

A SHORT HISTORY OF REFORM JUDAISM  
IN SOUTH WALES. 1947-70.

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by

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## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<u>CHAPTER I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</u>	1
I    19th Century movement for Reform in Britain	1
II   Reform Judaism in Britain 1930-50	3
III  The Social climate in Post War Judaism	4
<u>CHAPTER II: A SHORT RABBINICAL BIOGRAPHY</u>	7
I    1912-1938	7
II   1939-1947	10
III  1948-1953	12
<u>CHAPTER III: THE FOUNDERS 1947-8</u>	15
<u>CHAPTER IV: ORTHODOXY: INITIAL HOSTILITY</u>	25
I    Reaction of the United Synagogue	25
II   Reform's Self Defence	28
III  Further United Synagogue Action	29
IV   Orthodox Attempts at Conciliation	32
<u>CHAPTER V: CONSOLIDATION</u>	35
I    A Temporary Home	35
II   The arrival of a Rabbi	39
III  Lay Democracy and the Constitution 1948-56	42
<u>CHAPTER VI: THE SYNAGOGUE BUILDING 1950-69</u>	
I    Methodist Chapel to Synagogue	45
II   Finance	48
III  Later Building Developments	51
IV   Financing the Growth	53

CHAPTER VII: REFORM JUDAISM AND THE LOCAL JEWISH PRESS

I	The Role of C.A.J.E.X. Magazine	56
II	Evidence of residual hostility	57
III	Agreeing to Differ	59
IV	Orthodoxy calls for decorum	62
V	Impartiality: The achievement of C.A.J.E.X. Magazine	65

CHAPTER VIII: RELATIONS WITH BRITISH JEWRY 1952-60 66

I	Cardiff	66
II	Relations with the R.S.G.B.	71

CHAPTER IX: THE GROWTH OF SYNAGOGUE INSTITUTIONS 76

I	Education	76
II	The Youth Association	83

CHAPTER X: MEMBERSHIP: A STORY OF GROWTH 86

I	The Drive for New Members	86
II	Appeal for more religious commitment	89
III	The Problem of Jewish Statistics	92
IV	General Decline of Cardiff Jewish Community	94
V	Orthodoxy's decline/Reform's growth	96
VI	The changing pattern of distribution of Reform Synagogue membership throughout Cardiff 1949-1970	99
VII	Changing pattern of distribution of Reform members throughout South Wales 1949-70	104

CHAPTER XI: CONCLUSION 107

APPENDIX I:

a)	Glossary	
b)	Bibliography	
c)	Documents	
1	Cardiff New Synagogue (Reform)	
2	The plain truth	
3	Why I should join the Cardiff New Synagogue	

- 3a Introductory letter, Rabbi Graf
- 3b Invitation to attend services (prospective members)
- 3c Invitation to attend public meeting on "Reform"
- 4 Cartoon (C.A.J.E.X. Magazine) criticising lack of decorum.
- 5 Living Judaism--Article by Rabbi Graf "A Pot and Pan Religion"

APPENDIX II:

- a) Distribution and Density of Adult members of C.N.S. in Cardiff 1949.
- b) Distribution and Density of Adult members of C.N.S. in Cardiff 1960.
- c) Distribution and Density of Adult members of C.N.S. in Cardiff 1970.
- d) Distribution and density of Adult C.N.S. members throughout South Wales 1949.
- e) Distribution and Density of Adult C.N.S. members throughout South Wales 1960.
- f) Distribution and density of Adult C.N.S. members throughout South Wales 1970.

APPENDIX III:

Table 1	Births and Deaths	1949-69
Table 2	Marriages	1949-76
Table 3	Confirmations	1953-69
Table 4	School Attendance	1953-69
Table 5	New Members	1960-69

## PREFACE

The purpose of this study, is to survey the development of a Progressive "Reform" Jewish congregation in South Wales, between 1947-70.

The study deals with the effect that the establishment of a Reform congregation had on the Orthodox traditional synagogue; and the Jewish community in general. It charts the course of relations between the old and new congregations.

A Jewish community had existed in Cardiff since 1840, its modes and patterns of worship were deeply entrenched. The foundation of a Reform Synagogue, propounding an evolutionary philosophy of Judaism, had profound effects on communal life.

In this work, I examine the growth of Reform Judaism in a South Wales context, but also attempt to relate it to earlier "Reform" movements in Pre-Second-World War Germany, and 19th century England. Comparisons are drawn between the "orthodox" and "Reform" movements, illustrating how the congregations reacted to the problems of the secular and irreligious society of post war Britain.

CHAPTER IHISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The growth of a Reform Jewish congregation in Cardiff should not be regarded as an isolated phenomenon nor either as a local schism within the Jewish community. It should be viewed as part of the general reforming trend within post war Judaism, that took place at an ever increasing pace, in the two decades that followed the outbreak of the second world war.

To understand the reasons for a reform movement one must examine the establishment of the Cardiff New Synagogue (Reform) within an historical context, first glancing briefly at the early history of "Reform" Judaism in Britain.

I . 19th Century movement for Reform in Britain.

The early movement for Reform Judaism, in Britain, could be characterised as a lay movement. Its demands were moderate, and secular, criticising ritual, rather than theology. The lay men who founded the West London Synagogue in 1840 advocated little that was revolutionary, they 'opted' for more decorum, and the introduction of music into the synagogue service. The

founders were basically conservative men: pillars of the Anglo-Jewish sephardic <sup>1</sup> community, whose names have an aristocratic ring in Anglo-Jewish history. The Henriques, the Montefiores, the Mocattas, the Goldsmidts.

The 19th century secession from the "Bevis Marks" synagogue, lacked a sense of missionary or theological drive; a criticism of "Reform" that was levelled by many contemporaries, who remained within the traditionalist fold. There was no real effort to establish or support the sister congregations that floundered in Hull, or Clapham, or to establish firm links with the Manchester "Congregation of British Jews". No attempt was made to set up an administrative framework, to link activities or train Rabbis. A movement, in a spiritual or organisational sense, did not really exist.

The 19th century reformers exhibited certain basic tendencies which are evident in the 20th century form of Reform Judaism, that developed in the 1940's and '50s. These characteristics were exhibited within the provincial communities, where demands for progressive Judaism were made. Namely, the laymen's influential role in Reform, and the emphasis on synagogal and administrative matters, as well as demands for music and more decorum within the service.

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\* Jews; traditionally of Spanish origin



II Britain 1930-50 Reform Judaism: a period of rapid growth.

The 1930's and '40s was a period of rapid growth in the provincial centres outside London. In the 1930's three new congregations were founded. Six more in the 1940's, and another twelve in the next two decades. Cardiff New Synagogue, founded in 1948 officially, was part of this post-war boom. The reasons for this sudden growth can be traced to a changed social climate and external political factors in Nazi dominated Europe.

The rise and spread of Nazi power across Europe, led to an influx of Rabbis from Germany. Many of these men were Reform Rabbis trained within a long established tradition of German Reform Judaism; which had a more theologically based tradition. They brought with them a more scholarly approach to Reform, and this served to give a solid basis to the "lay" demands for decorum. More importantly; this group of Rabbis provided trained Rabbinical personnel. At a time when no theological college for Reform Rabbis existed in Britain.

From this group of Rabbinical refugees would come the Rabbis of many of Britain's postwar Reform congregations. Rabbi Graf of Bradford, Leeds and Cardiff. Rabbi Cassel of Glasgow. Rabbi Dr. Pfingst of Leeds, and Rabbi Berg of Bournemouth. This influx of Rabbis, provided the future provincial Reform Rabbis, but there had to be some central direction, and finally, in the

twentieth century this came from the West London Synagogue.

Due to the influence of Rabbi Reinhart, an American Rabbi, the West London Synagogue was to play an important role in the spread of Reform Judaism. Rabbi Reinhart took over the pulpit of the West London Synagogue in 1929, and was to prove an administrative genius. He recognised that in these German Rabbis there existed a trained and experienced group of communal and religious leaders. Thus he actively coordinated the activities of these ministers and the fledgling groups of Reformers in the provinces.

The influence of this wave of German Rabbis can be seen especially in the endeavours to found a "Reform" congregation in Cardiff. The "lay" founders of a Reform Synagogue in Cardiff, were from the outset, advised, guided and ministered to, from among this German group of Rabbis. Names like Rabbi Berg, Van der Zyl, Graf, Cassel, are those most frequently seen in the documents that cover the first three years of the Cardiff New Synagogue's life. Despite the undeniable importance of individuals in the rise of provincial Reform Judaism, one cannot ignore the complex social factors that greatly facilitated this rapid growth.

### III The Social Climate and Post World War Judaism

The effects of the second world war were far reaching on Anglo-Jewry, as in British society as a whole.

The war had created a far more open and classless society, indeed a far more secular society.

Many of the young Jewish couples who were married after the war, were disenchanted with much of traditional Judaism. The changing social structure and rise of an affluent middle class helped to break long established traditions of religious practice. Indeed some enemies of the "Reform movement" credit post war secularism and inter-marriage as the reason for the rapid rise of provincial "Reform"; and possibly there may be an element of this in Reform's growth.

In the documents of the early period of Cardiff New Synagogue, one can see strong demands for changes in traditional ritual and practice, which surely echo and reflect the post-war political mood of change.

Combined with these social changes, there was an undoubted change in the social and ethnic composition of Anglo-Jewry. There had been a large influx of continental refugees, many of whom tended to join Reform congregations, which were more akin to their previous patterns of worship. In Cardiff one saw this as an important factor. As many as 30 per cent of the earliest members, circa 1949, were of continental origin, many of whom had been attracted to Cardiff by Government inducements; such as the new "industrial estates" at Treforest and Bridgend.

This is further borne out by the high percentage

of C.N.S.<sup>1</sup> members, who chose to live on the Northern side of the city, in Rhiwbina and Whitchurch, away from the traditional areas of Jewish settlement, but near to their factories in Treforest, and the valleys.

To summarise, one can attribute the rise of provincial Reform Judaism to the second World War, which served to change attitudes, ideas and ethnic structure of the Jewish community; part of which found that traditional Judaism was unable to satisfy its spiritual needs, as well as being slightly outmoded in the new Elizabethan age.

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<sup>1</sup>Cardiff New Synagogue

CHAPTER IIA SHORT RABBINICAL BIOGRAPHYI           1912-1938

In its thirty years of life, Cardiff New Synagogue has only had one minister, Rabbi L. G. Graf. He was one of the wave of German Rabbis who entered Britain, as a result of the Nazi rise to power. The early history of the synagogue reveals particularly close contact with this group of German Rabbis.

These men, Rabbi Graf, Van der Zyl, Berg, etc. brought with them the traditions of German Reform Judaism, that emphasised the philosophies of the historical development of religion. One can see this philosophical trend in much of Rabbi Graf's writing.<sup>1</sup> His emphasis being on the developmental nature of Judaism, rather than on negative criticism of Orthodoxy's lack of decorum.

Rabbi Graf was born in 1912, and came from a very old Berlin Jewish family; which can be traced back more than three hundred years through the Berlin Jewish

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix  
"Living Judaism article" and Rabbi Graf's  
first letter.

Archives. The family had strong religious roots in the German Reform movement, but Rabbi Graf was the first member to study for the Rabbinate. The family was a typical professional Berlin Jewish family, the Rabbi's father being a businessman.

Rabbi Graf followed the traditional pattern of study for the Reform Rabbinate. Firstly, the Gymnasium, and then the combining of University and theological college training. This coupling of secular university training and intensive Rabbinical study was particularly Germanic. Compare this training with that received by the Orthodox Rabbis of Anglo-Jewry, which followed a pattern of training formulated in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. The orthodox Rabbis and ministers of Cardiff had received their ordination via "Yeshivot"<sup>1</sup> which entailed intense study of a solely religious type, and ignored the influences of the European "enlightenment".

Study for the Reform Rabbinate necessitated a formal course of University secular study, a precondition for Rabbinical training. A rabbinical course of study was followed in the student's own time, outside of university hours. Rabbi Graf became a registered student in the Berlin University, where he followed a course in comparative religion, psychology, and sociology.

Rabbi Graf combined his university course with

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<sup>1</sup>Seminaries concentrating on biblical, talmudic and hebraic study.

a parallel course of study at the "Hochschule für die Wissenschaften des Judentums" (Institute for the scientific study of Judaism). A Reform Jewish college in Berlin, which provided the model for the Leo Baeck Reform Rabbinical college in London. Ordination for the rabbinate entailed an intensive course of study, and the preparation of two theses of a religious nature. One talmudic; the second on a subject of Jewish interest. Rabbi Graf prepared a historical work on a 19th century Jewish thinker from Westphalia.

Nineteen thirty five was a traumatic year for German Jewry. The Nazi regime passed the Nuremberg laws, which excluded the Jews from participation in many areas of German life. Jewish lecturers and students were barred from universities, and institutions of higher education. The awarding of all academic diplomas to Jews ceased. This was the year in which Rabbi Graf completed this thesis on "the development of religion according to Ott Wundt and Rudolph Otto", consequently the Ph.D., which should have been awarded, was withheld. Notwithstanding Nazi undermining of academic freedom, and instruction to withhold all awards to Jewish students, not all academics were easily cowed. Rabbi Graf's supervising professor, Prof. ~~Fierkamp~~ <sup>Vierkandt (Sociologist)</sup>, took a grave personal risk, and wrote a personal letter to his student, testifying as to the academic excellence of the work in Rabbi Graf's possession.

In 1938 Rabbi Graf received ordination as a Rabbi, working as a Rabbi for the United Berlin Jewish community until 1939. The Jewish communities of Germany were organised on communal, rather than a congregational basis. Traditionalists, and Reformers, worked side by side within a united communal body. There was little of the antagonism that marked Anglo-Reform/orthodox relations in post-war Cardiff. This outward-looking attitude of tolerance to one's co-religionists became a characteristic of post war Anglo-Reform. The C.N.S. early history reveals a deliberate attempt to participate in all Jewish communal affairs.

II            1939-48

As did many of his fellow "Hochschuller" pupils and teachers, Rabbi Graf (with wife and parents) stayed in Berlin until the eve of the war, continuing to work as a Rabbi with the Berlin community. The situation was fraught with danger, and the Graf family soon had to consider fleeing the country.

The first destination considered as a refugee was that of Shanghai. Not a city with strong Jewish connections, but one which was still for obscure reasons, easily accessible. Departure for Shanghai drew closer. Tickets were bought, but other alternative destinations were continuously investigated. For a time, the U.S.A. seemed an attractive possibility, with its large Jewish



community, and a strong reform tradition. Initial enquiries by Rabbi Graf's mother were abandoned in favour of Manchester, England, where distant relatives of the Graf family lived.

An eminent Manchester Jew, a Mr. <sup>Arthur</sup> ~~Alfred~~ Marks, who was a distant relative, and member of Manchester Congregation of British Jews, the second oldest Reform congregation in Britain, arranged visas for the Graf family and acted as a guarantor. In April 1939 the family finally left Berlin, and arrived in Manchester. Almost immediately Rabbi Graf became involved with Rabbi Reinhart of the West London Synagogue, an American trained Rabbi who advised and organised many of the post war struggling reform congregation. At Rabbi Reinhart's suggestion, Rabbi Graf was sent to minister to the Bradford congregation, where he remained till 1947.

Bradford was an already established Reform community, and Rabbi Graf was soon involved in the whole range of Rabbinical duties. This period could be described as the age of the commuting Rabbi. Whilst at Bradford, Rabbi Graf was to be a constant visitor to Leeds, where he conducted services for a struggling Reform group of Jews, trying to establish a permanent synagogue. Thus, from the time of his first appointment in Britain, the future Rabbi of Cardiff gained valuable experience in developing virgin Reform territory in provincial communities.

In 1948 the direction of the commuting became reversed, when Rabbi Graf moved to Leeds Sinai Synagogue. Its first Rabbi, he was to give this congregation its name. The ministry at Leeds was not to be a sedentary one, it was more hectic than the previous pulpit. Whilst at Leeds, Rabbi Graf continued to help his former congregation in Bradford, preach as a guest in the Cardiff New Synagogue's temporary "Temple of Peace" premises, and at the same time minister to the Leeds congregation.

### III        1948-53.

In 1948 the Cardiff New Synagogue began to advertise for a permanent Rabbi in the Synagogue Gazette, a post for which Rabbi Graf applied; but we hear of Rabbi Graf in connection with Cardiff long before this. In 1947, in correspondence with Myer Cohen, one reads of an offer made by Rabbi Graf to Reinhart, of willingness to come to Cardiff to discuss the Reform point of view. At this time, moves to establish a Reform synagogue were still in their initial stages. The meeting never took place, as Rabbi Reinhart was unable to contact Myer Cohen in sufficient time.

From circulars issued in 1948-9, one learns that the selection of Rabbis was a meticulous procedure, and at least ~~another~~ two German Rabbis were candidates for the post. Rabbi Graf must have made an impression on the synagogue council, for in August 1949 Rabbi Graf

moved for the third, and probably final time, to take up his pulpit in Cardiff.

Whilst the founders of the congregation were impressed by Rabbi Graf, he was attracted in turn by the Cardiff congregation. In Cardiff he found a congregation that under lay leadership was functioning extremely well, and whose foundation had caused a stir in the pages of Anglo-Jewish journalism. The congregation was enthusiastic and temporarily housed in the palatial splendour of the "Temple of Peace" in Cardiff's neo-classical civic centre. There is little doubt that Rabbi Graf found Cardiff a physically attractive city. In Cardiff New Synagogue Rabbi Graf discerned a well organised community that had weathered initial orthodox opposition; this dedication may have attracted Rabbi Graf to Cardiff, a move which made him the only, and thus the senior "reform" Rabbi of Wales.

The Rabbi settled down to pursue a round of Rabbinical and communal duties, and made his home on the northern side of the city. An important centre of Reform Jewish settlement, throughout the synagogue's short history; with a high concentration of members of continental origin. In 1952 Rabbi Graf expressed a wish to pursue his Ph.D., interrupted as a result of the Nazi tyranny. His first move was to write to Chancellor Adenaur, with regard to receiving his much delayed doctorate.

This was not to prove a simple business. The

University of Berlin was now situated in the Eastern sector of Berlin, and there was little hope of Rabbi Graf pursuing his studies at his former University. After much correspondence with the German authorities it was decided that Rabbi Graf could be examined for his Ph.D. at Bonn University. Owing to the lapse of time since his original research was undertaken, the university authorities recommended that he could be exempted from a two year period of study, if he could pass the intensive oral examinations, which they seriously doubted.

In order to pursue his course of study, Rabbi Graf felt compelled to ask for a period of leave of absence from Rabbinical duties in 1952-3. This would amount to thirty weeks' leave, and there was some opposition from the council, which was eventually resolved. Rabbi Graf eventually gained his Ph.D. with the citation "*Magna cum laude*".

In the development of the Cardiff New Synagogue, one can see certain influences that spring from Rabbi Graf and the "~~Hochschul~~" period. Namely, an emphasis on continuing Jewish education, and an ecumenical tolerance to non-Jews. Whilst the synagogue under its Rabbi has constantly expressed an earnest desire to establish the harmony of the Berlin community's unity, and has made constant efforts to involve itself in all communal and civic activities.

CHAPTER IIITHE FOUNDERS 1947-8

Two laymen initiated moves to establish a congregation of progressive Jews in Cardiff. In doing so, they were unwittingly following the long established pattern in Reform Judaism, of secular agitation for reform preceding Rabbinical involvement.

What prompted these two laymen, Max Corne, a cinema chain owner, and Myer Cohen, a solicitor, to initiate independent enquiries into the possibility of establishing a progressive congregation in Cardiff? Undoubtedly, the most important factor was a disillusionment with the traditional forms of orthodoxy, but this does not answer the question as to why these men, and why at this period of history.

Myer Cohen and Mr. Max Corne were both well established figures in the South Wales Valleys. Mr. Corne's cinema chain extended through South Wales and the valleys and he was a well known character in the South Wales business community. Mr. Myer Cohen was a well known and respected solicitor in South Wales, and both were British born. Possibly their active involvement with non-Jewish civic life, and a disenchantment with a

stultifying Judaism, led them to see Progressive Judaism as a means of revitalising Jewish life and belief.

