ghetto life and would not welcome Rabbi Brickman's discussion points.

But others might, providing his "universal religion" holds on to familiar ritual and retains identifiably Jewish points of reference. Though I admire those German Jews of the last century who launched the Reform project, in my opinion they went too far in dismissing liturgical and other heirlooms bequeathed by generations of their ancestors. Those who set out to reform religious thinking must show respect for custom and usage, unless they run directly counter to one's theological convictions. Reciting the wish to sacrifice animals in a rebuilt Temple or expressing the hope of witnessing the destruction of descendants of certain Semitic tribes exemplify the practices that Rabbi Brickman and I would eliminate on principle. But praying with a head covering, mostly in Hebrew, is something that a Jewish Religion would have to keep, to attract Jewish numbers, even if it also featured a universal theology and universal ethical rules.

Folk Memories

Ironically, it is persistent Jewish ethnicity and Jewish folk memories that may provide a possible foundation for a Jewish universal religion — just as Reformed Christian Churches combined universal theology with Scottish, Dutch, Swiss, or Hungarian ethnic consciousness. Though Jewish ethnicity may be unavoidable for Jewish identity, it can also work to create the demographic base for a genuinely spiritual enterprise. Jews for Jesus illustrate this possibility, even if their presumed Trinitarianism may be theologically incompatible with a specifically Jewish monotheism.

Like Rabbi Brickman, I am also disinclined to associate an American Jewish religion with any particular Zionist position. Adherents should be free to support or not support any political group in Israel, and there should be no religious line on this issue. Favoring the Israeli Left, which the American Council for Judaism tends to do, is as much a partyline as the predictable enthusiasm for the Israeli nationalist Right expressed by Orthodox groups. As self-conscious Jewish ethnics, individual Jews will inevitably take positions on Israeli politics, but a Jewish universal religion practiced in the U.S. should avoid doing the same.

One final merit should be mentioned about Brickman's proposals for a Jewish universal religion. Unlike the present non-Orthodox Jewish groupings, which I criticized in an earlier issue, the Jewish universalists do not have to be a lazier version of Orthodoxy. They would not have to be Jewish tribalists who are lazy about Orthodox observances or who are trying to fuse Jewish nationalism with left liberal politics. They should have a distinctive, non-Orthodox but seriously embraced theology and treat their biblically-based theology as integral to their being Jewish. Equally important, their religious identity should not reenforce ethnic exclusiveness — which is characteristic of Orthodoxy. It should entail a reaching out beyond ethnic concerns and ethnic whining, toward a recognition of the shared spiritual obligations and identity of the entire human race. Unlike Rabbinic Judaism, there would be no distinction drawn between moral obligations owed by Jewish universalists to the gentiles as opposed to each other. The religious focus taken would work against ethnic narrowness instead of strengthening it.

Beliefs and Ancestry

A German Jewish commentator, Ivan Denes, is correct to observe that Jews who immigrate to Israel are asked on arriving not about their theological beliefs but about their Jewish ancestry. A Jewish universal religion might not end such a practice nor necessarily change the Zionist emphasis on Jewish lineage. But it would draw a distinction between adhering to a biblical theology and the test of Jewish genes. Contrary to Rabbinic teachings, though not to those of Jesus, such a religion would not permit distinctions to be made between a Jewish and gentile neighbor in terms of ethical obligation. The same moral if not ceremonial commandments would apply equally in our dealing with all people. And ritual and dietary observances would only be retained to the extent that they highlight, not blur, universal obligations, by setting an example of pious living.

Like Rabbi Brickman, I have no problem choosing universal ethical precepts, e.g., the last five commandments of the Decalogue, over the multiple dietary, sartorial, and ceremonial restrictions which characterize Rabbinic Jewish life. The choice the Orthodox make for Rabbinically imposed laws is not the only one that the biblical text would suggest. It was a choice imposed, as David Ben Gurion frequently noted, by the need to preserve an unassimilated Jewish nation in exile. And while such a regimen achieved the goal of Jewish separation, it did so at a high cost. The Rabbinic Judaism exalted by the Orthodox habituated Jews to ritually prescribed and morally discriminatory lives. One evidence of this continuing link is the Orthodox obsession with ever more detailed dietary restrictions, coupled with the politics of Zionist ultra-nationalism.

Human Distinctions

When I asked an Orthodox relative, and a seminarian, what he thought of "gay marriage," he provided a characteristically Orthodox response: "For the goyim it is alright, but for us it's not mutar [permitted]." The Christian Right and liberal Jews both recognize, from admittedly different perspectives, that what's good for the Christian goose is equally good for the Jewish gander. But millennia of Talmudically grounded human distinctions and segregated living have convinced Jewish "traditionalists" otherwise. Just as Jews are not obligated, save by the concern to avoid Jewish communal shame, to recognize the gentile as a legal and ethical person, whether in financial dealings or having to save his life or possessions, so too is the Orthodox Jew not bound to advance for everyone what he considers proper for a Jewish community. And what he considers proper is not primarily about universally applicable ethical imperatives but restrictions on food, dress, and conduct with menstruating women.

