish children is making a momentous affirmation that may not be dishonoured. Even if we must sometimes reject the beliefs and deeds of an individual Jew, none the less he or she is a fragment of the *Shechinah*, the divine presence which dwells in the midst of Jews wherever and whatever they are. For the inclusivist believes with perfect faith that the covenant binds all Jews to one another, and that a Jew who remains attached to the chosen people cannot be unchosen.⁸

In his early bid to ‘bind all Jews to one another,’ Sacks frequently called on the community to observe the courtesies of civility and tolerance. “‘Argument for the sake of Heaven,’” he wrote on the eve of Traditional Alternatives, ‘does not imply

⁶ *Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity*, ed., Jonathan Sacks (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, in association with Jews’ College, 1991), p.8.

⁷ Sacks, *Tradition in an Untraditional Age* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1990), p.133. The book is dedicated to Louis Mintz – ‘tireless fighter for the cause of Jewish unity’ – who was instrumental in the sale of the redundant St John’s Wood (United) Synagogue building to Louis Jacobs’ New London Synagogue in 1964 (see *Faith Against Reason*, chapter 16).

⁸ Sacks, *One People? Tradition, Modernity, and Jewish Unity* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993), pp.222, 226-227.

pluralism. But it does imply a willingness to engage in reasoned dialogue with views with which one disagrees.’⁹ And, at the conference itself: ‘If Torah is, God forbid, ideologised, politicised, used to delegitimize other Jews who also care for Torah, then it will bring not peace but conflict to the world.’¹⁰ Months later, he wrote:

The religious voice that has sounded loudest, and most often, has been that of one group of Jews denouncing the faith and practice of another. Who benefits? Neither Jews nor Judaism. No movement was ever given strength by castigating the rest of the Jewish world as heretics, on the one hand, and fanatics, on the other.

We need not be religious pluralists in order to treat other Jews with respect. In the end, we must realise that there is more at stake than institutional rivalries. There is the honour of Judaism itself which must, if it is to command respect, speak with a voice that transcends the politics and personalities of its human representatives. We must never use the language of our enemies in speaking of other Jews.¹¹

In his first interview as Chief Rabbi-elect, Sacks affirmed his aim

to heal some of the rifts that have divided Anglo-Jewry, to encourage debate, and not shy away from communicating Jewish values to the wider community. I am determined as far as possible to emphasise what unites Jews and to encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect. The Jewish people have suffered too tragically and too often from internal divisions, and I hope that divisive words will be at a minimum from all sectors of the community.

Declaring that he would ‘run a very open Chief Rabbinate,’ he added: ‘The sages had great faith in the concept of “argument for the sake of Heaven.” By that they meant that not even the greatest sage in history could get it completely right all the time. But if he listened to constructive criticism, he was more likely to do so.’¹²

* * * * *

Despite his best endeavours to encourage debate, unity and ‘an atmosphere of mutual respect,’ internal divisions and divisive words dogged Sacks from the very beginning. Launching his Chief Rabbinate on a platform of inclusivism, he soon found himself called upon to respond to the Kalms review on the United Synagogue:

The most powerful plea to emerge from the research is ‘for the United Synagogue to reject religious exclusivism and *welcome the non-observant, less observant or*

⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 May 1989, p.29.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 26 May 1989, p.8.

¹¹ Sacks, ‘The Way Forward,’ in *ibid*, 29 September 1989, p.73.

¹² ‘Sacks to stress unity,’ interview with Bernard Josephs, in *ibid*, 2 March 1990, p.6.

middle-of-the-road Jew’ [Sacks’ emphasis].¹³ Almost exactly the same plea was made eight centuries ago by no less an authority than Moses Maimonides, at the end of his *Epistle on Martyrdom*.

The passage is so crucial to what must be the ethos of the United Synagogue that I quote it in full: ‘It is not right to alienate, scorn and hate people who desecrate the Sabbath. It is our duty to befriend them and encourage them to fulfil the commandments. The rabbis regulate explicitly that when an evildoer who sinned by choice comes to the synagogue, he is to be welcomed and not insulted.’

Something is badly wrong with the spiritual state of Anglo-Jewry if these points, honestly made and honestly responded to, are taken to signal a movement away from Torah and *halachah*. Against such facile misinterpretations, the simplest answer is the one given long ago by Hillel: ‘Do not criticise Jews; even if they are not prophets, they are the children of prophets.’ There is an authentic echo in these contemporary Anglo-Jewish voices of one of the most powerful of our prayers: ‘Do not cast us away from Your presence.’

Those interviewed did not ask for an abandonment of *halachah*. They asked for sympathetic rabbis, welcoming synagogues, and a compassionate application of Jewish law. Those are legitimate demands, *spiritual* demands. Those who dismiss them or turn a deaf ear to them have either not understood Torah or do not have the spiritual qualities needed to lead a congregation.¹⁴

Between the lines, in these early strictures, was a sideswipe at the ‘Ultras’ whose influence had seeped into Hertz’s twilight years and had increased steadily, in the Beth Din and beyond, during Brodie’s tenure. Sacks, an Oxford and Cambridge philosopher with no yeshivah background, had still seriously to confront the wrath of the dayanim and their colleagues, whose world was ‘notoriously suspicious of outsiders’ and to whom the new Chief Rabbi’s credentials were ‘open to question.’¹⁵ At this stage, *they* were the unsympathetic, *their* hearts hardened – or so it was suggested – against a ‘compassionate application of Jewish law.’ Sacks had yet to face similar charges from those to his left, or, at the very least, accusations that he was under pressure, from those to his right, to ‘turn a deaf ear.’

The first test of his authority, and of his inclusivist platform, came with ‘stage two’ of his Decade of Jewish Renewal – the creation of a community-wide organisation known as Jewish Continuity. Laying out his stall,¹⁶ Sacks wrote that he sought

to establish the Chief Rabbinate as a proactive force in the community, not merely encouraging others to create projects of renewal, but leading by example. Beyond

¹³ *A Time for Change*, p.263.

¹⁴ Sacks, *A Time for Renewal*, pp.14-15.

¹⁵ Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, new edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.392-393.

¹⁶ Sacks, *Studies in Renewal*: 1. *From Integration to Survival to Continuity*; 2. *The Crisis of Continuity*; 3. *The Secret of Jewish Continuity*; 4. *Rethinking Priorities*; 5. *From Jewish Continuity to Jewish Continuity* (London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, June–October 1993). The studies were subsequently reworked into Sacks, *Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren?* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1994).

the parameters of synagogue and school life, the Chief Rabbinate has in the past led by influence and exhortation. These are no small things. Through them over the past two centuries my predecessors have helped shape the direction of the community as it has met the challenges of changing times.

As I read the mood of the age, however, I doubted whether influence and encouragement alone were enough. I suspected – and that suspicion has since hardened to certainty – that we were living at a time unprecedentedly sceptical of authority. Few people today in secular democratic societies can exercise influence in virtue of position. That applies not only to religious leaders but to politicians and heads of other institutions also.

We respect not the position but the person, and we judge the person less by what he says than by what he does. Therefore I had to create a doing Chief Rabbinate. And since the battle for Jewish commitment today extends beyond the synagogue and Jewish school, I had to extend the field of doing as well.¹⁷

Asserting that ‘as an established community we are out of touch with the realities of contemporary Jewish life,’ and drawing attention to the ‘great institution-builders – most notably Chief Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler and Sir Moses Montefiore, who created in the Victorian age many of the communal structures we still inherit today’ – Sacks added: ‘There is a danger that what is old can become aged. And that, I believed, is what had begun to happen to at least some of our institutions. I therefore encouraged a process of self-examination which has yielded, thus far, an unexpectedly rich harvest ... Individually, these have brought gusts of fresh air into our communal thinking, even if they have created occasional squalls and storms.’¹⁸

The biggest ‘gust of fresh air’ blew in Jewish Continuity – ‘a challenge, an idea and a project, the most ambitious but the most urgently necessary project Anglo-Jewry has been called on to create in the last twenty years. Everything I have done in the Chief Rabbinate so far,’ declared Sacks, ‘has been mere preparation for this, the structural and spiritual heart of renewal.’ There was, he wrote later,

one widely held view which I call Jewish Darwinism. It says that ‘throughout the generations, only the fittest Jews survive ... What is happening today has always happened: when Jews were free to leave, they left. Only the most dedicated remain. On this view, it is futile to speak of continuity as a programme for all Jews. Instead, one should concentrate on the committed. They are Jewry’s survivalists.’ This view is cogent and persuasive, but I reject it absolutely ... I reject it because it identifies fact with value; it confuses what happens with what we are right to let happen. I reject it because the covenant at the heart of Judaism links us in bonds of obligation to all Jews, not just the righteous few.

¹⁷ *Studies in Renewal* 1, p.1.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp.2-3. One ‘squall’ developed in 1992 over what Sacks described as ‘the novel attempt to express community – the Walkabout’ (*Studies in Renewal* 1, p.2), when the Jewish Lesbian and Gay Helpline was banned from participating in the event.

The new organisation, Sacks pledged,

will be aimed at all Jews in the unshakeable belief that every Jew is precious ... Jewish Continuity will provide vision. Its aim is to secure the future of Anglo-Jewry by creating a community in which every Jew is given the opportunity to learn about and experience Jewish living. It recognises that this vision must be the subject of a dialogue between Jewish Continuity and the Anglo-Jewish community as a whole.

Through its consultative processes and through the forums it creates, or encourages others to create, it will encourage that dialogue so that the many individuals and organisations concerned with the Anglo-Jewish future feel that they or their representatives had a voice in formulating strategy and subjecting it to scrutiny and evaluation ... Though it will be supportive of all ventures that create continuity, it will embody a bias towards those institutions and projects which most affect Jews whose involvement in Jewish life is marginal ... In short, Jewish Continuity will have a bias towards outreach and innovation.¹⁹

Launched in 1993, Jewish Continuity was virtually wiped out within two years. When funding was finally in place, it quickly became clear that its outreach bias had to win the approval of the Chief Rabbi and Beth Din. 'It should not surprise anybody,' remarked the chairman of trustees, Michael Sinclair, 'that since Jewish Continuity is an initiative of the Chief Rabbi, the outreach we are going to run will represent normative Judaism.' To which its treasurer, Clive Marks – whose Ashdown Trust was a central funder from the outset – responded: 'To insist that the sole form of Jewish education must be religious and halachic is, at this stage – I repeat, at this stage – unrealistic and self-defeating.'²⁰ A reorganisation of funding, through the creation of a separate allocations board, later ensured support for non-Orthodox institutions, but this provoked outrage from the 'Ultras.' Sacksian appeasement thereupon led, in part, to the dying beats of his 'heart of renewal.'

* * * * *

Concurrently with his difficulties at Continuity, Sacks faced opposition from 'the righteous few' over his certification of Masorti marriages. Within weeks of assuming office in 1967, Jakobovits had granted the New London a certificate, testifying that it constituted 'a synagogue of persons professing the Jewish religion,'²¹ and had later

¹⁹ *Studies in Renewal* 5, pp.3, 4, 6, 7.

²⁰ *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 April 1995, p.29.

²¹ Minutes of meeting of the Board of Deputies, London (item 7), 2 July 1967, London Metropolitan Archives, ACC/3121/A042. Chaim Bermant, Jakobovits' 'authorised' biographer, writes that, 'anxious

told the Chief Rabbinate Council that it was ‘neither Reform nor Liberal and generally not in breach of our principles, as it recognises the guidelines of halachic law.’²² The status of Masorti marriages was challenged, however, in 1983, when Marcus Carr, the clerk to the London Beth Din, declared that ‘they have no more halachic validity than marriages contracted in a register office in civil law.’²³ His statement followed the dayanim’s concern over conversions which Masorti rabbis had begun to perform,²⁴ and over the marriages of their converts in Masorti synagogues. Jakobovits, meanwhile, remained silent on the subject.

In January 1994, Sacks granted a certificate to the St Albans Masorti Synagogue, similarly affirming that it ‘constitutes a congregation of persons professing the Jewish religion,’ but omitting two qualifying sentences added by his predecessor when certifying another Masorti congregation, the New Highgate and North London

to end the bitterness and friction which had resulted from the [Jacobs] affair,’ the newly installed Chief Rabbi had ‘reached a concordat with Dr Jacobs by giving formal recognition to his congregation as part of the Orthodox fold, after Dr Jacobs agreed to perform no marriages which could not be held in an Orthodox synagogue’ (*Jewish Chronicle*, 31 December 1993, p.19).

²² Minutes of meeting of the Chief Rabbinate Council, London, 17 July 1977, p.3.

²³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 September 1983, p.1

²⁴ The issue of non-Orthodox conversions surfaced many years later, in the context of a dispute over ‘the propriety and legality of the criteria governing admission to the JFS school in London’ (R [E] v the Governing Body of JFS and the Admissions Panel of JFS, case no. CO/7896/2007; R [E] v Office of the Schools Adjudicator, case no. CO/11587/2007, Royal Courts of Justice, before Mr Justice Munby, 4-7 March 2008). In his judgment handed down 3 July 2008 (pp.1-73), refusing a judicial review in the case of a child – the son of a woman converted under Progressive auspices – whose application to enter JFS was rejected, representatives of four religious bodies submitted witness statements on their respective approaches to conversion. For the London Beth Din, senior dayan Menachem Gelley wrote (26 February 2008): ‘A convert’s state of mind at the moment of conversion (i.e., immersion in a *mikveh*) is absolutely vital to the validity of an Orthodox conversion. If, for example, the convert was prepared to accept some or even most of the laws of Orthodox Judaism, but was not prepared to accept certain laws or even one law (e.g., the laws concerning Sabbath observance or the dietary laws), the conversion would be invalid, because the convert was unwilling to accept the Orthodox Jewish faith in its entirety at the moment of conversion. Indeed, it is a well-established point of Jewish Law that if a Beth Din discovers new information relevant to the time of a conversion, it should consider whether the conversion was valid, even if the conversion was not recent or took place in a different jurisdiction’ (p.6). Michael Gluckman, executive director of the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, wrote (5 February 2008): ‘To be recognised, a conversion must have been in accordance with the standards of the Masorti Beth Din. We strive for inclusion wherever possible ... our aim is to welcome and include people’ (p.8). For the Movement for Reform Judaism, its head, Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield, wrote (7 February 2008): ‘When it comes to matters of Jewish status, we are more liberal than the O[ffice of the] C[hief] R[abbi] and adopt a more inclusivist policy. This applies particularly in the area of conversion, where we are keen to count in as many people who wish to define themselves as Jews as possible ... Our formal requirements for conversion are almost exactly the same as those of Orthodoxy, but we are less exacting and more “pluralistic” in the demands we make in terms of religious observance’ (p.8). Rabbi Danny Rich, chief executive of Liberal Judaism, wrote (31 January 2008): ‘Liberal Judaism is guided by the following principles: affording the benefit of the doubt where an individual affirms something to be true or where documentation or other evidence is difficult to obtain or unavailable; a wish to be inclusive, by which a person recognised as Jewish by one rabbinic authority (even if it differs from our own) should not in virtually all circumstances be rejected as Jewish by another authority; and the value of compassion coupled with common sense over excessive legalism’ (p.8). On non-Orthodox approaches to issues of Jewish status, see also chapter 4, note 64.

Synagogue, some thirteen years earlier. 'This statement is made,' Jakobovits had written then, after his affirmation, 'on the basis of the understanding that all marriages performed there shall be strictly in accord with Jewish law and tradition – *Kedat Moshe VeYisrael*. Furthermore, this letter and statement relate only to membership of the Board of Deputies and the appointment of a Secretary for Marriages.'²⁵

Sacks' certificate to the St Albans congregation was preceded by accusations from the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues that his office was employing 'unfair tactics' in attempting to dissuade couples from being married under Masorti auspices, and in warning that the children of such marriages might encounter practical difficulties in later life. 'It's very upsetting for the families involved,' Jacobs argued. 'The Chief Rabbi's Office seems to be suggesting that our marriages are in some ways not kosher.' He added that he himself had been refused permission to participate in United Synagogue wedding ceremonies, 'something I have done many times in the past. Without giving any clear grounds for its actions, the Chief Rabbi's Office is throwing obstacles in my path.'²⁶

As the year progressed, Sacks found himself caught between a spirited membership drive by Masorti, aimed at extending its power base well beyond the metropolis, and a counter-attack by the strictly Orthodox that included allegations of a 'secret deal' between the Chief Rabbinate and Masorti. Followers of the latter announced plans to extend the movement to Manchester, while leading members of the city's Orthodox rabbinate pledged their 'absolute determination' to prevent it from gaining a foothold. 'The dayanim and all the main Orthodox synagogue rabbis shall be setting out what we see as the dangers of the Masorti movement,' declared Manchester Beth Din registrar Yehudah Brodie. Masorti supporter Sidney Huller, president of the Prestwich United Synagogue, retorted: 'Many people belonging to Orthodox congregations are attracted to Masorti. I have been disenchanted with mainstream Orthodox Judaism for some time and believe it has been hijacked by fundamentalists.'²⁷

At a subsequent meeting organised by Manchester's Orthodox clergy, 'packed with well over 300 people, and with standing-room only for latecomers,' Whitefield's Rabbi Jonathan Guttentag asserted that leaflets were circulating within the city 'purporting to show that their [Masorti] marriages are recognised by the Chief Rabbi's

²⁵ Sacks to the Board of Deputies, 11 January 1994; Jakobovits to the president of the Board of Deputies, 24 September 1981; copies of original letters in Alderman's possession.

²⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 December 1993, p.11.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 2 December 1994, p.1.

Office, [and] read a letter from the registrar of the London Beis Din confirming that this was certainly not the case.’²⁸

That this was ‘certainly not the case’ was evidenced, too, both by the Chief Rabbi’s Office and by Masorti itself. A statement from the former ‘made clear that it does not accept as halachically valid any conversion or marriage conducted under the auspices of the Masorti movement ... but also confirmed that the status of children of such a marriage is not affected by the fact that a couple were married in a Masorti synagogue, provided they were eligible to marry in an Orthodox synagogue.’

Rabbi Julian Shindler, director of the office’s marriage authorisation department, stated that the policy ‘has never changed and no deals have been struck with Masorti.’ He was issuing the clarification, he explained, ‘because of claims to the contrary’ in the newsletter *Masortimatters*, which had reprinted, under the heading ‘Masorti marriages win *hechsher* [sanction],’ a letter from Jacobs to the Chief Rabbi ‘thanking him for repeating in a telephone conversation “what we both and everyone else knows to be true” – that the Jewish status of children “is in no way affected by the fact that a couple were married in the New London Synagogue or any other Masorti synagogue.”’ Many people, said Shindler, ‘have misinterpreted the letter and the accompanying comment in the newsletter, “Yes, it’s official – our marriages are kosher and we really are Jewish!”’²⁹

Following this ‘clarification,’ and affirming their ‘commitment to traditional Jewish practice and an open approach to the study of Jewish sources,’ Masorti’s rabbinate countered with a statement of their own:

We are not part of the United Synagogue, and our synagogues are not affiliated with the Office of the Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue. We do not accept the authority of the Chief Rabbi, we do not receive guidance from him, nor do we seek it. Marriages conducted under our auspices are in accordance with Jewish Law. It is our understanding that the Office of the Chief Rabbi does not recognise our marriages, as it does not recognise any marriage that has not taken place under Orthodox auspices.

There is no ‘secret deal’ between the Chief Rabbi and Masorti regarding recognition of our marriages. There has never been such a deal, nor has it ever been our intention to imply that there was. The Chief Rabbi has made clear on several occasions that a marriage under Masorti auspices does not disadvantage the status of children of that marriage, if the parents could have married in an Orthodox synagogue. Any future children are regarded as Jewish by the Office of the Chief

²⁸ ‘Rabbis strip mask from Masorti group,’ *Jewish Tribune*, 22 December 1994, p.1.

²⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 January 1995, p.9.

Rabbi. These children may attend schools under the authority of the Chief Rabbi and may marry in an Orthodox synagogue if they so wish.³⁰

The statement concluded with a prayer that ‘the time will come when co-operation and understanding will replace the current atmosphere of distrust, and together we will work to guarantee our Jewish future.’ The plea fell, however, not on deaf ears but on hearts and minds determined to expunge the Masorti ‘danger.’ Writing in the strictly Orthodox *Jewish Tribune* – and circulating his article in advance to members of his own rabbinate – Sacks denounced the movement’s campaigns as ‘dishonest, disreputable and unforgiveable,’ and its adherents as ‘intellectual thieves’:

An individual who does not believe in *Torah min haShomayim* has cut himself off from living connection with *Shomayim*. He has severed his links with the faith of his ancestors. He has cut himself off from what Rav Saadia Gaon declared made us a nation – our Torah, which alone unites the Jewish people across centuries and continents ...

Undeniably, Anglo-Jewry faces a danger. The Masorti movement is currently engaged in a country-wide campaign to start new branches, particularly in the provinces. The specific danger is that it is being conducted with what seems to be a genuine attempt to mislead. Unlike its American counterpart, the Masorti movement in Britain has claimed to be ‘orthodox,’ ‘traditional,’ ‘halachic,’ and the true heir to *minhag Anglia* [‘the English tradition’]. It has even claimed that the late Chief Rabbi J. H. Hertz, *ztl* [of blessed memory], one of the most forthright defenders of Orthodoxy Anglo-Jewry has known, was a Conservative Jew.