Mr. Myer Cohen credits his interest in the Reform movement to a particular event. The father of Mr. Cohen was a sincere and devout Orthodox Jew. In the summer of 1947, whilst on holiday in Bournemouth, and wishing to attend the local synagogue, Myer Cohen's father was inadvertently directed to the Bournemouth New Synagogue. Although Mr. Cohen Snr. disliked the modern service that he found in progress, he was pleasantly surprised by the congregation's cordiality. As a result, on his return to South Wales, he handed to his son a document given to him after the service. A document in which Bournemouth New Synagogue succinctly outlined the Reform point of view, for all visitors:

Its founders are convinced that the way our religious traditions are interpreted in Orthodox synagogues, and the lack of decorum displayed in such places of worship, does little to help a sincere Jew in his spiritual needs.

The content and tone of this leaflet reflects to some degree the message of the 1840 secessionists, and their concern with the lack of decorum in orthodox synagogues. Bournemouth's desire to attract new members was evident in this leaflet, and its appeal touched a chord in the outlook of Myer Cohen.

Unlike the reformers a century earlier, the

reformers of Bournemouth, under their German Rabbi, Berg, were keen to spread the philosophy of Reform. In this his initial contact with Reform, Myer Cohen had fortunately stumbled across a congregation willing to assist all potential reformers. It was also a provincial congregation and its experiences were to be of inestimable value to the Cardiff founders. This early contact may account for the adoption of the name, "Cardiff New Synagogue" in acknowledgement of "Bournemouth New Synagogue's" early guidance.

Myer Cohen took immediate action on reading Bournemouth's leaflet to visitors. He wrote to Reform congregations in Leeds, Glasgow, the West London synagogue and Bournemouth, requesting information on the Reform point of view.

"Bournemouth" proved most cooperative, as a letter from their Hon. Secretary, Frank Berman in 1947 testifies "we are certainly ready to give you all assistance". Despite the fact that Bournemouth was itself a struggling young community, their Rabbi offered to pass on Myer Cohen's inquiry to Rabbi Reinhart at the West London Synagogue. Their interest was to be a continuing feature of Cardiff's development.

Following Myer Cohen's initial inquiry, there was a period of silence. This prompted another letter from Frank Berman, which demonstrates their continued interest "I would be very pleased to hear whether you

wish to take any steps; and whether our synagogue, which has made excellent progress during the past months, can be of assistance to you".

What was the reason for this period of silence at the Cardiff end of the correspondence? Inactivity was definitely not the reason. The Reform Movement's central office in London had been in touch with Myer Cohen, following Rabbi Berg's message. A Mr. Max Corne had, unknown to Myer Cohen, been making enquiries to the U.L.P.S.<sup>1</sup>, with a view to formation of a Liberal Synagogue.

Although the U.L.P.S. was a more radical organisation than the A.S.G.B. (Reform movement) there was evidently a great deal of cooperation between the two organisations. For the U.L.P.S. quickly informed the A.S.G.B. of Max Corne's inquiry. Neither organisation wished to compete against the other, in the foundation of a progressive synagogue. A letter dated January 1948 suggests that Mr. Corne and Mr. Cohen should meet:

as it is felt that the cause of progressive Judaism would best be served if not more than one new venture was started in your city.

Despite this evidence of Reform-liberal cooperation, there is no extant literature from the U.L.P.S.

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<sup>1</sup>Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues



that states their theological point of view. The archives of C.N.S. contain only Reform pamphlets, which give the impression that the Reform movement was the more helpful organisation. This view needs some modification, as Max Corne, who had the greater involvement with the U.L.P.S., moved to Australia and may have taken such documents with him.

Evidence of liberal involvement can only be deduced from the A.S.G.B. correspondence with Myer Cohen. The picture is thus heavily one sided. The Reform movement actively followed up its contact with Myer Cohen. Rabbi Reinhart's letter of August 1947 said that Rabbi Graf (then in Bradford) was willing to travel to Cardiff for private discussions with Mr. Cohen, but this meeting did not take place owing to bad communications.

Rabbi Reinhart appears to have appreciated the problems of the provincial communities, who were trying to establish Reform congregations, for in August of 1947 he says, in a letter to Myer Cohen

If the situation there (in Cardiff)  
Is similar to that which  
We know in many towns,  
the need must be very great

Such insight, on the part of Rabbi Reinhart, was gained through his experience in directing the many fledgling communities in postwar Britain. His advice was of a theological, and an administrative nature, and at times was quite specific, even suggesting the manner

in which meetings of interested parties should be held "I venture to suggest the first meeting should be a private one of people likely to be sympathetic to a free and progressive movement than a public meeting". Rabbi Reinhart's advice encompassed not only administrative details. His letters to Mr. Myer Cohen were concise statements of Reform theology as it stood in 1947.

In an early letter to Myer Cohen he outlines the Reform standpoint on the need to bring relevance and dignity to twentieth century Judaism. The fundamental idea is that Judaism, and Jewish tradition, which in our view is caricatured by formalistic, shabby expression commonly observed, must be expressed in dignity and earnestness....."It is our view that in most synagogues nowadays, the creative Jewish impulse is stifled"....."It is our firm conviction the reverent adaptation of ritual and an enlightened interpretation of Jewish law, will restore the Jewish faith, for lack of which the Jewish people languish today".

Such clear and authoritative guidance on spiritual matters, no doubt influenced Myer Cohen and Max Corne. For the Synagogue ultimately affiliated to the A.S.G.B. Although this decision was by no means sudden--taken in a blinding light of conviction--but the result of a careful consideration of both Reform and liberal points of view. The founders made further

enquiries of both movements on doctrinal and ritualistic matters, particularly with regard to services, dietary laws, mixed marriages (an increasing fact of life in postwar Jewry) sabbath and festival observance.

Progressive Judaism was undoubtedly gaining strength in these months. Many individuals appear to have approached Myer Cohen, with queries and detailed questions. Events must have for a time been moving at a rapid pace, for Mr. Cohen betrays a sense of urgency in a letter of May 1948 to Rabbi Reinhart: "I am anxious to have this information as quickly as possible, as many of my friends are asking me questions, which I am unable to answer".

One can only surmise that around these two men, there quickly gathered a body of like-minded men; disenchanted with traditional orthodoxy. Academic, professional men of standing in South Wales--Justice Sir Phillip Wein, Professor Mushin and Professor Mortiz, Alban Levy, B.A. How many people were actively involved can never be accurately gauged, but a list prepared by Myer Cohen at about this date lists 62 names, as interested in the proposed formation of a Reform Synagogue.

The U.L.P.S. were still keen to present their point of view to a Cardiff audience, and it appears that in May 1948 the organisers in Cardiff had still not decided between the Liberal and Reform points of view. In that month Mr. Myer Cohen had written to the

Dr. I. Mattuck, vice-president of the U.L.P.S., suggesting a joint forum where both Liberal and Reform points of view could be propounded.

Not surprisingly, the Liberals rejected this idea, as being akin to a theological duel. This rejection was not the end of Liberal interest in the formation of a progressive congregation, for a further letter asks that the Liberals be given the opportunity of presenting their philosophy. For once again there had been a pooling of information between the A.S.G.B., and the U.L.P.S.: and the Liberals had been informed of proposed plans to hold a public meeting on June 2nd, 1948, with A.S.G.B. speakers.

At this stage Myer Cohen states in a letter to the Liberals, that persons in Cardiff were more interested in hearing the Reform point of view. This situation was arrived at, no doubt, due to the provision of full literature and advice by Rabbi Reinhart and Rabbi Berg, and the initial enthusiastic cooperation with Bournemouth New Synagogue. On June 2nd 1948 a public meeting was held in Cardiff City Hall, addressed by Rabbi Van der Zyl (another German Rabbi) and the Cardiff New Synagogue was officially born.

The New Synagogue wasted little time in making its brand of Judaism known. Soon after the first public meeting, the synagogue authorised the printing of leaflets and pamphlets for distribution among the Jewish

community.<sup>1</sup> They clearly stated the Reform theology, and actively canvassed for new members, and reflects an almost "missionary" attitude towards Reform. That reflected the attitude of the writer, Professor Mushin. Their content clearly demonstrates the influence of Rabbi Reinhart on spiritual matters, but the desire to attract new members is clearly the New Synagogue's.

Dissatisfaction with the orthodox United Synagogue was strongly expressed in these early documents.

"The Cardiff New Synagogue has been founded to provide for the religious needs of Jews residing in Cardiff" ..... (who) "are unable to find satisfaction in membership of an orthodox synagogue".

The leaflets deliberately emphasised the positive differences between Reform and orthodox practices and concentrated on attempts to improve decorum during the services.

"Important prayers are emphasised, and those out of date are cut out" ..... "Prayers are said word by word in Hebrew and English, nothing is garbled". These changes were by no means revolutionary, to some extent, they echo criticisms of lack of decorum that surfaced within the orthodox community in the 1950's.<sup>2</sup> Other

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<sup>1</sup> see appendix: documents 1, 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> see Chapter on Cardiff New Synagogue and the Jewish Press.

changes that the reformers emphasised were that "men and women are on equal terms" and youth played an active part in worship.

Mild though these reforms were, they were sufficient to draw a hostile reaction from the orthodox establishment, who reacted strongly and hysterically to the new synagogue.

CHAPTER IVORTHODOXY: INITIAL HOSTILITY

The new synagogue had been formally established, and was eager to attract members to its ranks. The leading activists saw the synagogue, not as a haven for the disenchanting orthodox, but as a means of injecting new spiritual blood, into the veins of Anglo-Jewry. Serious constructive debate with the orthodox community was what was desired, but initially the reaction was that of hostility and excommunication.

Reasoned debate of the theological differences would come about three years later in the columns of C.A.J.E.X., the magazine of the Cardiff Association of Jewish ex-servicemen, which soon became the unofficial magazine of Cardiff Jewry. The debate, and issues reflected through its columns, will be dealt with in a later chapter, and covers a period when communal tempers had cooled a little. For the immediate reaction of the Jewish community one must turn to the documents and letters preserved from this period.

I            Reaction of the United Synagogue

The reaction of the establishment of the United

Synagogue to the C.N.S. was swift and dramatic, it was also anachronistic, as the national Jewish press would point out. Basically it took the form of an attempt to ostracise those Jews who joined the C.N.S. by depriving them of the means to buy Kosher <sup>1</sup> meat, circumcise their children, or to bury their dead in the Jewish cemetery. The last two were of minor importance, as in 1948 the age structure of the C.N.S. was still relatively youthful.

Eighteen days after the public birth of the C.N.S. a general meeting was called of members of the United Synagogue, where a motion was passed depriving Reform Jews of the above privileges. This was a reactionary and shortsighted move, reflecting a rigid ultra-orthodox viewpoint not shared in all sections of the Anglo-orthodox community. That such a motion could be passed was a sad reflection on an ageing community.

The tone and attitude of this meeting was sadly reactionary, and the meeting exhibited certain xenophobic attitudes, that were possibly a post-war reaction to the holocaust. This can be demonstrated by referring to another motion on the agenda of that meeting that stated:

Any person of either sex who shall marry a person not of the Jewish faith shall forfeit rights of membership and privileges thereto.

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<sup>1</sup>ritually slaughtered meat



Not an attitude in line with the best traditions of Jewish liberalism. The hostility of the Orthodox community was most virulent at the top. The Rabbi of the United Synagogue characterised the new synagogue, as "New assimilationists, one of whose objects, it was to legalise intermarriage", whilst the United Synagogue's Hon. Life President, referred to Reform members as "camouflage Jews".

This type of reaction sprung partly from the very nature of provincial orthodoxy, with a religious establishment whose ideas were forged in the Yeshivot traditions of Eastern Europe. How much these men were out of step with mainstream Jewry can be judged by the reaction of Anglo-Jewry's national weekly; the Jewish Chronicle, which, in an editorial dated the ninth of July 1948, pilloried the leaders of the Cardiff United Synagogue

In order to counter the establishment of a local reform Synagogue, the Cardiff United Synagogue has withdrawn membership and privileges

from those who joined the C.N.S. The Jewish Chronicle then proceeds to draw historical parallels with the 19th century reformers, who seceded from the Bevis Marks synagogue

When threat of secular excommunication, instead of blocking reform, strengthened it, giving its adherents the crown of an easy martyrdom .....

Cardiff's latest frolics may have little more than passing interest ..... The leaders of an important congregation, do not seem, in their haste, to have read or understood the lessons of the past.

Indeed, the leaders of the United Synagogue did not recognise the genuine need the C.N.S. filled, or the motivation of its leaders. Despite initial hostility, the story of "Reform" in Cardiff was to be of numerical growth, whereas orthodoxy's was to be a story of continual decline.

## II Reform's Self Defence

It is interesting to note that in the same issue of the Jewish Chronicle there appears a letter of solidarity from none other than Rabbi Berg of Bournemouth, Cardiff's first reform friend.

This support from a sister provincial community must have been most welcome, but the founding members were to prove quite capable of springing to the defence of their new creation.

On the 19th of June, a day before the United Synagogue held its general meeting, Mr. Myer Cohen had taken preemptive action. He wrote a letter to the Ministry of Food, setting out the basic facts, and issues involved, explaining what effect the ban on the sale of kosher meat to Reform Jews would have. Myer Cohen characterised the United Synagogue's action as "an effort

to prevent members leaving the old and joining the new".

The Ministry quickly took action and communicated with the Chief Rabbi, who, according to Sir Waley Cohen (adviser to the Ministry on Jewish affairs) "took immediate steps to put this matter in order, and to arrange for authoritative instructions to be sent to the Cardiff United Synagogue that they must withdraw the instructions that they have given to the butchers, that they must on no account refuse to sell kosher meat to any of their registered customers; whether they are members of Cardiff United Synagogue .....or not".

### III Further United Synagogue Action

Although the orthodox establishment had suffered a serious rebuff from the highest Rabbinical authorities, the United Synagogue was still not prepared to allow its burial ground to be used by "Reform" members, even by those persons who had paid reservation fees, when members of the United Synagogue.

The immediate issue was one of principle, for the members of the new synagogue were by and large relatively young, and burial facilities were unlikely to be needed in the near future. If the United Synagogue was to remain adamant in its refusal to grant burial facilities to non-members, then the Reformers would be forced to acquire their own land for burial, a move that

was taken reluctantly, as it smacked of religious apartheid.

The New Synagogue was loathe to proceed with this matter, for the acquisition of a burial ground would necessitate raising the matter with non-Jewish authorities, airing to public gaze, communal matters which, ideally, were the private concern of the Jewish community.

Once again the New Synagogue sought advice and guidance before proceeding with the matter, turning once more to the Bournemouth New Synagogue; who had experienced similar difficulties themselves. They in turn advised the C.N.S. to approach the civic authorities with a request for burial land. This course was only taken after private purchase of land for a cemetery failed, at which stage the synagogue council decided, however undesirable the publicity would be, the matter would have to be raised with the civic authorities.

Justic Sir Phillip Wein, Q.C., was instrumental in presenting the problem to the civic authorities. In a concise and well argued letter; in keeping with his legal stature, he presented the facts of the case. Expressing the council's sadness at having to involve the civic authorities in this matter.

At the time of the grant of land in the Highfield Road by the Marquis of Bute, it could not be reasonably foreseen that there would be in Cardiff any Jews who were not members of the United Synagogue, or that consequently the orthodox synagogue

might refuse to bury Cardiff Jews who were not members of that Synagogue.....There is of course no right for the new synagogue to insist that the Cardiff United Synagogue act more charitably in granting facilities to all Jews in Cardiff.

Sir Phillip Wein stressed in the letter the traditional record of the Jewish Community of settling its own affairs, and providing welfare facilities independently of the ratepayer. He cites especially the Jewish community's care of its poor; he could have mentioned other examples of self-help, such as the Jewish Old Age Home. Sir Phillip Wein stressed that the New Synagogue was willing to make its burial facilities available to all members of the Jewish faith, whether C.N.S. or not.

This tolerant and progressive attitude was in marked contrast to the United Synagogue's attitude, which terminated burial privileges, and refunded burial fees if a member joined the Reform synagogue. In October 1948 threequarters of an acre of land was granted to the Synagogue, in the municipal Western Cemetery. Illogically, after having refused burial facilities to Reform Jews, some Orthodox extremists criticised the fact that Jews would be buried surrounded by crosses. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> factually incorrect, as Jewish cemetery was surrounded by a hedge.

IV Orthodox Attempts at Conciliation

What must appear a gloomy picture of Orthodox intolerance, is obviously not a completely accurate reflection of the view of many members of the orthodox community, many of whom in later years became members of the New Synagogue. Unfortunately for the Jewish historian, only the more spectacular hostile statements to Reform were available before 1951, and the arrival of C.A.J.E.X. Magazine.<sup>1</sup> Thus any history of the Reform movement in Cardiff must be written in the non-availability of documents, which would illustrate the Orthodox view more fully.

To what degree the official Orthodox reaction reflected lay opinion is difficult to assess. All one can deduce from the available material is that outright intolerance was by no means universal, among the Orthodox community.

A letter dated July 1948 from the late Mr. Harry Sherman, pools magnate and philanthropist within the City of Cardiff, provides evidence of some moves towards a reconciliation within the community.

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<sup>1</sup>Magazine of the Cardiff Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen.

In his letter to Mr. Myer Cohen; Harry Sherman invited him "to attend a meeting for the free exchange of opinions and suggestions which might lead to the restoration of healthier conditions in the community". That Mr. Sherman was a prominent member of the Cardiff Jewish community is well known and who would have attended such a meeting can only be a matter of speculation.

For other people were involved in these tentative moves of conciliation. Mr. Sherman states that "arising out of the proposal to start a reform movement in Cardiff, many members of the community have suggested that a meeting should be called with a view to discussing this". If such an attitude had prevailed throughout the orthodox community, the two synagogues would have been able to co-exist and share facilities. Obviously this letter came at a late stage, and the synagogue had already begun to attract members.

Plans to consolidate the new Synagogue were moving at a rapid pace. Indeed, only six days before the letter from Mr. Sherman, the synagogue had held a general meeting, which was attended by more than seventy members. Any moves to nip the development of the synagogue in the bud were obviously doomed to failure, as the founding members were now keenly committed to the project.

Relations between the two communities grew gradually closer and closer over the next thirty years.

Especially on a personal and communal basis. On a religious and Rabbinical level, official relations have unfortunately remained unfriendly. This cannot be seen as a reflection on the orthodox community as a whole, for attitudes have gradually become more liberal, but represent the unchanging attitude of the incumbent Orthodox Rabbi. The degree and extent of the change in lay opinion will be dealt with in later chapters.



CHAPTER VCONSOLIDATIONI A Temporary Home (1948-52)

The first general meeting of the "New Synagogue" was held on fifteenth of July 1948. This meeting was held in strict privacy. Members were urged to bring their invitations with them to the Royal Hotel. Possibly some disruptive heckling or opposition was feared. This meeting was well attended, and some important administrative decisions were taken.

Membership fees were fixed, at 15 guineas for families and 7 guineas for single persons; a figure that did not rise for some years, as increased membership led to more revenue. From the very outset of the Synagogue, the principle was firmly established that the synagogue was open to all and "that no one was to be refused membership on financial grounds". This principle was to be applied to all services of the synagogue from cradle to grave.

This general meeting appears to have taken a decision to actively canvass for members. Leaflets and pamphlets <sup>1</sup> were published, appealing for new members,

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<sup>1</sup>see appendix: Documents 1, 2 and 3.

and putting forward the Reform case. Almost immediately a search took place for a temporary place of worship.

Within a month of this meeting a synagogue bulletin had been published. This was an ambitious leaflet, it announced that services were to commence in the Temple of Peace on the twentyfourth of September 1948. It announced that a birth had taken place, a Torah Scroll<sup>1</sup> had been bought, and new year festival services would be held.

The introduction of music into the synagogue followed soon after, and the early members formed an enthusiastic choir, which ceased to function after September 1949, as youthful members married, or left Cardiff. This short lived choir appears to have achieved some stature, for in July 1949 a presentation was made to Mrs. L. Corne and Mrs. W. Tondorff, two members who left Cardiff.

The voluntary efforts of choir members were frequently supplemented by professional singers from London. Gradually this initial vocal enthusiasm seems to have waned, and despite frequent appeals for the reformation of a choir, this never happened, and singing became the work of professionals.