Beginning Slowly

Rabbi Brickman proposes a radical alteration in this Rabbinic paradigm. I too would support such alteration but would advise zarich lalecht maat maat. One cannot accomplish much in these matters without beginning slowly. And one must avoid the errors while admiring the audacity of the nineteenth century architects of Reform Judaism. One should only change what must be changed while attaching universal ethical and theological meaning to what is preserved. •

The New Judaism?

by Mayer Schiller

I have been asked by the American Council for Judaism to respond to Professor Paul Gottfried's *Rising Above Jewish Ethnicity*. This was an assignment which I took as an honor of sorts, having long admired the Professor's scholarly and polemical writings. Gottfried is a insightful and courageous theoretician. He has been willing to suffer and has suffered much for his principles — a rare quality in this age of cowardly conformity. Yet, despite his learning and idealism he remains open to ideas. Discussions with him are never dogmatic and always enjoyable. Therefore, although some of the following comments may be critical, they are all enveloped in respect and affection.

Ultra-Orthodox Zionism?

Before moving to weightier matters there are a few generalizations in Professor Gottfried's piece which need further development. Orthodox Jewry is described as embracing the "Zionist nationalist right." We are told of "the Orthodox obsession with . . . the politics of Zionist ultra-nationalism." In fact, this is only the case among the Modern Orthodox in America and the Religious Zionist camp in Israel, far from a majority of Orthodoxy worldwide.

In its initial stages Zionism was virulently opposed by almost all Orthodox Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. Those who embraced the Mizrahi (religious Zionist) perspective were a tiny fraction of the leaders and masses of observant Jewry. This near uniform opposition to Zionism continued up till the creation of Israel when Agudath Israel, which represented the main body of Orthodoxy (after having opposed statehood for close to half a century), grudgingly agreed to work within the state to safeguard the interests of Torah observance.

However, even this tepid participation was seen as too much of a compromise by many who would shortly thereafter found the Adah ha-Charedis in order to continue the traditional Orthodox, anti-Zionist perspective. Their policy has been one of total non-engagement with the Israeli government. They refuse the many financial benefits offered to institutions and individuals by the Zionist bureaucracy in the spirit of wanting "neither their honey or their sting."

Orthodoxy Is Divided

Thus, Orthodoxy today divides into pro-, non- and anti-Zionist camps. Interestingly, though, it has been precisely those on the Orthodox left religiously who have evidenced the greatest enthusiasms for Zionism and, in particular, its nationalist elements. Of late, in the aftermath of the '67 war there has been an improvement in the observance standards of the Religious Zionists in Israel and by extension in America. Despite these recent trends, though, the media's use of the term "ultra Orthodox" to describe West bank settlers is completely misleading, as images are doubtless conjured up of black clad, hat wearers with beards and *peyos* flying, brandishing machine guns in the streets of Hebron.

Actually the reverse is true. It has been the most "ultra Orthodox" who have opposed statehood since the 1890s and have been violently persecuted for it. For example, their spokesman Dr. Yakov de Haan was assassinated in 1922 by Haganah operatives for assisting the then Rav of Jerusalem's orthodox community, Rabbi Yoseph Chaim Zonnenfeld, in negotiations with King Hussein geared to finding a non-Zionist reconciliation between Jew and Arab. And, in 1948 it was Rabbi Amram Blau, battle scarred veteran of many an anti-Zionist crusade, who marched toward the Arab lines brandishing a white flag, while being fired on by Israeli troops.

Mention must also be made of the vast majority of German Orthodox who, along with their non-Orthodox brethren, were steadfast in their anti-Zionism. This opposition was rooted in traditional rhetoric which rejected any desire for Jewish political sovereignty over the Holy Land pre-Messiah. However, it went beyond this by seeing Zionism as the betrayal of a properly constituted German patriotism.

In passing it is also worth noting that even in the Religious Zionist camp there is an articulate minority which rejects militant Zionism. This group (represented by organizations such as Oz Veshalom and the political party Meimad) has favored a rapprochement with the Palestinians and endorsed the Oslo peace effort. They are drowned out by the majority of their co-ideologists but their brave existence cannot be ignored.

Non-Religious Jews

Traditional Orthodoxy rejected Zionism for many reasons. On the practical level it was a movement comprised largely of non-religious Jews. Often an assent to Zionism went hand-in-hand with a denial of Torah beliefs and practices. Thus, Orthodox leaders saw Zionist fervor as another of the myriad ideologies which, in the Enlightenment's aftermath, lured the masses from their ancestral devotions.

Theoretically many viewed Zionism as a denial of traditional Jewish doctrines concerning exile and redemption. In this perspective exile was a punishment for Jewish sins. It was a spiritual state imposed by God. Repentance and spiritual acts were the only methods to be properly employed in order that the Creator should miraculously bring about the redemption. By positing exile as a human condition and the "Jewish problem" as one capable of political and military solution, Zionism was implicitly denying the sacred core of the nation's history. Instead of a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation," Jewry was now to become a nation like all others.

As noted before, German Orthodoxy added to these traditional considerations those of patriotism. In the writings of the nineteenth century German Orthodox leader, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, for example, we find constant references to the "fatherland" and the duty of all citizens to love it with a passion which I'm sure many of the contemporary inhabitants of the Federal Republic would find quite embarrassing.

This original anti-Zionist argument of nineteenth century German Jewry is occasionally heard today in Neturei Karta circles in America and England. A small group, the most strident of all the traditional Orthodox in its opposition to Zionism, they will often carry American flags at their rallies and signs which proclaim they are "Americans — not Israelis."

There are obviously many differences between the patriotism and attendant anti-Zionism of German Orthodoxy and that of the bearded NK sporting their Eastern European dress as they protest against Israel in Washington, New York and London. The most profound of these is

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