Chazal [the sages] said that there are seven kinds of *ganovim* [thieves], but the worst of all is *gonev daas habriyos*: the worst kind of dishonesty is intellectual dishonesty. None of these Masorti claims is true, and over the past ten years I have devoted, through my writings and speeches, more effort than any other Orthodox writer known to me to showing in detail how and why they are untrue.

The attempt to mislead Anglo-Jewry into thinking that a movement can abandon its faith in *Torah min haShomayim*, adjust Jewish law to the secular fashion of the times, and still be counted within Orthodoxy is disreputable and unforgiveable. I have said this consistently and publicly. Masorti know this, which is why I have always been attacked by their spokesmen. Alone among Orthodox rabbis, I published a detailed refutation of the Masorti position in the Jewish press ten years ago.³¹ Since then I have continued to publish extensive critiques of the Masorti

³⁰ *Statement on Masorti Marriages*, signed by Rabbi Dr Louis Jacobs, Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg and Rabbi Chaim Weiner, London: Assembly of Masorti Synagogues (AMS), January 1995. The statement appeared in Masorti publications and as a paid advertisement in the national Jewish press. Later that year, the movement’s approach to conversions was examined by Wittenberg in ‘The Significance of Motivation in the Halachah of Conversion’ (*Judaism Today*, No. 3, winter 1995-96, London: AMS, pp.19-23) – of striking relevance to the London Beth Din’s 2008 comments quoted in note 24 above.

³¹ Reluctant to refer to the *Jewish Chronicle* by name in the anti-JC Agudah mouthpiece, Sacks was alluding to ‘The Origin of Torah,’ a feature review (commissioned by this writer) of Jacobs’ *A Tree of Life: Diversity, Flexibility, and Creativity in Jewish Law* (Oxford University Press for the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1984) in the *JC*, 2 November 1984, pp.24-25. The article was billed as ‘a rabbinical response to the non-fundamentalist views of Rabbi Louis Jacobs, for the first time in these columns since the Jacobs Affair broke twenty years ago.’ Jacobs replied to the review in *ibid*, 16

position, alongside expositions of Orthodoxy, which can be drawn on by all those who are called on to defend our faith.

Let me say explicitly that there has been no covert 'deal' between the Chief Rabbinate and Masorti: none discussed, none proposed, none formulated, none contemplated. The position of the Court of the Chief Rabbi (London Beth Din) on Masorti marriages and conversions has been a matter of public record since the early 1980s, and there has been no change, nor will there be.

Neither marriages nor conversions performed under non-Orthodox auspices are valid in Jewish law. Any suggestion to the contrary is pure fiction, put forward by Masorti spokesmen, presumably with the intention of misleading Masorti members and potential members that theirs is a credible alternative to Orthodoxy. It is not, as I have made repeatedly clear.

For those who seek clarity, let me make my position absolutely clear. My task is at all times to strengthen *emunah* [faith], to increase the fulfilment of the *mitzvos* [commandments], to articulate in all contexts and constituencies the values of Torah, to oppose those views which are in contradiction with it, and to maintain as far as lies within my power, and with *siyata diShmaya* [God's help], the position of Orthodoxy as the affiliation of the majority of the community.³²

In a digression on the theme of continuity, Sacks wrote:

Programmes of Jewish continuity based on a rejection of Torah are a contradiction in terms. They are bound to fail, and they deserve to fail. But because the vast majority of Anglo-Jewry identifies with Orthodoxy, it is still possible to launch, as I have done, a fund to resource programmes for Jewish Continuity which will be based solely on Torah and *mitzvos*, a fund administered, distributed and kept entirely separate from the independent Jewish Community Allocations Board. What will emerge in the coming years is a strengthening of Jewish communities through programmes of outreach such as those pioneered by Seed and other Torah-based groups, through a yeshivah-trained university chaplaincy, and other similar initiatives. There is no other way of securing continuity than through true Torah teaching and the power of genuine Jewish experience. Of that, I have no doubt.³³

Spokesmen from across the community sought immediately to distance themselves from Sacks' attack. Reform declared that his article 'must call into question the leadership position of the Chief Rabbi and his expressed concern for the whole of

November 1984, p.25, and the two articles led to a prolonged and scholarly correspondence spanning several weeks. In February 1995, days after Sacks' *Jewish Tribune* and *Jewish Chronicle* articles, Rabbi Yitzchok Schochet, minister of the Mill Hill (United) Synagogue, lectured to his congregation on 'Torah from Heaven,' provoking a lengthy commentary from Jacobs (based on a transcript provided by Schochet), in the introduction to which he wrote: 'I would not have thought it necessary to offer this response were it not that, so far as I can tell, Rabbi Schochet speaks for all his Orthodox colleagues, including, it would seem, the Chief Rabbi. I challenge the Chief Rabbi to state clearly and unambiguously that he believes Moses to have written every word of the Chumash at the dictation of God, and that he rejects totally all modern biblical scholarship, not only the Documentary Hypothesis' (*Masortimatters*, March 1995, pp.1-4, London: Assembly of Masorti Synagogues). Sacks' response appeared in *Le'Ela*, No. 40, September 1995 (London: Office of the Chief Rabbi and Jews' College), pp.10-15, in the form of extracts from his *Crisis and Covenant: Jewish Thought After the Holocaust* (Manchester: University Press, 1992), chapters 7 and 8.

³² *Jewish Tribune*, 12 January 1995, p.5.

³³ *Ibid.*

Anglo-Jewry.’ The Joint Israel Appeal, Continuity’s fund-raising arm, stated that it would ‘continue, as always, to work with all sections of the community, whatever their political or religious affiliations.’ The Board of Deputies likewise stressed its ‘central role as the bridge between all sections of the community.’ Even Continuity’s chairman reiterated – ‘in order to ensure that there is no misunderstanding regarding our approach’ – that ‘Jewish Continuity is a community-wide initiative and is “inclusivist.” This means that, in carrying out our mission to make Jewish life more meaningful and relevant, we are addressing, and seek to engage, all Jews, irrespective of background or belief.’³⁴ And, judging by its unprecedentedly full postbag – representing, it revealed, ‘virtually unanimous opposition’³⁵ – the *Jewish Chronicle* spoke for many in asserting that ‘this week the Chief Rabbinate of Dr Jonathan Sacks took an extraordinary, and perhaps definitive, turn:

Barely had he moved into Adler House than the rhetoric of renewal ran into the roadblocks of realpolitik. The urge to be a Chief Rabbi to all Anglo-Jews bumped against his central, institutional role as the standard-bearer of established Orthodoxy. On issue after issue – the question of letting the Jewish Gay and Lesbian Helpline participate in a ‘community-wide’ walkabout; women-only prayer groups; and Jewish Continuity – the instinct to include all Jews, and to question old communal assumptions, ran up against the need to demonstrate a primary loyalty to the concerns of his primary constituency, and to his core faith, Orthodoxy ... The substantive implications of his message are stark. Rabbi Sacks’ article is a forceful and eloquent cry for Orthodoxy. Perhaps that is all any Chief Rabbi can, or should, reasonably provide. But it also suggests a hugely different agenda from that with which Rabbi Sacks assumed office barely three years ago.³⁶

Once again, however, ‘the urge to be a Chief Rabbi to all Anglo-Jews’ got the better of Sacks. Within eight days of his arrows came his ‘olive branch,’³⁷ in the form of a *Jewish Chronicle* ‘restatement’ to his wider constituency. Declaring that ‘it is not easy to be a leader within Jewry, and it never was,’ he wrote:

The role of Chief Rabbi is peculiarly fraught with conflict, for he may be called on to do incompatible things. He is charged with being a leader of Orthodoxy. He is the head of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, the majority

³⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 January 1995, p.26. In the same issue (p.27), Masorti limited its response to a full-page feature by Wittenberg, ‘More Questions than Answers,’ setting out ‘the meaning and the message of Masorti,’ without any direct reference to the Chief Rabbi’s remarks.

³⁵ ‘After the Storm,’ leading article, *ibid*, p.22.

³⁶ ‘Politics of Contempt,’ leading article, *ibid*, 13 January 1995, p.22. The impact of Sacks’ attack on public perceptions of the Chief Rabbinate, and on the extent of its writ, is discussed by Alderman in ‘The Chief Rabbinate: An Excursion into Myth-Making’ (*Judaism Today*, No. 3, winter 1995-96, London: Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, pp.36-41). See also this paper, chapter 4, note 75.

³⁷ ‘Chief extends olive branch amid fury at Masorti attack,’ *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 January 1995, p.1.

presence in Britain, Australia and elsewhere. He also feels a sense of responsibility for the Jewish people as a whole, and must strive to speak and act in ways that will address the community as a whole, including those who reject the beliefs for which he stands ... To me, every Jew is precious, as is every development, every human gesture, that leads us to treat our identity with pride, our religious heritage with respect, and grow closer to our Father in heaven. But this means that I have accepted a role laden with potential conflict. For I must speak for the great tradition of the Jewish faith. And I must speak for Jews some of whom disavow that faith.

How has that conflict been resolved until now? For the communities under my authority, I have advocated an Orthodoxy uncompromising in its faith and practice, but uncompromising also in its tolerance, compassion, warmth, intellectual openness and challenge to spiritual growth. At the same time, I have reached out beyond the Orthodox community, through a whole range of community-wide initiatives ... My principle has been: let us act together where we can; and where we cannot, let us respect one another. The effect, I believe, has been to enhance our sense of community, and the regard in which we are held by others ...

The same principle drives Jewish Continuity. It will be inclusive. It will work for all Jews, especially marginal Jews, and for the totality of Jewish life. But because it wants us to be able to work for continuity together, it will observe standards we can all respect, even if we do not personally subscribe to them. Its programmes, where they have a religious content, will be consistent with Torah and mitzvot, for these have always formed the overarching canopy of Jewish unity and continuity ...

Anglo-Jewry stands at a critical juncture. For more than a century, it has set an example, rivalled by few others, of a Judaism that is faithful but tolerant, respected by those who do not share its views and respectful to them in turn. As a result, it has been able to put together, in a single year, a framework for its future that no Jewry in the world can rival. That is now at risk because of a few irresponsible individuals who would rather see the initiative fail than respect a system in which we can all live. I give warning to them now that I will fight them all the way.

I will fight them because I refuse to compromise my Judaism, and I refuse to compromise my commitment to every single Jew. I ask no one to share my views, but I ask them not to ask me to compromise mine. I will continue to hold fast to the twin pillars of our existence, Torah and the indivisibility of the Jewish people, even as they threaten to split apart.³⁸

* * * * *

Sacks' 'twin-pillars' approach did little to reassure a troubled community, and did much to expedite the extinction of Jewish Continuity as an independent body. Rejecting his defence, leaders of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues declared:

If he claims to be the leader of the community, he cannot allow himself to be pressured into using intemperate language or exclusivist thinking about any sectors of that community. No one who professes leadership of British Jewry has the right to declare that we, or others, 'have severed links with the faith of (our) ancestors.'

³⁸ Sacks, 'Community and Conflict,' in *ibid*, p.20.

Indeed, in a modern society, the continuity of the Jewish people is ensured by those who choose Judaism in a positive manner. In our view, no individual could reconcile this conflict of interest. So let us leave the president of the Board of Deputies to speak to the non-Jewish world on our behalf, and let the religious leaders of the various synagogue movements speak according to their consciences on matters of belief, where relevant.³⁹

Appealing for tolerance, on behalf of Anglo-Jewry's foremost lay institutions, five prominent communal leaders asserted their belief that 'the cohesion and co-operation of the community are essential to its strength and viability. Religious issues, where there are deeply held differences, should be discussed in a spirit of candour and in language which is balanced and restrained. Now is surely the time for the community to reassert its wish for mutual respect and common sense to prevail.'⁴⁰

That the cohesion of the community was at risk became immediately apparent. 'The ability of the Joint Israel Appeal, traditionally a cross-communal organisation, to raise funds for Jewish Continuity dried up almost overnight,' said one insider.⁴¹ Shortly afterwards, Marks resigned as Continuity's treasurer, after declining to ratify its budget.

Crisis talks between the organisation and the JIA resulted in plans to merge the two, with the creation of a new body the following year. The merger, said JIA chairman Brian Kerner, had been put in place 'in the realisation that Jewish Continuity by itself is not going to have a secure future.' Professor Leslie Wagner, chairman of the allocations board and of a review into Continuity's future, commented: 'The biggest challenge remains the religious one,' adding that 'it is important to guard against the religious communities setting up their own bodies outside the new single organisation.'⁴² At its launch in September 1997, Kerner remarked of the United Jewish Israel Appeal: 'Our new name reflects the balance between our ongoing rescue work, our partnership with Israel, and our new mission, which is the renewal of Jewish life in Britain. It also reflects our determination to enhance a sense of harmony and mutual respect across the community.'⁴³

³⁹ Tony Sacker, chairperson, Rosita Rosenberg, director, Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues; Rabbi Marcia Plumb, acting chairperson, ULPS Rabbinic Conference, *ibid*, 27 January 1995, p.22.

⁴⁰ Eldred Tabachnik, president, Board of Deputies; Sir Trevor Chinn, president, Joint Israel Appeal; Michael Levy, chairman, Jewish Care; Dr Michael Sinclair, chairman, Jewish Continuity; Lord Young, chairman, Central Council for Jewish Community Service, *ibid*.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 21 June 1996, p.8.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.1.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 26 September 1997, p.27.

Earlier, telling a Board of Deputies meeting that the moment was approaching for him to step down from active involvement in Continuity, the Chief Rabbi welcomed the publication of Wagner's report,⁴⁴ which described as 'the best way forward' the establishment of a 'cross-community' planning and development agency. 'It should,' said Sacks, 'begin to lower the by-now unacceptable levels of tension within Anglo-Jewry. It is time to fight apathy and indifference and not waste energy fighting one another. We need to include the uninvolved and the unaffiliated and to extend the boundaries of belonging.' Likening himself to 'a parent for whom the time has come to let go,' he added: 'I took the greatest risk of my Chief Rabbinate when I created Jewish Continuity. It was an undertaking fraught with controversy. Sometimes I have been forced to take difficult positions on complex religious or communal questions. Those who criticise, injure only themselves. A rabbi whom they don't want to get rid of is not a rabbi, and a rabbi they succeed in getting rid of is not a real man.'⁴⁵

* * * * *

On Monday, 10 February 1997, at 9.59 a.m., a four-page document – typed exclusively in Hebrew, on the letterhead of the Office of the Chief Rabbi – was faxed to the *Jewish Chronicle*, for the attention of this writer. Dated 12 Shevat 5757 [20 January 1997], the letter was marked by its author 'Not for Publication,' was addressed to 'His Honour the Rabbi and Gaon, Dayan Chench Dov Padwa, Av Beth Din of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations,' and was signed (in Hebrew) by 'Yaacov Zvi Sacks, Chief Rabbi.'⁴⁶ A month later, following the lifting of a High Court injunction obtained against the *JC* by lawyers for the Chief Rabbinate, the letter was published, with brief omissions, unleashing the fiercest and most far-reaching controversy in the institution's history – ironically, despite (or, rather, because of) its incumbent's trumpeted wish, during the same episode, to follow the 'paths of peace.'⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Change in Continuity: Report of the Review into Jewish Continuity*, Leslie Wagner, chairman (London: Jewish Continuity, 1996). The report recommended that 'the Chief Rabbi should have a less active role because his present position creates significant difficulties for him and the organisation. Orthodox leaders hold him responsible for grants, via the Allocations Board, to non-Orthodox organisations. In turn, Masorti and Progressive groups feel that, by accepting grants, they are being forced into *de facto* recognition of his office' (*Jewish Chronicle*, 8 March 1996, p.25).

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 22 March, 1996, p.17.

⁴⁶ Copy of the document in this writer's possession.

⁴⁷ See notes 61 and 65 below.

Six months before these seismic events, Hugo Gryn, senior minister of the West London Synagogue, died after a brief illness, aged 66. Born in Berehova, Czechoslovakia, the young Gryn was in 1944 deported to Auschwitz with his family, of whom he and his mother were the only survivors. Reaching Britain through the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, he was sent to a boys' hostel in rural Scotland, won a science scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, and later read Semitics at University College, London, under Leo Baeck, himself a survivor of Theresienstadt. Although from Orthodox stock, Gryn was persuaded by Baeck, and by Lily Montagu, to study for the Reform rabbinate at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, where he was ordained in 1957. Seven years later, he was appointed assistant to Werner van der Zyl at Upper Berkeley Street, succeeding him as senior minister in 1968.

From Gryn's funeral Sacks chose to be absent, or at least was reported to have been 'out of town' and to have been 'represented by his honorary consultant,' Alan Greenbat.⁴⁸ The United Synagogue was not formally represented, though Sacks' wife, Elaine, was at the Hoop Lane (Reform) cemetery, as was the spiritual head of the Sephardi community, Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy.

Commenting on the omissions in a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, Sir Peter Millett, a former president of the West London, wrote: 'Rabbi Hugo Gryn would have been saddened, though not surprised, by the absence of Orthodox rabbis from his funeral service. Many of your readers appear to believe that, by deliberately absenting themselves, these rabbis both demeaned themselves and desecrated their office.'⁴⁹ The paper reported, however, that the Chief Rabbi and his wife, as well as Lord and Lady Jakobovits, had 'visited Rabbi Gryn's widow, Jackie, at her home.'⁵⁰

Jakobovits had earlier written of Gryn: 'We were personally very good friends. I had a very high regard for him. He never put a foot wrong or said anything in public that could have contributed to widening the gap between Orthodoxy and the Progressives.'⁵¹

The following week, having failed to appear at a West London memorial service, Sacks came under pressure to associate himself with other planned tributes to the departed minister, while United Synagogue president Elkan Levy – also under attack

⁴⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 August 1996, p.1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 6 September 1996, p.36.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 30 August 1996, p.1.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 23 August 1996, p.14.

– confirmed that there would be ‘a US presence at a future memorial meeting for Rabbi Gryn.’⁵²

Announcing in early January 1997 that he would be addressing a Board of Deputies-sponsored gathering, Sacks provoked immediate calls to pull out of the engagement. The Federation of Synagogues’ Dayan Yisroel Yaacov Lichtenstein spoke of ‘widespread dismay’ at the decision and warned of ‘a split with the Orthodox right’ if the Chief Rabbi took part and, in so doing, ‘gave a certain amount of respect to Hugo Gryn’s position as a rabbi. This is a major theological issue, and there could be severe consequences. Rabbis all over the country are viewing the situation with alarm. There cannot be any credence of Reform or any sign of legitimacy for them.’⁵³

Early signs of support for Sacks came from sections of the United Synagogue ministry, with Mill Hill’s Rabbi Yitzchok Schochet⁵⁴ declaring that, while Reform and Orthodox rabbis ‘cannot share a religious platform, the Board of Deputies meeting is not religiously focused. There is no compromise, and I stand behind the Chief Rabbi 100 per cent. This is more a matter of bullying tactics by some Orthodox rabbis.’⁵⁵

Days later, however, the US rabbinical council declined to offer unqualified backing, limiting itself to the view that ‘although the council reflects a broad range of opinions on the issue, it nevertheless understands the Chief Rabbi’s position in attending the Hugo Gryn memorial.’⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the presiding rabbis of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, headed by Padwa, entered the fray. In a private letter to Sacks – and ‘in the hope that there will be no need to bring this matter to public protest’ – they wrote of his ‘plan to participate in a meeting in honour of a Reform rabbi who died recently’:

We understand that there is great pressure upon the esteemed Rabbi [Sacks] to fulfil this suggestion, and it is clear to us that his good heart has a conscience on this matter, that it is not really his desire, and that he has agreed to it simply due to ‘ways of peace.’ However, there is a duty incumbent upon us to tell him that the matter of *Chillul Hashem* [desecration of God’s name] – Heaven forbid – overrides the concerns of ‘ways of peace’; and there is no greater *Chillul Hashem* than for people to say that *perushim*, the rabbis, are esteeming the honour of a man whose main task was, Heaven forbid, the uprooting of fundamental principles and

⁵² Ibid, 30 August 1996, p.1.

⁵³ Ibid, 17 January 1997, p.1.

⁵⁴ On Schochet, see note 31 above.

⁵⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 January 1997, p.13.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 31 January 1997, p.1.

substance of the Torah, and matters concerning the sanctity of Israel, God preserve us. Therefore, the Rabbinat of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations requests, with all expressions of entreaty, that the esteemed Rabbi cancel this plan and not participate in any form of gathering whose aim is to honour those who uproot the religion.⁵⁷

The rabbinat urged Sacks ‘to reply to us with his decision at the earliest possible opportunity, and by the very latest within two weeks.’ Having received from him ‘a four-page confidential letter’ within that period, they went public with a statement that they had ‘pleaded with Rabbi Sacks to refrain from attending the meeting, as Hugo Gryn had undermined the very fabric of Torah Judaism, and this was tantamount to a *Chillul Hashem*.’ While understanding his ‘predicament’ and acknowledging ‘his commitment to authentic Judaism,’ they added: ‘We are bound to condemn Rabbi Sacks’ decision to grace a meeting in memory of a person who publicly flouted, and caused others to flout, commandments of our holy Torah, and who was responsible for the performance of many mixed marriages as well as invalid conversions.’⁵⁸

Praising Gryn’s ‘honesty and courage,’ a month later, at the Deputies gathering – without once referring to him as ‘Rabbi’ – Sacks drew loud applause from the 400-strong audience, focusing his remarks on the deceased’s experience as a Holocaust survivor. He had ‘never doubted,’ he said, that he would be present at the meeting, though he had not wanted his presence to aggravate rifts within the community. He had tried, through ‘private conversations and letters,’ to carry the various groups with him, but ‘with hindsight I now know that I tried too hard. I made regrettable mistakes, and my attempts to bring peace failed.’