The missionary zeal of this period did not flag

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<sup>1</sup>a Scroll containing the 5 books of Moses

as quickly as the voluntary choir. The bulletin of August 1948 enclosed a leaflet for distribution to non-members of the C.N.S. It urged all members to play a missionary role in seeking the new members, whom; the synagogue believed, would join with just a little prompting. The leaflet stated

We know there are many people with us, who have so far held back from membership because of some small doubt.....If you know of any such person, you will be doing the movement a service by passing on your leaflet.

Such enthusiasm led to a growth in membership; and the Temple of Peace, whilst a magnificent building, belonged to the United Nations Association and many occasions arose when the building would be unavailable for use by the C.N.S. Cancellation of services proved unavoidable, and even before this had become a frequent occurrence, the synagogue had begun to investigate the purchase of property for a synagogue near the city centre. The initial search in September of 1948 was to prove unsuccessful, and a certain estate agent obviously misunderstood the nature of the inquiry and a letter to the synagogue council asked if the synagogue "wished premises that were occupied or with vacant possession".

Despite the cancellation of many services during 1948, the social life of the synagogue gathered momentum. All religious festivals were celebrated, and the first

communal passover meal was held in a restaurant "The Louis" specially hired for the occasion. Members were reminded to "bring their own wine".

This typifies the relaxed and informal atmosphere of the early years, with formality and pomp being kept to a minimum. Other social and religious functions, such as a "Chanukah" <sup>1</sup> party were held in the founders' houses. Occasionally, religious services were re-arranged and took place in hastily organised alternative venues, such as hotels.

Prior to the arrival of a permanent Rabbi in August 1949, the Synagogue was ministered to by a series of guest Rabbis, who were appointed by the A.S.G.B. These Rabbis performed far more than merely ceremonial functions. They advised and helped organise the synagogue's communal life.

Rabbi ~~Dr.~~ Cassel (one of the German school of Rabbis) was instrumental in February of 1949, in calling a meeting of Reform youth, in order to start a Youth Association for members aged 16-30, an age group which constituted a large proportion of the synagogue membership. This organisation was to lead to many of the successful marriages within the congregation in the early years.

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<sup>1</sup>Festival of Lights, celebrating Israel's victory over the Assyrians.

Even without a permanent Rabbi, the social and communal life appears to have been organised on a sound basis, by the congregation. When Rabbi Graf finally took up his appointment in August 1949, he found a congregation which had already established a youth club and a Chevra Kadisha<sup>1</sup>; whilst a lay council efficiently governed the day-to-day life of the Synagogue, meeting once a month, in Mr. Max Corne's office overlooking the Clock Tower of Cardiff's 14th century church, St. John's.

## II The arrival of a Rabbi

The method by which the council of the synagogue arrived at a selection of a permanent Rabbi provides an interesting insight into the democratic and congregational nature of synagogue government at this time.

During the period of the visiting Rabbis, provided by the A.S.G.B., members were duly informed when a particular minister was a prospective candidate for the post. This was done by means of a circular to members, with an asterisk against the candidate's name.

Members were urged to attend these services especially in order that their opinions could be formed,

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<sup>1</sup>Funeral Guild

and a broad consensus of synagogue opinion gained. In March 1949 the post was advertised in the synagogue gazette, and in August of 1949, Rabbi Graf took up the post, as Rabbi of Cardiff New Synagogue, a post which he has held until the present (1976) - incidentally making him one of Reform's longest continuously serving Rabbis.

The immediate impact of Rabbi Graf's arrival appears to have been an upsurge in educational and cultural activity. In a letter <sup>1</sup> written to the congregation soon after his arrival in Cardiff, Rabbi Graf stressed the developmental nature of Judaism as "our grand old faith speaking in terms understandable to a modern Jewish generation".

No This concern with the development of religion had its roots in the theology of German Reform Judaism, a philosophy that Rabbi Graf investigated as a major part of his Ph.D. thesis.

In this, his first letter, the Rabbi was careful to emphasize the importance that he placed on Jewish education for both children and adults; urging youth club members and adults "to show an interest in Jewish teaching, by taking an active part in the lectures and discussions to be arranged soon".

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<sup>1</sup> see appendix  
document 4

This early call for serious attention to culture and education, fell on fertile ground, the synagogue being fortunate in possessing as members men with high academic qualifications, who eagerly responded to this call. With the support of a council, strongly committed to the value of education, the Rabbi was able to organise an impressive programme of study, both religious and secular, assistance being forthcoming from such people as Dr. William Mushin, Dr. Moritz, Alban Levy, B.A.

An adult Hebrew class was organised, a study group formed, and a course of lectures held on Jewish ritual in the "Synagogue and home". Circulars dated from this period reveal a full range of intellectual activities. Debates were deliberately organised as part of a semi-educational programme on Reform Judaism. Talks were given on "How old is Reform in Judaism" and "The lack of missionary zeal in Judaism".

The arrival of a Rabbi coincided with a definite marked increase in the educational and cultural life of the synagogue. A deliberate policy was formulated of involving adults in further education as part of the religious life of the synagogue. Debates and discussions were to form a regular part of the Sabbath worship.

III Lay Democracy and the Constitution 1948-56

The establishing of a Reform synagogue in Cardiff was due to the enthusiasm of laymen, Rabbinical guidance followed from initial lay activity. The importance of lay involvement in synagogue affairs was deliberately enshrined in the constitution, hammered out in 1949. This constitution, accepted by the members in September 1949, reflects the progressive thinking of the early members, for it vested ultimate control with the general body of Reform members.

The principle of sexual equality within the synagogue, was made part of the synagogue constitution. Law 13 stated "That lady members shall be eligible for membership and shall hold any office in the Synagogue". This was a progressive move, in line with general Reform thinking, although it must have appeared strange to many members, who had grown up in an orthodox tradition, where women played a secondary role. Despite Law 13, synagogue membership was to prove more conservative than this law implies. In November 1954 the synagogue minutes record that objections have been made to women taking part in a service. The Rabbi frequently stressed his wish that women should play a more active part in services, and, in this he was supported by most members of the council, though it was not until the 1970's that women finally began to take an active part in the conduct of the synagogue service.



Deliberate steps were taken to preserve congregational control of synagogal matters. The wardens were given a large degree of responsibility for the control of religious services and for the provision of the annual reports on the synagogue's progress. They even had to countersign any authorisation to perform a marriage or a burial.

The Wardens' posts were elected positions; ultimately it was the members who held control over all matters. The framers of the original constitution wished to avoid the creation of powerful cliques, or interest groups within the synagogue government. To prevent this, the original constitution contained a clause that no father and son, or two brothers, might hold office simultaneously as wardens.

Congregational control was firmly established at this general meeting. The role of the Rabbi was to be that of spiritual leader and servant of the congregation, but in material matters he was only another member of the synagogue council. Even the salary of the Rabbi was fixed at a general meeting of all members of the synagogue and not by the synagogue council, as in many other communities. This would become a serious constitutional issue in October of 1956, when Council felt that the matter of the minister's stipend should not be a matter for debate at a general meeting, but the members felt otherwise and the proposal was rejected.

The minister in turn, had to adhere in writing to the laws of the synagogue, and could be dismissed at any time by a two-thirds majority at a general meeting of members. The position of the Rabbi was established as that of spiritual leader. On non-religious issues his vote had no more power than that of any other member.

The tone of the constitution reflected a progressive, modern outlook towards the running of a religious community. Its attitudes of democracy and tolerance were forged out of its experience of traditionalist intolerance at its birth. The principle of extending a hand towards all men and all Jews is clearly demonstrated in the synagogue's policy on burial. Namely, that any professing Jew could be buried in its cemetery. This tolerant attitude was in marked contrast to the earlier shabby treatment that the new synagogue had received at the hands of the United Synagogue.

CHAPTER VITHE SYNAGOGUE BUILDING 1950-69I Methodist Chapel to Synagogue

The dedication of the members was severely tested in the '50s. Despite frequent changes of venue, services were regularly conducted; and the congregation was deliberately involved in the act of worship. Youth members held their first religious service in September of 1949, and many women members sang in the ill-fated choir. A high level of congregational participation sprung from the fact that for the first year of its life, the congregation was without a permanent Rabbi and was greatly dependent on the enthusiasm of its members.

The congregation, if it was to continue its growth, had to acquire a building. If Reform was to be a permanent fact of Cardiff's Jewish life, it had to be rooted in a synagogue building. The possibility of building from scratch does not appear to have been discussed. Inquiries were made to various estate agents for properties in the North and North-East of the city, suitable for use as a synagogue. The search was concentrated in this area probably with an eye on the Jewish

cachement area of Cyncoed and Penylan; with its high density of orthodox Jews.

Eventually, after consideration of many premises in this area, even a semi-detached house, the council began to seriously investigate a war-damaged Methodist Church, with the name "Mount Tabor Primitive Methodist Church". Obviously this had many advantages, as the building had originally been designed for religious worship. It had been a non-conformist place of worship and its very plainness and simplicity, i.e. lack of icons, stained glass; made it very suitable for use as a Synagogue. In the September of 1950 the synagogue council was considering the architects' preliminary report on this building.

This report was a mixture of good and bad: "front elevation was in reasonably good condition" ..... "side and rear walls however need repairing and renewal" ..... "structural work needed to prevent walls spreading" Once inside the church, the architects considered the situation a positive improvement--well, relative to the outside of the building. "Internally the church body, including balcony and organ, is in quite good condition, comparative with the external work".

The synagogue and building committee were not seriously discouraged by this report, and proceeded to enter into negotiations with the Methodist Chapel committee in Manchester. By October of that year a draft contract

had been drawn up, and sent to Manchester. A clause in the original contract reflects the religious persuasion of the vendors, the buyers agreeing "not to use or suffer the property to be used for the manufacture, distribution, sale or supply of intoxicating liquor".

The purchasing of the property soon received a setback. In November of that year the conversion plans were rejected by the City Council on the basis of the "dangerous conditions of walls and roofs". The prospect of a synagogue building receded even further when Thraves and Walker, the synagogue architects, advised that rectifying these faults would mean "the demolition of the roof and side walls and rebuilding". This was surely a bitter blow for the congregation, because the synagogue council unanimously decided to back out of the contract.

The initial feeling of the synagogue council was that the Methodist Chapel committee had concealed certain information from the synagogue, but in fact this was found to be incorrect. A flurry of correspondence followed throughout December of 1950, and it transpired that the synagogue had been misinformed. In December 1950 a letter to the synagogue clearly states that "the chapel has not been condemned.....nor has any notice been served on the present owners". With this letter, the synagogue council resolved to continue with the purchase.

There were still difficulties to overcome. New

plans were submitted to the City Council in July 1951; but even this was not to be a matter of simple procedure. Delays were experienced in obtaining a building licence from the Ministry of Works. This meant that the synagogue had a building which they could not move into and services continued to be held in the Temple of Peace, an arrangement that could not be guaranteed to continue for much longer.

Consequently, a letter was sent to the Ministry stating that delays were disrupting religious and communal life. "If we are turned out of the Temple of Peace we shall have no place in which to hold our services". The manner in which this was disrupting religious education was also strongly emphasised. If appeals on religious and educational grounds did not sway the Ministry, then the hint that the building might collapse in the near future proved effective. This helped to convince the Ministry to expedite the licence for how could they resist an argument such as "The building.....is in dangerous condition.....It is important that repairs are carried out as soon as possible.....if these repairs are not carried out in the near future, then it is quite possible that portions of the building will collapse".

## II Finance (building)

The raising of finance for the project illustrates the level of communal involvement in synagogue

activities. The Ladies' Guild, formed in 1950, was to prove highly successful in raising considerable finance for the building fund. This was done via an ambitious programme of fund raising activities, such as coffee evenings, parties and dances. All members were encouraged to keep collecting boxes on their mantelpieces; and the daily accumulation of copper demonstrates that no contribution, however humble, was refused.

The contributions of the Ladies' Guild were generous but the bulk of the finance would have to be found via guarantors to the banks. Synagogue building and finance in Great Britain, being traditionally organised on a congregational basis. In May 1952, Mr. G. Corne offered to find twenty five guarantors, guaranteeing £100 each. The financial acumen of the building committee is to be marvelled at, for by June of that year the minutes record that the twenty five guarantors had been found.

A Reform synagogue considers music an integral part of its worship, and the purchase of an organ was a priority. The Corne family's connections in the cinema world resulted in the synagogue negotiating to purchase an unwanted cinema organ from the "Empire" cinema in Cardiff, a purchase which would have made the C.N.S. the only synagogue in possession of an organ that had serenaded the antics of Charlie Chaplin. This proposal was short lived, as the contractors informed the synagogue

that the organ was too big to install in the synagogue. It was decided instead to purchase a Hammond organ. This was in turn superseded by an Allen computerised organ, the only one of its kind in use at a place of worship in Wales, which opens up the possibilities of the synagogue as a place for the performance of religious music for the general public.

The vision of the founding members had finally come to fruition. On September 14th, 1952, a consecration service took place. This was a simple ceremony attended by the senior minister of the West London Synagogue, the senior congregation of the A.S.G.B. It was an impressive and dignified ceremony, performed in difficult circumstances, with scaffolding still standing in the synagogue interior.

The opening ceremony was marked by a telegram from the Corne family, now in Australia. This expressed the dedication to a reformed Judaism of the early members "May it grow from strength to strength and prove that our work and our belief in Reform was worthwhile". Whilst some diehard traditionalists may have viewed this event as a black day for Judaism, C.A.J.C.X. probably expressed the general opinion of the Jewish community when it said, in an editorial



Let us hope too, that religious sectarianism will be no bar to the unity of purpose behind all Jewish good works. So that true religion will mark the efforts of this new venue, to play its part in Cardiff's Jewish communal work. <sup>1</sup>

### III Later Building Developments

The proportion of members of continental origin in the synagogue in 1952 was very high. It is therefore not surprising that in October of 1952 it was proposed to erect a memorial plaque to relatives and families of the congregation, who had perished under the Nazis. Collation of names for the memorial was a slow and painful process. It is sad to record that by the time of the unveiling in October 1954, forty-six names had been inscribed; mostly of close family, of early members. A tragically high number, if one considers that there were only approximately 30 families of continental origin.

Growth, not death, happily marks the early history of Cardiff New Synagogue. Only seven years after the opening of the building, a special council meeting was held to establish a development fund; its aims being to raise money to pay for the erection of a chapel at the synagogue cemetery, and to purchase property near the synagogue for future development.

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<sup>1</sup>C.A.J.E.X. Magazine, Vol. 2, No. 4, October, 1952.

In the seven years since it had purchased the building, the synagogue experienced unprecedented growth in membership. The age structure of the synagogue was relatively young, but by 1959 the growth in the numbers of school age children attending religion school was putting pressure on cramped classroom facilities, and new classrooms would soon be required.

Numbers attending religion school

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1953	38
1954	40
1955	45
1956	54
1957	60
1958	65
1959	77
1960	90
1961	90
1962	100+

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1976	30+
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The proposal to extend the synagogue premises was a direct result of a growth in membership, and of a need to meet increasing educational demands. This was an ambitious plan, but it coincided with certain external factors that made this a judicious moment to take such a step.

As far back as 1958 the synagogue council had been aware of the work of a claims commission, whose function was to make funds available to refugee groups from the second World War. The synagogue felt that, because of the high percentage of ex-refugees in the congregation, the community might possibly be entitled to a financial payment from this body. This was correct, and the building committee of the synagogue drew up plans for a three-storey extension to the building, with communal facilities, classrooms, and a caretaker's house.

The Claims Commission granted the New Synagogue £3,500 if the work was completed by 1964. Initially planning permission was refused, but eventually after the intervention of a consultant planner, and a considerable delay, work commenced on the three-storey extension in 1967.

#### IV Financing the Growth

During the first 20 years of the synagogue's life, the trend, reflected in building developments, is that of continuous growth. Later in the 1970's (in line with many Jewish provincial centres) the trend becomes one of stagnation. In comparison to the orthodox community, where the picture was of decline, the state of the C.N.S. in later years was still relatively healthy.

How did the synagogue finance the rapid growth between 1948-58, when there was no substantial increase in the subscription fee? Proposals to charge for religious education and weddings, made in March 1958 were also firmly rejected. The congregation, like all congregations in the A.S.G.B., was financially independent, and any plans for development were solely a congregational matter.

One can detect four factors that allowed the synagogue to meet its financial commitments. Firstly, an absolute growth in membership that led to an increase in revenue, without the need to make any substantial increase in membership fees. Secondly, there was a highly successful campaign of self-help and voluntary donations within the congregation. For example, the Ladies' Guild donations to the synagogue funds rose from £162 per annum in 1953 to as high as £2,100 per annum. Thirdly, many members were to prove extremely generous in gifts of money, religious ornaments, educational material etc., and this was of great importance for it meant revenue from membership fees was conserved. Fourthly, there was astute financial management of the synagogue affairs.

Taking the period 1948-68; the annual accounts show that in most years there was a surplus of income over expenditure; in 1969, for example, even after heavy expenditure on the synagogue extension, the accounts

show a surplus. A sound economic basis provided a firm foundation for synagogue expansion, whilst a rising membership in turn contributed to financial stability.

CHAPTER VII"REFORM" JUDAISM, AND THE LOCAL JEWISH PRESS  
1951-56I The Role of C.A.J.E.X. Magazine

In 1951, the Cardiff Association of Jewish ex-servicemen, published the first issue of the "C.A.J.E.X. Magazine". Officially the journal of the Association, it tended to take a non-sectarian point of view on the Reform-Orthodox controversy. Gradually the magazine became the unofficial journal of Cardiff Jewry, and its function as the magazine of an ex-servicemen's association became of secondary importance to its function as a magazine for the Jewish community. It published articles of Jewish interest: social, historical, and religious.

Publishing its first issue in 1951, C.A.J.E.X. mirrors the attitudes of the Jewish community towards Reform Judaism, three years after the inception of the C.N.S. Its articles on Reform Judaism did not constitute editorial policy, but provide evidence that public debate on Reform Judaism still continued within the community.

II Evidence of residual hostility

Although C.A.J.E.X. magazine was published more than three years after the founding of the C.N.S., the articles published demonstrate that in '51-2 there were strong feelings on the topic of "Reform", open intolerance existed in some of the articles, although these coexisted with contributions pleading for a more tolerant approach.

The magazine stood above this controversy, taking as its stand a belief in open journalism, and deliberately published all sides to the argument. With justified pride in its journalistic integrity, the magazine asserted its impartiality. In Volume 1, No. 2<sup>1</sup> it said that it was

"The first contribution in print locally; to explain the point of view of the Reform movement"

and included in that issue a tightly written article by Rabbi Graf, entitled "Living Judaism". This article stressed the evolutionary nature of Judaism as "an expanding tradition, and an ever growing and reforming religion". Such impartial journalism was misunderstood by the Honorary President of the United Synagogue, Mr. H. M. Roskin. C.A.J.E.X. magazine never feared the

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<sup>1</sup>1951

controversial, and published his reply.

Mr. Roskin, infuriated by Rabbi Graf's reasoned attitude, lashed out verbally in all directions, attacking Rabbi Graf, C.A.J.E.X. and the Reform movement in general. C.A.J.E.X. was accused of "constituting a forum for..... irreligious propadanda". Obviously the Hon. Life President of the United Synagogue regarded Reform Judaism as incompatible with religion. Rabbi Graf's attitude on the evolutionary nature of Judaism was criticised as being "glib" ..... "meaningless" ..... "containing the usual gibberish which is the stock-in-trade of leaders of reform congregations".

Hostility of this strength represents the extreme view, but C.A.J.E.X. published other less extreme viewpoints. These often expressed the disquiet and unease felt towards Reform Judaism by more moderate Orthodox opinion. Writing in 1951, Ben Gabriel reflects Orthodox fears on the attractiveness of Reform Judaism to its youth, possibly illustrating that in these years, Reform was attracting many away from traditional Judaism. I quote

returning to communal life in 1946, I found a new element in the city, a disquieting talk of the need for progress, for adaptation, for development among Jews in religious matters ..... What was this reform that deprived our synagogue of some of its oldest members, if not its most active and set about capturing the enthusiasm of its youth. What do our spiritual leaders propose to do before our youth deserts us, for Judaism gone modern.



III Agreeing to differ

In this article by Ben Gabriel one detects a note of concern, not at the philosophy of Reform, but for the ability of Orthodoxy to maintain its hold on the spiritual affections of its youth. Within the columns of C.A.J.E.X. a common theme was apparent, namely, that all opposition to Reform, tempered by an awareness that not everything in the orthodox garden was rosy.

Editorially C.A.J.E.X. was progressive and appealed for tolerance. In an editorial <sup>1</sup> welcoming the opening of the synagogue building, it said,

Let us hope too that religious sectarianism will be no bar to the unity of purpose behind all Jewish good works, so that true religion will mark the efforts of this new venture to play its part in Cardiff's Jewish communal work.

This was a welcome lead, from a publication representing the broad spectrum of the Jewish community and the precursor of a series of articles from contributors writing in a private capacity; expressing a reasoned, if critical, attitude towards Reform Judaism.

This was a continuing trend, and 1953 saw more articles in this vein. Len Goss, boxing editor and drama critic of the South Wales Evening Post, contributed a

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<sup>1</sup>Vol. 2, No. 4.

personal article, appealing for clerical tolerance towards Reform<sup>1</sup> "I hope that the Rabbi of Cardiff" (Orthodox) ..... "will not take exception to the idea that this attitude" ..... i.e. of religious tolerance<sup>2</sup> ..... "should obtain in religious circles, as well as elsewhere". This piece is interesting, because it not only displays a grudging recognition (from a prominent member of South Wales's Jewish community), of the relevance of some of Reform's arguments; but also implies that the orthodox Rabbi's tolerance towards Christianity should be extended to his co-religionists.

There is little doubt that in 1953, members of the Orthodox community were willing to go into print, recognising both the strengths and weaknesses of Reform Judaism, discussing in turn the inherent weaknesses of traditionalism. Much of the criticism of Reform Judaism echoes that, made more than a hundred years earlier, concerning the secession from the Bevis Marks synagogue. A Mr. Arnold Shepherd contributed an article entitled "On being a Jew", which illustrates the similarity

The Reform Jew would deliberately weaken his Judaism by cutting off much ceremonial and tradition, so as to allow his liberal British background to supply the motive force of his personality.

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<sup>1</sup>Vol. 3, No. 4.

<sup>2</sup>my words.

At the same time, Mr. Shepherd is willing to concede the partial truth of Reform's attitude to orthodoxy as "Ghetto Judaism, as a way of life, sterile and lost in day-to-day minutae".

Possibly Mr. Gabriel reflected the mainstream view; that orthodoxy may be becoming sterile and bogged down in ritual but also takes the view that Reform is not able to distinguish between "what is superfluous and what is not". Historically his analysis of the motivation for Reform Judaism is not totally incorrect. The earlier 19th century reformers, stressed that they were "British Jews", whilst the postwar Reform movement drew its impetus from liberal German traditions, as opposed to the ghetto rooted tradition of Yeshiva trained orthodox Rabbinate. A conflict basically between the liberal traditions of Western Europe and those from Eastern Europe.

Jewish visitors to Cardiff provide an objective view of the Reform-Orthodox controversy, implying that orthodox intolerance was less virulent in other Jewish communities. Mr. Harry Peters, an ex-commando sergeant, in an article entitled "Some impressions of the Jewish scene" notes "that traditional Judaism seems to be waging a defensive battle against Reform, and has been hard put to compose their own differences". Mr. Peter's article, in common with others quoted in this chapter, reveals that the orthodox community was itself exper-

encing some calls for more decorum, attitudes that were found echoed more strongly within the Reform congregation.

Unfortunately, the views expressed in the columns of C.A.J.E.X. were not influential, with the Orthodox Rabbinate. Even seven years after the founding of Cardiff New Synagogue, it appears that the opening of the new Orthodox synagogue was marked by the exclusion of the Reform Rabbi from the invited guests. This was commented on in the letters page of C.A.J.E.X.<sup>1</sup>

It appears that the leaders of Cardiff United Synagogue have no wish to be united with their co-religionists of Cardiff New Synagogue. This to me is very wrong, especially after the way millions of fellow Jews suffered at the hands of Nazi intolerance.

#### IV Orthodoxy calls for decorum

The articles published in C.A.J.E.X. during the early 1950's reflect orthodox criticism of Reform, but this is often tempered by some honest analysis of Orthodoxy's weaknesses. Many of the articles express a sense of disquiet with the lack of decorum in orthodox services. In providing an alternative form of Judaism, that stressed decorum, dignity and comprehension, Reform was meeting a real need.

That this issue became a matter for public

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<sup>1</sup>Vol. 5, No. 2, 1955.

comment in the columns of C.A.J.E.X., is indicative of the rigidity of traditional Judaism in Cardiff. Earlier quotations, from articles by Ben Gabriel and Harry Peters, reveal the establishment's inability to react in a positive manner to desertions from the orthodox synagogue.

An article published in Vol. 2, No. 1, expresses the view that intelligibility and decorum were sadly lacking in the orthodox service; and implies that this very lack of decorum was the cause of absences, and desertions from the orthodox synagogue.

Surely the sooner that we are given services that we can all understand, and take part in, the sooner people will use the *shool* (1) again as it should be used, for prayer.....The repetition of prayers sounds nothing more or less than an unintelligible gabble, which few people can follow or understand.

If one compares the above, an orthodox point of view to the case put forward by the Cardiff New Synagogue in its pamphlet, "The Plain Truth" <sup>2</sup> there are interesting similarities that show that the Cardiff New Synagogue was meeting a real need. I make no apology for quoting again from this pamphlet

<sup>1</sup>*Shool* = Yiddish for Synagogue.

<sup>2</sup>Appendix: Document (2)

The services are conducted so that you should UNDERSTAND your prayers. Important prayers are emphasised, and those out of date are cut out.....the prayers are said word by word, in Hebrew and in English. Nothing is garbled, so that everyone in the synagogue, rather than a mere handful, can understand, take part in, and enjoy the service.

Complaints on the lack of decorum must surely have been widespread, and not only limited to the columns of C.A.J.E.X. Criticism of this type tended to regret the growing secularism of synagogue life, criticising the practice of many members to use the synagogue more as a social meeting place to exchange gossip, than a house of prayer. This is effectively illustrated in a visual manner by a cartoon <sup>1</sup> entitled "know thyself" drawn by the designer of C.A.J.E.X. magazine's cover, Mr. Raymonde Woolfe.

In the cartoon he shows two contrasting pictures of synagogue life. The first shows a congregation gossiping, reading newspapers, eating sweets, etc., whilst the second picture shows the same congregation devout in worship. The cartoon caption challenges the reader "know thyself" ..... "Do you belong in this picture ..... or in this?"

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<sup>1</sup>see Appendix: document 4.

V            Impartiality: The achievement of C.A.J.E.X.  
Magazine

In the early '50s, C.A.J.E.X. magazine allowed its columns to reflect all opinions on Reform Judaism. This was in the face of frequent criticism from both Orthodox and Reform members, that it was "being used as a platform for propaganda, directed by one congregation against the other".

This accusation was undeserved. A careful examination of the magazine reveals that from its inception, C.A.J.E.X. took great care to publish almost all sides to the Reform/Orthodox debate. It reported in an unbiased manner, the political, social and religious issues, that involved the New Synagogue. Editorially C.A.J.E.X. appealed for a unity of purpose within the community, and was an instrument for reasoned discussion. Via the columns of C.A.J.E.X. magazine one can observe a gradual mellowing of orthodox lay opinion toward Reform Judaism. Relations became gradually warmer on an inter-communal lay level. To discover the process, and course of this normalisation of relations on both the lay and Rabbinical level, one must turn to the records of the Cardiff New Synagogue.

CHAPTER VIIIRELATIONS WITH BRITISH JEWRYI        Cardiff

The New synagogue, once established in a permanent home, began to approach official Jewish bodies with a view to membership and participation in their activities. Relations with the Board of Guardians in Cardiff <sup>1</sup> throughout 1952 appear cordial. Reform members were advised of this organisation's activities, and the synagogue distributed the Board's circulars and leaflets. Also throughout 1952 there were negotiations with the Board of Deputies <sup>2</sup> in London, with a view to putting a representative of the synagogue on the Board.

Despite the growing cordiality of relations between orthodox and reform laymen, the animosity of the orthodox establishment occasionally emerged to mar intercommunal functions. Rabbi Graf was publicly insulted at the A.G.M. of the Board of Guardians, by Mr. H. H. Roskin, Hon. Life President of the United Synagogue,

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<sup>1</sup>An organisation in Cardiff, for social service within the Jewish community.

<sup>2</sup>The representative body in London, of British Jewry.



whose attitude to the C.N.S. had remained unchanged. At the time, his remarks caused serious debate in the council of the New Synagogue, but do not seem to have had any long term effect on relations with the Board of Guardians. Indeed, by 1954 the C.N.S. had four nominees on the Board of Guardians, and during the early '60s obtained a representative on the Board of Deputies, first ascertaining that their attitude to 'Reform' congregations was tolerant.

The new synagogue pursued a policy of constant overtures to their orthodox co-religionists, and on a social and communal level links became closer. The opening of the New synagogue building saw invitations being extended to the orthodox community. Nineteen-fifty-three saw the fruits of this non-sectarian approach, for the records of the New Synagogue reveal that the congregation was involved on an official level with A.J.E.X.<sup>1</sup> and the Jewish Old Age Home. Even the Jewish Boy Scouts made use of Reform premises, whilst the Reform youth club participated in a proposal to establish a Jewish Youth Centre.

Such involvement, and cooperation between Jewish organisations inside the city, provides evidence that by 1954 almost all Jewish clubs and organisations were willing to cooperate with the Reform Synagogue.

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<sup>1</sup> Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen

This is further borne out by a public meeting in the C.N.S. on November 27th, 1953, addressed by Justice Sir Seymour E. Karminski on "The Jewish duty of Social service", to which all Jewish lawyers were invited, all Jewish heads of university departments, all Jewish bodies and reporters from C.A.J.E.X. magazine and the Jewish Chronicle.

This indicates the growing involvement of C.N.S. with the wider community, and relations were peaceful as long as issues of religious substance were not raised. A sermon delivered during the High Holy days <sup>1</sup> of Autumn of 1955 by Rabbi Graf was misinterpreted as an "attack on another congregation". Intercommunal relations could be disturbed even as late as 1960, if an issue of doctrine or worship was a factor.

Harmonious relations with A.J.E.X. suffered a slight setback over the problem of styles of worship. A.J.E.X. had, from the inception of C.N.S., proved a most cooperative organisation. Many of its most active members were also members of the C.N.S., and throughout the 1950's the synagogue participated in A.J.E.X. activities. The official A.J.E.X. memorial service was Orthodox and traditional in format; it was over this that disagreement arose.

Cooperation between A.J.E.X. and C.N.S. had

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<sup>1</sup>The Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement

developed to such an extent that in 1959, Mr. Kelly, a member of the synagogue council, announced that A.J.E.X. had agreed to a joint remembrance day service at the United Synagogue at Pen-y-lan, with an A.J.E.X. chaplain. Rabbi Graf pointed out that as a Reform Rabbi, he would be excluded from officiating at the service even if the following year's remembrance day service was held in the Reform Synagogue.

The Reform Synagogue then entered into discussions with A.J.E.X., proposing that the following year the remembrance service could be held in the Reform synagogue, with Rabbi Graf having the right to participate. The association wished for all services to be conducted by an A.J.E.X. chaplain. Who would be an Orthodox Rabbi. C.N.S. were willing to accept the idea of using an A.J.E.X. chaplain, if on alternative years the services of a "Reform" chaplain were used. Unfortunately this was turned down by A.J.E.X. and the C.N.S. decided to go ahead with its separate service, making use of A.J.E.X. standards and bugler.

This was an isolated incident of non-cooperation with A.J.E.X., and arose because of the natural majority of orthodox members in A.J.E.X. It should be noted that A.J.E.X. was a long established organisation, with traditions and practices rooted in the orthodoxy that was historically part of the Cardiff Jewish community. Probably it was not surprising that A.J.E.X.

took this view, being unwilling to commit itself to participating in a modern Jewish service, which might offend the majority of its members.

By 1960 C.N.S. was firmly established in Cardiff's Jewish community and was an accepted and integral part of communal life. A wide range of organisations had firm contacts with C.N.S.; this was not due to any watering down of Reform theology. Willingness to establish cooperative relations sprang from a pragmatic recognition of the growing importance of the "Reform" Synagogue - in the face of the United Synagogue's decline in membership.

There is also a more positive reason for increased cooperation, namely the non-sectarian attitude of the Reform Synagogue. Unlike Reform movements in other religions, the New Synagogue never claimed a monopoly of "right" despite earlier hostility from the orthodox establishment; the reform synagogue never displayed any tendency to withdraw into a shell. Instead it made the fullest efforts to explain its stand to the established orthodox community. On the socio-political level the synagogue became an integral part of the life of the Jewish community. In the 1960's the synagogue became relatively more influential as its membership constituted an ever increasing share of the Jewish population affiliated to synagogues. Although even after a decade of existence, the Rabbinate of the United Synagogue had not

become sufficiently adjusted to the existence of "Reform" to establish cordial relations with the Reform Rabbi.

## II Relations with the R.S.G.B.<sup>1</sup>

Relations with the British Reform movement had a firm basis, in the early help and guidance from the West London Synagogue, Bournemouth, and the A.S.G.B.<sup>1</sup> in the 1940's. Prior to the purchase of a synagogue building, the A.S.G.B. was instrumental in sending visiting Rabbis to officiate at the Temple of Peace, the temporary home of the congregation.

The A.S.G.B. in 1952 had established a special "expansion committee" to coordinate and assess the needs of the new congregations springing up in the provinces. Much of this assistance was of an administrative nature, advisory rather than doctrinal. Throughout 1952 relations with the Reform movement were on a fraternal and social level. Prayer books were borrowed from Rabbi Graf's former congregation in Bradford. Advice was received on the validity of Reform marriages, and A.S.G.B. representatives attended the consecration of the synagogue building.

The A.S.G.B. was composed of constituent congregations, with each affiliated synagogue largely

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<sup>1</sup>Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, formerly the A.S.G.B., Association of Synagogues in Great Britain.

independent in a physical, material sense. Decisions made by the A.S.G.B. were not necessarily binding on member congregations. The issues on which the A.S.G.B. and the C.N.S. consulted during 1952 and 53, concern the supply of ministers during Rabbi Graf's absence to study for his Ph.D. There is also evidence of some mediation by senior Reform Rabbis when serious personal clashes arose between some members of the Council and the Rabbi.

In 1954 there is evidence of a growing communication between the A.S.G.B. and the new synagogue on other than organisational problems. The A.S.G.B. now had the final say in the approval of any minister to be appointed at a later date. Although this was likely to be a matter of formality, in theory it meant that the A.S.G.B. had the power of veto over its affiliated congregations. Whether this veto has ever been used is unimportant, but it does demonstrate the increasing influence of the Reform movement on its member congregations.

The 1950's reveal the New synagogue as a strong supporter of more cooperation with the Liberal movement, advocating a joint theological college. Although the congregation was a strong supporter financially of the Leo Baek College <sup>1</sup>, it strongly urged more cooperation

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<sup>1</sup>Reform Rabbinical College

with the Liberals. In 1957, when making a donation to the World Union Progressive Judaism, a plea for closer cooperation with the liberals was again made. "We would have more consideration for this body if they worked for closer cooperation with the Liberals". The synagogue continued to hold the view that cooperation with all sections of Jewry was desirable. In October of 1958, commenting on the cost of training Rabbis at the Leo Baeck College, the council made the point that more cooperation with the liberals would bring the cost down, a view that was ahead of Reform opinion in the country at large.

In the late '50s Cardiff became more involved with the A.S.G.B. Sir B. L. Q. Henriques, C.B.E., J.P., addressed the community on the World Union of Progressive Judaism. Rabbi Graf became the synagogue's representative on the magazine committee of the "Synagogue Review". C.N.S. played a major role in A.S.G.B. activities. In 1957, Rabbi Graf delivered the sermon at the annual conference, and the synagogue turned down the offer to stage the A.S.G.B. conference. Despite increasing involvement with the A.S.G.B., there were important points of difference.

In 1959 there were moves to disaffiliate the A.S.G.B. from the World Union, the synagogue disagreed with this, and approached the World Union with a view to taking up congregational membership. This was done, and for a time Cardiff remained one of the few British Reform

congregations affiliated to the World Union. Eventually the A.S.G.B. as a body rejoined.

In the Synagogue's relations with the A.S.G.B. (later R.S.G.B.) one can detect three themes. Firstly, growing involvement of A.S.G.B. in religious matters: e.g. procedure for proselytes; preaching of sermons with common themes on important occasions in all member congregations. Secondly, greater participation by C.N.S. in the administrative and general business of the A.S.G.B. e.g. representation on magazine committee, and in the late '60s a Mrs. Foster became the first woman to attend the Central Education Committee of the A.S.G.B. This was a progressive move, indicative of a progressive congregation. This radicalism contributed to the third trend; namely, advocacy of closer cooperation with the Liberals, and of maintaining links with World Union.

This Radicalism stemmed from the philosophy and ideals of the Rabbi and Council. There was a constant attempt to maintain cordial contacts with all sections of Jewry. On a local, national and world-wide basis. One might be forgiven for suggesting that the motive force for this was Rabbi Graf, who along with others, believed in the philosophy of German Reform Judaism. With its universal and non-sectarian approach

German Reform Judaism never indulged  
in sectarianism. The German Rabbi  
who cherished Reform saw it as just  
another school within authentic  
Judaism.....



The former German Reform Rabbi would still like to guide British Jewry as a whole towards a blessed state he experienced in the country from which he came: United Jewish communities (*Einheitsgemeinden*) where 'orthodox' and 'Reform' Jews work together in harmony. <sup>1</sup>

If the above can be taken as representative of Rabbi Graf's philosophical attitude to Reform, surely it moulded the synagogue policies of cooperation with Liberal Jews, Orthodox Jews, the World Union, and last, but not least, active participation in the work of the Council of Christians and Jews.

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<sup>1</sup>Influence of German Rabbis by Rabbi L. G. Graf  
Essay in "Reform Judaism", ed. Dow Marmur.

CHAPTER IXTHE GROWTH OF SYNAGOGUE INSTITUTIONSI Education

The arrival of Rabbi Graf in 1949 was marked by an increase in the level of cultural and educational activity, but it was not until after the acquisition of permanent premises in 1952 that the synagogue was able to launch a system of religious education for its children.

The 1950's was a period of rapid numerical growth in religion school attendance. During the period attendance rose from 38 pupils in 1953, to a peak of 100+ in 1962, and the development of education reflects this growth. Such rapid escalation can be traced in part to the postwar baby boom, but this does not answer the question, why religion school attendance rose, when social historians point to a general decline in membership of religious institutions throughout the U.K.

The early members of the synagogue were keen that their children should receive a religious education. Witness the enquiries from members living in Pontypridd, Porthcawl concerning the education of their children. These parents were more than willing to make the 80 mile

round trip, in order that their children might receive a Jewish education. This was in marked contrast to the decline in the interest of parents in the 1970's.

Classes commenced in 1953, on Sunday mornings, Rabbi Graf taking 4 classes in a continuous 4-hour session. There were further lessons on Thursday night, again conducted by Rabbi Graf. Throughout the early '50s the synagogue discussed the question of paying for more teachers, but it was not until 1955 that there was any teaching assistance for Rabbi Graf, when two members of the congregation offered their services as teachers.

In that year a programme of adult religious education was started, covering Hebrew language and Sabbath prayers. Its aim was to allow those adults (especially women) whose education had been neglected in the past, to rectify the situation.

There is evidence that during this period there was occasionally some form of payment to Religion School teachers; often this was only of a nominal sum. Some members of the council objected to this, and in December 1956 the principle was established and recorded in the minutes "That members who gave their services to C.N.S. should do so free of charge". Rabbi Graf was officially the headmaster of the Religion school and always performed teaching duties. He was influential in drawing up the curriculum which covered Hebrew, Bible, Post-biblical Jewish history, and Jewish belief.

Parental involvement in their children's education was a feature of this decade, and this involvement was a factor in the continued increase in attendance. The A.G.M. for the year ending 1957, prophesied attendance of 60+, many children continuing to attend after the age of 13. Parental involvement was officially encouraged by the formation of a Parents' Association, through which it was hoped parents would influence and formulate educational policy for the school and on adult education. The Parents' Association was formed in 1958 and launched an ambitious programme of debates and discussions on educational topics.