The *Jewish Chronicle* report added: ‘He did not go into detail about his “private conversations and letters,” nor about the mistakes he said he had made.’⁵⁹

* * * * *

Behind the scenes, an altogether more quixotic drama was being enacted. Following receipt of his letter, the *Jewish Chronicle*’s editors informed Sacks of their intention to publish it, and invited him to comment. The Chief Rabbinat’s response was to

⁵⁷ Padwa to Sacks, erev Rosh Chodesh Shevat 5757 [8 January 1977], copy of translation in this writer’s possession. The original letter, addressed to ‘His Honour, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *shlita* [may he live long and happily, amen!], Chief Rabbi,’ was in Hebrew.

⁵⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 31 January 1997, p.1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 28 February 1997, p.13. For further details of Sacks’ address, see note 65.

seek an injunction, duly granted, and to press for a permanent ban. As legal wrangling continued in and outside the High Court, discussions were initiated between the parties, burning the midnight oil across the inns,⁶⁰ in an effort to reach a settlement ‘in the public interest.’

Four weeks later, a compromise agreement allowed for the omission of ‘three brief passages of a personal nature which were not central to the letter’s contents’;⁶¹ for an introductory paragraph by Sacks explaining its ‘rabbinic Hebrew’ and phraseology which ‘should be borne in mind when reading what follows’; and for a separate but contemporaneous article by him on ‘the context in which it was written.’⁶² The letter itself, declared the *Jewish Chronicle* in a front-page leader, had engulfed the paper, Anglo-Jewry and the Chief Rabbinate – ‘among the most venerable of its institutions

– by a conflict unprecedented in their history and which none, surely, would have wished ... The letter dealt exclusively with an issue which was already a matter of communal knowledge and debate: the Chief Rabbi’s response to the death of Rabbi Gryn. It was also, in both tone and content, at odds with statements which the Chief Rabbi had made, and was making, publicly. The *JC* felt that it had a duty to place the letter in the communal domain – a position which we pressed in what diplomats might call a ‘full and frank exchange of views’ with the Chief Rabbi and those close to him, who argued with equal passion that for the *JC* to publish would be both irresponsible and wrong.

Our belief that *not* to publish would be irresponsible has only been strengthened by further leaks over the past few weeks, creating a situation in which rabbinical and lay leaders from all sections of the community were aware of the letter’s contents, while ordinary Jews – their constituents – were left in the dark ... Rabbi Sacks has written to the *JC* [on occasion] of the difficulties inherent in being a Chief Rabbi. Sometimes, he has said, one may be called upon to ‘do incompatible things.’ The problem is that the present Chief Rabbi seems to have resolved that

⁶⁰ This writer participated in the all-night meeting of *JC* staff and lawyers on 10-11 February 1997.

⁶¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 March 1997, p.6. A source then close to the Chief Rabbinate has confirmed to this writer (19 August 2008) that the cuts, sought by lawyers for Sacks, formed part of the terms by which the injunction was lifted. The ‘three brief passages of a personal nature’ – in fact there were more – explained the Chief Rabbi’s absence from the funeral and the memorial service and related to his opposition to affording any form of recognition to the Reform movement (‘that fraudulent sect’), or to ‘Mr’ Hugo Gryn’s role in it (describing him as *oso ho’ish*, ‘that man’) – passages that were clearly ‘central to the letter’s contents.’

⁶² *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 March 1997, pp.2, 3.

undeniable challenge by saying irreconcilable things to different audiences – which is why the *JC* felt a public-interest duty to publish his letter.⁶³

Referring to Padwa's 'invaluable letter' – for which, he declared, he was 'deeply indebted' – and asserting that 'better is an open rebuke than pretended love, more sincere are wounds from a friend than an embrace from an enemy,'⁶⁴ Sacks replied to it, *inter alia*:

The leaders of the Reform, Liberal and Masorti movements know that they have no enemy and opponent equal to the Chief Rabbi, who fights against them intelligently and defends the faith in our holy Torah in his writings, articles and broadcasts, that he has in this respect achieved considerable standing in non-Jewish eyes, and that he does not accord them any gesture of recognition. Because of this they oppose me vehemently and write critical letters to the newspapers, etc., and exercise all kinds of pressure. But this does not help them at all because we may not submit to intimidation, and I know from the depths of my heart that a Jewish sage who does not show strength in standing up to pressure is not worthy of the mantle of leadership ...

[E]veryone knows, Jew and non-Jew, religious and non-religious, that our community is indeed a community of faith in which the voice that is heard is the voice of Jacob, and that the Reform and Liberal movements do not have a significant standing amongst us. The Reform movement knows this clearly and well and has already for a number of years quietly and cunningly tried to change the situation and to persuade lay leaders of communal organisations and inter-faith organisations, and also non-Jews in these organisations, to appoint a second representative to represent non-Orthodox Jews. Our office has fought against this tactic with determination, a battle which is genuinely daily, because in my opinion it is the principal battlefield on which to fight against the false philosophy of pluralism in our community.

There would be no greater victory for Reform and pluralism than that there should be two chief rabbis, one Orthodox and one Reform, at every ceremony and national or communal gathering. If such were to be the situation, then in the eyes of the whole community time after time the impression would emerge that there are two kinds of Torah, two kinds of faith, two kinds of rabbi, that they are equal in their standing in the eyes of non-Jews and the community, and there is no greater shame and falsehood than that. My sacred task is to prevent this absolutely, and thankfully we have succeeded thus far ...

Justifying his attendance at the memorial meeting, Sacks implored:

The principal point is this, that if it were impossible for a Chief Rabbi to pay due recognition to the good deeds that he [Gryn] did, not as a 'Reform rabbi' or indeed even as a Jew, but simply as a human being, to improve relations between faiths and to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust – efforts in which we engage in

⁶³ 'A need to lead,' *ibid*, pp.1, 32.

⁶⁴ Proverbs 27:5-6.

partnership with all human beings, Jews or non-Jews alike – then I would have given to the Reform movement the victory that they seek. They could then say to all organisations that engage in wider relationships, and to the government itself, that this would constitute clear proof that the Chief Rabbi does not represent them, since he refuses to recognise even the activities that they engage in together with the Orthodox, in which case we, the non-Orthodox, require a representative and president and Chief Rabbi of our own, together with full recognition from the government and other faiths. Such, indeed, would be the case, because this is what they have aspired to for a number of years and have merely sought the opportunity to do so. If this would indeed transpire, there could be no greater disgrace done to Jewish values than this, and the result would be lasting damage to the religious nature of the community ...

Sacks wrote that his presence at the meeting was conditional on its ‘being clear to all’ that he was there as president of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ); that the gathering was ‘dedicated to inter-faith relations,’ emphasised by the participation ‘of the bishop who is chairman of the CCJ’; that it was not a religious ceremony, nor held in a synagogue – ‘neither one of ours or theirs’; and that the organisers ‘would understand from the outset that I would speak only on his [Gryn’s] work in inter-faith relations, and that I would have to explicitly signal that my words did not constitute a recognition of Reform or his role in it.’⁶⁵ All these conditions, the Chief Rabbi told Padwa, ‘were agreed.’

I write these lines with great sorrow [Sacks concluded], and only your Honour can know what conflict I experience in praising a person who was amongst those who destroy the faith, even for the good human deeds which he did. Your Honour knows that there are difficult circumstances in which it is impossible to do the completely right thing, and one has to choose the way which is least harmful, and so it is in our present situation. And it is clear that I have done this in order to enhance the honour of God and that of our Torah ... I do not expect the blessing of your Honour, but merely your understanding, because there are great dangers to the situation of Torah amongst the wider community if I do not go, and every day I pray that I should not

⁶⁵ Sacks adds, in his unexpurgated letter, ‘but rather – on the contrary – opposition to it.’ In the event, as a later account of his memorial address made clear, the Chief Rabbi expressed no opposition to the Reform movement, explicit or otherwise. The closest he went to mentioning it was in these passages: ‘Hugo and I worked together regardless of our religious differences, for the sake of our common humanity which precedes our religious differences. Those differences between us were painful and intense. He knew it. I knew it ... What brought us together was something even deeper than our religious differences: it was humanity itself and our role, as Jews, as witnesses to the sacred flame of life and against those in every generation who seek to extinguish it in the name of hatred ... The reason I all along knew that I had to be here is that *Yiddishkeit* demands *menshlichkeit*. There is a principle in Judaism that “the Almighty does not withhold the reward of any creature.” The good we do is worthy of honour, whatever else we do, whatever else we are, whatever the differences that exist between us. I do not minimise the tragedy of religious conflict within our community. It breaks my heart as a Jew; and it threatens our very coherence as a people. But one thing I will not do. Even amidst sharp discord and the most bitter criticism, I cannot forsake the principle that the Torah’s ways are ways of pleasantness and its paths are paths of peace’ (*Jewish Chronicle*, 14 March 1997, p.6).

have to endure such trials and that I should not give misleading rulings on matters of Jewish law or faith.⁶⁶

* * * * *

Days after Sacks' letter appeared, the actress Maureen Lipman – a congregant of Gryn's at the West London Synagogue – penned one of her own:

It has never occurred to me to be anything other than proud that I am a Jew. My heritage has fuelled and defined my work and my life. Last week, reading the *Jewish Chronicle*, for the first time I felt thoroughly ashamed for all 300,000 of us.

Hugo was my rabbi, my teacher, my friend ... [He] brought me back to Judaism as a worshipper and a practitioner after years of lip-service brought about by the demagogic and distant rabbis of my childhood and the hypocrisy of small-time shul rivalries and meaningless services where men ranted and women talked through the services about the cost of their hats ...

'Let us practise tolerance, cherish humanity, and celebrate our differences,' said Hugo – and what he preached, he practised. Now I read that, because of him, I'm not really a Jew; that my son is not barmitzvah; that the holy place at which I worship is not recognised as a House of God. '*Hamakom*,' says the prayer-book; 'God is everywhere.' But not in Upper Berkeley Street, say the Orthodox.

My husband [the playwright Jack Rosenthal] and I have sat at the present Chief Rabbi's table in his home. I'm anxious to know now exactly what I was there *as*. Not as a Jew, it would seem, but like the bishop who was also attending – as a prominent citizen and a human being. A lost soul? Well, I say 'humbug' to these fundamentalists who will tell me that we are destroyers of the faith. I say I am what I am, and it is for me and my God to decide what that is ...

Call me naïve, but I always thought of the Chief Rabbi as my representative. It is because we are *thinking* people that Reform Judaism satisfies our intellectual curiosity and our dislike of hypocrisy. Non-Orthodox Jews do not wish to change anything which their Orthodox counterparts do, nor do they wish to proselytise. Why are these people so frightened of us? ...

Everything Hugo stood for in his life is being put on trial by his death. A great chance of love and respect and reconciliation was lost at Hugo's funeral. In place of courage and honour came hypocrisy, fear and bigotry. It is truly, truly shameful. And it must stop now.⁶⁷

Former *Jewish Chronicle* editor Geoffrey Paul viewed the controversy in its wider perspective:

The question now confronting the Chief Rabbi [he wrote] is not really whether he is sorry, but whether he can, with hand on heart, face the philosophical U-turn needed for him to represent the entire community of Anglo-Jewish believers. Can he now accept the fact that their ways of faith are not his ways, but that he should make a place under his umbrella for any Jew trying to reach for a deeper religious

⁶⁶ Translation as agreed between the parties and as published in the *JC*, 14 March 1997, pp.2, 6.

⁶⁷ Maureen Lipman Rosenthal, 'The posthumous trial of Hugo Gryn,' letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 March 1997, p.31; copy of original in this writer's possession.

commitment, whatever his or her starting-point? If he cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, then there really is no cross-communal role for the Chief Rabbi, and we will have reached a major turning-point in the history of an institution which, on the whole, has served the community well.⁶⁸

* * * * *

Reform's initial 'shock' and 'anger'⁶⁹ at the Chief Rabbi's letter, vented immediately it was published, soon gave way to a more measured approach. 'We don't want to act in the heat of the moment,' said the movement's chief executive, Tony Bayfield. Dismissing Sacks' suggestion that his attendance at the memorial meeting had been needed 'to stop Reform plans to set up its own Chief Rabbinate,' Bayfield added:

The Chief Rabbinate might be able to continue its representative function for the whole community if it accepts changes. It would have to disavow that it is at war with us, cease to be sectarian and, for example, use the title 'Rabbi' in referring to our rabbis. Otherwise the office will have to be seen as only for the Orthodox, while Reform, Liberals and Masorti will have to find their own methods of representation to wider society. How can you expect anybody to be represented by an institution which describes a major section of the community as 'destroyers of the faith' and which says it is your greatest enemy? It would appear that the Chief Rabbinate is at war with us.⁷⁰

Alongside the transcript of the leaked letter, the *Jewish Chronicle* had published Sacks' article explaining its context and calling for 'an end to public bickering. As of today,' he had written, 'I am issuing a call to Anglo-Jewish leaders and organisations to join a Coalition for Peace in the Community. I will be asking them to subscribe to the following principles:

- 1. We recognise a duty to the Jewish people as a whole, and we will act responsibly in the light of that duty.
- 2. We will seek to promote peaceful relations throughout the community, exercising restraint to avoid confrontation.
- 3. We will emphasise what unites us as a people – our common past, our shared fate, our mutual responsibility.
- 4. We will work together, despite religious differences, on matters which affect us all regardless of religious differences.
- 5. We owe one another a duty of mutual respect, and we will not attack other Jews in public.
- 6. We will defend our beliefs without publicly denigrating others.
- 7. We will state clearly that those who sow dissension and dishonour Jewish values do not represent the community.

⁶⁸ Paul, 'How the Chief can patch up his umbrella,' in *ibid*, p.29.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 21 March 1997, p.1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

If we can implement these principles, good may yet come out of months of unnecessary conflict and pain. We must now call a halt to the debate over Hugo Gryn. A brave man has died, a man of courage and deep humanity. May he be allowed to rest in peace – and may we, at last, learn to live in peace.⁷¹

Referring to this plea, Bayfield asserted: ‘We desperately want peace and co-operation, and will work for it. But it has to be based on a real understanding of *Klal Yisrael* [the entire Jewish people], and there needs to be consonance between private and public attitudes and language.’ Board of Deputies’ president Eldred Tabachnik thought the Chief Rabbi’s proposal ‘may afford a basis for discussion. The point is to find a formula that will hold all sides.’

Sacks’ office announced that it had begun a ‘consultation process with various groups on ways of bringing greater harmony within our community,’⁷² while Levy declared that his officers were ‘looking forward to implementing the plan.’ Masorti’s Harry Freedman warned, however, that his movement ‘won’t support anything unless it has the full backing of the whole community and is brokered by a neutral body.’⁷³

Turning their backs on the Consultative and Liaison Committees that had operated, intermittently, between the United Synagogue and the non-Orthodox over a period of years,⁷⁴ leaders of the Reform, Liberal and Masorti movements later called on the US to join in talks ‘on co-operation and on how the community should be represented to the outside world.’ In a statement pointedly referring to ‘the United Synagogue’s Chief Rabbi,’ they urged the establishment of representative structures ‘that are fair, effective and a truthful reflection of our community.’ Freedman added that Masorti ‘would like Anglo-Jewry’s figurehead to be the president of the Board of Deputies or some other figure, agreed by the denominations, who can represent the whole community.’⁷⁵

Eighteen months were to pass before the ‘Coalition for Peace in the Community’ was shakily in place.

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⁷¹ Ibid, 14 March 1997, p.3.

⁷² The *Jewish Chronicle* later reported (16 May 1997, p.1): ‘A member of an Orthodox-Progressive liaison group, Lionel Swift, is understood to have made approaches to the Reform on behalf of the Chief Rabbi. Reform personalities such as Sir Sigmund Sternberg and Sir Trevor Chinn have also made bridge-building efforts.’

⁷³ Ibid, 21 March 1997, p.1.

⁷⁴ See *Faith Against Reason*, chapter 19, and chapter 4 of this paper.

⁷⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 May 1997, p.1.

In his letter to Padwa, Sacks had noted that his writings, articles and broadcasts had gained for him 'considerable standing in non-Jewish eyes.' Others, too, had lauded the Chief Rabbi's achievements, though not always in totally uncritical terms.

'Dr Sacks,' wrote Bermant after the Masorti imbroglio, 'brings many qualities to his office, including wide curiosity and an amazing breadth of knowledge. There is hardly a major philosopher whom he has not studied, or a major writer – to say nothing of any number of minor ones – he has not read. He is, in that respect certainly, by far the most catholic Chief Rabbi we have had. Why, then, this attempt to ingratiate himself with people who define themselves by their narrowness, who regard his very qualities as a handicap, and who have never recognised, and will never recognise, his office?'

⁷⁶

'Almost from the moment of his elevation to the most prestigious religious post in Anglo-Jewry,' declared the *Jewish Chronicle* during the same period,

Rabbi Sacks has seemed a leader of both immense promise and profound paradox. A Cambridge philosophy scholar, he has demonstrated in his speeches and, above all, his writings a rare combination of intellectual agility, academic rigour, and almost poetic eloquence. He has read widely – from Maimonides and Montesquieu to Pirkei Avot and Plato. Having solidified his own faith through a personal odyssey from Cambridge to Crown Heights, he has a keen sense of the interplay between committed, Orthodox Judaism and those many Jews on the margins of religious and communal life, or indeed outside them.

Through his 'Traditional Alternatives' initiative, he set out to relate the age-old beauties of the Torah to the closing years of the twentieth century. His aim – in the spirit of openness, and inclusivism – was to reinvigorate and enrich Anglo-Jewish life. In his induction address as Chief Rabbi, he lamented inter-communal divisions, reached out to the disaffected, and trumpeted 'renewal' ... Yet the paradoxes also emerged. In part, no doubt, they were due to the expectations raised by his Kennedyesque inaugural flourishes. Equally, they may have stemmed from a sense of vulnerability: having been schooled at Cambridge rather than yeshivah, his Judaic credentials on the right were clearly suspect ...

⁷⁷

Seeking the following week to resolve the 'paradoxes,' the leader-writer concluded: 'Chief Rabbi Sacks is absolutely correct in asserting that a strong and growing Orthodox Judaism will crucially help to guarantee the Jewish continuity which he so passionately seeks. But a strong Orthodoxy should also imply a self-confidence in its own beliefs and practice – a self-confidence that need not feel threatened by a far

⁷⁶ Bermant, 'Wrong time, place, words and audience,' in *ibid*, 20 January 1995, p.23.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 13 January 1995, p.22.

more open dialogue, and partnership, with other movements in pursuit of Anglo-Jewry's future.'⁷⁸

Five years on from the Gryn affair came another manifestation of Sacks' propensity 'to ingratiate himself with people who define themselves by their narrowness.' In *The Dignity of Difference*,⁷⁹ written after the 9/11 atrocity to coincide with the United Nations Year of Dialogue between Civilisations, he addressed the question 'Can religion overcome its conflict-ridden past and become a force for peace?' with 'a radical proposal for reframing the terms of this important debate ... We must do more than search for common human values. We must also learn to make space for difference, even and especially at the heart of the monotheistic imagination.'⁸⁰

Following the publication of extracts from the final chapter,⁸¹ Sacks found himself once again embroiled in conflict with the Orthodox right. In a Rosh Hashanah sermon at Manchester's Holy Law South Broughton synagogue, Rabbi Yossi Chazan suggested that the book had 'gone too far' in its plea for inter-faith understanding and questioned whether its views on other religions might amount to 'heresy.'

Chazan had secured 'private support' for his opinions on the book from 'a number of rabbis in Britain and abroad' and, as a result, the Chief Rabbi and his Av Beth Din, Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu, flew to Manchester for a 'closed-door meeting' with some of the critics. In a subsequent statement, Sacks' office announced: 'The Chief Rabbi has heard of the concerns of Rabbi Chazan and others at the meeting that one or two sentences might be misunderstood and will make appropriate amendments in the next possible edition of the book.'⁸²

Elaborating on the rabbis' concerns, Whitefield's Jonathan Guttentag – a vocal opponent of Masorti some eight years earlier, and another of the participants in the meeting with Sacks and Ehrentreu – declared from his pulpit:

The Chief Rabbi argues that only in Heaven is there 'absolute truth.' On earth there is only 'partial truth.' Faiths should understand that they do not possess the 'absolute truth.' Each faith only has a 'partial truth.' This appears to be the basis of the solution Chief Rabbi Professor Sacks would like to suggest to prevent the clash of civilisations ... There is, however, in my opinion, a major problem with the

⁷⁸ Ibid, 20 January 1995, p.22.

⁷⁹ Sub-titled *How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London and New York: Continuum, first edition, 2002).