The range of discussion and activity was diverse, covering problems such as "Child-parents relationships" "The Work of the N.S.P.C.C.". Adult education was not neglected for the Parents' Association held debates with the "Council of Christians and Jews" on the colour problem. A high level of parental concern contributed to almost all children attending Religion school.

The Rabbi constantly stressed that parental involvement should not be limited to educational matters; he envisaged the parents role as encouraging the religious and educational unity of synagogue life. Parents were expected to bring their children to the specially designed Children's Service, that integrated religious worship with education.

There are children's services every month.....encourage your child to attend every one of these services <sup>1</sup> which are followed by an *oneg shabbat* .....at which talk of a Jewish educational nature goes hand in hand with refreshment.

The function of the Parent's Association was clearly visualised by Rabbi Graf, as increasing the theological and religious content of synagogue life, which he felt should have more importance than the social life of the synagogue. In a message to the congregation, Rabbi Graf defined the role of the Parents' Association

We founded the parents' association linked to our religion school, to enable our parents to become once again teachers of their children .....Fathers and mothers have a chance to learn and ask questions, discuss problems and gain information on how to make their home more Jewish, through religious ceremonies, and how to answer their children when they come to seek enlightenment on what it means to be Jewish.

After 1960 numbers attending religion school remained fairly static, this can be attributed to a declining birth rate, in line with national trends, and the growing secularisation of Jewish life, G.C.E.'s and ballet lessons competing with Sunday Religion school.

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<sup>1</sup>A social event following a religious service, which combines a light meal with discussion.

Despite this, new enrolments continued to hover around the sixty mark, but children were leaving at an earlier age owing to the pressures of secular schooling. Education was still a remarkably healthy institution as late as 1960, ambitious plans being made for drawing up a ten year syllabus of religious education; audio-visual aids were bought. Adult education continued to survive with an extensive programme of discussion evenings, and Saturday afternoon debates entitled "Let's talk it over".

The size of the teaching staff constantly increased. In 1961 there were 5 teachers; 1963, six teachers. Major L. C. Cohen established a trust fund for the religion school, all positive indications of the strength of Jewish education, but a note of concern was obvious regarding the absence of older children from Religion school. Rabbi Graf expressed concern at growing secularisation in March 1964

Boys and girls should not leave our classes before the age of sixteen. One can take G.C.E.'s and still find time for Jewish studies. Jews who are ignorant of their Judaism miss the blessings of our faith and endanger the future of our community. What is taught must be put into practice. Without parental aid the teachers are at a loss.

This appears to be a constant worry of the Rabbi throughout the 1960s, when parental interest in Jewish education was waning. There was a parallel increase in confirmation of children at the age of 13, where once

this had been considered an important stage in a child's religious development. Rabbi Graf felt it was becoming more of a social event. He records his dismay at this in April 1966, "*Barmitzvah* is considered only as the termination of Jewish studies and regular attendance at Synagogue".

The voluntary participation of members in synagogue life appears to have sadly declined. Rabbi Graf warned of the dangers it held for the future of Judaism

It is a poor sign of religious understanding, if members withhold their children from our religion school. If we do not receive offers from parents to teach in our classes.

In the late 1960's the Rabbi expressed concern at secularisation that was undoubtedly taking place within the Reform movement as a whole. The attachment of many members was not to a religion capable of dealing with the problems of modern society, but to the "folksy" side of Judaism. <sup>1</sup>

This is evident in the Reform movement's increasing involvement with Zionism, the importance of Jewish identity becoming more important than Jewish religious belief. *Barmitzvah* <sup>2</sup> had in the 1950's been seen as a prelude to more intensive Jewish education.

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<sup>1</sup>for a fuller exposition of Rabbi Graf's point of view see document (5) "Pots and Pans religion".

<sup>2</sup>confirmation

In the 1960's it became a mere social institution, performed at the age of 13, the traditional age. Previously it had been conducted at the age when the Rabbi considered the pupil had reached emotional maturity and understood the religious significance of the event. Parents obviously felt differently and desired *Barmitzvah*, much in the same way as non-church members desire a white wedding. The minute book records in November 1967 that the

Parents in the congregation do not feel that children are getting enough tuition.....and want to see their children become *barmitzvah* at the traditional age of 13.

This was a development that Rabbi Graf regretted but he was forced to concede to congregational sentiment "If parents get in touch with him when the child is 11½ he will discuss *Barmitzvah* arrangements".

Education in the Reform Synagogue has experienced two definite periods of development. In the 1950s there was a rapid increase in Religion school attendance, paralleled by active parental involvement on curricular matters, finance and adult education. In the 1960s there was a gradual decrease in parental involvement, offers of teaching assistance were not forthcoming, children left classes at an earlier age; many parents did not enrol their children in classes at all. *Barmitzvah* became an automatic ceremony performed at the age of 13.



A fall in the birth rate, migration of young couples from Cardiff, all contributed to this trend, but the major factor was undoubtedly the growing secularism of British and Jewish society. The loosening of religious attachments, and the increasing involvement of many young Jewish couples in the wider society turning outside Jewish circles for entertainment, education and culture.

## II        The Youth Association

Social institutions such as the Youth Association, went through a period of rapid growth in the 1950s, followed by a period of stagnation, and decline in the '60s. A declining Jewish population in Cardiff and a declining birth rate were undoubtedly part of the cause. A more worrying factor was the tendency of many Jewish youth to turn away from the synagogue, seeking entertainment and diversion among the wider non-Jewish community. This was a natural process, attributable to the changing nature of British society in the 60s. Compared to the postwar society, the 60s was a permissive and open era, Jewish youth; like youth in general, were victims of a generation gap, and subculture. The family exercised less control over its children, many of whom left home or held greatly different values to their parents. Lastly, the 60s saw Britain very much a secular, irreligious society and Jewish youth was no

longer isolated from these influences.

In the 1950s the Youth Association catered for an age range that today would be designated as adult, ie. 16 years - 30 years. At that time there was little generation or culture gap between the age groups, and youth were far more willing to be organised into Youth groups or clubs. Membership was high, forty five at its peak, but the maturity of the Youth Association was to prove its own undoing. Many members migrated from Cardiff or married, and by 1955 it is recorded that there were not enough members in the 18 - 23 age range to support such a club.

A younger group of children was growing up, and Rabbi Graf called a meeting to form a new Youth Club, called *Ner Tamid*, catering for the under-sixteens. This grew rapidly from 11 members in 1956 to 1962 when it had 60 members, many of whose parents were members of the orthodox synagogue. Meetings were held with the orthodox Sinai Youth Club, and with Orthodox youth groups in Newport and Swansea.

The older youth group made a spirited re-appearance in the late '50s but was again doomed to failure. *Ner Tamid* suffered to a lesser degree the same fate; children became less willing to stay members, leaving at an earlier age. As time wore on the synagogue created a Junior Youth Group called Wombats to cater for the young teens, but this organisation constantly laboured

under similar difficulties and competition from many quarters for the loyalty of its youth. Television, school and decreasing parental direction of their children created problems for the youth leaders.

It is possible that factors such as migration and a falling birth rate will make the existence of a Reform Youth Club impractical. A similar situation was mirrored in orthodox youth organisations, whereas in the '40s and '50s more than 10 youth and social clubs functioned, no more than three organisations were active by the late 1960s.

CHAPTER XMEMBERSHIP: A STORY OF GROWTHI The drive for new members

The first five years of the synagogue were characterised by an almost missionary zeal, to spread the message of Reform Judaism amongst Cardiff Jewry. This campaign was largely successful, and most of the membership growth can be accounted for by former Orthodox Jews joining the congregation.

The attitude of the synagogue council was to involve all members in the life of the synagogue. Special membership rates were available to Youth Association members who took up synagogue membership, whilst reduction or waiving of membership fees was permitted for less prosperous members. Financial difficulties were never allowed to discourage potential members. This eagerness to attract new members can be discerned in the early pamphlets issued by the synagogue.<sup>1</sup>

Public meetings were frequently held, and addressed by prominent Reform Jews. In September 1953,

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix I: documents 1 - 3C

a public meeting was held in the Royal Hotel, Cardiff, and was addressed by Mr. Turner Samuel, Q.C., M.P., and Rabbi Van der Zyl, minister of the North Western Reform Synagogue, London. This meeting, like others, was widely publicised in the Jewish Chronicle, the South Wales Echo. A letter dated 25th August 1953, states clearly that the aim of this meeting is

That information about the Reform Movement and Cardiff New Synagogue may be available to as wide a circle of South Wales Jewry as possible.....We not only urge you most strongly to attend this meeting so that you may increase your knowledge of the movement, but also to tell your friends about the meeting, particularly those who are not yet members of the Cardiff New Synagogue and whose impressions of our outlook on Judaism and of our services are necessarily vague.

Such an approach was highly successful, and throughout the 1950s, "New members" was a regular item in the minutes of Council meetings. Recruitment of members was not confined to the medium of the public meeting; a sub committee was formed in June 1956 to approach persons whom it was thought might be interested in joining the synagogue. Visitors to the synagogue who showed an interest in the service were followed up, and for High holy days cards were printed, inviting visitors to join or make a donation, if they felt unable to become members.

Despite rapid growth, public meetings and personal approaches, the council remained dissatisfied with the rate of growth of approximately 1 - 5 per month, and felt an even more personal approach was needed. To facilitate this a reception committee was formed in 1960 to "meet with interested parties". Still the Rabbi and Council remained dissatisfied with what they designated as lack of missionary zeal, and appealed for more active cooperation to attract new members <sup>1</sup>

A reform synagogue stands for certain very distinct and definite positive principles.....One simply has got to be a sort of missionary..... Why don't you help me, I need your help.....Is it not (the members') solemn obligation to talk Reform with his friends.....Our members should cooperate with us to double our present membership. Or have we to assume that our own members mistake reform as Orthodoxy does for indifference.....This bit of plain speaking is the outcome of a great and sincere worry on the part of your Rabbi.....Only an enthusiastic Jew endeavours to bring other Jews into his congregation. We need enthusiastic Jews and we shall go from strength to strength.

The Rabbi was expressing in 1960 his fear that the synagogue was becoming the refuge of indifferent Orthodox Jews, possibly a minority of new members were not really committed to the Reform philosophy, wanting

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<sup>1</sup>A.G.M. year ending 31/12/60. Rabbi's message.

only its ceremonial functions of Birth, Marriage and Death. This would not explain the continued rise in membership of the Reform Synagogue and parallel decline in membership of the orthodox community. Still there is little doubt that after the 1950s the New Synagogue no longer actively campaigned for new members. Despite this, membership continued to increase, mainly due to disenchanted orthodox Jews joining the synagogue. Continued growth meant that financially the synagogue was in a strong position, the treasurer announcing at the A.G.M. for the year ending 1961, that increased membership meant there would be no need to increase the subscription.

## II Appeal for more religious commitment 1960-70

During the 1960s the Rabbi became increasingly concerned at the religious apathy of many members, and suggested in March 1964, a token membership for the youth of the synagogue in order that they "be made aware of their belonging to the Cardiff New Synagogue". Rabbi Graf did not view this lack of religious attachment as an isolated phenomenon. He saw it as a part of a national trend, which he deplored.

If the world is not interested  
in Religion today, why should the Jew  
be assimilated to this form of nihilism?  
If the Christian cannot accept the  
dogma of his Church, what has this to  
do with Jewish teaching?

The Rabbi argued that instead of being swept along with the secular age we should "ask ourselves how to react to the permissive society, to abortion and euthanasia".<sup>1</sup>

In Reform Judaism Rabbi Graf believed, lay the vitality and means of "coming closer to the past and present in one". He detected an ever increasing tendency to make of the synagogue a social institution, with consequent loss of missionary zeal, witness the secularisation of *Barmitzvah*. The role of the membership should be to resist the trend

to make it (the synagogue) a social club and nothing else is a travesty. To make of a Jewish congregation something similar to a Welsh society outside Wales, is simply to keep in touch, is a wrong evaluation of this great religious institution.

The decade constantly echoes with this theme, the Rabbi recognising that members are lacking in the spiritual zeal that marked the synagogue's early years. In April 1967 this theme was reiterated forcibly

It should be the honourable duty of every member to act as a missionary among his fellow Jews.....One misses the missionary zeal at a time when many who are affiliated somewhere else in name only, or completely unaffiliated, would gain the right kind of spiritual home.

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix 1: document 5.



Over a period of twenty years' ministry at the Cardiff New Synagogue, the Rabbi had not lost his enthusiasm for spreading the message of Reform, but this message appeared to be lost on the membership. The Rabbi detected that the synagogue was becoming conservative spiritually, and losing its identity. Rabbi Graf prepounded social ideas that were ahead of a more conservative congregation, ideas such as sexual equality

I feel a balance of the representation of the two sexes has not yet been achieved on our council, this is highly desirable. Reform Judaism believes that men and women ought to have an equal chance to serve the cause for which we stand. <sup>1</sup>

but it was not until the 1970s that women began to play an active role in the conduct of the service.

In the twenty years of the synagogue's existence one can observe that a gradual lessening of missionary zeal, followed a decade of active campaigning for new members. This was a conservative trend that cannot be separated from a right wing move by the R.S.G.B. <sup>2</sup>  
To quote Rabbi Graf's observations on this shift

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<sup>1</sup>April 1967

<sup>2</sup>Appendix 1, Document 5.

Reform Judaism today is becoming top heavy with laws and ceremony. The trend is towards more customs, more ritual, more observances. The movement stands in danger of losing its identity.....The movement is becoming folksy.....

He points to the increasing cults, and "*ersatz* faiths that seem to have displaced the Jewish religion in many circles, such as the cult of Jewish Nationalism, culture and philanthropy". Whilst this is a possible explanation of loss of Reforming missionary zeal, it should be pointed out that the Cardiff New Synagogue was merely suffering the hardening of arteries and the general religious apathy of a permissive age.

### III The Problem of Jewish Statistics

When analysing statistics that show Jewish population, or membership of an organisation, one should tread carefully. Firstly, there is no official record of the Jewish population of Cardiff. Religious affiliation is not an area which the Registrar General collates. The Jewish Year Book, has for many years given figures for the Jewish population of Cardiff. This they have estimated as 3000, until recently, when the figure suddenly increased to 3500, in the face of all evidence of declining provincial communities. Chaim Bermant, in his book about Anglo Jewry, "Troubled Eden" gives a figure of 5000. All figures must be treated with extreme

caution, whatever their source, be it the Jewish Statistical Board or Jewish Chronicle. At best, any figures are the result of research into membership lists of synagogues, at worst, they are educated guesses.

Any figures based on synagogue membership exclude the growing number of unaffiliated Jews, and non-professing Jews, whilst estimated guesses can be grossly inaccurate, depending of course on the estimator. The figures used in this work suffer from further complicating factors. Those researched by Mr. Maurice Dennis and published by C.A.J.E.X. exclude non Cardiffians, are drawn from the annual balance sheets of the Orthodox Synagogue, after meticulous research, and are more accurate than figures for the Reform Synagogue.

Those I have compiled from three membership lists, minute books, and Warden's reports are not a 100 per cent accurate, as membership lists were not kept up to date; addresses not always recorded and births also not always recorded. The statistics have been compiled by two different historians using different sources and techniques, and information relating to the Reform synagogue is often incomplete or unavailable. Any errors that may arise in this work on statistical data are entirely my own, and spring from my collation of data from multifarious sources.

IV General decline of Cardiff Jewish Community

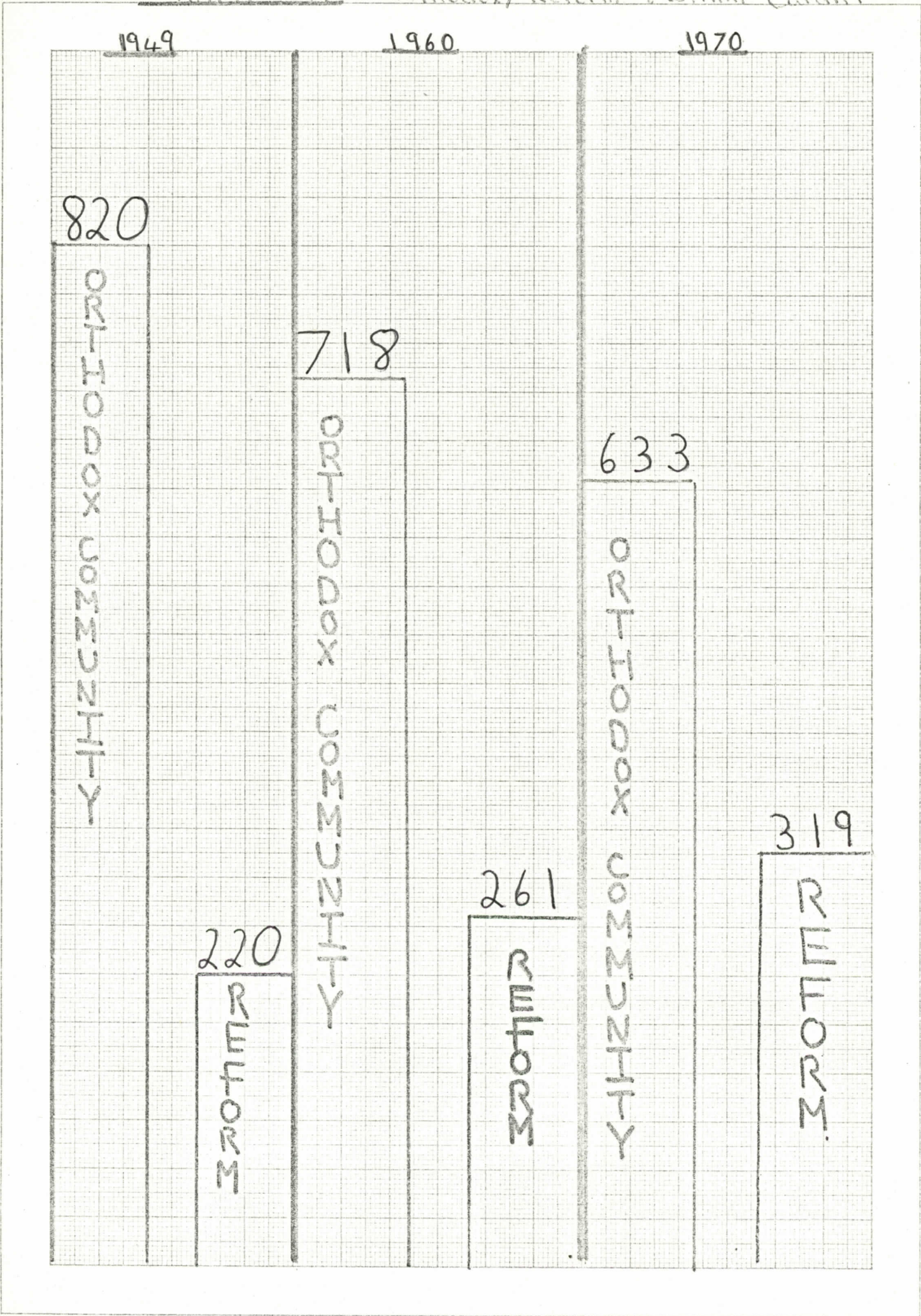
Despite the assertion of the Jewish Year Book that population has remained constant, there is considerable data to show that postwar Jewry has declined dramatically in Cardiff and South Wales.

In 1951 there were 21 Jewish organisations listed in C.A.J.E.X. magazine, today many of these are no more. In 1964 the Jewish community was catered to by 7 kosher grocery shops, 2 bakers, 3 butchers, 1 patisserie, 1 restaurant and 1 caterer. In 1977, at the time of writing, there is one butcher and no fully kosher grocery shop. Formerly there were synagogues at Swansea, Cardiff, Newport, Llanelli, Merthyr, Pontypridd, and congregations at Brynmawr, Tredegar, Aberdare, Newbridge, Abercarn, Crumlin, Llanhilleth. Today only Cardiff, Newport, Swansea hold regular services.

If more evidence was needed, addition of yearly totals of both Reform and Orthodox communities would demonstrate a real decrease in the Jewish population had taken place. Although it must be noted that these figures refer to adult membership of synagogues. Attempts to ascertain the numbers of non affiliated Jews in Cardiff and South Wales are further complicated by the prevalence of surnames like Solomans, Moses, Issacs, common to Jewish and Welsh cultures.

Postwar disillusionment, with Orthodoxy, led a few Jews to assimilate; this was facilitated by a more

\* GRAPH "A" Share of Synagogue affiliation by congregations Orthodox/Reform: within Cardiff



\* all orthodox figures: Courtesy of M Dennis: & CAJEX magazine.

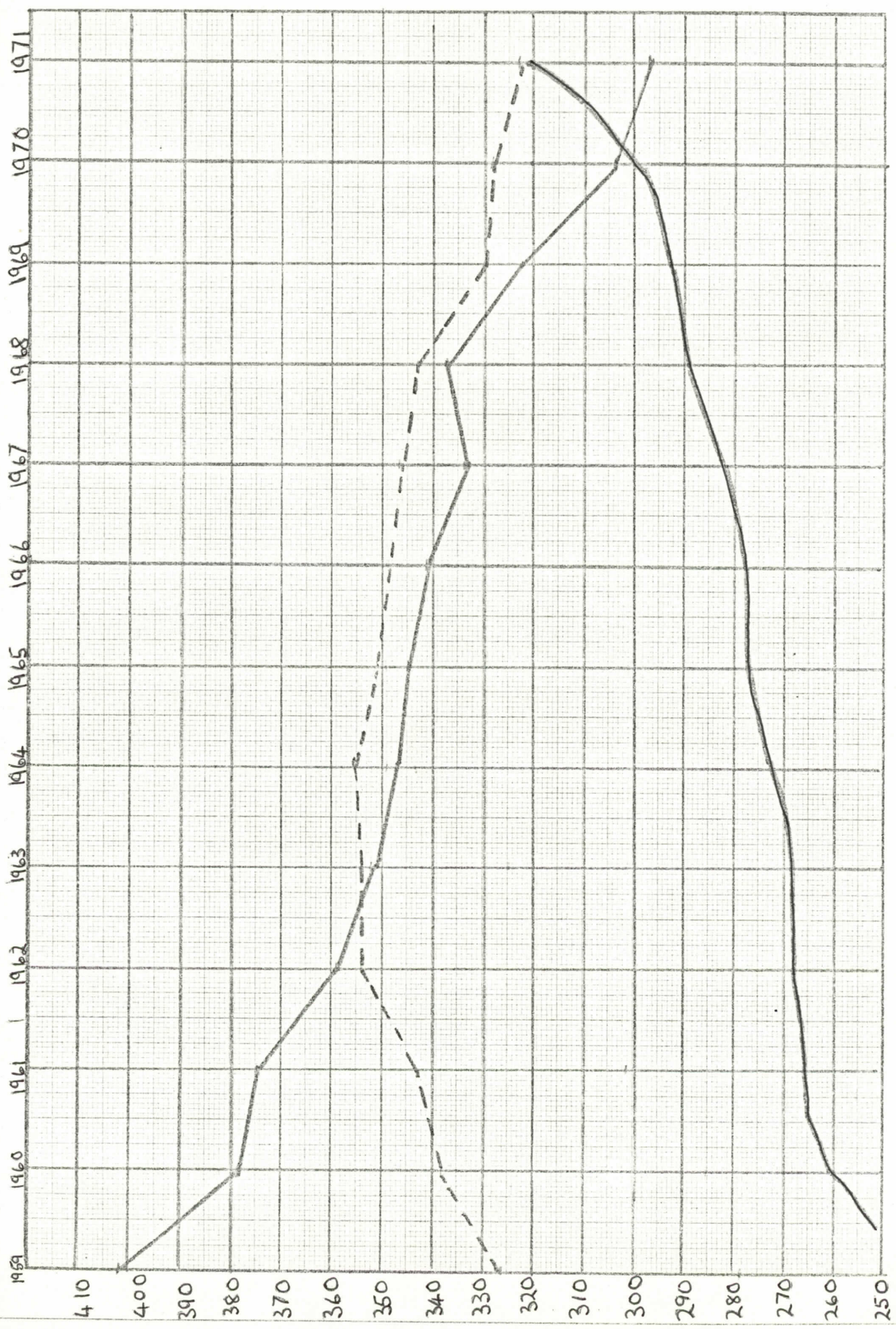
open society. Others migrated to London, or emigrated to Israel, and a declining birth rate contributed to a drop in the total number of professing Jews living in Cardiff. In the face of such pressures, it is indeed surprising that the Cardiff New Synagogue's share of total synagogue affiliations increased in percentage and numerical terms (see Graph A. facing p. 95).

What the graph reveals, is that over a twenty one year period 1949-1970, total synagogue membership in the city declined from 1040, to 952, and that despite absolute decline in Cardiff, falling birthrate, migration, intermarriage. The Cardiff New Synagogue's share of total professing Jews increased from 21.2 per cent in 1949 to 33.5 per cent in 1950. The present share (1976) has been estimated at 35 per cent, thus the New Synagogue gained an increasing share of a dying community. This was achieved by attracting new members, and not by any natural increase in birth rate.

This trend appears to be in decline. Present membership is approximately 350, but the rate of membership applications is slowing to a trickle as young people continue to migrate from Cardiff, taking up membership elsewhere, or not at all. The picture for the future appears to bear nothing but gloom, no natural increase can be expected via birth rate, and unless more orthodox members join the Reform synagogue, stagnation is the only prospect. This also is unlikely as the United Synagogue

# Affiliation to Reform/Orthodox: Distribution by SYNAGOGUE

Graph B



ORTHODOX Penylan  
 SYNAGOGUES Cathedral Rd.

REFORM

(an ageing institution) and its members will become increasingly unlikely to change their loyalties with the onset of old age. Even if this were not the case, little optimism can be derived from possessing a larger share of a rapidly vanishing Jewish population.

#### V Orthodoxy's decline/Reform's growth

When one compares membership figures for the two communities on a synagogal basis, other interesting developments emerge (Graph B, facing p. 96) over the ten year period. It can be seen that the New Synagogue has had a period of continuous growth, whereas the constituent Orthodox synagogues have experienced an overall decline.

The United Synagogue had experienced its most spectacular fall in its Cathedral Road Synagogue in the 1959-1963 period. This can be explained by the fact that there had been a migration of Jews from this area to Penylan in the 1950's. Consequently, the New Orthodox synagogue in Penylan, built in 1955, had a period of growth from 1955-64. This is a false picture as the actual Orthodox community declined. What took place was a shift of population from the old Orthodox Synagogue to the new. After 1964 the two orthodox synagogues continue their sharp decline, Cathedral Road at a faster pace, because it is no longer a centre of Jewish habitation.

By 1970 the Reform Synagogue had approximately



a third of all synagogue members in Cardiff, but is the second largest place of worship. This growth comes not from an increase in birth rate. Some of the synagogue's growth may be accounted for by its marginally better birth rate, taking the period 1961-1969, see chart below:

	<u>Cardiff United Synagogue (Orthodox)</u>		<u>Cardiff New Synagogue (Reform)</u>	
	Births	Deaths	Births	Deaths
1961	11	27	6	1
1962	11	30	10	5
1963	9	32	2	8
1964	14	25	7	5
1965	6	17	1	8
1966	7	28	2	5
1967	6	21	7	4
1968	2	23	3	5
1969	4	33	3	12

The United Synagogue had a yearly average of 7.7 births and 26.2 deaths, evidence of a declining ageing organisation, whereas the New Synagogue presents a healthier picture. Its yearly average is 4.5 births and 5.8 deaths, once again obviously a declining community, but declining at a much slower rate. The picture

generally is a gloomy one. Neither marriage or education statistics give any real hope, or evidence of a halt in overall decline of either of the two communities.

Marriages appeared to be stagnating in the community. Over a ten year period there is no dramatic increase in the numbers married, despite the decline in one community and the growth of another. Undoubtedly young Jewish couples were getting married, possibly meeting their marriage partners outside the community, at University, and often becoming married in other synagogues, in other towns.

Marriages

	C.U.S. <sup>1</sup>	C.N.S. <sup>2</sup>
1961	13	2
1962	8	1
1963	8	2
1964	6	0
1965	7	0
1966	3	1
1967	5	0
1968	3	0
1969	7	5
1970	6	4
1971	6	3

<sup>1</sup>Orthodox

<sup>2</sup>Reform

During this ten year period of Orthodox decline and Reform growth, marriages performed in the synagogues remained static. This is a reflection of an ageing community, troubled by migration and increasing inter-marriage. Should this trend continue one can only prophesy a bleak future for both communities. Education provides a similar picture for the period that this dissertation covers.

In 1953 attendance at the Reform religion school was 38, by 1962 it had reached a peak of 100+, by 1976 it had declined to an average attendance of 35, a depressing omen for the future, but one that reflects the national declining birth rate.

VI The changing pattern of distribution of Reform Synagogue membership throughout Cardiff 1949-1970

1949. Map A. Appendix II.

The distribution of Reform membership throughout the City of Cardiff has changed over a twenty year period. This change reflects in part the changing pattern of Jewish social life, increased social mobility and prosperity.

In 1949 there were two Orthodox synagogues in the city; one in Pontcanna, east of the River Taff, and the second in Windsor Place, in the city centre. The Reform congregation held its services in the Temple of Peace, situated in the civic centre. Many of the Reform

members, if not the majority, were former members of the Orthodox Synagogue, and this explains why 22 per cent of members lived in Llandaff and Canton, immediately North and West of the city centre, relatively close to the places of worship, and within easy walking distance. Similar reasons would explain the 17 per cent of members who lived in areas O. and P., again older areas of Jewish habitation within walking distance of their former synagogue.

Traditional orthodoxy allows no travel by car on the sabbath, and orthodox Jews would have felt compelled to live near their synagogues. Reform Jews in 1949 were under no such travel restrictions, and could choose their domicile with greater freedom; even so, a certain concentration of members is evident.

Cyncoed and Penylan were middle class suburbs, relatively distant from the orthodox synagogues. The high concentration of members in these areas reflects the growing social mobility of Cardiff Jewry and Reform members in particular, for whom travel by car would pose no religious problems.

The areas on the outskirts of the city are particularly interesting, especially those on the far East and West, and South. Area K, South Cardiff, was a deprived area, largely working class, servicing the docks and steelworks. Jewish dockers and steelworkers are a rare occurrence, and one would not expect to find Reform

members living in this area. Ely, on the East of the City, was largely fields and council estates, with little private housing. Jews traditionally make little use of the social services or municipal housing, preferring to turn to the extended family, or to the Board of Guardians for help. Radyr was a rural community, unattractive to Jewish people, who are an urbanised people. These factors also serve to explain why no Reform members lived in Llanrhyney and Rhyney, areas distant from the city, and largely virgin land. Lisvane also was a rural community, with little private housing.

There was a heavy concentration of members in the North West of the city in Whitchurch and Rhiwbina, areas a long way from the synagogues. An examination of the membership list at this date explains the heavy concentration. Whitchurch and Rhiwbina were middle class suburbs, relatively close to the trading estate at Treforest, where many continental members had their factories, but other factors were important. Many of the families living in Whitchurch were closely related, and settled within close proximity to one another.

1960. Map B. Appendix II.

Between 1949 and 1960 some important changes took place within the Jewish community. The Reform synagogue acquired a building, situated in an area (South Cardiff) inhabited by only two members. The siting of a Reform synagogue would be of minor importance

for the congregation, as members were not restricted by travel restrictions on the Sabbath. The United Synagogue had closed down the Windsor Place synagogue, due to a declining population living around the city centre, and built a new synagogue in Penylan and Cyncoed.

This demographic shift affected the whole community, and the percentage of Reform members living in the areas immediately around the city centre dropped dramatically from 22.3 per cent in Canton/Pontcanna in 1949, to 14.9 per cent in 1960. This process of demographic shift is also observable in the areas North and East of the city, where the population dropped from 23 per cent to 14 per cent.

During this eleven year period, Reform Jews spread more widely throughout the recently developed suburban areas of Cardiff, where, formerly, there had been little private housing, and consequently little Jewish habitation, one now finds Jews. Radyr, Fairwater and Rhymney now have a minute percentage of Reform Jews. Reform Jews, like the general Jewish population, has moved away from the city centre, to the North and North West.

Rhiwbina shows a dramatic increase in the percentage of Reform members living there, from eight to twenty four members. This was a suburban area where there had been a large amount of private building of new and relatively cheap houses and this attracted some

Reform members, who moved up from the older Jewish areas. For this reason also we now see some Reform members living in the prosperous suburban areas of Lisvane.

The United Synagogue had chosen to build a new synagogue in Penylan, primarily because, with increased prosperity, the Jewish community was moving across the city to this area, on a hill above Roath Park, one of Cardiff's most attractive areas. Reform Jews follow this pattern also, but the increase in Reform members in this area probably comes not from Reform members moving into Cyncoed/Penylan district, but from Orthodox Jews living in this district joining the Reform congregation.

Map C. Appendix II.

A decade later one can see that the shift of Reform members has continued at an increasing rate. The areas on the East and West of the city remain lightly populated, isolated from communal life by distance. The old Jewish areas around the city centre have continued their rapid decline.

Canton, Pontcanna and Llandaff now contain (1970) 8 per cent of members, where formerly there lived 14 per cent; Cathays and Roath have also suffered migration as the Jewish population has moved out to the adjoining suburb of Cyncoed/Penylan, which now contains more than a third of all members.

Generally it appears that over a twenty year period a distinguishable trend has emerged. Reform Jews

like Cardiff Jews in general, have moved out of the older Victorian areas of Cardiff, into the newer prosperous suburban areas of the city--Rhiwbina, Cyncoed, Penylan, Lisvane. Pressures to stay close to the centre of communal Jewish life have weakened with the increase in car ownership, and secularisation. It is to be expected that this process of suburbanisation will continue.

VII Changing pattern of distribution of Reform members throughout South Wales 1949-60.

Maps D., E., F. Appendix II.

The distribution of Reform Jewish adults throughout South Wales follows a continuous pattern over a twenty one year period, well over 80 per cent of members always living in Cardiff. This is the common denominator over the period. The Cardiff New Synagogue catered primarily for Reform Jews of Cardiff. Superficially the three maps show that the percentage of members living in Cardiff has not changed. This is true, but the percentage has remained fairly constant, due to the decline in membership throughout the valleys of South Wales.

In 1949, almost a 100 per cent of members were urban dwellers, living in the main towns throughout the South Wales valleys, working as traders and businessmen. Only three Jews can be described as living in rural areas, two members in Penarth and one in Porthcawl.



In the Cynon Valley, where very few Jews lived, there are no members recorded throughout the New Synagogue's history. Swansea (West Glamorgan) and the West of England are areas that show minute percentage increases over the period, possibly because although declining communities, synagogues still function. Any increase can be explained by individuals who for personal or religious reasons, found Reform Judaism an acceptable creed.

The majority of Jewish centres have declined over this period, and communal life in Pontypridd, Merthyr is practically extinct. The overall picture in six of the ten areas is one of decline. Gwent, Ogwr, Rhondda, Merthyr, Pontypridd and Caerphilly are no longer of any importance as far as Reform and Jewish life are concerned. In 1949 sixteen Reform Jews lived in Newport; in 1970, nine, ten Reform Jews once lived in the Rhondda, by 1970, there were none. Merthyr remained stable with two members, whilst Pontypridd declined from nineteen to five members. Membership in the valleys consisted of groups of families, usually related. For instance, the five adults living in Caerphilly, were all related. As the years passed, whole families left the valleys as the Jewish population migrated down to Cardiff.

The largest area of growth is the Vale of Glamorgan, where the percentage of members increased from 0.8 per cent to as high as 6.9 per cent. In numerical

terms this means an increase from two members to twenty two. This was part of a process of commuterisation into the Vale, with Cardiffians moving out into the developing commuter belt of the Vale of Glamorgan. Car ownership and increased prosperity meant that suburban Reform Jews were also part of this migration from the city, settling in areas such as Cowbridge, Penarth, Dinas Powis, Sully. In view of the general decline of the valley communities, it is to be supposed that Reform membership in most, if not all, of the valleys, will be non-existent in the near future.

CHAPTER XICONCLUSION

This short history of the Cardiff New Synagogue basically reveals two clearly defined stages in the Synagogue's history.

The 1950s was a period of rapid growth, and vitality; membership, education, communal relations all improved, going from strength to strength as the synagogue grew to encompass a third of all professing Jews within Cardiff.

During the 1960s a process of secularisation set in; new membership applications began to slow down, attendance at Religion school dropped, the death rate rose, and marriages remained static.

The rapid period of growth in the 1950s was at a time when Cardiff's Jewish population was still large, and Orthodoxy's conservatism drove many to the Reform movement. From the late 1960s it has become obvious that young Jewish people are leaving the city, of those who stay, some join no synagogue, but the majority join their parent's synagogue.

Unless the Reform movement can recapture its early vitality and almost missionary zeal, the synagogue will stagnate. The ultimate fate of the Reform synagogue

depends to a far greater extent on the fate of the Jewish community as a whole, historically the community at large is dying. The Reform synagogue managed, during its first twenty years, to capture a larger and larger share of this declining cake. It is extremely doubtful if this will continue to take place; and Cardiff Jewry and Reform in particular, could cease to function as active Jewish communities.

APPENDIX I

- A. Glossary
  - B. Bibliography.
  - C. Documents
- 

- 1. Cardiff New Synagogue (Reform)
- 2. The Plain Truth
- 3. Why I should Join the  
Cardiff New Synagogue
- 3a. Introductory letter - Rabbi Graf
- 3b. Invitation to attend services  
(Prospective members)
- 3c. Invitation to Public Meeting  
on "Reform"
- 4. Cartoon (C.A.J.E.X. Magazine)  
criticising lack of decorum
- 5. Living Judaism - Article by  
Rabbi Graf. "A Pot and Pan Religion"

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN TEXT

- A.S.G.B.: Reform Synagogues of Great Britain  
(R.S.G.B.)
- Barmitzvah: Confirmation
- Board of deputies: representative body of British  
Jewry, London.
- Board of Guardians: A representative Organisation of  
the Jewish community in Cardiff,  
on largely welfare matters.
- C.A.J.E.X. Cardiff Association of Jewish Ex-  
Servicemen.
- Chanukah: Festival of Lights, celebrating victory  
of the Maccabees.
- Chevra Kadisha: Funeral guild performing last rites.
- C.N.S.: Cardiff New Synagogue (Reform).
- C.U.S.: Cardiff United Synagogue (Orthodox).
- High Holy Days: The holiest days in the Jewish Calendar,  
ie. The Jewish New Year (Rosh Ha Shanah)  
and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
- Hochschul fur die wissenschaft des Judentums: The  
institute for the scientific study of  
Judaism.

- Kosher: Food and meat, prepared in accordance with Jewish dietary laws.
- Shabbat: Sabbath: Oneg Shabbat--Social/educational meeting to celebrate the Sabbath.
- Shool: Yiddish for synagogue.
- Torah: A scroll, containing 5 books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deutronomy.
- U.L.P.S.: Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues.
- W.U.P.~~T~~: World Union for Progressive Judaism.
- Yeshiva: Orthodox religion seminary.