⁸⁰ Publisher's jacket description of the book's theme.

⁸¹ 'Enlarged by diversity,' in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 September 2002, New Year Section, pp.vi, viii, ix, x.

⁸² 'Sacks to amend "heretical book,"' ibid, 27 September 2002, p.1.

central thesis of the book. Is Chief Rabbi Sacks suggesting that Judaism also does not contain absolute truth? That is certainly one interpretation of what is being said.

In the noble aim of preventing a clash of civilisations, our Chief Rabbi seems – in conversations with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the imam from Iran – to be prepared to contemplate negotiating away the unique status of Judaism. When we make a *berachah* [blessing] over the Sefer Torah, we say: *asher natan lanu Torat emet* – that God gave us a ‘Torah of truth.’ How am I now supposed to understand these words, *Torat emet*. Torah of truth? According to the new view being propounded, while Judaism has its ‘truth,’ other religions, too, have their ‘truths.’ Well, that indeed is something very radical and very new. But it does not sound like Judaism.⁸³

In a paid and prominent advertisement the following month, Sacks’ own dayanim put him squarely in his place. The Chief Rabbi, they announced,

has recently published a new book entitled *The Dignity of Difference*, in which he articulates Judaism’s response to challenges generated by globalisation and the current turmoil in world affairs. The broad message of tolerance constitutes a valuable and insightful response to contemporary world issues. We have had concerns, however, that certain passages in the book lend themselves to an interpretation that is inconsistent with basic Jewish beliefs. We therefore welcome both our Chief Rabbi’s clarification of his position and his statement that in future editions of the book he will use different phraseology to restate the ambiguous points in order to avoid misunderstanding.

– Dayan Ch. Ehrentreu, Dayan M. Gelley, Dayan I. Binstock, Dayan Y. Abraham.⁸⁴

The Chief Rabbi’s ‘clarification’ took the form of a second, and widely circulated, statement dismissing the interpretations and inferences which, he said,

are quite foreign to my intentions and beliefs. The problem lies in the use I make of words – such as ‘truth,’ ‘faith,’ ‘language,’ ‘voice,’ and ‘speaks’ – that can be ambiguous, especially when, as here, one is trying to communicate across boundaries between different cultures and languages. I believed I had guarded against this possibility by making it clear in the Prologue (page 18) that I was writing as an Orthodox Jew.⁸⁵ That means one who believes in the absolute truth and divine authorship of the Torah and its completeness as the totality of revelation at Sinai – God’s covenant with humanity (the ‘covenant of Noah’) and with the Jewish people (the ‘covenant of Sinai’) ... Nothing I have written should be taken

⁸³ Edited transcript of sermon delivered at the Whitefield Hebrew Congregation, Shemini Atseret 5763 (28 September 2002).

⁸⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 October 2002, p.4.

⁸⁵ ‘Here I must make an autobiographical admission. I am not a liberal Jew. My faith is orthodox. I am used to being called, by my liberal colleagues, a fundamentalist, and it is precisely here that contemporary challenge is most acute. The revivals in most of the world’s faiths in recent decades have been at the conservative rather than liberal end of the spectrum. The power of conservative religious movements has been precisely the fact that they represent protests against, rather than accommodations to, late modernity ... It is religion not so much in its modern but in its counter-modern guise that has won adherents in today’s world, and it is here that the struggle for tolerance, co-existence and non-violence must be fought’ (*The Dignity of Difference*, p.18).

as implying that religious differences are inconsequential or unsubstantive, that all religions are equally true, or conversely that each is incomplete; or that it does not matter if one abandons or changes one's faith. I hold none of these views.⁸⁶

No sooner did he issue this statement than Sacks was compelled to ask his publisher to stop promoting the book, following a pronouncement from one of the Orthodox world's most revered sages. Parts of the book, ruled Rabbi Yosef Sholom Elyashiv of Jerusalem, 'contain views contrary to our faith in the Holy Torah and it is therefore forbidden to have it in the home.' His comment came in a letter to Rabbi Bezalel Rakow, leader of the Gateshead community, who said that he had sought Elyashiv's intervention after his own public plea for the book's withdrawal had been 'ignored.'⁸⁷

Just four months later, the revised edition hit the bookstands, with the publisher announcing: '*The Dignity of Difference* is now available as a paperback with a new preface. If you've only heard what other people have said about it, perhaps it's time you read it for yourself.'⁸⁸ Writing, in the preface, that his caveat [as contained in the prologue] had 'proved insufficient,' and that certain passages '*were* misunderstood,' Sacks added:⁸⁹ 'I therefore decided to restate them in less problematic terms. Since the core argument of the book is simple and, in Jewish terms, uncontroversial, I have redrafted it in such a way as to circumnavigate all debated issues unrelated to its main thesis.'⁹⁰

Such 'circumnavigation,' however, left at least one of his critics more mystified than ever. Reviewing the revised edition in the week of its release, London University philosophy professor David-Hillel Rubin was forced to declare:

In the second edition, the idea of truth in spiritual matters has become even less clear than it was in the first. The Chief Rabbi's tinkering with the passages that raised so much controversy has not been buttressed by what it needed: a clear restatement of exactly what truth means in spiritual and religious matters, and how, if at all, it differs from scientific truth, on the one hand, and from other areas of human endeavour, like music and art, where it seems to have no obvious applicability. The Chief Rabbi has made a convincing case for respecting people of different faiths and creeds, but no case at all, as far as I can see, for necessarily respecting what they believe. The nicest people can believe the most preposterous things.⁹¹

⁸⁶ London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, October 2002; quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 October 2002, p.35.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 8 November 2002, p.1.

⁸⁸ Continuum advertisement, *Jewish Chronicle Literary Supplement*, 21 February 2003, p.vii.

⁸⁹ Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (London and New York: Continuum, revised edition, 2003), p.vii.

⁹⁰ Original and revised passages appear below as Appendix II.

⁹¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 February 2003, p.31.

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‘The result of the row, and the nature of its resolution,’ wrote the *Jewish Chronicle* in the closing stages of the controversy,

has been further to weaken the office of the Chief Rabbinate. Sadly, it is also likely further to limit the likelihood of genuine, mutually respectable debate within British Orthodoxy for the foreseeable future. The hope must be, therefore, that lessons will meanwhile be learned, not least because the causes of this latest crisis are similar to those of some of the earlier disputes during Rabbi Sacks’ eleven-year tenure – above all, a tendency to try to speak in different voices to conflicting, sometimes irreconcilable, constituencies. Ultimately, it must be hoped that both Chief Rabbi Sacks and the wider community can find a way to move beyond the need for periodic damage-limitation exercises, and to focus on the undeniable intellectual and other strengths which he does bring to his office.⁹²

As if these ‘periodic damage-limitation exercises’ were not humiliation enough, within months Kalms ‘found a way’ by calling, once again, on Sacks to stand down.⁹³ Nor did his call defy precedent. Every Chief Rabbi from Hermann Adler on, as will now be demonstrated, faced opposition to his appointment, and growing demands for the abolition of his office.

⁹² Ibid, 25 October 2002, p.32.

⁹³ The Chief Rabbi, meanwhile, had closed his ‘Decade of Jewish Renewal’ with these words: ‘One of the fundamental Jewish values is *hakarat hatov*, “recognising the good.” To see the world through Jewish eyes is to search out the goodness in each person, every situation – to identify it, praise it, and thereby strengthen it. That is what I want to do here: to give thanks to the British Jewish community for all it has done these past ten years in making our ancient faith new again ... The time has come to chart the next stage of the journey, to look at where we are and where we must go from here’ (Sacks: *From Renewal to Responsibility*, London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, September 2001, pp.3, 6).

*'We are more deeply divided than at almost any time in our history. Israel is divided. We in the diaspora are divided. A few years ago, Jewish thinkers asked the question: "Will there be one Jewish people in the year 2000?" Today there are already many prepared to give the answer "No."'*¹

Much has been made, in accounts of the 1891 and 1913 Chief Rabbinical elections, of divisions within Orthodox ranks over the procedures, policies and posturing of the communal potentates and their potential candidates.² Scant attention is paid, however, to the attitudes of the non-Orthodox – and of leaders within the emergent Anglo-Zionist world – to the Chief Rabbinate as an institution, aspects of the religious divide that were to become increasingly dominant as the twentieth century assumed form and function.³

As *Faith Against Reason* has shown, while Nathan Marcus Adler evinced varying degrees of opposition to the reforms and ritual 'modifications' of the West London Synagogue, relations between the Orthodox and Progressive congregations softened considerably over the course of his Chief Rabbinate. 'The strong feelings which were evoked fifty years ago against the Reform Movement,' declared a *Jewish Chronicle* supplement in 1892, 'have long since died a natural death. For many years past, the closest domestic ties by marriage, and the growth of general enlightenment and forbearance, have combined to reunite the two sections of the community into one; one for all practical purposes of communal action and religious sympathy despite the deviations in external forms of public worship.'⁴

¹ Sacks, *A Decade of Jewish Renewal*, p.6.

² See, in particular, Newman, op. cit., pp.89-102; Freud-Kandel, *Orthodox Judaism in Britain Since 1913* (London and Portland OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006) pp.42-51; Elton, *Britain's Chief Rabbis: The Jewish response to modernity and the remoulding of tradition* (PhD dissertation, University of London, 2007); Englander, 'Anglicized Not Anglican: Jews and Judaism In Victorian Britain,' in *Religion in Victorian Britain, I. – Traditions*, ed., Gerald Parsons (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.235-273; Gutwein, *The Divided Elite: Economics, Politics and Anglo-Jewry 1882-1917* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp.235-240; Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry 1880-1920* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp.50-66; Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p.141.

³ While sketching some of the disputes between their movements and the six Chief Rabbis since 1845, even the 'official' accounts of Reform and Liberal Judaism in Britain offer little insight into their views on the conception of a Chief Rabbinate. The main historical works are Kershner and Romain, *Tradition and Change: A History of Reform Judaism in Britain 1840-1995* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995), and Rigal and Rosenberg, *Liberal Judaism: The First Hundred Years* (London: Liberal Judaism, 2004).

⁴ 'History of the Reform Movement,' in *Supplement to the Jewish Chronicle*, 29 January 1892, p.20.

That the two sections were ‘reunited into one’ was clearly an expression both of journalistic hyperbole and of wishful thinking, but co-operation had reached a close enough level by Adler’s death in 1890 to prompt six of their ‘influential members’ to suggest taking steps ‘with the object of uniting the entire Anglo-Jewish Community under one Spiritual Chief.’⁵ In a letter to Lord Rothschild, president of the United Synagogue, signed by (among others) Samuel Montagu, MP, acting president of the Federation of Synagogues, and Sir Philip Magnus, a council member of the West London Synagogue, they wrote:

There is now abundant evidence of the existence of a widespread desire for (a) a comprehension of the English Jews under the guidance of one presiding Chief Rabbi, who shall be the Chief Spiritual adviser of all the Jews residing in the British Empire; and (b) a certain latitude to individual congregations within well-defined limits to vary the present order of Divine Service in some details.

It may be useful to point out that though there are some differences of outward practice and of ritual observance between sections of Jews, differences which may perhaps be the outcome of their surroundings, the main principles of the Creed of all are not merely similar but identical, and that the brotherhood of Israel is far stronger than any divergence of liturgy or rite.

We, the undersigned, acting entirely without any representative authority, submit to you that the time has now arrived when you can usefully invite 1. The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue; 2. The Federation of Synagogues, whose acting President is one of the signatories of this letter; 3. The West London Synagogue of British Jews, of the Council of which some of us are members; 4. The other Metropolitan and the Provincial Synagogues to join with 5. The United Synagogue, of which you are the President, in the election of a consultative Committee, who shall endeavour to formulate a plan of comprehension of the Jews of the British Empire.⁶

The first of the three bases for such ‘comprehension’ – the second and third dealt with modes of ritual service – proposed that ‘the Chief Rabbi shall be the Spiritual head of the whole of the Jews of the British Empire, but in respect to the Portuguese and West London Congregations in a consultative capacity only, such congregations respectively retaining their autonomy.’⁷ At a related meeting the following day, a memorial signed by 472 members of the United Synagogue was adopted urging, *inter alia*, that the US constitution ‘be so amended as to render possible the admission of the West London Synagogue of British Jews as a constituent synagogue.’⁸ A fortnight

⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 April 1890, p.9.

⁶ *Ibid*, 9 May 1890, p.9. The other signatories to the letter, dated 22 April 1890, were F. D. Mocatta, Alfred L. Cohen, Herbert G. Lousada and Alfred H. Beddington.

⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸ *Ibid*, 25 April 1890, p.9.

later (6 May 1890), the United Synagogue council authorised Rothschild 'to invite representatives from the Metropolitan and Provincial Synagogues to consider in conjunction with the Honorary Officers of the United Synagogue the proposals contained in the letters addressed to the President in reference to the appointment of Chief Rabbi.'

The West London Synagogue and Federation of Synagogues were among those subsequently invited by Rothschild 'to elect gentlemen to represent them at the Conference which I propose summoning to give effect to this resolution.'⁹ The West London's response, preceded by a 'long and animated'¹⁰ debate within its council, represents the first overt indication of Reform's historical, and ultimately unyielding, opposition to the Chief Rabbinate as an institution. At the council,

a proposal was made by the chairman, Sir Julian Goldsmid, to return a courteous negative to the invitation of the President of the United Synagogue; to this proposal an amendment was moved by Mr L. Schloss accepting the invitation, but limiting very greatly the powers of any delegates who might be appointed ... A very strong feeling was shown by both parties to preserve the autonomy of the congregation. Eventually, the resolution of Sir Julian Goldsmid that the invitation of Lord Rothschild should be declined was carried by a narrow majority of three – 12 votes to 9. The majority included the chairman of the council, the three wardens, and the two treasurers. The ministers attended the meeting to express their views, and two of them (the Rev. Prof. Marks and the Rev. Isidore Harris) recommended that the invitation should not be accepted. Prof. Marks, in a very earnest speech, stated that if the suggestions contained in the letter signed by three of his congregants were carried into effect, he would have no alternative but to retire from his ministrations.

Immediately thereafter, as the conference was later informed,¹¹ Goldsmid wrote to Rothschild:

We wish to acknowledge with much satisfaction both the courtesy shown in this invitation and the desire for closer relations between our body and the constituents of the United Synagogue. At the same time, it appears to the great majority of the members of this Congregation that the principle upon which it has been founded must, of necessity, prevent its being represented at a meeting intended to prepare the way for the election of a new Chief Rabbi, as the congregation has uniformly declined to accept the spiritual authority of such an officer, however personally distinguished.¹²

⁹ Ibid, 23 May 1890, p.6.

¹⁰ Ibid, 13 June 1890, p.11.

¹¹ Ibid, 25 July 1890, p.20.

¹² Appended to this letter was the text of a resolution 'that the Congregation, whilst desiring to maintain and, if possible, to strengthen the cordial relations now happily subsisting between it and the United Synagogue, cannot be represented by delegates at a Conference which is called to consider the conditions of the appointment of a Chief Rabbi.'

‘The union of the three joint sections of the community under one spiritual direction,’ editorialised the *Jewish Chronicle* after the deliberations,

would have been an epoch-making event that would for all time have marked the conference as a memorable occasion in the annals of Anglo-Jewish history. But the idea was slain at the moment of its birth, and the authors of its being could have derived little satisfaction from its reception by two of the three sections of the community.¹³ Clearly the time was not ripe for the practical realisation of the project. It is as well, however, that it should have been made manifest that some leading members of all three sections are favourable to a more complete union than that which exists.¹⁴

As events were to demonstrate in the decades, and Chief Rabbinate, that followed, no time was ripe – or could be – for a realisation of the project.

* * * * *

The election of 1913 was an altogether more divisive, and bitter, affair. By then there was no hint, let alone talk, of Reform representation in the cumbersome and drawn-out process. The differences occurred in the Orthodox arena, with the Federation of Synagogues withdrawing from the Chief Rabbinical conference following a dispute over the number of delegates, its 6,500-strong membership having received twenty-eight votes against the 314 allotted to the 5,412 members of the United Synagogue. ‘The [Federation] Board,’ wrote its secretary, Joseph Blank, to his US counterpart,

cannot give its adhesion to a scheme which practically secures to the United Synagogue, representing as it does only about one-sixteenth of the Jews of the United Kingdom, the election or dismissal of the Chief Rabbi ... [E]very argument advanced by the Federation is strengthened by the action of the Council of the United Synagogue. The Board has only to repeat (a) that the Federation cannot therefore share in the responsibility of an election in which it has practically no voice, and (b) trusts that after the United Synagogue has made its choice of a Chief Rabbi, the Federation will be able to accept him.¹⁵

¹³ The invitation was also rejected by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews’ Congregation at Bevis Marks (City of London), Bryanstone Street (Central London), Manchester – from each of which ‘No official reply has been received’ – and Ramsgate (‘No reply’), and by the Manchester Congregation of British Jews (‘Decline to send a delegate’), *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 July 1890, p.18, quoting the official list of delegates to the conference.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 August 1890, p.9.

¹⁵ Letter dated 30 May 1912 from Joseph Blank to Philip Ornstein, secretary of the United Synagogue, *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 June 1912, p.14. In his reply, dated 4 June 1912, Ornstein wrote, *inter alia*: ‘The choice of the Chief Rabbi is not vested in the United Synagogue. The large number of synagogues

Representing the views of the immigrant community, the Association for Furthering Traditional Judaism in Great Britain told the selection committee that there was ‘no room for a Chief Rabbi who could be the ecclesiastical chief of all the other rabbis in the kingdom. Their experience of other countries showed that where a Chief Rabbi existed, Orthodox Judaism completely disappeared. They were entirely opposed to the appointment of a Chief Rabbi, but would withhold their objections for the sake of peace.’¹⁶

No such inhibitions were displayed, however, by the turncoat Joseph Hochman who, while still ministering at the time to the New West End Synagogue, ‘constantly and consistently pleaded for a postponement of the appointment of a Chief Rabbi, pending the consideration of the communal organisation of Anglo-Jewry:

No Rabbi of commanding importance has been presented to the community, and nowhere is there a Rabbi who exercises the authority which Anglo-Jewry would entrust to its Chief Rabbi. The prestige of the community has not suffered through the absence of a Chief Rabbi. The vigour of the community has benefited by the increased sense of responsibility which the absence has fostered, and before the appointment of a Chief Rabbi, we should secure such rearrangement of communal organisation and congregational responsibility as will enable us to maintain this vigour, and teach us to look to ourselves for our security. It were better to change the Act of Parliament than to shelter behind it against the demands of changing circumstance.¹⁷

Most forthright among the critics were Harry Sacher and Leon Simon, joint editors of *The Zionist*, a Manchester-based journal which, throughout the campaign, railed against ‘the dangers of Chief Rabbinitism,’ expressing the hope that ‘out of the dissatisfaction created by the Chief Rabbi on the one hand, and the “foreign Rabbis” on the other, there will grow a movement towards a real orthodoxy – an orthodoxy thoroughly true to Jewish tradition, and especially to the tradition of Jewish learning, but free from the excrescences of traditionalism.’¹⁸ As the intra-Orthodox wrangling

throughout the British dominions which have not shirked the responsibility of taking part in the Election is sufficient evidence to refute this allegation’ (ibid).

¹⁶ Newman, op. cit., p.98, and the same writer’s *Chief Rabbi Dr Joseph H. Hertz, C.H.* (London: United Synagogue, 1972), pp.4-5, citing minutes of the United Synagogue council, 13 March 1912, London Metropolitan Archives, ACC2712/1/143.

¹⁷ Hochman, ‘The Chief Rabbinate,’ unsigned editorial in *The Jewish Review*, Vol. III, No. 17 (ed., Norman Bentwich and Joseph Hochman, London: George Routledge and Sons, January 1913), p.382. Similar sentiments were expressed in Vol. III, No. 18 (March 1913), p.465, and Vol. IV, No. 23 (January-February 1914), pp.381-384. On Hochman, see *Faith Against Reason*, chapter 9.

¹⁸ ‘The Rabbinical Conference,’ unsigned editorial in *The Zionist* [formerly *The Zionist Banner*], Vol. 2, No. 1, April 1911–5671, pp.1-2. London-born Harry Sacher (1881–1971), a prominent lawyer, was

intensified, so, too, did calls for the abolition of the Chief Rabbinate. 'It is common ground,' *The Zionist* declared, 'that the late Dr Adler made the Chief Rabbinate the present thing which nobody ventures to approve. The plain truth of the matter is that the Chief Rabbinate in England is so utterly unjustifiable that it would collapse if exposed to the fresh air of scientific curiosity.'¹⁹ The leader-writers added in a subsequent issue:

Since the Jews of the British Empire are to be given the sort of 'Chief' Rabbi that Lord Rothschild likes, it is necessary to see what Lord Rothschild's taste is. The aim of the Jewish community, he told the Conference, is to Anglicise the foreign Jewish immigrants, and the function of the 'Chief' Rabbi is to assist and direct the process of Anglicisation. That is the naked truth, and it explains why a great many Jews in this country have no excessive respect for the Anglo-Jewish community and would like to see the 'Chief' Rabbinate abolished. They believe that the business of a healthy Jewish community and of a Jewish Rabbi ought to be not to Anglicise but to Judaise, and to Judaise not only immigrants from abroad but also the native born ...