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APPENDIX II

MAPS

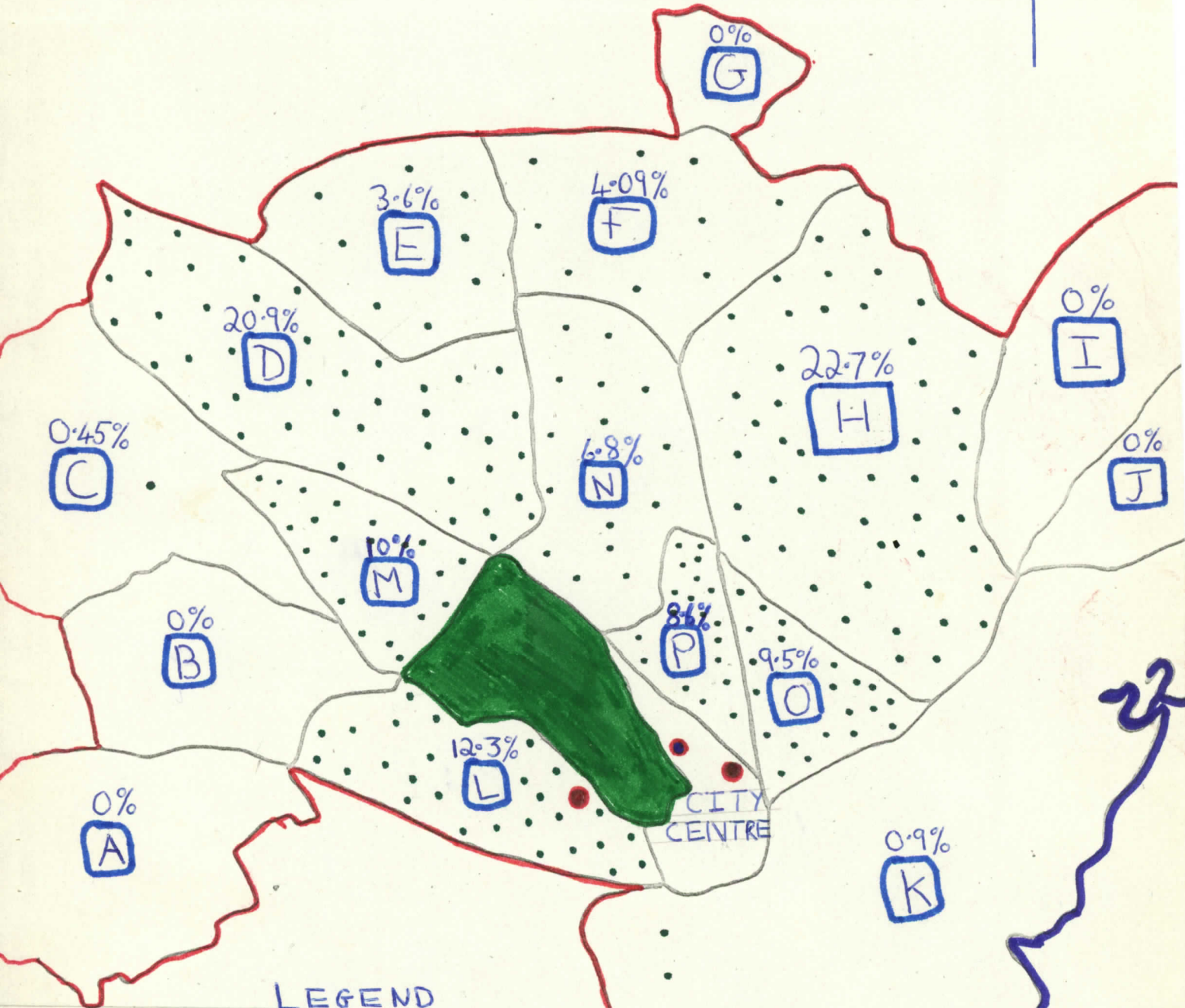
A	Distribution of Adult members of C.N.S. in Cardiff	1949
B	" " " " " " " "	1960
C	" " " " " " " "	1970
D	Distribution of Adult members of C.N.S. in South Wales	1949
E	" " " " " " " "	1960
F	" " " " " " " "	1970

# MAP A

1949.

## Distribution and density of adult members of C.N.S.

A	ELY	I	LLANRHYMNEY
B	FAIRWATER	J	RHYMNEY
C	RADYR	K	South CARDIFF
D	WHITCHURCH	L	CANTON/ PONTCANNA
E	RHIWBINA	M	HANDAFF
F	LLANISHEN	N	HEATH/ GABALFA
G	LISVANE	O	ROATH
H	CYNCOED / PENYLAN	P	CATHAYS

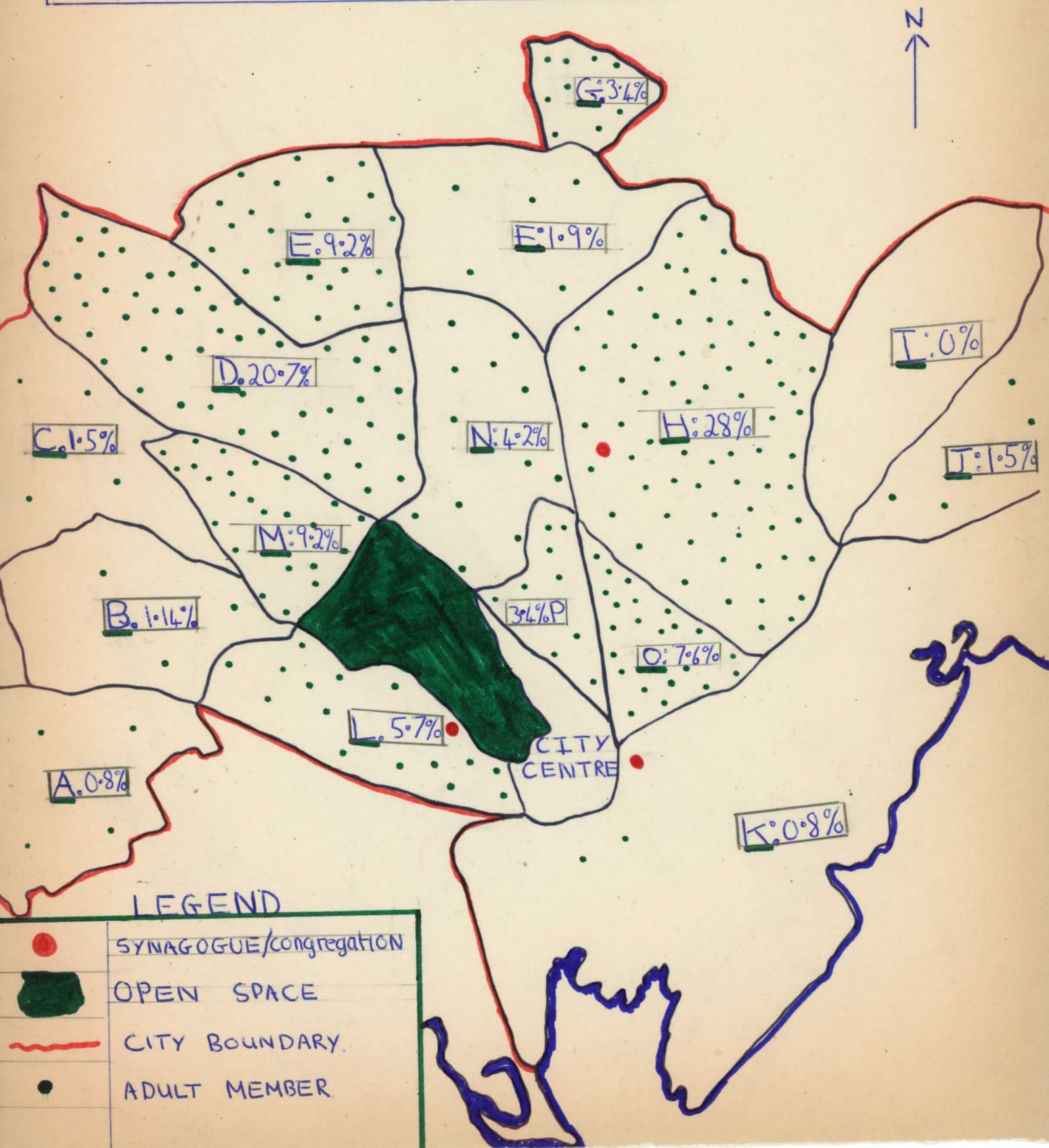


BRISTOL CHANNEL

MAP B

Distribution and density of adult members of C.N.S. 1960

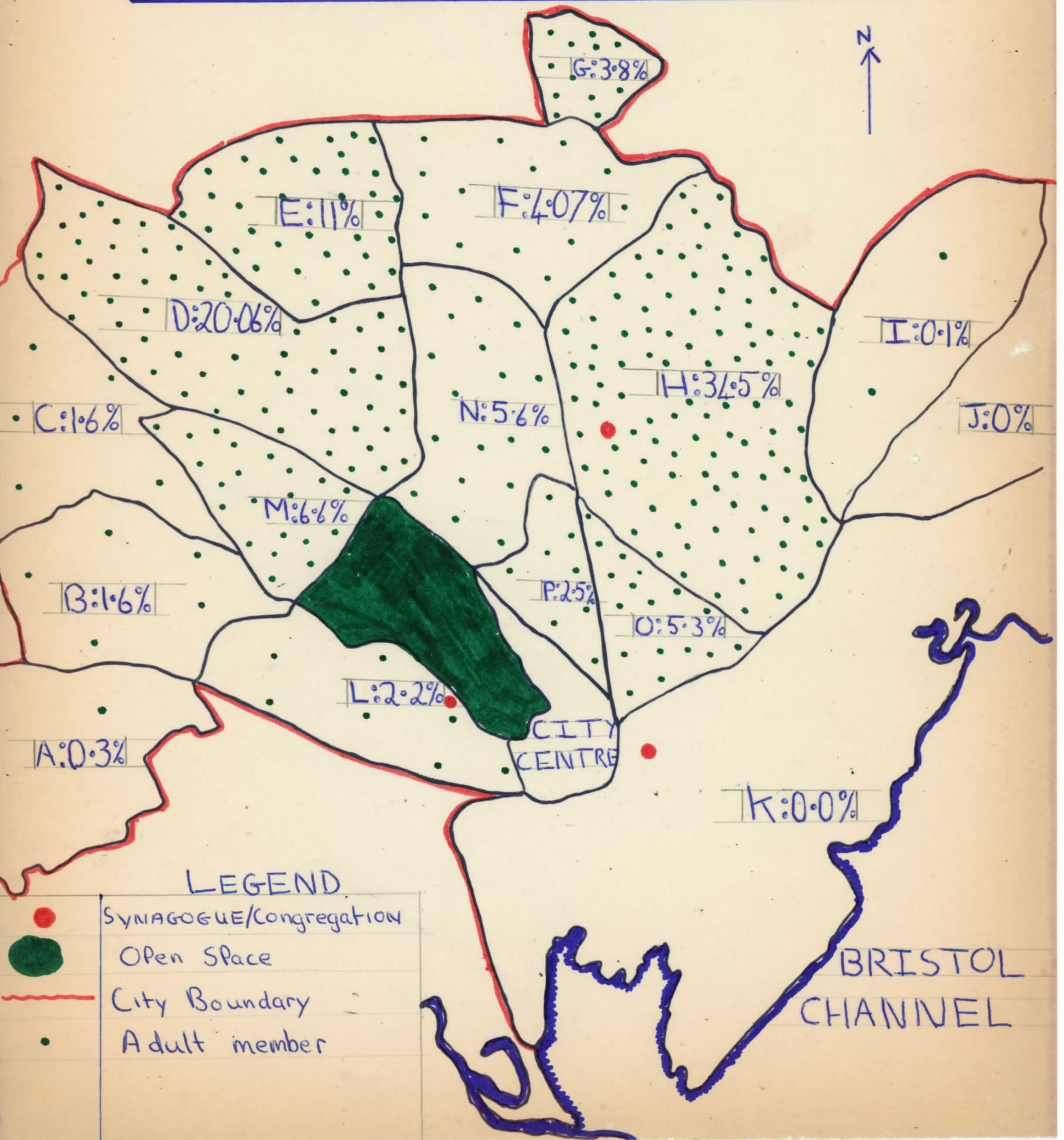
A	ELY	I	LLANRHYMNEY
B	FAIRWATER	J	RHYMNEY
C	RADYR	K	SOUTH CARDIFF
D	WHITCHURCH	L	CANTON/PONTCANNA
E	RHIWBINA	M	LIANDAFF
F	LLANISHEN	N	HEATH/GABALFA
G	LISVANE	O	ROATH
H	CYNCOED & PENYLAN	P	CATHAYS



# MAP. C.

Distribution and density of adult members of C.N.S. 1970

A	ELY	I	LLANRHYMNEY
B	FAIRWATER	J	RHYMNEY
C	RADYR	K	SOUTH CARDIFF
D	WHITCHURCH	L	CANTON/PONTCANNVA
E	RHIWBINA	M	LLANDAFF
F	LLANISHEN	N	HEATH/GABALFA
G	LISVANE	O	ROATH
H	CYNCOED/PENYLAN	P	CATHAYS



# Distribution/Density of Reform Jews: South Wales 1949

MAP D.



# Distribution/Density of adult Reform Jews in South Wales.

MAP E

1960



- KEY
- County boundaries
  - - - District boundaries
  - Adult member

Scale 1:250,000 or about 4 miles to 1 inch

2 0 2 4 6 8 Miles

2 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 Kilometres

Distribution of adult Jews (Reform) in South Wales. 1970

MAP F.



- KEY
- County boundaries
  - - - District boundaries
  - Adult members.

Scale 1:250,000 or about 4 miles to 1 inch

2 0 2 4 6 8 Miles

2 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 Kilometres

APPENDIX III

STATISTICAL DATA RELATED TO THE RESEARCH

1	Births and deaths	1949-69
2	Marriages	1949-76
3	Confirmations	1953-69
4	Religion School attendance	1953-69
5	New members	1960-69



CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

Births and deaths\* 1949-69

Table 1

Year	Births	Deaths
1949	1	0
1950	2	2
1951	0	1
1952	0	3
1953	5	5
1954	9	2
1955	?	1
1956	10	1
1957	6	6
1958	7	6
1959	5	7
1960	6	2
1961	6	1
1962	10	5
1963	2	8
1964	7	5
1965	1	8
1966	2	5
1967	7	4
1968	3	5
1969	3	12

? = unknown

\* = Deaths include 14  
burials of non  
members

CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

Table 2

1949-76

Year	Marriages	Jewish Ceremonies *
1949	2	0
1950	4	0
1951	0	1
1952	2	0
1953	1	0
1954	1	0
1955	4	2
1956	1	1
1957	3	3
1958	2	0
1959	1	4
1960	3	2
1961	2	0
1962	1	2
1963	2	2
1964	0	0
1965	0	3
1966	1	1
1967	0	3
1968	0	0
1969	5	1
1970	4	1
1971	3	1
1972	3	1
1973	2	2
1974	1	3
1975	4	0
1976	4	1

\* Marriages sanctified in Synagogue, Civil Marriage previously. One of partners converting to Judaism.

CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

Table 3

Confirmations 1953-69

1953	5
1954	3
1955	?
1956	5
1957	5
1958	3
1959	?
1960	3
1961	2
1962	5
1963	7
1964	5
1965	8
1966	0
1967	5
1968	5
1969	8

? = not available

CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

Table 4

School Attendance

1953	38
1954	39
1955	43*
1956	54
1957	60
1958	65
1959	85
1960	90
1961	90
1962	100+
1963	80
1964	85
1965	85
1966	85
1967	85
1968	85
1969	85
1976	40*

\* Estimated

CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

Table 5

New members\*

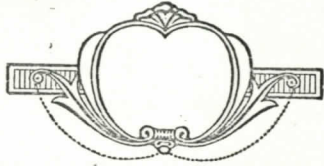
1960	23
1961	23
1962	16
1963	19
1964	28
1965	12
1966	17
1967	14
1968	18
1969	23

\*Figures unavailable before 1960

Document

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CARDIFF  
NEW SYNAGOGUE  
(REFORM)



*Hon. Secretary :*

LESLIE CORNE, 7 St. John Square, Cardiff

Telephone : Cardiff 355

The CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE (Reform) has been founded to provide for the religious needs of Jews residing in Cardiff and adjoining districts, who, whilst feeling a strong attachment to their ancient faith and an abiding loyalty to the Jewish people, are unable to find satisfaction in membership of an orthodox synagogue.

It is desired to institute a form of Jewish religious worship which appeals to the modern generation, and thereby influences the worshipper in his daily life.

To attain this objective the new congregation has associated itself with the West London Synagogue and has adopted its Prayer Book. Men and women sit together, and the religious equality of the sexes is completely recognised, women as well as men being encouraged to take an active part in Synagogue life.

The beauty and power of ceremonial and ritual are fully appreciated, but care is taken that the outward symbols do not become the substitute for the inner spiritual values they are intended to express. The ordinances governing the ceremonial requirements cannot be accepted as binding in every detail for all time, and therefore, should be retained only where they possess inspirational value to-day and can be revised or developed to that end.

It is earnestly sought to retain those outstanding rites and ceremonies which identify us with all Jews.

The aim for which this Synagogue stands is to interpret Judaism in the light of our present age. We lay special stress on the ethical, moral and social teachings which are ours, and in this connection emphasis is laid on the teaching of the great Teachers and Prophets of Israel who were confronted with very similar problems in their day. There must be complete sincerity in all that we believe and observe, both in the home and in the Synagogue.

The Cardiff New Synagogue (Reform) will become a constituent of the Association of Synagogues in Great Britain, which comprise :

The West London Synagogue (Berkeley Street),  
North Western Reform Synagogue,  
Bernhard Baron and St. George's Settlement Synagogue,  
Manchester Congregation of British Jews,  
Bradford Reform Synagogue,  
Glasgow Progressive Synagogue,  
Edgware and District Reform Synagogue,  
Sinai Synagogue, Leeds,  
Bournemouth New Synagogue (Reform).

#### DIVINE WORSHIP.

Services will be held throughout the year on the evenings and mornings of Sabbaths and Festivals. All Services will be conducted in Hebrew and English.

It is hoped to provide a form of service which is traditional in character, yet in harmony with modern thought. The prayer book is printed in both Hebrew and English. The important and time-honoured passages revered by Jews throughout the world are retained and read in Hebrew. The teaching of Hebrew is given an important place in our Religion School.

#### RELIGION CLASSES.

Religion Classes will be held regularly for the children of members and non-members. Details will be available from the Hon. Secretary.

#### CIRCUMCISION.

Arrangements will be made for the circumcision of the infant sons of Members.



BARMITZVAH.

Boys will be prepared for their Barmitzvah at the age of 13. Pupils of both sexes will also be prepared for Confirmation at a later age.

MARRIAGES.

Arrangements have been made for marriages to be solemnised in Cardiff.

BURIAL.

Membership of the Synagogue includes the right of burial at the Synagogue's Burial Ground, for the acquisition of which, negotiations are in progress. Arrangements will be made with the Burial Committee of the Synagogue concerning funeral costs.

JAHREZEIT REGISTER.

A Jahrzeit Register will be kept by the Minister. Members who wish their deceased relatives to be included may inform the Minister. The Minister will notify members of the respective dates of their Jahrzeit.

ACTIVITIES.

Social evenings to be arranged from time to time by a Ladies' Society.

A Youth Society to meet at regular intervals. It will be a constituent member of the Youth Association of Synagogues in Great Britain.

Meetings for the spreading of knowledge on matters of Jewish interest, both religious and otherwise will be held from time to time and the Minister will always be ready to advise members personally. The Synagogue will interest itself in all matters concerning the welfare of Jewry. Representation will be sought at the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

In welcoming Members we look to their enthusiastic support and interest in the welfare of the Congregation, and the cause of Judaism.

# CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

(CONSTITUENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SYNAGOGUES  
IN GREAT BRITAIN).

*The  
Plain  
Truth!*

Doc  
2

### **ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHANGES ?**

Yes. Men and women are placed on equal terms as members. Festivals are observed on the same days as were observed traditionally in Eretz Yisrael. "Shnodering" is not permitted. Special services are held for and by the Youth Movement.

### **ARE WE OPPOSED TO ORTHODOXY ?**

No. We differ from it, but that doesn't mean we are hostile to it. We are tolerant towards it, and respect it where it is sincerely held and actually practised.

We have no regard for sham orthodoxy.

### **WHAT ARE THE FACILITIES FOR CIRCUMCISION, MARRIAGE AND BURIAL ?**

Circumcision, in the traditional manner, is carried out at the traditional time. By Act of Parliament, Marriages may be solemnized as in any other Synagogue. We possess a beautiful Chuppah for this purpose.

Our consecrated burial ground is situated at Ely, and is the preserve of the Synagogue for all time. There is an active Chevra Kadishah.

### **WHAT ABOUT A SYNAGOGUE BUILDING ?**

Negotiations are actively in progress for acquiring a centrally situated site. It is certain that we shall have a permanent Synagogue before very long. In the meantime, the Temple of Peace serves as a most dignified place for worship. Thanks to the great kindness of the Authorities, we may use it for this purpose until we acquire our own Synagogue.

### **ARE WE EXTREMISTS ?**

Not at all. The unprejudiced reader of this leaflet will by now have realised that we stand for positive Judaism, based on Torah.

### **WHAT WILL THE CHILDREN BE TAUGHT ?**

Boys and Girls will be taught Torah, Jewish History and Religious and Modern Hebrew.