It is pleasant to be a Pope-maker, and a tame Pope may be so useful. But Lord Rothschild, Mr Jessel and Mr Felix Davis²⁰ may give; it rests with ourselves to decide whether we shall take. Whichever be the obscure person 'trained in an English University' who is made 'Chief' Rabbi, it may be safely said that the fiction of his ecclesiastical sovereignty over the British Empire will be blown to pieces pretty quickly. A Pope has as much place in Judaism as has the Trinity, and the Jews of England will not suffer its perpetuation. Those Jews who are determined to have no part or lot in the Jewish Papacy must take steps to make their repudiation of it too emphatic and too concrete to be misunderstood or ignored.²¹

With the election on 16 February 1913 of Joseph Herman Hertz, who trounced Moses Hyamson by 298 votes to 39, *The Zionist* – speaking, arguably, for the silent majority of Anglo-Jewry – delivered its final verdict on the 'Jewish Papacy':

It is obvious that the new 'Chief' Rabbi cannot be accepted by a very considerable section of the community. But the dissentient element will not be able simply to disregard him and go their own way. Invested as he is with an authority based on Act of Parliament, and backed by the financial power of the house of Rothschild, he will be bound, even in spite of himself, to run counter in many ways to those who feel themselves compelled to deny his right to pose as the spiritual leader of the Jews of the British Empire. Thus it is inevitable that for some time to come much

for several years on the editorial board of the *Manchester Guardian* and, with Simon (later Sir Leon), belonged to the Manchester Zionist Circle headed by Chaim Weizmann. Southampton-born Simon (1881–1965), the son of a rabbi, was a civil servant and writer, in both Hebrew and English.

¹⁹ *The Zionist*, Vol. 2, No. 8, November 1911–5672, p.122.

²⁰ President and vice-presidents, respectively, of the United Synagogue.

²¹ *The Zionist*, Vol. 2, No. 10, January 1912–5672, pp.153–154. Further attacks against the Chief Rabbinate appeared in the journal between then and the appointment of Hertz, leading to the one final blow reproduced here.

effort must be wasted in internecine strife which might have gone into the channel of constructive work. In saying this, we are casting no reflection on the particular Rabbi who has been chosen. There is no occasion here for personal criticism. We object not to this or that 'Chief' Rabbi, but to the 'Chief' Rabbinate itself ... As things are at present, the 'Chief Rabbinate of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire' is just a sham, and not even an angel from heaven could occupy the position without retarding Jewish progress.²²

* * * * *

No 'angel from heaven' himself, Hertz was nevertheless well equipped to straddle the worlds of 'East' and 'West' that his predecessor had addressed in his parting message. 'Forget not moderation,' the incoming Chief Rabbi urged the fractious elements of his adopted community. 'We simply cannot succeed without sympathetic understanding and co-operation. Tower-builders, even when such are labouring for the greater glory of God, must understand one another. Confusion of tongues can wreck any scheme.'²³

Weeks before these words were uttered, on the eve of the electoral college's vote, Hertz had received a glowing endorsement from Solomon Schechter,²⁴ writing from New York as head of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The 'best school' to nurture Hertz's qualities of mind and leadership, Schechter had asserted, was

the London Chief Rabbinate, with its wide possibilities and manifold problems and variety of opinions, in which he would be compelled to bring some harmony and unity ... [U]nless you have a man of his oratory, able to present the ideas and ideals of ancient Judaism in an intelligent and lucid manner, and even to enlist modernity itself in the defence of Conservatism, Traditional Judaism will soon be a matter of the past. It is not a question of denouncing Radicalism, which is out of date, but of giving Conservative Judaism a fair chance by explaining and interpreting it in such a manner as to awaken the sympathies and arouse the loyalty and devotion of the congregation to our great heritage. And I thoroughly believe that Dr Hertz is the man able to accomplish this great task.²⁵

By the time Schechter wrote this, the Conservative Judaism espoused by his Seminary had veered several degrees to the left of that which, two decades earlier,

²² Ibid, Vol. 3, No. 9, February 1913–5673, pp. 129–130.

²³ *The Installation Sermon of the Very Rev. Dr Joseph Herman Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire* (London: United Synagogue, 1913), p.19.

²⁴ Romanian-born Schechter (1847–1915) was Claude Montefiore's private tutor in rabbinics and, in 1890, became lecturer (and later reader) in rabbinics at Cambridge University. From 1898–1902 he was professor of Hebrew at University College London, before succeeding Sabato Morais as president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. His many publications included *Studies in Judaism* and *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*. Although Jessel commended Schechter to his colleagues as 'one of the leading living Rabbis,' whose position 'is unassailable, and [whose] orthodoxy is unquestioned,' he is generally regarded as the founder of Conservative Judaism as it is known today.

²⁵ Letter from Solomon Schechter to Albert H. Jessel, chairman of the Chief Rabbinical Selection Committee, 31 January 1913, *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 February 1913, p.13.

Hertz had imbibed at the feet of its founders, and yet several degrees further from that of the 'progressive conservatism' upon which his legacy came to rest. Indeed, as we have seen,²⁶ it was the differing interpretations of 'Conservative' and 'Traditional' that were to fuel many of the controversies of his Chief Rabbinate, and of those that followed over the succeeding century.

Significantly, however – for the first and last time during the 'internecine strife' foreshadowed by *The Zionist* – Hertz reserved his fiercest armoury for his battle with the Liberals, maintaining a degree of 'clerical unity'²⁷ with the West Londoners, and even speaking on their premises, until Abramsky's arrival ended the fraternisation. In relation to this dual approach, the ritual and theological differences between the Progressive movements – highlighted by Claude Montefiore in his strictures against Reform – became increasingly evident, and the Chief Rabbi's responses markedly selective. In denouncing Upper Berkeley Street for opening its pulpit to the Liberals' Israel Mattuck, the *Jewish Chronicle* gave voice to the thinking behind Hertz's stand:

It is surely a glaring inconsistency for the synagogue to invite a minister of the 'Liberal' Synagogue to teach Judaism according to the lights of the congregation of which he is the spiritual head, and which he himself has shown to be so palpably opposed to the faith for which Berkeley Street stands ... To the plain man, the invitation to Rabbi Mattuck reads, and can only read, like an intimation that notwithstanding all that has been proclaimed as the attitude of 'Liberal' Judaism, no 'fundamental' differences subsist between the real opinions of Berkeley Street and the teachings of the 'Liberal' congregation. Since the very gravest differences do in fact exist, nobody who cares an iota for the sheer decencies, not to say the mere honesty, of religious belief can regard that as other than a serious matter.

There is no question here of broadmindedness or toleration; it is a matter of clear understanding and of knowing just where we stand in these vital matters. If there are 'fundamental differences' between the 'Liberal' congregation and the remainder of the community, then it is useless, and worse, to pretend that they are not fundamental, and represent merely shades of the same religious colour ... Much of the weakness of our community in the past has been the habit of make-believe and of self-confusion on religious matters, which has tended to tarnish the clarity of its outlook in regard to so much with which it is concerned.²⁸

Hertz acknowledged as much when, justifying his presence in the course of his 1934 address at the opening of the West London Synagogue extension, he declared that he was 'the last person in the world to minimise the significance of religious difference in Jewry.' But, he was quick to add,

²⁶ *Faith Against Reason*, chapters 10 to 13.

²⁷ Kershen and Romain, op. cit., p.123.

²⁸ 'An Inconsistent Invitation,' *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 January 1920, p.7.

far more calamitous than religious difference in Jewry is religious indifference. The erection and dedication of a building such as this, intended primarily for school purposes, means a determination on the part of the West London Synagogue of British Jews to provide the only adequate safeguard against religious indifference – a more intensive and extensive system of Jewish religious education that will bring all the children and adolescents within the sphere of your influence to the living fountains of Jewish inspiration and faith.²⁹

This was, however, the last such declaration of Chief Rabbinical support. Hertz's subsequent brush with the Liberals over the appointment of a marriage secretary, and his humiliating capitulation to Robert Waley Cohen, marked the end of his flirtation with Reform and the onset of a war against the wider non-Orthodox movement that has continued unabated to the present day. The hostilities were intensified after calls for closer ties between the Liberals and Reformers led, for brief periods at least (1936–37 and 1981–87), to mutual proposals for a full-scale merger.³⁰

* * * * *

Events led, too, to further question-marks over the authority and viability of the Chief Rabbinate. With the halachic validity of Liberal marriages challenged again, during the interregnum following Hertz's death,³¹ 'the traditional structure of Anglo-Jewry behind its impressive façade,' wrote Roth, 'has suddenly shown such fissures and weaknesses that a catastrophic collapse, within a very short period, seems likely. That the two characteristic historical institutions of the community [the Board of Deputies and the Chief Rabbinate, both central to the dispute] should be menaced at the same time is perhaps more significant than purely coincidental.'

Referring, tangentially, to the Federation of Synagogue's earlier detachment from the Chief Rabbinical election process, Roth asserted, with remarkable prescience:

If no satisfactory arrangement can be reached between the United Synagogue and the Federation – and I am afraid that there can be no satisfactory compromise short of capitulation on the part of the former body – there can be little doubt that the latter will refuse to recognise the authority of the new Chief Rabbi when he is appointed, and will elevate their own Principal Rabbi into an anti-Pope. If there are two Chief Rabbis, there can be no logical reason why there should not be three, or four: and I foresee the emergence of Chief Rabbis in the major provincial centres,

²⁹ Ibid, 1 June 1934, p.10.

³⁰ See Kershen and Romain, op. cit., pp.156-158, 310-316.

³¹ *Faith Against Reason*, chapter 13.

as well as, of course, a Chief Rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, which has already declared its neutrality (or, as it is better to term it, non-belligerency) in a conflict the outcome of which it will not recognise.

As for the Liberals, whose number and organisation have very much increased in the last generation, they were willing to acquiesce, however reluctantly, in the institution of the Chief Rabbinate as formally representing the community, so long as a certain degree of tolerance was maintained. But it is too much to expect them to maintain this attitude now that they have been declared by the Chief Rabbinate, *sede vacante*, to be entirely outside the bounds of Judaism. Thus extremes are meeting; and it may be questioned whether a Chief Rabbinate so diminished, and so rivalled, will be a Chief Rabbinate at all. It will add to the variety and interest of Anglo-Jewish life, of course, and, after all, people may be right when they say that the entire conception of a Chief Rabbi is somewhat new and alien to Judaism.³²

By the time of Israel Brodie's departure from the post, some twenty years later, Roth's predictions had all but been realised. The two decades had seen, in the words of another observer,³³ 'a new realignment: a coalition between the supporters of the Chief Rabbinate and the ultra-Orthodox who suddenly sprang to the defence of an office the jurisdiction of which they themselves never recognised.'³⁴ The Federation's 'anti-Pope,' Eliezer Kirzner, was appointed, with the title of Rav Rashi, and an 'understanding' reached – but speedily unhinged – with the incoming Chief Rabbi, Jakobovits, 'to ensure the closest and most effective co-operation between us'; to 'give full and unqualified recognition to each other's rabbinic rulings'; and 'to restore the solidarity of Orthodox Judaism as a constructive force to inspire and uplift the Anglo-Jewish community.'³⁵

Commenting on reports to this effect – that Britain's 'Jews may get two Chief Rabbis' – the Liberals' Sidney Brichto riposted:

³² Roth, 'The Collapse of English Jewry,' in *The Jewish Monthly*, No. 4 (London: Anglo-Jewish Association, July 1947), pp.11-17.

³³ 'The Making of a Chief Rabbi,' unsigned article in *the jew: Quest 2* (London: Cornmarket Press, 1967), p.11.

³⁴ This was demonstrated, for example, by a leading article in the weekly mouthpiece of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations: 'British Jewry, despite all the undermining which it has been forced to witness in recent years, is basically loyal and devoted to its [Chief] Rabbinate. There is no doubt whatever that a concerted and resolute effort by the Rabbinate will produce a change in atmosphere in the whole of the community which will not only promote greater harmony and understanding but also generate a new spirit necessary to give the newly elected Chief Rabbi [Jakobovits] a fair chance to succeed in his aims' (*Jewish Tribune*, 11 November 1966, p.2). Noting this support, Jacobs' successor at the New West End Synagogue, Chaim Pearl, wrote at the time, after assuming the pulpit of the Conservative Synagogue of Riverdale, New York: 'The right-wing Union is a self-contained *kehillah*. They add to the religious and educational strength of the community. They do not show any penchant just now for power politics and, if anything, they are likely to be secret if not open supporters of the new incumbent, whose origins and background are similar to their own' (Pearl, 'About "Chief Rabbis,"' in *The Jewish Spectator*, New York, January 1967, p.22).

³⁵ "'Understanding" with the Rav Rashi-Elect of the Federation of Synagogues,' in Jakobovits, *Prelude to Service* (London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, Adar II 5727–April 1967), pp.29-30.

There are very substantial sections of Anglo-Jewry which, on principle, won't have one Chief Rabbi, still less two. Liberal Synagogues, as only one example, do not believe in a religious hierarchy by appointment. All matters of religious policy are decided by a conference of Rabbis in which the knowledge and vision of the individual Rabbi, and not his office, determine the respect and authority he will win for himself. It is our firm conviction that the non-acceptance of any Rabbi as 'Chief' is in keeping with the religiously democratic spirit of the Jewish religion.³⁶

Earlier, Brichto had commented: 'For our purpose, personalities are of no concern. It would make no difference to us if the title of Chief Rabbi were held by the most brilliant, excellent, saintly, kindly, competent Jew in the world ... We do not accept a form of Judaism in which there is an inseparable gulf between the religious and lay leaders in belief and practice. Anglo-Jewry must hear that we believe in a form of Judaism in which all may participate with full honesty. We believe in the equality of all Rabbis and we reject the idea of a Chief Rabbinate as the sole source of religious authority.'³⁷

For the Reform movement, one of its senior ministers, Ignaz Maybaum, wrote of the Chief Rabbinate:

[T]his office is not based on a true conception of Judaism, but is in fact a product of assimilation to the Christian concept of hierarchical organisation ... The rabbis of Anglo-Jewry who are under the jurisdiction and supervision of a Chief Rabbi are no longer free. Why should young men choose the rabbinical profession under such undignified conditions. These conditions make a rabbi a minor official, a *mesharet* of a *mesharet* – and *mesharet* means servant in the most derogatory sense ... The jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi is also responsible for the present sterility of Anglo-Jewish public life. The best brains and the finest characters turn with disgust from Anglo-Jewish public life. The office of the Chief Rabbi must disappear from the scene or be changed into an honorary position, with a new occupant, say, every third year.³⁸

Rejecting an approach by the newly elected Jakobovits to bring the New London Synagogue under the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbinate, Louis Jacobs declared:

I was brought up, by pious rabbis of the old school, to believe that the Chief Rabbinate, of very recent origin, is an example of *chukkat ha-goy* [Gentile practice], and further experience and study have convinced me that in this they were right. It is not only that the idea of a superior rabbi is unknown in Judaism and

³⁶ Letter from Sidney Brichto, executive vice-president, Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, to *The Observer*, 12 February 1967, p.25.

³⁷ Brichto, 'What is wrong with the Chief Rabbinate?', in *Liberal Jewish Monthly* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, May 1965), pp.101-104.

³⁸ Maybaum, *The Office of a Chief Rabbi* (London: Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1964), p.13.

involves the abdication by the subordinate rabbi of the responsibilities conferred on him by his *semichah* [rabbinical ordination]. The office of chief rabbi in Anglo-Jewry is modelled on that of bishop and archbishop in the Christian Church, which, in turn, is based on belief in the apostolic succession. Thus, unlike the wearing of the clerical collar and canonicals, the institution has strong doctrinal overtones. It is not for us to cast stones at those who see fit to recognise the office, but for ourselves we prefer to abide by Jewish tradition.³⁹

Jakobovits' Chief Rabbinate, punctuated by fiery – and self-admittedly futile – attempts to reconcile the opposing factions, ultimately led to the spurning of the 'hand in friendship'⁴⁰ he had once extended. 'The obsession with communal unity,' he wrote on his retirement, 'is a peculiarly Anglo-Jewish trait. It does not feature in such a form among American or European Jews – and certainly not in Israel. It is time we shifted our concern from form to substance: how to live as fuller and better Jews, rather than how to gloss over differences and proclaim a unity which turns out to be a mirage.'⁴¹

* * * * *

Commenting on the Liberals' declaration⁴² – some ten weeks before the appointment of Sacks – that 'the Chief Rabbi to be elected has no authority over our own rabbis or lay people, nor does he represent us or speak on our behalf,' the *Jewish Chronicle* contended:

There is nothing new in the statement from the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues disavowing the authority of the Chief Rabbi – any Chief Rabbi – over its members. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a situation in which the incumbent would be regarded as a spiritual guide to it, or its members as a natural flock for

³⁹ Jacobs, letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 April 1967, p.6. When pondering whether to accept the position, Jakobovits himself appears to have had doubts over its status in Judaism. 'At my yeshivah,' he wrote, 'the whole concept of the Chief Rabbinate had run counter to all my teachers' principles. For them, the leading rabbi of an area had to be the one whose rabbinic skills were the most prodigious. The idea that a lay-appointed rabbi could be empowered to lay down the law to dayanim and every type of rabbi and minister under his jurisdiction had no traditional basis in halachah ... In the end, the decisive judgment came from my father-in-law, Rabbi Elie Munk, in Paris. He asserted – perhaps ruled is the better word – that morally I was duty-bound to accept the challenge and had no right to refuse it, lest the office fall into the wrong hands' (Jakobovits, 'Fragments from an Unpublished Autobiography,' in Persoff, *Immanuel Jakobovits: a Prophet in Israel*, London and Portland OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002, p.115; the 'fragments' were discovered, collated and edited by the author following Jakobovits' death in 1999).

⁴⁰ Jakobovits, 'The major tasks ahead,' letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 December 1966, p.6.

⁴¹ Jakobovits, 'Putting Stability Before "Mirage" Of Unity,' in *ibid*, 10 January 1997, p.23.

⁴² Harold Sanderson and Rosita Rosenberg, 'Statement on the Appointment of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations' (Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, London, 14 December 1989), Brichto Papers, London. Sanderson was the chairman, and Rosenberg the director, of the Union. See *Faith Against Reason*, p.373.

him. The same would apply to almost all the Reform movement ... Masorti has placed itself outside the United Synagogue mainstream by its rejection of the classic Orthodox understanding of Revelation. Thus, it is essentially that collectivity known as the United Synagogue, and those many mainstream traditional congregations in the regions and a number overseas, which regard the Chief Rabbi as their guide and mentor. It is from their strength, which is predominant in Anglo-Jewish life, that he draws his. Lord Jakobovits has put his own special stamp on the Chief Rabbinate to the extent that the global perception of him is that of sole spiritual leader of the Anglo-Jewish community.

But, the paper added a few lines later,

[t]here is a crying need for a restatement of the philosophy of what we call United Synagogue Judaism. The intense interest in the fate of mainstream religious thinking was amply demonstrated by the massive attendance at the 'Traditional Alternatives' conference in London earlier this year. However, the US, both in its lay leadership and its rabbinate, failed miserably, with one or two honourable exceptions, to pick up the ball and run with it. There is a perception of a rabbinate always looking over its shoulder lest it fall foul of the Right. The US takes pride in a Beth Din which, whatever the truth, is perceived as being unbending in its approach to the interpretation of Jewish religious law. It has taken on a life of its own, outside its traditional role as 'Court of the Chief Rabbi.'

What is to be the relationship between the two? This question should be addressed before the mantle of the Chief Rabbinate is placed upon other shoulders. That consideration could well dictate the character of the successful candidate. So, too, could his approach to working with other segments of the community which do not share his religious outlook but which share a common interest in defending Anglo-Jewry against its enemies and in uniting its strength in support of Israel and local causes. There probably does not exist one man who embodies all those merits which the position demands. But the minimum that can be asked is that his deep religious conviction should be allied with a vision of a revitalised United Synagogue community and an ability to translate that vision into a sense of purpose for a community which so often seems to be without one.⁴³

Central to an assessment of Sacks' Chief Rabbinate to date is a resolution of the fundamental questions posed above – the nature of his relationship with the Beth Din and 'his approach to working with other segments of the community which do not share his religious outlook.' The first became evident only after 'the mantle of the Chief Rabbinate' was placed upon his shoulders; the second, however, seemed mapped out in advance – though, as the last chapter has demonstrated, it was continually confounded as his incumbency progressed.

In the summer of 2003, the two questions again received a simultaneous (and very public) response, and the patience of the 'kingmaker' – as Alderman labelled Kalms⁴⁴

⁴³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 December 1989, p.20.

⁴⁴ Alderman, 'Public matters need a public airing,' in *ibid*, 2 January 2004, p.19.

– finally evaporated, with yet another call on Sacks to resign. Attending the *aufruf* (pre-wedding) ceremony of his granddaughter's husband-to-be, Louis Jacobs was barred by the London Beth Din from being called up to the Sabbath reading of the Torah at the Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation, a synagogue under the Chief Rabbi's authority. The minister, Lionel Rosenfeld – who had been instructed by the dayanim to operate the ban – had offered Jacobs the honour of opening the ark, but the Masorti rabbi had declined. A spokesman for the Chief Rabbi's Office told the *Jewish Chronicle*: 'It is not the policy for synagogues under his jurisdiction to call up non-Orthodox rabbis. We are comfortable that the protocols of the Stanmore Accords have been complied with. The accords state that there is "no expectation that non-Orthodox ministers will participate in Orthodox services."' ⁴⁵

The 'Stanmore Accords' – so named after the area in which they were signed, at the home of then United Synagogue president Elkan Levy – emerged from the ruins of the Consultative and Liaison Committees disbanded in 1997 following the Chief Rabbinical debacle over Hugo Gryn. ⁴⁶ Eighteen months of meetings, lobbying and (in the words of Liberal participants) 'frustrating approaches to the United Synagogue' ⁴⁷ led to an agreement drawn up in November 1998 by the US, Masorti, Reform and Liberal movements 'to bring about a more harmonious and productive relationship between the various sections of the community.' ⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1 August 2003, p.11.

⁴⁶ '[D]isgust over the actions of Rabbi Jakobovits' successor, following the death of Rabbi Hugo Gryn, caused the Liberal and Reform members to withdraw' (Rigal and Rosenberg, op. cit., p.170). In a conversation with this writer (23 July 2008), Bayfield, head of the renamed Movement for Reform Judaism, confirmed the dismantling of the Consultative and Liaison Committees in the aftermath of the Sacks/Gryn controversy, and the non-Orthodox movements' desire to construct a new framework which dispensed with the Chief Rabbi's 'patronage' and afforded them 'not recognition – which we knew we would never get from the United Synagogue – but de facto acceptance of different groups with different constituencies, and an end to bickering, for the sake of the community.'

At a 2002 gathering of Stanmore representatives, engineered by Board of Deputies president Eldred Tabachnik following a meeting (held on 22 March 2001) between him and parties to the accords, Sacks referred to the committees' fate: 'JS [Jonathan Sacks] spoke of the old Liaison Committee which, he said, had discussed issues of representation and which had broken up at the time of the Hugo Gryn affair, and offered to reconvene it quite separately from the Consultative Committee. Paul S[hrank] pointed out that, so far as he was concerned, JS did not represent Masorti, and JS said this question was an important one, and this seemed a good reason to reconvene the Liaison Committee' (from notes of an 'informal meeting' – called to discuss non-Orthodox disquiet over cross-communal representation – held at the Chief Rabbi's residence, 20 February 2002, copies in this writer's possession). Present with Sacks and Shrank, co-chairman of the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, were Peter Sheldon, Levy's successor as US president, and Jeromé Freedman, chairperson of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues; the Reform's Steven Licht was unable to attend. See also p.72 below, and Postscript, p.82.

⁴⁷ Rigal and Rosenberg, op. cit., p.175.

⁴⁸ The text of the preamble, 'A Statement to the Jewish Community,' and Annexes 1 and 2 to the accords – 'Conventions of Orthodox communities as adopted by the United Synagogue' and 'Consultative Committee: Terms of Reference' – appear below in Appendix III.

The clause in the accords relevant to the Jacobs episode – open to varying interpretations, but evidently operated by the Beth Din with its ‘unbending approach’ – originally read: ‘Orthodox rabbis and ministers do not speak at or participate in Reform, Liberal and Masorti services. Their attendance at such services is within their discretion. Orthodox bodies do not invite Reform, Liberal and Masorti rabbis and ministers to speak at or participate in services under Orthodox auspices.’ Considerable debate was occasioned, both in and outside Bournemouth, over the precise meaning of ‘invite’ and ‘participate in.’

The ink on the accords was barely dry before the London Beth Din ordered the deletion of the sentence on discretionary Orthodox attendance at Reform, Liberal and Masorti services. Voicing their opposition to the reference, which Levy subsequently described as ‘an infelicitous piece of drafting,’⁴⁹ the dayanim declared:

While the Beth Din warmly welcomes measures that will defuse tensions and enhance mutual respect within the community, nevertheless the Beth Din’s long-standing policy has been to withhold its support of interdenominational committees. While their intentions may be commendable, they ultimately sow confusion within Anglo-Jewry. Notwithstanding the above, the conventions set out therein, in the main, conform with our guidelines, with the exception of reference to Orthodox rabbis attending non-Orthodox services. It is the ruling of the Beth Din that rabbis may not attend any services held under non-Orthodox auspices.⁵⁰

Before this retraction, Levy had hailed the agreement as ‘a considerable achievement,’ adding: ‘I do not believe that Orthodox Judaism has anything to fear from a dialogue with non-Orthodox Jews.’ Reform chairman Neville Sassienie said that it marked ‘a significant move forward in the search for communal harmony and development’ and would ‘alter the atmosphere in the community.’ While the director of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh, expressed the ‘hope that intra-communal relations can finally move on to a more sensible, mature and rational footing,’ Masorti’s director, Harry Freedman, saw the Consultative Committee – which the president and chief executive of the Board of Deputies would be invited to attend – as ‘the most important thing to come out of the agreement.’⁵¹

The Beth Din’s statement, however, provoked surprise and dismay in equal measure. Sources close to the deal said that ‘the rabbinical court had been kept aware

⁴⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 November 1998, p.1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6 November 1998, p.1.

of the negotiations throughout' and that Sacks had had 'at least one meeting with Reform leaders during the negotiating process.' (Levy told the United Synagogue council that the agreement had been negotiated 'with the full knowledge of, and some input from, the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din, although they did not see the final alterations.'⁵²) Middleburgh remarked that his initial 'measured euphoria' was 'slipping into despondency. We signed on the understanding that this had the full endorsement of the Chief Rabbi and the Beth Din.'

The Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations described the accords as marking 'the beginning of the end of the United Synagogue as the guardian of an Orthodox *kehillah* [community],' and the Federation of Synagogues asserted that they would 'blur the clear difference between traditional Judaism and the various Reform movements.'⁵³ The *Jewish Chronicle* assessed the implications of the agreement, and of the Beth Din's involvement, within their historical context:

The blast of criticism from Orthodox voices to the right of the United Synagogue was only to be expected. And, given the pattern of recent communal politics, it was perhaps equally predicable that the Beth Din would move to counter any suggestion that it was somehow less Orthodox than the Adath or Federation critics. Predictable, too, was the evident reluctance of the Chief Rabbi – who has spent an unhappy past few years trying, and spectacularly failing, to please both left and right – to enter this latest fray.

But both he and the United Synagogue president will inevitably come under pressure in the coming days, if not to answer a right wing whose opposition they surely expected, at least to address the implicit rejection of the Orthodox-Progressive deal by a Beth Din which at least nominally works for them. How, or indeed whether, they choose to do so will be a defining moment for a synagogal movement which for many decades was pre-eminent not only in British Orthodoxy but in British Jewry as a whole – but a movement whose role and identity have become increasingly blurred amid criticism from both right and left, and disaffection among many grassroots congregants.⁵⁴

While not exactly 'entering this latest fray,' Sacks sought to diffuse the situation on behalf of those who, he declared, wanted 'a community at peace':

They are troubled, as I am, by the tone of acrimony that so often seems to mar our public life. That is why I welcome the agreement signed by the lay leaders of four communal bodies to promote more harmonious relationships in Anglo-Jewry. The document, as amended and clarified this week, is a genuine attempt to move beyond the rancour which should have no place in a community of those whose task is to

⁵² Ibid, 20 November 1998, p.2.

⁵³ Ibid, 13 November 1998, p.1.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.30.

walk humbly with God. The statement has nothing to do with blurring religious differences. Indeed, it recognises that profound differences exist and will continue to do so, and asks: how then shall we behave?

The answer given by Jewish law is *darchei shalom*, the ways of peace. Maimonides rules in one of his great responsa that this applies to relationships between Jew and Jew even when there are fundamental divisions between them on matters of practice and faith. He adds that the ways of peace are reciprocal. They call on Orthodox Jews to be respectful of others, but they also call on others to be respectful of Jewish law and tradition. Reciprocity will be the test of the current agreement.

I wish, therefore, to make an appeal to all those who care for the future of the community and for the integrity of our faith as a code of compassion in human affairs. The following principles should guide us. On matters which affect us regardless of our religious differences, we work together regardless of our religious differences. On matters which touch on religious differences, we agree to differ, but with courtesy. Absence of recognition does not imply absence of respect. Think twice before condemning a fellow Jew. Establish facts before making an accusation. Exercise charity in interpretation. Honour confidences and act so as to inspire trust. Choose public expression only when private representation has been tried and failed. In public debate, be civil as well as fair to those with whom you disagree.

These things will not make us less persuasive; they will make us more so. They will create *Kiddush Hashem* [sanctification of God's name] where too often there has been *Chillul Hashem*.⁵⁵

* * * * *

Largely absent from Sacks' statements and actions during his Chief Rabbinate thus far – as we have seen – has been any manifestation of his self-proclaimed plea to 'think twice' before condemning the non-Orthodox, or of exerting influence over his Beth Din to 'exercise charity in interpretation.' Alongside the major disputes explored here was a succession of local issues touching on intra-communal relations.

Six months after the Jacobs incident, Ernest Hornung, a member of Cardiff's New Synagogue (Reform), was similarly refused an *aliyah* in the neighbouring United Synagogue (Orthodox) at the barmitzvah of his grandson.⁵⁶ Sacks subsequently issued a ruling that 'membership of a Reform congregation is not in itself a reason to prevent a person being called up in an Orthodox synagogue, provided that the person is halachically Jewish.'⁵⁷

This provoked a sharp response from a group of right-wing sages, eliciting what amounted to a Chief Rabbinical volte-face. A statement from the group – Dayanim

⁵⁵ Ibid, 20 November 1998, p.20.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 11 March 1994, p.13.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 27 May 1994, p.13.

Yisroel Yaacov Lichtenstein, Gavriel Krausz and Pinchas Toledano, respective heads of the Federation, Manchester and Sephardi *batei din*; Rabbi Joseph Dunner, of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations; and Rabbi Bezalel Rakow, of Gateshead – spoke of ‘a worrying erosion’ in the nature of Orthodox-Reform relations, and added:

We have been given an explicit assurance [from the Chief Rabbi] that communal policies regarding formal association with, or acceptance of, adherents to non-Orthodox movements – which we consider to be detrimental to both the character and the ethos of an Orthodox community – are to be determined on a local level. The prerogative of determining such policies is to remain, therefore, with local rabbinic authority, with a view to the preservation and enhancement of the Orthodox nature of the particular community. We welcome this assurance that there has been no new acceptance of non-Orthodox ideologies, nor any attempt to confer a degree of legitimacy upon them.⁵⁸

Later that year, following a two-thirds majority vote by another Cardiff Orthodox congregation to alter its constitution, Rabbis Rakow and Dunner, with Rabbi Shamai Zahn of Sunderland, ‘defied the Chief Rabbi by instructing the Penylan Synagogue that changing its constitution to allow members of the Reform movement an *aliyah* is against *halachah*.’⁵⁹ Other incidents included a Masorti member being denied the honour of chanting the *haftarah* (prophetical portion) at his son-in-law’s *aufruf* in the Western Marble Arch Synagogue; a scribe’s refusal to write a *ketubah* (marriage contract) for the nuptials of a couple at a Masorti congregation; and the censorship of a *hesped* (eulogy) at the Orthodox funeral of a 101-year-old woman, omitting any reference to Jacobs’ New London Synagogue which she had long attended.

Commenting on these episodes, and on the vicissitudes of the Stanmore agreement since its inception, former Masorti co-chairman Paul Shrank provided a revealing insight into its workings:

I signed the statement with some mixed feelings. There were forceful voices in Masorti which suggested that we should not be a party to this agreement, because it meant we would have to be less assertive in public and we would have to accept the United Synagogue conventions, which did not satisfy all our complaints about discriminatory practices. I felt, however, that it was important for the whole community that we should be part of the effort to achieve harmony, and that we would always regret it if we had not tried.

I also felt that, over time, the establishment of personal relationships and dialogue, particularly between rabbis, would lead to a softening of those things which were causing us pain ... After a time, it became obvious that the United

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 23 December 1994, p.40.

Synagogue had no intention of moving on any of these issues, and when I had a private meeting⁶⁰ with the Chief Rabbi, in the company of United Synagogue president Peter Sheldon and the then ULPS chairman Jeromé Freedman, Rabbi Sacks contemptuously dismissed the issues we raised and said that the reason for denying *aliyot* to Rabbi Jacobs was 'halachic.' So much for the dignity of difference ...

The dialogue with the United Synagogue has been a dialogue of the deaf, and the spirit in which we signed the Stanmore Accords has been dissipated ... There is no prospect of an end to the vicious discrimination which occurs in this community, so I see little point in continuing the façade of dialogue. Masorti should return to asserting its position vigorously and not hesitate to publicise those incidents that cause so much hurt to our members. I do not regret signing the Stanmore Accords, but I must now admit that, unfortunately, they were an experiment which has failed.⁶¹

For the Liberals, senior vice-president Sidney Brichto wrote of the Jacobs incident:

This issue must be the testing ground for the continuation of the Stanmore Accords. If neither the Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue nor its lay leaders can reverse this decision, the accords will only amount to the cowardly agreement of the Jewish community to give assent to the unacceptable moral blindness of the Beth Din in whatever direction it decides to take. The accords will then become no more than a treaty of surrender.⁶²

Brichto's colleague, Liberal Jewish Synagogue senior rabbi David J. Goldberg, added:

The Stanmore Accords are not worth the paper they were written on. The establishment United Synagogue, haemorrhaging members and no longer capable of even maintaining a college for the training of its rabbis, nevertheless has learnt from the British establishment the trick of appearing to concede in order to keep things as they are ... In return for crumbs from the United Synagogue table, the right of the Chief Rabbi to speak on behalf of all Jews goes unchallenged, even though his organisation now represents a minority in Anglo-Jewry. Having survived from the Gryn Affair to the Jacobs Affair Mark II, it is now time for all the parties involved to give a decent burial to the accords.⁶³

The Stanmore agreement survived further, however, but five years later leaders of the Reform, Liberal and Masorti movements called for a 'rethink' of its terms, having sought 'greater focus on trying to resolve problems that stem from issues over Jewish status,' and having encountered 'little leeway on this' within the United Synagogue.⁶⁴

Bayfield subsequently asserted:

⁶⁰ The meeting is referred to in note 46 above.

⁶¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 August 2003, p.18.

⁶² *Ibid*, 29 August 2003, p.18.

⁶³ *Ibid* 22 August 2003, p.20.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 11 January 2008, p.7. The subject surfaced in correspondence between Brichto and Jakobovits in 1997, weeks after the Sacks/Gryn affair, when the Liberal leader drew the Emeritus Chief Rabbi's attention (25 April 1997) to their exchange of views arising from Brichto's 'Halachah with Humility'

I think the Stanmore Accords have reached the end of their useful life, and a new initiative is in the making by the Reform, Liberal and Masorti movements. The agreement promised something significant and, under the Chief Rabbi's 'one people' agenda, was successful at first. But the United Synagogue's stultified, defensive and increasingly reactive preoccupation with the right-wing sector of the community over the past several years has changed the name of the game. What is unclear is whether Jonathan Sacks is the prisoner or the leader of this process.⁶⁵

The most telling of the responses to Jacobs Mark II came from the 'kingmaker' himself, in his second call on Sacks to step down from office. Reviewing the Chief Rabbi's record over his first decade, Kalms wrote:

... He has no plans for another Traditional Alternatives-style conference to keep open the doors of our faith to the widest circle. The recent row over Rabbi Dr Louis Jacobs shows only too well that one step forward has been followed by two steps back. In the middle ground between the fundamentalist right and radical left, the Chief Rabbi is like a shuttlecock. Inclusivism, the theme of his original manifesto, is but a distant memory. It has not been a good two years for the Chief Rabbi. He has been marginally unfortunate and, I suppose, paraphrasing Napoleon, we could

proposals ten years earlier (which Sacks subsequently described as 'the most courageous statement by a non-Orthodox Jew this century' [Sacks to Brichto, 4 March 1990, Brichto Papers, London]; see *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 October 1987, p.29, *Faith Against Reason*, chapter 19, and Jakobovits, *Preserving the Oneness of the Jewish People: Orthodox-Progressive divisions and discussions on marriage, divorce and conversion – can a permanent schism be averted?* London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, 1988, pp.12-14). 'While much water has flowed down the Thames since then,' Jakobovits replied (30 April 1997), 'I think some of our deliberations, and perhaps even suggestions, are still as relevant now as they were then ... I know I was thinking at the time of the pre-war German model in which my father and [the Reform] Leo Baeck were rabbinical colleagues serving the same community, and in which all Beth Din matters were left to be administered by the Orthodox Beth Din serving the entire community. I know this model was certainly discussed between us ... I will now consider whether, and in what form, I could best use the experience of that period to promote some progress now.' Brichto commented (30 April 1997): 'I appreciate the matter is so terribly complicated, but the attempt to resolve these issues would in itself reveal good will and a common purpose, two factors so sadly lacking among our present religious leadership.' Jakobovits responded (1 May 1997): 'I still think the idea is worth pursuing, yet am not sure who are to be the *dramatis personae* in the next act.' Taking up this point, Brichto wrote (7 May 1997): 'I would imagine that ultimately the key actors would need to be the active leaders of the religious communities, but I see no reason why some of us could not meet without the pressures of office, time and publicity to see what we could come up with. If between us we saw something remotely feasible, we could submit it to the community as a blue (discussion) paper for consideration.' Jakobovits expressed agreement (13 May 1997), adding that 'the idea of some new understanding does bear further exploration. For my part, I shall keep my eyes and ears open for any opportunity to encourage the search' (Brichto Papers, London). In the event, 'the search' again came to nothing: thirty months after these lines were written, Jakobovits died (31 October 1999) and was buried in Jerusalem.

Among attempts during Sacks' Chief Rabbinate to publicise non-Orthodox approaches to issues of Jewish status were: Romain, *Faith and Practice: A Guide to Reform Judaism Today* (London: Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1991), pp.173-197; David J. Goldberg, *Where We Stand On Jewish Marriage* (London: Liberal Judaism, 2000), pp.1-4; John D. Rayner, *Where We Stand On Liberal Judaism And Jewish Identity* (London: Liberal Judaism, 2002), pp.1-8; Chaim Weiner, *Frequently Asked Questions About Masorti* (London: Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, 2005) pp.1-11. An earlier booklet – Bernard Hooker, *Facts and Fallacies About Liberal Judaism* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, 1961) – was revised and republished under Brichto's editorship.

⁶⁵ Bayfield in conversation with this writer, 23 July 2008. See also note 80 below, and Postscript, p.80.

mutter under our breath: 'We need a lucky Chief Rabbi.' Instead, we seem to have a Duke of York. What we have missed is sufficient evidence of a deep, unstoppable passion to fight the good fight, to give 110 per cent. In a global society rocked by the potential clash of civilisations, the Chief Rabbi adopts a policy of 'wait-and-see' instead of setting out his stall clearly and without ambivalence.

For all his difficulties, the Chief Rabbi remains gifted both as an orator and thinker. He would do well to consider throwing off the chains of office and giving himself the freedom and independence that would allow his undoubted talents to be expressed to the full. He would be a formidable exponent of Jewish ideals and would attract many supporters. I am aware that his praetorian guard will immediately rally to his side and try to persuade him to stay on as Chief Rabbi, but even they, I suspect, will be acting out of loyalty rather than conviction. In this dangerous time for world Jewry, can we afford a low-key leadership?⁶⁶

As predicted, no sooner was Kalms' piece in print than the 'praetorian guard' rallied to Sacks' side. 'It is not surprising,' wrote Radlett minister Gideon Sylvester,

that over the last few months a number of criticisms have appeared in this newspaper condemning the work of the Chief Rabbi. While it is undoubtedly true that he has made mistakes, these polemics have failed to credit some real achievements ... Jewish tradition recognises that even our leaders may make mistakes, but where they recognise them and correct them, their leadership remains not just undiminished, but greater. The Chief Rabbi has discovered that trying to please the entire community all of the time does not work. Stanley Kalms may be correct to identify the problems associated with endless attempts at consensus and compromise. But as the Chief Rabbi emerges as his own man, implementing his own philosophy, we will be the beneficiaries.⁶⁷

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At the heart of the lengthy and acrimonious dispute in the early 1970s over the religious status of the Progressives at the Board of Deputies⁶⁸ lay the role within the Board of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations, and the Haham of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation. Clause 43 of the Board's constitution – stating that it 'shall be guided on religious matters' by these two ecclesiastical heads – was a source of long-standing concern to the Reform and Liberal movements, which had sought a similar role for their own religious leaders, and which had threatened on several occasions to leave the Board if this was not effected. The dispute was settled at a meeting of deputies on 24 October 1971, when – by 228 votes to seven – they

⁶⁶ Kalms, 'Time for the Chief Rabbi to step down?' in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 December 2003, p.20.

⁶⁷ Sylvester, 'Tough at the top,' in *ibid*, 2 January 2004, p.20.