Barmitzvah and Batmitzvah (consecration of girls) are regarded as of the greatest importance. Between the ages of 13 and 16, there will be special courses designed to develop their characters as the soundest means of defence against any forces hostile to all Jewry, and to make Judaism a real and practical influence on their lives.

There is an active Youth Movement providing social recreation and educational activities for our young Jews and Jewesses.

We want them to be upright Jews, proud of their parents, their faith, and their people.

Our plans are for the future generation. They will, in time, form the active majority in the community.

**THE FUTURE IS WITH US.**

Doc 2

So many misleading tales have been spread about the CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE that we are sure you will be interested to know the truth.

We are giving simple answers to some typical questions.

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR SERVICES AND THE ORTHODOX ?**

Our Prayer-Book is based on the traditional "sidur", but the services are conducted so that you should UNDERSTAND your prayers. Important prayers are emphasised, and those out of date are cut out. We do not have prayers for the restoration of animal sacrifices, nor for vengeance.

The prayers are said, word by word, in Hebrew and in English. Nothing is garbled, so that everyone in the Synagogue, rather than a mere handful, can understand, take part in, and enjoy the service. Modern Jewish prayers have been added, as in former times, to meet the needs of the day.

**ARE WE "SPLITTING" THE COMMUNITY ?**

On the contrary, we intend to work hand in hand with our fellow-Jews in every sphere helpful to communal life.

We regard ourselves as members of Klal Yisrael.

**WHAT ABOUT OBSERVANCES ?**

We believe that Jewish family life is one of our most precious possessions ; and we are in favour of traditional observances wherever they help to keep the spirit of the Jewish family alive : e.g. kindling of Sabbath Lights, Kiddush, Kashrut, Matza, Circumcision, Barmitzvah, Tallit, Yahrzeit. ALL the traditional Holy Days are observed. In fact, any other observances that help the individual to be a better Jew are encouraged.

**WILL THIS OUTLOOK LEAD PEOPLE AWAY FROM JUDAISM ?**

Definitely not. It is bringing Jews back to Judaism. A very great number of decent Jews, who had drifted away because they could not accept the old methods with sincerity, have been attracted back to Judaism. They can now practice what they sincerely believe.

**IS THE REFORM MOVEMENT BUILDING ON "QUICK-SANDS" ?**

Starting from small beginnings over a hundred years ago, the Reform Movement has now nearly 400 Synagogues in America alone, with the world's finest Rabbinical Colleges.

The West London Synagogue that started with a handful of members has now a membership exceeding that of ANY other Synagogue in the British Isles. Many others have been established in London suburbs, and in the provincial cities. Congregations are flourishing in Palestine, South Africa, Australia, France, Brazil, Holland, Sweden, Czecho-slovakia, Uruguay, Switzerland, Argentine, India.

Ministers of orthodox congregations are now joining our ranks ; and everywhere membership is increasing.

Document ③

## Why I should Join the Cardiff New Synagogue

- Because** it provides for the religious needs of Jews residing in Cardiff and surrounding districts who, whilst feeling a strong attachment to their ancient faith and an abiding loyalty to the Jewish people, are unable to find satisfaction in Membership of an orthodox Synagogue.
- Because** it provides a form of Jewish religious worship which appeals to the modern generation and so influences the worshipper in his daily life.
- Because** the beauty and power of ceremonial and ritual are fully appreciated but care is taken that the outward symbols do not become a substitute for the spiritual values they are intended to express.
- Because** it retains those outstanding rites and ceremonies which identify us with all Jews.
- Because** it stands for complete sincerity in all that is believed and observed both in the home and the Synagogue.
- Because** the religious equality of the sexes is recognised. Men and women sit together in the Synagogue.
- Because** the spiritual and moral education of the younger people occupies a prominent place.
- Because** the children grow up as intelligent Jews, educated in their Faith and conversant with its laws and traditions.
- Because** far from leading people away from Judaism, the Reform Movement is bringing the Jew back to Judaism.

## THE CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

*Hon. Treasurer :*

D. JOSEPH, Esq.,  
20 KIMBERLEY ROAD,  
CARDIFF

*Hon. Secretary :*

MR. L. CORNE,  
7 ST. JOHN'S SQUARE,  
CARDIFF  
Tel. : CARDIFF 355

*Minister :*

RABBI L. GERHARD GRAF,  
86 NEW STATION ROAD,  
WHITCHURCH  
Telephone : Whitchurch 1420

My Dear Friends,

It is only a short time since I arrived in this city in order to take over the ministry of the Cardiff New Synagogue.

I have not yet had an opportunity of meeting all the members of my congregation, and therefore I am availing myself of this letter to assure you how very happy I am now to be with you.

This synagogue of ours, though only of recent existence, has already a fine record of achievement. You will remember that it was only started one year ago by a small number of highly enthusiastic people, whose zeal for Judaism induced them to gather together like-minded men and women for the sake of God and the future of our religion in this community.

Their names will go down in the history of our Congregation for the unique spade work they have done and the amount of toil they are joyfully putting in, at all times, for this Jewish cause of ours.

The Services held in the beautiful Temple of Peace, our temporary Place of Worship, will and do inspire everyone who attends them. But we are earnestly endeavouring to obtain our own Synagogue building, and hope we shall see our desire being fulfilled in the near future.

The Youth Group gives us another reason to be proud and to look, with confidence, towards the years that lie ahead. 'The future rests with those who have got the rising generation.' There is no doubt that the future rests with us.

The Cardiff New Synagogue must develop more and more into the Jewish Communal Centre of our city. Its message is our grand old faith, our living Torah, speaking to Israel in terms understandable to a modern Jewish generation.

I regard Jewish Education as the very basis of Jewish life and therefore intend to commence religion classes for children between the ages six and sixteen at the earliest date possible. But, Jewish Education must never terminate, and I sincerely hope that those who belong to the Youth Club, and also those congregants who form the senior body of the Congregation, will show their interest in Jewish teaching by taking an active part in lectures and discussions to be arranged soon.

A great deal has already been achieved. Do accept my congratulations on what you have done. More needs achieving.

May I ask all of you who identify yourselves with this Synagogue :

To worship with me whenever the hour of worship calls ;

To be with me whenever the Synagogue expects our service ;

To gladly avail yourselves of whatever the Synagogue has to offer you.

We want to build ! We all, without exception, must be the builders !

Give me your hearts, I shall give you mine.

With kindest thoughts,

Yours most sincerely,

L. GERHARD GRAF.

ק"ק שערי שלום

## THE CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

*Hon. Treasurer :*  
D. JOSEPH  
43 The Hayes

*Hon. Secretary :*  
L. CORNE  
7 St. John's Square  
*Telephone : Cardiff 355*

*Minister :*  
Rabbi L. GERHARD GRAF  
86 New Station Road, Whitchurch  
*Telephone : Whitchurch 1420*

CONSTITUENT OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF SYNAGOGUES  
IN GREAT BRITAIN

Dear

The High Holy Days are drawing near. So much interest has been shown in our Synagogue at these times that we venture to send you the enclosed pamphlets. They will give you a true picture of our Synagogue and its activities.

You and your Family will be made very welcome at any of our Services, and I will be very happy to give you any information about these you may desire.

In addition, should you wish to discuss any of the points raised in the pamphlets, our Minister, Rabbi Graf, will be delighted to meet you.

You will find our Community composed of earnest and sincere Jews who will welcome you as a new Member. Once again, as in olden times, your Synagogue will become not only a spiritual but also a cultural and social centre, and communal life will take on a new meaning.

For your convenience an application form is enclosed, but we would repeat again—do not hesitate to ask for any information you may desire.

Wishing you a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

LESLIE CORNE,

*Hon. Secretary*

# CARDIFF NEW SYNAGOGUE

MOIRA TERRACE, CARDIFF

*Hon. Treasurer*  
D. JOSEPH  
43 The Hayes  
Cardiff

*Hon. Secretary*  
Dr. P. SIMON  
53 Butleigh Avenue  
Llandaff, Cardiff  
*Telephone : Llandaff 1195*

*Minister :*

Rabbi Dr. L. GERHARD GRAF  
86 New Station Road,  
Whitchurch, Cardiff  
*Telephone : Whitchurch 1420*

CONSTITUENT OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF SYNAGOGUES  
IN GREAT BRITAIN

25 Aug 1953

Dear Member,

On September 3rd at 7.45 p.m. in the Alexandra Ballroom at the Royal Hotel, Cardiff, we have arranged a Public Meeting so that information about the Reform Movement and Cardiff New Synagogue may be available to as wide a circle of South Wales Jewry as possible.

It is important that the manner in which we interpret Judaism should be stated truthfully and fearlessly and, to this end, Mr. Turner Samuel, Q.C., M.P. and Rabbi Dr. Van Der Zyl, Minister of the North Western Reform Synagogue, London, have kindly consented to speak at the Meeting.

We not only urge you most strongly to attend this Meeting so that you may increase your own knowledge of the Movement, but also to tell all your friends about the Meeting, particularly those who are not yet Members of the Cardiff New Synagogue and whose impressions of our outlook on Judaism and of our Services are necessarily vague.

They will be welcome and will have every opportunity of learning about our Synagogue.

Yours sincerely,

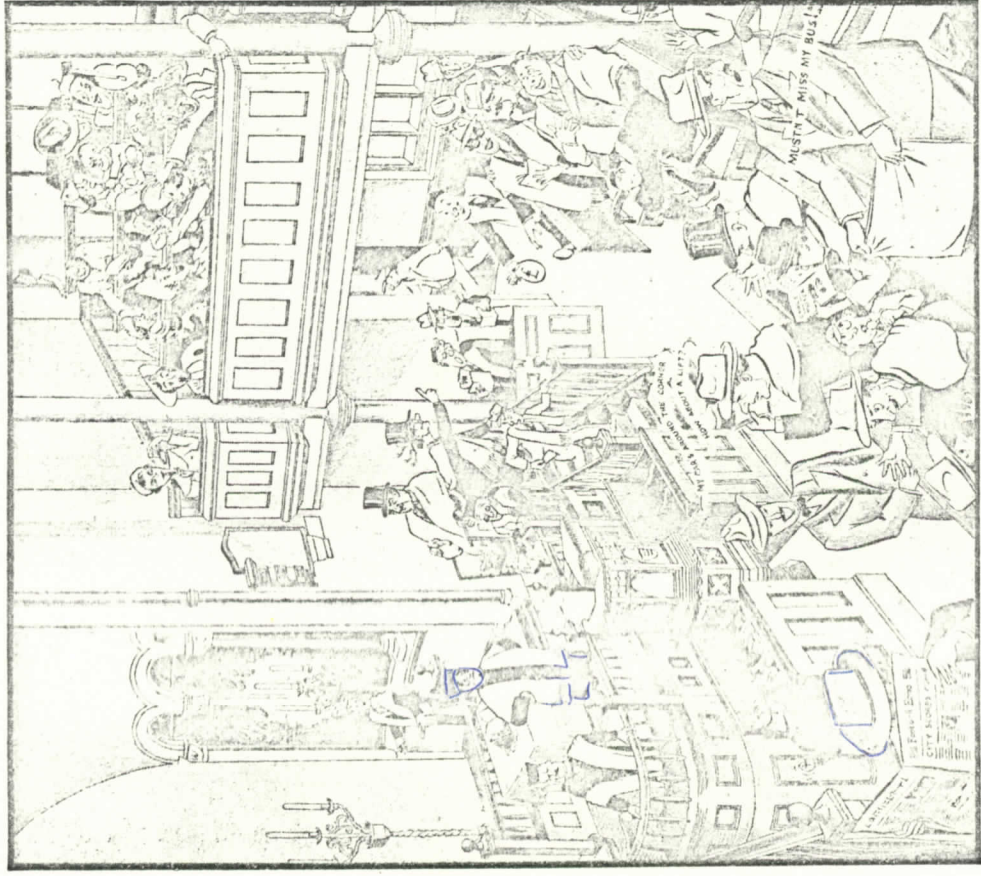
P. SIMON,

*Secretary*



KNOW

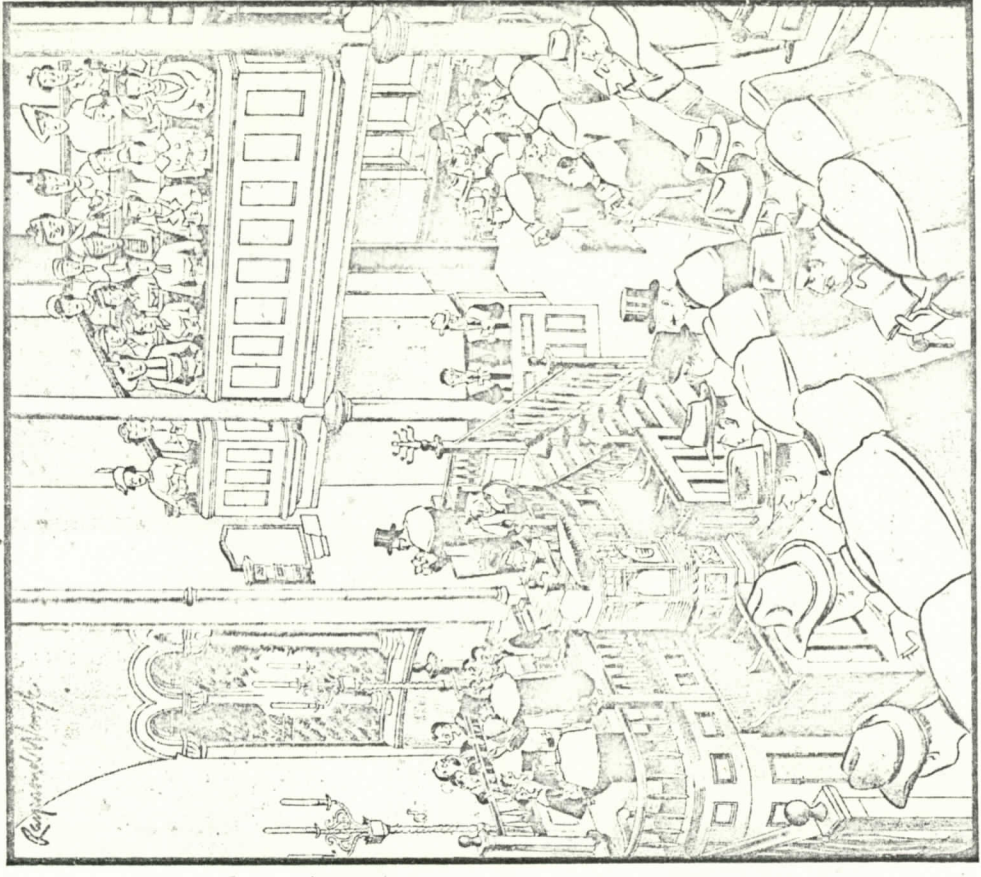
Do you belong in this Picture



“and fools who came to Scoff,

THYSELF

or in this?



remain'd to Pray.”

# LIVING JUDAISM

JOURNAL OF THE REFORM SYNAGOGUES OF GT. BRITAIN · AUTUMN 1975

## A POT AND PAN RELIGION?

by Dr. L. G. Graf

Reform Judaism today is becoming top heavy with law and ceremony. The trend is towards more customs, more ritual, more observances. The movement stands in danger of losing its identity. The Publications Committee of the R.S.G.B. feeds our congregations with pamphlets which could easily be written by Orthodox Jews. Those "forms of expression" which have hitherto been taught and expected are lapsing. I wish all our members would say a short prayer after meals, followed by a few seconds of silence; this can be of greater religious significance than the "long benshen" with its jolly sing-song, seldom determined by religious motives.

Instead the movement is becoming folksy. An over-ritualistic Reform Judaism is bound to breed hypocrites. Jewish theology and Jewish ethics take a back seat. All of a sudden one pooh-poohs the decorum and solemnity of our synagogues. On Purim our children swing the "klappers". Samuel Pepys ran out of such a House of Prayer in disgust. Do

we want intelligent Reform Jews to do likewise? This is certainly not the way to satisfy spiritually the groping and bewildered Jew of today. Perhaps we should be a little more preoccupied with the questions and problems which trouble man in this age. Instead of discussing the re-introduction of the Mikveh for proselytes, let us ask ourselves how to react to the permissive society, the pluralistic society, to abortion and euthanasia. Bernard Martin in "Contemporary Reform Jewish Thought" reminds us that we must prove to the earnest Jewish seeker that Judaism is not a "pot and pan religion"! "There is", he writes, "on the part of the more intellectually alert and informed young people in the community a growing dissatisfaction with a merely 'practical' Judaism and a tendency to reject as ultimately irrelevant to their lives and deepest interests the ersatz faiths...that seem to have displaced the Jewish religion in many circles, such as the cult of Jewish nationalism, culture and philanthropy. These young people

ask whether Judaism has not any deep insights that may give meaning to their apparently meaningless existence and healing truths that may knit up their broken and fragmented lives”.

Are we really so far removed from Abraham Geiger, from Martin Buber and Leo Baeck that our thoughts revolve around the ‘little Judaism’ or have politics and expediency crept into our camp?

#### In Darwin’s day

Torah has always been interpreted in accordance with the needs and requirements of the age in which our people have lived. In the century in which Darwin developed his theory of evolution, German Jewry produced the “Reform” movement. Though started by laymen, it was developed intellectually by scholars and rabbis who were academically trained and deeply steeped in Jewish sources. Gunther Plaut’s book “The Rise of Reform Judaism” gives us a valuable insight into the struggle of those men who endeavoured to revive the spirit of the Jewish tradition in its true reality. The leaders of that century wrestling to reconcile the demands of a new age with our heritage, found a way to save Jews in large numbers from leaving the Jewish fold.

#### Primitive Customs

One may perhaps reject some radical ideas which they proposed, but in principle their outlook has not lost its significance. I am in full agreement with a non-fundamentalistic Judaism. I uphold the belief in a personal God, the consummation of history through the arrival of a messianic age. I reject the redemption of Israel and the world at large through the coming of a personal Messiah. I accept the concept of the immortality of the soul, the mission of the Jewish people, the leap forward through the institution of the synagogue in contradistinction to a sacrificial cult and an absolute equality of the sexes.

The “reformers” differentiated between religious ideas and forms of expression. An over-valuation of customs and ceremonials, many of which were outdated and primitive, had made the Jews forget the philosophy of Judaism. One must be charitable in one’s evaluation of the pruning of the ritualism of our religion which characterised

### THE REFORM SYNAGOGUES OF GREAT BRITAIN

33 Seymour Place, London W.1.  
Office: 01-723 8118. Youth Division: 01-723 6405.

**Hon Life President:** Rabbi Dr W Van der Zyl.  
**Vice-Presidents:** H Arbeid, B D Davies, K Heilbron, H S Langdon, S G Schwab  
**Chairman:** Mrs F J Mitchell.  
**Vice-Chairmen:** S Brook, J S Rose, A Strudwick.  
**Joint Hon. Treasurers:** J Bennett, A Summers  
**Hon Secretary:** H Newman.  
**General Secretary:** R M Goldman  
**Youth Development Officer:** Mrs M Wiseman

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**LIVING JUDAISM** journal of the  
Reform Synagogues of Great Britain  
33 Seymour Place, London W.1.  
Editor: June Rose

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#### Contents

1. **A Pot and Pan religion**  
By Dr. L. G. GRAF
3. **A Family Affair**  
By SUSAN and STEPHEN MALTZ
- 4-7 **The R.S.G.B. and the Zionist Federation**  
By Rabbi DOW MARMUR  
and Rabbi LIONEL BLUE
7. **Chanukah not Chrisnucah**  
By JANE SHAPIRO
8. **An Orgy of Hugging and Kissing**  
By HARRY BLACKER
10. **Is Morality Enough?**  
HOWARD COOPER
12. **A Divine Dish, Cookery Column**  
By LIONEL BLUE
13. **Dear Editor**
14. **Open Book**
15. **Silver and Bark**  
A poem by JUDI ROSE
16. **A Sane way to Live**  
By MOLLY TUBY

nineteenth century Reform. Gradually it became clear that religion without a moderate number of observances is an impossibility. Ideas and forms have to go hand in hand and I certainly realise that Halachah has to play a rightful part in our present movement, but it has to be Jewish Law which meets the demands of the twentieth century.

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*Dr. L. G. Graf is the Minister of Cardiff New Synagogue.*