⁶⁸ See *Faith Against Reason*, chapter 18. Full accounts of the dispute are in Bornstein and Homa, *Tell It In Gath: British Jewry and Clause 43 – The Inside Story* (London, privately published, 1972), for the Orthodox; and, for the Progressives, Langdon, 'The Place of Reform in Anglo-Jewry Today,' in *A Genuine Search*, ed., Dow Marmur (London: Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, 1979), pp.239-255.

voted to amend the clause, requiring the Board henceforth 'to consult with those designated by such groups and congregations as their respective religious leaders on religious matters in any matter whatsoever concerning them.'⁶⁹

In protest, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations quit the Board, never to return, and the Federation of Synagogues absented itself for a two-year stretch. However, under pressure from a growing number of right-wingers within the United Synagogue, a campaign in 1984 succeeded in introducing a 'code of practice' into the renumbered Clause 74, making it mandatory for the Board 'to follow the guidance of its ecclesiastical authorities, and to support such guidance in all ways possible and with all due speed.'

The code allowed for groups and organisations not under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities 'to be notified in writing of any action the Board intends to take in accordance with the guidance of those authorities.' But the Progressives failed in committee to add a stipulation that, 'in the absence of a consensus, the Board must inform those seeking its advice or opinion that a minority view is held by some sections of the community.' The Reformers were nonplussed. 'What is the use of consultations,' they asked of their own position, 'if the guidance of the ecclesiastical authorities is mandatory?'⁷⁰

That very point, crucial to the present discussion, was taken up by Jack Wolkind, former chairman of a Board of Deputies working party which, a decade earlier, had recommended fundamental changes in its structure and administration. Delivering a public lecture in London,⁷¹ he commented on the Clause 74 ambiguities:

The clause stipulates that, in religious matters, the Board shall be guided by the ecclesiastical authorities, who, for this purpose, are the Chief Rabbi and the religious head of the Sephardi community. I have some doubt as to whether the words 'shall be guided by' can be read as a mandatory duty to act in accordance with the advice of the ecclesiastical authorities. Nor do I understand what seems to me to have been a contradictory line taken in past years, as illustrated by this extract from a letter written by the Board's then president in 1971: 'We have

⁶⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 October 1971, p.6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 21 December 1984, p.4

⁷¹ Wolkind, *London and its Jewish Community*, annual West Central Lecture delivered at University College London, 13 June 1985 (London: West Central Counselling and Community Research, 1985), pp.1-26. Wolkind (1920-1997) was chief executive, and former town clerk, of Tower Hamlets and an adviser to the London Boroughs Association and Association of Metropolitan Authorities. In 1974, he headed a working party set up by Lord Fisher of Camden, the Board of Deputies' president, to recommend changes in its structure and administration. His committee members included Harold Langdon, Sidney Frosh and Louis Mintz, each of whom played a significant role in the communal controversies of the Brodie and Jakobovits Chief Rabbinate.

always assumed that the words “the Board shall be guided on religious matters... by the ecclesiastical authorities” are mandatory and mean, *inter alia*, that the Board cannot act contrarily to the guidance it receives from the ecclesiastical authorities.’ However, the letter goes on: ‘The Board must always reserve the right to decide for itself what course it should take in the light of that guidance.’

I find it difficult to read those two extracts without coming upon an apparent contradiction. If the Board regards the acceptance of what is described as ‘guidance’ as being mandatory, how can it at the same time reserve the right to decide what course to take in the light of that guidance? Moreover, if, as claimed by the Orthodox representatives, the acceptance of the guidance of the ecclesiastical authorities is mandatory on the Board of Deputies, what meaning is to be given to the requirement, in the same clause of the Board’s constitution, to consult those designated by the Progressive movement? What is the worth and significance of any such consultation?

And why was it necessary to raise the issue in this manner, when it must have been known that to do so was to run the risk of causing a major rift in the Board and, thereby, in the Jewish community? That such a rift was averted should make us all the more vigilant to ensure that the risk is not taken again. We can do without these potentially explosive issues: the community faces enough problems without striving to manufacture new ones. I see no reason why the Progressives should not have been allowed the opportunity of expressing what, inevitably at present, would be – and would be seen to be – a minority opinion, and clearly stated as such.

I know this solution was rejected by some of my good friends in the Orthodox community. In the first issue of the United Synagogue’s new magazine, *The Path*, Sidney Frosh, a respected honorary officer, wrote: ‘Can one imagine the credence that would be given to representations by the Board which were accompanied by comments that there are those who disagree with the views being proposed? It is our view that, under such circumstances, the representations would have very little credibility.’⁷²

I regret I cannot accept that view. The expression of a minority view does not weaken or denigrate a majority view. A decision of, say, the Court of Appeal is no less binding because one of the justices expresses a minority view; nor does a minority dissenting view among, say, members of a Royal Commission downgrade the authority of the majority view. What these expressions of minority opinion do, however, is to make clear that there is another opinion.

The view was expressed in some quarters during the Clause 74 incident that it might be better if the Board were relieved of its duty of having to consider matters of a religious nature. This, I believe, merits further consideration. One might ask, perhaps, whether there is a case for disestablishment.

In a civilised society, it ought to be possible to differ without either party abusively questioning the sincerity of the other. Whenever this happens, it is not only painful, but it does considerable harm to the Jewish community. Of course there are fundamental differences between the Orthodox and Progressives, but do they have to be accompanied by sour, bitter and abusive comments?

Some suggest that, in matters of principle, there is no room for compromise, though I have doubts about this. We are not being asked to accept views and practices that are contrary to our strongly held principles; but we should, and must,

⁷² Frosh, ‘Clause 74 And All That,’ in *Hamesilah [The Path]*, Pesach 5745 (London: United Synagogue, 1985), pp.24-25. Frosh was president of the United Synagogue.

be asked to respect the sincerity of those who hold those views and who follow those practices – and, moreover, to work for the good of the community with *all* others, whatever their religious convictions.

* * * * *

A disestablished Rabbinate – designated as ‘a,’ not ‘the,’ by the 1870 Jewish United Synagogues Act – and Board of Deputies would pave the way for the elevation of the Board’s president as the recognised leader of an inclusivist, if not pluralistic, Anglo-Jewry. The United Hebrew Congregations, of which the Chief Rabbi is the titular head though not ‘his own man,’ now constitute less than one-half of the community in nominal terms, and far less in terms of Orthodox allegiance.⁷³ No other synagogal movement accepts his jurisdiction, and many have called for the abolition of his office. His authority is undermined by his own Beth Din, and his ‘mistakes’ have been acknowledged both by himself and by his own rabbis. His ‘kingmaker’ and former patron has twice urged him to resign, while many of his supporters – and not a few of his opponents – credit him more as a writer and orator than for his communal input.⁷⁴

⁷³ Astonishingly, as recently as 1979 – some fifteen years after the establishment of the New London Synagogue, with the Liberals, Reform and Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations making similarly significant advances, and in the face of Jakobovits’ own contemporaneous anxieties (see the Epilogue to *Faith Against Reason*, pp.383-386) – sociologist Stephen Sharot felt able to assert: ‘The “Central Orthodox” position, as exemplified by the United Synagogue, remains the dominant one in London Jewry, and there is no sign that this is likely to change in the near future’ (‘Reform and Liberal Judaism in London: 1840–1940,’ in *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. XLI, New York: Conference on Jewish Social Studies, 1979, p.225). Only two years earlier, Jakobovits had declared: ‘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 secularisation – sometimes via various progressive half-way houses – from the left’ (‘An Analysis of Religious Versus Secularist Trends in Anglo-Jewry, Especially During the Past Fifteen Years,’ in *Jewish Life in Britain, 1962–1977*, ed., Sonia L. Lipman and Vivian D. Lipman, New York/Munich/London/Paris: K. G. Saur, 1981, p.144). Statistics on synagogue membership adduced in the Preface to *Faith Against Reason*, the views of former ‘Central Orthodox’ worshippers – and of Kalms himself – cited in *A Time for Change*, and the sequence of events described throughout this context statement all demonstrate the fallacy of Sharot’s prognostication, if by ‘near future’ is meant the rising generation.

⁷⁴ In a comment to this writer (26 August 2008), one such supporter (and critic) – a former lay executive of the United Synagogue – contends: ‘Externally, Sacks’ record as Chief Rabbi is superb, having raised the prestige of the Chief Rabbinate, Anglo-Jewry and himself to great heights in the eyes of the Gentile world. Within the Jewish community, however, his record is not good, partly because he fails to understand how his statements and actions impact on ordinary people, and partly because he lacks the courage and drive to take a stand on anything in which he really believes. He lacks the backbone to make a decision and stick to it, and this is glaringly obvious behind his public presence and the glamour of his speeches. He began his “Decade of Renewal,” for example, by initiating a two-volume report on “Women in the Jewish Community” [London: Office of the Chief Rabbi, 1994], but it has produced virtually nothing in the long term, and certainly nothing of significance.’ An upcoming appraisal of the report’s progress, adds this critic in relation to its languishing state, ‘will be damning.’

In a similar vein, religious-affairs journalist and associate editor Paul Vallely writes (‘Jonathan Sacks: Defender of the Faith,’ in *The Independent*, 8 September 2001, Comment section, p.5): ‘If Dr Sacks is lauded as a thoughtful and devoted leader by the wider community, he is a prophet with significantly less honour among his own people. The *Jewish Chronicle* is currently running an Internet

At the outset of the period surveyed by *Faith Against Reason*, the climate allowed for an overarching religious leader, though it became clear over time that his influence was waning – and his approach counter-productive – as his constituency declined. As each movement emerged, so, too, did the need for a redistribution of authority. Sacks' record has demonstrated that, in today's Anglo-Jewry, *the* Chief Rabbinate has run its course,⁷⁵ and that the time has come to find a successor. In so doing, the community's leaders, to whom the 'Jewish Papacy' is largely anachronistic, might well heed the words of an astute and far-sighted observer commenting, a century ago, on factional strife.

Writing during the lengthy interregnum following the Chief Rabbi's death,⁷⁶ he noted that,

to all outward appearance, Anglo-Jewry has not changed an atom through the absence of this functionary ... The idea that the failure to find a Chief Rabbi will be disastrous deserves to be analysed a little more closely. Disastrous to whom? Of course to the candidates who are not successful; but then we are presumably dealing with a serious subject. Apart from these victims, it is not so easy to locate the expected calamity. Shall we say, to the community as a whole?

A cry is raised in some quarters that the unity and solidarity of the community are in danger. Unity and solidarity: nice names to play with; but do they stand for anything that the community really wants, that it could not perfectly dispense with? If they stand for the state of things which prevailed under the rule of the late Chief Rabbi [Hermann Adler] – well, it has already been demonstrated that the

poll on the question "Have Jonathan Sacks' first ten years as Chief Rabbi been a success?" Voting is still going on, but at one point yesterday a resounding 71 per cent had voted "No" ... From the outset, the paradox was that a man trained in the philosophical tradition of suspecting everything had taken on the job of a spokesman for an institutional tradition that meant, in the discourse of his university peers, defending the rationally indefensible. "From the beginning," says one who knows him well, "it induced in him a kind of intellectual schizophrenia. He was the wrong man for the job" ... In an attempt to modernise the role of women in Orthodoxy, he set up the equivalent of a Jewish royal commission. Two years later, it reported with recommendations for sweeping changes in social and religious rules, which included a Jewish singles dating agency, reform of the divorce system, and changes to prayer ceremonies and rituals to make them more relevant to the spiritual needs of women worshippers. But the main recommendations were, in the words of one critic, "booted into the long grass." Many of Dr Sacks' most ardent admirers became disillusioned ... Critics saw a terrible inevitability in it all. "The previous Chief Rabbi had believed it all unquestioningly," said one insider. "But Jonathan's western education set up a tension for him. His trouble is that he has never known quite where to position himself between the diehard traditionalists and an openness to modernity."

⁷⁵ Alderman touches on this theme in 'The British Chief Rabbinate: a Most Peculiar Practice,' in *European Judaism*, Vol. 23, No. 2, autumn 1990, pp.45-58; 'Power, Authority and Status in British Jewry: The Chief Rabbinate and Shechita,' in *Outsiders and Outcasts: Essays in Honour of William J. Fishman*, eds., G. Alderman and C. Holmes (London: Duckworth, 1993), pp.12-31; *Anglo-Jewry: A Suitable Case for Treatment* (and appendix, *Albert Road: An Everyday Story of Jewish Folk*), Egham: Royal Holloway & Bedford New College, 1990, pp.1-41; 'The defence of shechita: Anglo-Jewry and the "humane conditions" regulations of 1990,' in *new community* 21(1), January 1995, pp.79-93; 'The Disunited Synagogue: Public Quarrels, Fragmentation and Disarray,' in *Judaism Today*, No. 4, spring 1996, London: Assembly of Masorti Synagogues.

⁷⁶ Hermann Adler had died in July 1911, and Hertz was not elected until February 1913.

community, as such, has been at least no worse off since it has been left to its own devices; and what it could do during those twelve months it can surely go on doing for an indefinite period longer. So long as the community is free from scandals, it may be said to have as much 'unity' and 'solidarity' as it requires; and to judge from experience, it is more likely to enjoy this freedom without a Chief Rabbi than with one.⁷⁷

The point is worth reinforcing. One hundred years on, despite what Kalms calls 'the sticking-plaster that holds the community together,' Anglo-Jewry is more fragmented and disputatious than ever. In a polarising world, the Jews of Britain – steadily shrinking in number and affiliation – have little to celebrate. Few see signs of unity, let alone uniformity; many (if not most) regard the Chief Rabbinate as divisive, and would not miss it should it cease to exist. Nathan Adler's incumbency peaked with Orthodox rebellion, while his son saw the 'old paths' wither away. Hertz failed to halt the Liberal advance; Brodie the emergence of Masorti; and Jakobovits the crumbling of his 'bridges of understanding.'⁷⁸

Sacks opened his Chief Rabbinate with a clarion response to the 'challenge' posed by the Kalms review. 'Now,' he declared, 'is a time for religious leadership if ever there was one; and we must not be found wanting.'⁷⁹ In recent years, his 'Coalition for Peace in the Community' has battled itself – and inclusivism – out of the picture.⁸⁰ Under a new leadership structure, things can only get better.

⁷⁷ 'The Chief Rabbinate – And After': 'M.S.' in *The Zionist*, Vol. 3, No. 3, August 1912, pp.38-39.

⁷⁸ The phrase was first used by Jakobovits in a pre-Chief Rabbinical letter to the Progressive journal *Pointer* (London: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, spring 1967), p.4.

⁷⁹ See Epilogue to *Faith Against Reason*, p.390, and Sacks, 'The Challenge,' in *A Time for Renewal*, pp.20-21.

⁸⁰ Noting that the Consultative Committee established by the Stanmore Accords – the progenitor of Sacks' 'Coalition for Peace in the Community' – was required to meet quarterly, and that the United Synagogue, as a result of its 'stultified preoccupation' with the right-wing sector of the community (see Appendix III below, and p.73 above), 'has undergone a profound change' in recent times, Bayfield told this writer (23 July 2008): 'The Consultative Committee has not met in more than six months and we are now considering how on earth we can work with a United Synagogue that refuses to budge.' See also Postscript overleaf.

POSTSCRIPT

*'Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: "Hashem [God], protect my family and me – especially my son-in-law who is involved with Limmud.¹ Forgive me my sins, and get the Beth Din off my back – and off my books. Make the Jews love me as much as the goyim [Gentiles] do. And by Jews I mean the Orthodox, of course."*²

Things did not necessarily get better, but they certainly changed tack. As this context statement was reaching its conclusion – and as Bayfield had predicted³ – the Stanmore Accords looked increasingly threatened. Without so much as mentioning the agreement by name, and eschewing any direct reference to the Chief Rabbinate or to their Orthodox partner, the United Synagogue, the religious and lay leaders of Liberal, Masorti and Reform Judaism – embracing, as they put it, ‘around a third of British Jewry’ – launched ‘a major shift in the way in which the various synagogue movements representing the UK’s quarter of a million-strong Jewish community behave towards each other.’ The initiative, they asserted, ‘is in part prompted by growing Jewish fundamentalism, which is exclusive and judgmental. The Jewish community cannot afford to divide against itself, and we call for a new voice that is open, tolerant, collaborative and respectful.’⁴ In what they described as ‘A Statement on Communal Collaboration,’ the leaders declared:

Pluralism means living creatively with diversity. It is based on treating other groups and their philosophies with respect, while maintaining the right to uphold the value of one’s own position. Diversity is a reality within the British Jewish community; true

¹ Anglo-Jewry’s leading, and most popular, cross-communal adult education organisation, drawing support from all sectors – central Orthodox to Progressive to secularist – but boycotted by Sacks and proscribed by the London Beth Din and the Chief Rabbinate from United Synagogue ministerial participation. In the statement referred to below (note 5), the signatories write of the organisation: ‘Perhaps the most inspiring example of pluralism to benefit our community is Limmud, which began in Britain and has spread throughout the Jewish world. A key feature of its success is that it welcomes both teachers and students from all the movements within Judaism today, and from none.’

² Columnist and comment editor Miriam Shaviv in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 August 2008, p.25, mimicking Barack Obama’s plea to God deposited in Jerusalem’s Western (Wailing) Wall and subsequently removed (by a yeshivah student, who later apologised) and published in the Israeli daily, *Maariv* (25 July 2008, p.1). Written on the letterhead of the King David Hotel, where he was staying, Obama’s note read: ‘Lord – protect my family and me. Forgive me my sins, and help me guard against pride and despair. Give me the wisdom to do what is right and just. And make me an instrument of your will.’

³ See chapter 4 of this paper, pp.72-73 and note 80.

⁴ News release sent by Bayfield to this writer, dated 4 September 2008, embargoed to 12 September 2008.

pluralism is, as yet, not. We believe that British Jewry both needs and deserves better. ... Wisdom dictates that our small community (267,000, and shrinking inexorably at the rate of 1 per cent each year) is best served by a leadership which embraces the values of pluralism and acts accordingly ... Respect for those who hold different positions from ourselves must begin with our leaders. We therefore resolve to treat one another accordingly, honouring the titles and status of rabbis and teachers, and instructing our communities to do likewise ...

Pluralism is not the same as spineless acquiescence. Debate, even to the extent of impassioned argument, is not only legitimate in Judaism, it has always been considered a positive value, so long as it is for the sake of Heaven. We therefore encourage informed and creative dialogue and disagreement. But we undertake to do our best never to let this descend to the delegitimisation of the rights of others to hold to the integrity of their positions ...

We believe that synagogue organisations need to model a pluralist manner of co-operative working in Britain, remembering the message of the Midrash that the Second Temple was destroyed on account of *sinat chinam*, causeless hatred between factions. Co-operation for the sake of Heaven, *l'shem shamayim*, is a profound religious value.⁵

On the future of the Stanmore Accords, in light of the statement and his perception of the United Synagogue's direction and focus, Bayfield was sceptical about their viability:

The Consultative Committee will meet [in due course] to discuss our proposals. We shall want to continue meeting, though probably with three people representing Reform, Liberal and Masorti rather than nine. And we want the United Synagogue to field a senior rabbi, as it was supposed to do under the [Stanmore] agreement but never consistently did.

In a nutshell, we are saying that the United Synagogue has changed its focus. Fifteen years ago, when Jonathan Sacks wrote *One People?*, the agenda was about keeping the Jewish people together by whatever devices were necessary. Today, the US is becoming increasingly *chareidi*-ised [ultra-Orthodox], and its focus is entirely on the needs of the traditionally observant community. It lives in constant fear of having its authority questioned by the far right, which is why it has become more and more *l'chumreh* [strict] on kashrut, conversion and schools admissions. Whether Jonathan Sacks is a willing partner of that focus or a prisoner, who knows?

We are saying that 80 per cent of the community will not respond to *chareidi* Judaism. Will the United Synagogue join us in a more inclusive, pluralistic approach to the diverse needs of that 80 per cent? If 'yes,' fine. If, as we suspect, the answer is 'no,' we will get on with providing the leadership, the initiatives, the thinking and the

⁵ *A Statement on Communal Collaboration*, signed by Nigel Cole, chair, Liberal Judaism; Michael Gluckman, executive director, Assembly of Masorti Synagogues; Stephen Moss, chair, Movement for Reform Judaism; Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield, head, Movement for Reform Judaism; Rabbi Danny Rich, chief executive, Liberal Judaism; Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, senior rabbi, Assembly of Masorti Synagogues (London, 4 September 2008). The full text appears below in Appendix III (pp.88-89). The announcement preceding publication of the statement, quoted above, gave Reform representation at 20 per cent, Liberal at 8 per cent, and Masorti at 6 per cent of British Jewry. It added: 'The three movements span from the progressive to the traditional, both in their practices and in their attitudes to Jewish law.'

programmes that are needed. Ultimately, this is about not writing off the mainstream of the community and not settling for just a *chareidi* rump in the year 2050.⁶

Responding to the statement and, indirectly, to Bayfield's remarks, former United Synagogue president Elkan Levy – at whose home (it will be recalled) the accords were signed almost exactly ten years earlier – lays the possible 'abandonment' of the Stanmore agreement firmly at the door of the non-Orthodox movements. 'They have,' he contends, 'unreasonable expectations of what is possible within Orthodox Judaism.'⁷ Their ignorance of Orthodoxy is very deep and very real, summed up by the Liberal woman rabbi who was convinced that, within a decade, the United Synagogue, too, would have women rabbis.' The Hugo Gryn controversy that led to the accords was, suggests Levy,

a tacit admission by the Reform that the Chief Rabbinate somehow encompassed them, that Sacks' presence at the funeral would have lent credence to the religious nature of the ceremony. This itself is strange: if, as they maintain, they are a self-confident and self-sufficient communion, why did they crave the presence of a religious leader whose authority, they say, means nothing to them?⁸

Meanwhile, the outcome of the new initiative awaits – in the language of the Chief Rabbi's reference to his own anticipated failures – 'another way, another time.'

⁶ Bayfield to this writer, 9 September 2008. Supporting Bayfield's view, an unnamed 'source close to the group behind the document' told the *Jewish Chronicle* (12 September 2008, p.1): 'The Chief Rabbi and the United Synagogue have to face up to the consequence of having moved from being the de facto leadership of the whole of the community to having become the vehicle for the fundamentalist revival.' Asked if he expected the United Synagogue to sign up to the new platform, he said: 'On balance, sadly, no. But we would love to be proved wrong.' He explained that it had been decided to publicise the statement rather than circulate it privately because 'otherwise we will have another umpteen years of frustration and inertia.'

⁷ On this point, the *Jewish Chronicle* noted of the statement: 'Some Orthodox readers will struggle to get past even the first word. That is because the joint declaration begins with the dreaded p-word – "pluralism." Indeed, the very mention of the bogey term, even if not intended to be provocative, may prove hard for the Orthodox establishment to swallow' ('Trouble with unity,' leading article, 12 September 2008, p.40).

⁸ Levy to this writer, 10 September 2008. In response to Bayfield's comment on the absence of a United Synagogue rabbinical representative on the Consultative Committee for much of the decade, Levy admitted that 'it was a real mistake on my part not to ensure that a US rabbi was appointed to the committee. Having Malcolm Weisman [the non-rabbinical religious adviser to the small communities] as the US representative – in the capacity of so-called "Orthodox rabbinic leader" – was a way for the Chief Rabbi to avoid the issue.' Weisman's role on the committee came under fire at the 'informal meeting' held at Sacks' home in February 2002 (see chapter 4, note 46), when 'Paul Shrank [Masorti] and Jeromé Freedman [Liberal] were both disappointed that there was no US rabbinic representative on the committee, Malcolm Weisman only representing Jonathan Sacks and not being an employee of the US' (from notes compiled by Freedman and Shrank, copies in this writer's possession). Following the new statement, US president and Chief Rabbinate Trust chairman Simon Hochhauser reaffirmed 'our commitment that the US will include a senior rabbi at all meetings.' But in other disputed areas – 'recognising our boundaries' – he upheld the status quo: 'On Jewish education and halachah we agree to differ, with respect and dignity' (*JC*, 19 September 2008, p.39).

APPENDIX I

Resolutions on Matters Relating to the Office of the Chief Rabbi, passed at Meetings of the Several Metropolitan and Provincial Congregations, the Great Synagogue, London, 19 and 21 February 1843

1. That this Conference, having heard the Resolutions of the Committee of the Great Synagogue on 14 November last, are of opinion that it is desirable that a Chief Rabbi be appointed, duly authorised as the Spiritual Guide and Director of all the Jews of this Empire.
2. That the amount required for the maintenance of the dignity of the office of Chief Rabbi be raised by sums to be contributed by the various Congregations in the Empire, in such manner as shall be hereafter agreed upon.
3. That no person be admitted a Candidate unless he be a Chief Rabbi, and must have held such office at least six months immediately preceding the death of the late lamented Rev Solomon Hirschell.
4. That each Candidate shall present to the Committee testimonials of ability from Chief Rabbis and others, and shall be expected to be well acquainted with Ancient Classical and Modern General Literature, and to have a competent knowledge of some of the Modern European Languages.
5. That he shall be able to deliver Discourses when required; and the successful Candidate will be expected to qualify himself to deliver such Discourses in the English Language, within two years from the date of his appointment.
6. That the Candidates shall not be under thirty, nor above forty-two years of age, at Rosh Hashanah 5603.
7. That a Committee, consisting of the same number and in the same proportion as compose this Conference (of whom eleven shall form a quorum), be appointed by the several uniting London Congregations to select Candidates, and that from the number of Candidates for the vacant office, not less than two, nor more than five, be returned for election.
8. That it is desirable, in the election of Chief Rabbi, the votes of each Synagogue be taken separately, agreeably to their own regulations; but that the Candidate returned by each Synagogue be taken as having each a number of votes estimated, according to the amount subscribed by such Congregation, on the following Scale:-

<u>Per Annum</u>			<u>Per Annum</u>		
£5, and under £10,	1	Vote	£50, and under £75,	10	Votes
£10, " £15,	2	"	£75, " £100,	20	"
£15, " £20,	3	"	£100, " £150,	25	"
£20, " £25,	4	"	£150, " £200,	30	"
£25, " £30,	5	"	£200, " £300,	35	"
£30, " £40,	6	"	£300, " £400,	40	"
£40, " £50,	8	"	£400, and upwards	50	"

9. That this Conference is of opinion that the Salary of the intended Chief Rabbi should be not less than £1100 per annum, which shall include the payment of an efficient Secretary, and the sum of £100 annually for a Life Assurance (such Policy of Insurance to be considered as a provision for the family of the Chief Rabbi after his decease), but shall be irrespective of what may be required for the annual payment of an Ecclesiastical Board.
10. That the Delegation for the Great Synagogue having stated their intention to recommend their Congregation to subscribe an annual amount of £500 (irrespective of what they now contribute to the Ecclesiastical Board), the several Congregations in London and the Provinces be requested to intimate to the Secretary, by letter, or through their representative, on or before 20 March next, the amount they will be willing to contribute towards the annual fund required for the purpose.
11. That the Honorary Officers, and three of the committee of the Great Synagogue, together with the Honorary Officers (for the time being) of the other London uniting Synagogues, do constitute a permanent committee, with which the Chief Rabbi may communicate, when necessary, on any subject relative to the exercise of the duties of his office, through the medium of the President of the Great Synagogue.
12. That should it unfortunately happen that the Rav should fail in his duty, the conjoint committee, composed as above, shall in the first instance inquire into the matter; and, if they deem it requisite, convene a meeting of twenty-three Delegates (to be elected by the vestries of the London uniting congregations, in the same proportion as constitute this conference), and such body, consisting of the conjoint committee and delegates, shall, after investigation, be empowered to do what is just and necessary.

13. That the Chief Rabbi shall have the general religious direction and superintendence of each of the uniting congregations.
14. That he shall determine all questions on religious points referred to him by any member of any such congregation.
15. That he shall deliver Discourses in the several Synagogues, at such times as shall be hereafter arranged.
16. That he shall perform the Marriage Ceremony for the Members and Seatholders of all the uniting London congregations, their widows and children, under such regulations as shall be hereafter agreed upon.
17. That he shall superintend the affairs of Shechitah, both in London and the Provinces, assisted by the gentlemen of the Beth Din, under such regulations as may be adopted by the conjoint committee of the Shechitah.
18. That he shall determine all religious matters referred to him by any of the Subscribing Provincial Congregations, and shall give *hatarat kiddushin*, without fee, on receiving a request from the President of any such Congregation, provided he see no cause to withhold such permission, and shall give *kabbalah* when a Shochet is required.
19. That he shall be recommended to visit the Public Educational Establishments, and to assist in carrying out their objects.
20. That he shall on no account denounce *cherem* (anathema) against any person; neither shall he deprive any member of his religious rights in the Synagogue, without the consent of the Committee of the Congregation to which such person shall belong.
21. That he shall occasionally visit the country, to superintend the religious condition of the Provincial Congregations, at such periods as his duties in London will permit; the mode of disbursement to be arranged at a future meeting.
22. That copies of the foregoing Resolutions be forwarded to the Presidents of each of the Metropolitan and Provincial Synagogues, and to the Colonies.
23. That the cordial thanks of this meeting be given to Isaac Cohen, Esq, for his very able and impartial conduct in the Chair.

APPENDIX II

Original and revised passages in Jonathan Sacks, The Dignity of Difference (London and New York: Continuum, first edition, 2002; revised edition with new preface, 2003)

ORIGINAL (First Edition, September 2002)

Here I have not hesitated to be radical and I have deliberately chosen to express that radicalism in religious terms. [p.17]

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are religions of revelation – faiths in which God speaks and we attempt to listen. [p.19]

The glory of the created world is its astonishing multiplicity: the thousands of different languages ... the hundreds of faiths, the proliferation of cultures ... in most of which ... we will hear the voice of God. [p.21]

God has created many cultures, civilisations, and faiths, but only one world. [p.23]

Judaism is a particularist monotheism. It believes in one God but not in one religion, one culture, one truth. *The God of Abraham is the God of all mankind, but the faith of Abraham is not the faith of all mankind.* [pp.52-53]

The radical transcendence of God in the Hebrew Bible means nothing more or less than that *there is a difference between God and religion*. God is universal, religions are particular ... In the course of history, God has spoken to mankind in many languages: through Judaism to Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Moslems. [p.55]

... no one creed has a monopoly on spiritual truth ... [p.62]

In heaven there is truth; on earth there are truths. Therefore, each culture has something to contribute. [p.64-65]

The way I have discovered ... is that the truth at the beating heart of monotheism is that God is greater than religion; that He is only partially comprehended by any faith. He is my God, but also your God. He is on my side, but also on your side. He exists not only in my faith, but also in yours. [p.65]

REVISED (Second Edition, February 2003)

Here I have not hesitated to return to the very sources of Western monotheism to ask what God wants of us. [p.17]

Deleted.

The glory of the created world is its astonishing multiplicity: the thousands of different languages ... the proliferation of cultures ... in most of which ... we will hear the voice of wisdom. [pp.20-21]

There are many cultures, civilisations and faiths, but God has given us only one world ... [p.23]

Judaism ... believes in one God but not in one exclusive path to salvation. *The God of the Israelites is the God of all mankind, but the demands made of the Israelites are not asked of all mankind.* [p.52]

The radical transcendence of God in the Hebrew Bible means that the Infinite lies beyond our finite understanding ... As Jews we believe that God has made a covenant with a singular people, but that does not exclude the possibility of other peoples, cultures and faiths finding their own relationship with God within the shared frame of the Noahide laws. [p.55]

Deleted.

Each culture has something to contribute to the totality of human wisdom. [p.64]

The way I have discovered ... is that the truth at the beating heart of monotheism is that God transcends the particularities of culture and the limits of human understanding. He is my God, but also the God of all mankind, even of those whose customs and way of life are unlike mine. [p.65]

APPENDIX III

The Stanmore Accords, signed by the lay leaders of the United Synagogue, Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, and Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, Stanmore, Middlesex, 3 November 1998– 14 Cheshvan 5759

A Statement to the Jewish Community

As lay leaders of different sections of the Jewish community, and for ourselves, we, like many members of Anglo-Jewry, have been perturbed and distressed by the divisions and dissension which have become the more apparent since the death of Rabbi Hugo Gryn, of blessed memory. It is inevitable that with different principles and practices there exist profound differences of belief calculated to stir deep emotions and impatience. These deep divisions within the Jewish community have existed for more than a century. It would be wrong to minimise or ignore them. They are not unique to our Anglo-Jewish community. We have seen them developing not only in Israel, but in many lands in the diaspora. It is not surprising, since fundamental concepts of Jewish life are in issue: divorce, conversion – indeed, the question itself as to who is a Jew.

The Jewish community is damaged by in-fighting and mutual recrimination. It harms us internally and externally. Internally, the spectacle of Jew attacking Jew has a harmful effect on the community, its members and its morale. It tends to show Jews and Judaism in a negative light and to obscure the positive achievements of the community, our community, and the inspiring values of Judaism itself. Externally, it compromises the unity we have hitherto been able to bring to matters of great importance, the support of Israel, welfare and defence among them. It would be wrong to suppose that our differences and divisions preclude peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and a considerable measure of co-operation on matters which are not divisive. There is a distinction to be drawn between substantive matters of contention and the protocols of respect and mutual courtesy which can and should exist between those who hold profoundly different views.

The substantive points of conflict within the community cannot be resolved quickly. That does not mean they should not be tackled. But to predicate harmonious relationships on their resolution is to defer indefinitely the quest of us all for communal peace. To that end, a set of understandings and conventions will reduce the level of acrimony now and in the foreseeable future. With these considerations in mind, and with the approval of our religious leaders, there have been discussions between us with a view to establishing certain protocols of behaviour, reaching certain understandings and clarifying certain conventions, thereby avoiding misunderstandings, resentments and the suspicion of an offence when none may be intended. We commit ourselves unreservedly to the pursuit of communal peace and co-operation.

Let it be said that mutual respect and co-operation on matters which are not divisive will be achieved only if there is a recognition of the sincerity of one another's point of view, and an understanding that certain beliefs and traditions impose limits on conduct and beliefs which are to be regarded as acceptable. The absence of recognition does not entail the absence of respect. No section of the community should ask or expect any other to act against its convictions, or embarrass it for being consistent with its principles; no group should seek to exploit difference for sectional ends; and when shared activity or common ground is sought, the search for it should be with due recognition for the sensitivities of the various participants. Any discussion should be conducted in a mutually respectful manner and tone. We therefore wish the annexed conventions of Orthodox communities which are adopted by the United Synagogue to be widely known and recognised.

This statement is but a step to bring about a more harmonious and productive relationship between the several sections of the community. Much remains for consideration, and we will seek to deal with problems when they arise, each of us consulting our own religious leaders. We have accordingly agreed to take early steps to renew and revise the Consultative Committee with a view to continuing to deal with the whole subject of communal relations. Terms of reference have been agreed and are annexed hereto.

We trust that this statement will lead to the diminution of dissension within a historic community.

Elkan D. Levy, President of the United Synagogue; **Neville Sassienie**, Chairman, Reform Synagogues of Great Britain; **Jeromé Freedman**, Chairperson, Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues; **Alex Sklan**, Co-Chairman, Assembly of Masorti Synagogues; **Paul Shrank**, Co-Chairman, Assembly of Masorti Synagogues.

Annexe 1: Conventions of Orthodox communities as adopted by the United Synagogue

Membership of a Reform, Liberal or Masorti congregation does not *ipso facto* prevent a Jew regarded as halachically Jewish by the Chief Rabbi or Beth Din from being called up or receiving a mitzvah at an Orthodox service.

Orthodox authorities do not recognise Reform, Liberal or Masorti conversions.

Where a marriage could have been solemnised in an Orthodox synagogue but the parties marry under Reform, Liberal or Masorti auspices, that fact does not provide any impediment to the children of such a marriage being recognised by Orthodox authorities as being halachically Jewish, and does not prevent their being admitted to Orthodox schools or marrying in an Orthodox synagogue.

Orthodox rabbis and ministers do not speak at or participate in Reform, Liberal and Masorti services. Their attendance at such services is within their discretion.[*] Orthodox bodies do not invite Reform, Liberal and Masorti rabbis and ministers to speak at or participate in services under Orthodox auspices.

*[*The sentence on attendance was subsequently deleted on the instructions of the London Beth Din.]*

Annexe 2: Consultative Committee – Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of the Consultative Committee is to provide a forum at which the main synagogal organisations of British Jewry can meet to discuss all relevant issues, in the interests of communal harmony and communal development.

Auspices

The Committee is an independent body, 'owned' by its constituent organisations.

Composition

Each grouping is to be represented at meetings by lay, professional and rabbinic leaders. Initially, it is anticipated that four synagogal bodies will participate – Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, and United Synagogue. Other synagogal bodies may be invited to join on an equal basis with the unanimous agreement of the 'founding four.' The President and Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies shall be invited to be in attendance.

Venue

The Committee will meet at a mutually acceptable venue.

Frequency of Meetings

The Committee itself will meet quarterly. It may set up sub-committees, strategy and project group which will take the work forward and which may meet at other times and other venues.

Chairing of Meetings

Participating bodies, in rotation, will nominate a chair for each meeting from their delegates.

A STATEMENT ON COMMUNAL COLLABORATION

*Signed by the lay and religious leaders of the Movement for Reform Judaism, Liberal Judaism,
and Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, London, 4 September 2008*

Pluralism means living creatively with diversity. It is based on treating other groups and their philosophies with respect, while maintaining the right to uphold the value of one's own position. Diversity is a reality within the British Jewish community; true pluralism is, as yet, not. We believe that British Jewry both needs and deserves better.

Wisdom dictates that our small community (267,000, and shrinking inexorably at the rate of 1 per cent each year) is best served by a leadership which embraces the values of pluralism and acts accordingly. Pragmatically, we cannot afford to duplicate the use of resources or waste them on denominational competition. If the Jewish community is to be renewed, it is manifestly obvious that we have to plan and work together. We acknowledge the challenges faced by the British Jewish community in terms of resources, and commit ourselves to avoiding destructive competition and needless duplication.

Perhaps the most inspiring example of pluralism to benefit our community is Limmud, which began in Britain and has spread throughout the Jewish world. A key feature of its success is that it welcomes both teachers and students from all the movements within Judaism today, and from none. But there are also other examples of respectful and creative cross-communal partnership, such as the UJIA and Jewish Care. These organisations model how we should behave towards one another.

Respect for those who hold different positions from ourselves must begin with our leaders. We therefore resolve to treat one another accordingly, honouring the titles and status of rabbis and teachers and instructing our communities to do likewise.

Such respect is no less the due of every individual, especially at sensitive times in the life cycle, including marriage, the celebration of namings, *brit* and *bnai mitzvah*, as well as during illness and after death. Whereas we acknowledge that there are significant differences between the movements on questions of personal status, we undertake to do our utmost to negotiate them in a spirit of respect for the dignity of each individual as created in the image of God. Whether at the *chuppah* or the cemetery, we resolve to work together as co-operatively as possible and to seek ways to prevent individuals from suffering because of the differences between our movements.

The values of pluralism must also influence the way in which we develop our institutions. We have every right to seek to further the goals of our own movements. But at the same time we recognise that there are many situations in which it is better to share than to squander limited financial and human resources on replication and competition. We resolve to bear this reality in mind at all times, and, even as we pursue our own objectives, to have as our primary aim the overall good of the whole community.

Pluralism is not the same as spineless acquiescence. Debate, even to the extent of impassioned argument, is not only legitimate in Judaism, it has always been considered a positive value, so long as it is for the sake of Heaven. We therefore encourage informed and creative dialogue and disagreement. But we undertake to do our best never to let this descend to the delegitimisation of the rights of others to hold to the integrity of their positions.

No less important than being able to disagree with dignity is our ability to agree, and to be seen to agree in public, so as to demonstrate leadership and solidarity on issues of vital and universal moral importance. These include opposition to racism and anti-Semitism, public stances regarding Israel, support of inter-faith initiatives, campaigns for justice, welfare, charity and the environment. We should not rely on external organisations to add us to their list of sponsors one at a time, but should be prepared, in appropriate contexts, to articulate Judaism's prophetic vision and values openly together.

We believe that synagogue organisations need to model a pluralist manner of co-operative working in Britain, remembering the message of the Midrash that the Second Temple was destroyed on account of *sinat chinam*, causeless hatred between factions. Co-operation for the sake of Heaven, *l'shem shamayim*, is a profound religious value.

There are many ways in which we differ. We have different approaches to that vast and distinctive Jewish inheritance – the halachic tradition. We use different prayer books, and our styles of services are different. We feel ourselves to be heirs to different Jewish cultural expressions (Ashkenazi, Sephardi, German, Eastern European, and American). These differences should be seen to add to the richness and diversity from which Jews of different tastes and temperaments can choose.

Areas for co-operation

We believe that for this to truly succeed we must move beyond just talking and look for areas where we can truly work together and demonstrate our commitment to these ideals. Such areas are many but would include:

Schools – We believe that this is one of the areas where there is a widespread consensus, namely, that one of the best ways of ensuring Jewish survival, the transmission of Judaism and a knowledgeable and committed Jewish community of the future is through Jewish day schools for all who seek such an education.

Students and young adults – Most of our students and young adults form one constituency and do not like to be ‘classified.’ They are our future, and supporting and nurturing them through this formative stage in their lives is critical. By working together we can avoid wasteful duplication and finance a well-resourced programme which responds to their needs.

Jewish Ethics – Judaism taught the world that God is the embodiment of the ethical and commands ethical action, the pursuit of justice and righteousness. We are committed to a Jewish ethical response to the cutting edge issues of our day – the environment, human rights, business ethics, medical ethics, development, the eradication of poverty. We know that no religious tradition contains all wisdom or possesses all the answers. We cannot repair the world on our own. We stress learning from others, working with others, networking, and partnership in advocacy.

Commitment to action

This document is not just a statement of principle, however important the principle. It is a commitment to work together for the sake of the Jewish community, the future of Judaism in Britain. As leaders, we have a responsibility to come together and demonstrate that we can truly work together.

Nigel Cole, Chair, Liberal Judaism; **Michael Gluckman**, Executive Director, Assembly of Masorti Synagogues; **Stephen Moss**, Chair, Movement for Reform Judaism; (Rabbi Dr) **Tony Bayfield**, Head, Movement for Reform Judaism; (Rabbi) **Danny Rich**, Chief Executive, Liberal Judaism; (Rabbi) **Jonathan Wittenberg**, Senior Rabbi, Assembly of Masorti Synagogues.

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