

*The 1999 CCAR Pittsburgh Platform and its Impact
on American Reform Judaism*

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Abstract

The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) adopted a new Platform in May 1999. This Platform has attracted a great deal of media interest, not only in the Jewish press but in the general media as well. While many of the general publications such as The New York Times stressed the perception that the new Platform marked a turning toward tradition, some of the Jewish newspapers stressed the fact that the Platform was much less traditional than the early drafts had been. The reason for this was, according to these accounts, to placate the Classical Reform wing of the Reform movement. This paper will analyze the Reform movement in American Judaism, analyzing the contemporary trend in the context of its history and sociology. The paper will argue that the Reform movement is undergoing a return to tradition should not be understood as an embracing of Orthodox Theology or Halachic commitment. Rather, the return to tradition generally and the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform specifically should be seen as both a response to contemporary religious trends as well as an attempt by the Reform movement's leadership to sharpen the distinctive image and message of reform Judaism. At the same time, it is retaining and even expanding its policy of inclusivity. The Reform movement is thus attempting to respond to the pressures of assimilation by both embracing tradition and expanding the policy of inclusivity. While this dual pronged strategy has many advantages, there are inherent inconsistencies and are clear indications of the theological conflicts that lie under the surface. As a result, the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform presents a very pluralistic religious vision that is embracing, but as a direct consequence, is extremely vague and lacks theological coherence. The theological vagueness of the Platform will make it difficult for reform leaders to present a clear and compelling religious vision. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation (UAHC), has argued that Reform Jews in America today need to involve themselves in 'Jewish Doing' developing ritual and study practices and that should take precedence before theological formulations. Yoffie's position may indeed be the wisest course for the Reform movement in America to follow.

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The 1999 CCAR Pittsburgh Platform and its Impact on American Reform Judaism

Introduction

The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) adopted a new Platform in May 1999, at its 110th Annual Convention held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The passing of these Principles has attracted a great deal of interest, not only in the American Reform movement, which claims about 1.5 million members, but also in the broader American Jewish community and beyond. The day after the conference, *The New York Times* reported on the passing of the Platform in an article that appeared on page one of the first section of that newspaper, a place of honor extremely rare for a religious conference. This article will seek to describe the current trends in the Reform movement today, and the place of that Platform within those trends.

Historical Background

The Reform movement is one of the three major movements in American Judaism. In Great Britain, there are two separate groups, the Liberals and the Reform, which together parallel the American Reform movement. Reform Judaism was founded in Germany at the beginning of the 19th Century. Israel Jacobson founded what is generally regarded as the first Reform synagogue in Seesen, Westphalia in 1808. Reform congregations developed throughout Central Europe and somewhat later, elsewhere as well.

Although Germany specifically, and Central Europe in general, was the birthplace of the Reform movement, it was in the United States that Reform Judaism became most widespread. Many Jewish immigrants wanted a form of Judaism that would allow them to adapt to the structure and ethos of American society, while still maintaining a loyalty and affiliation with the religion of their forefathers. This was a form of Judaism which allowed for change—particularly pragmatic-based innovations—that met with a great deal of success. Reforms were generally introduced piecemeal in response to changes in the local social and economic conditions. With the exception of an early attempt to institute reforms in Charleston, South Carolina, most change in religious ritual developed over the course of a generation from the 1840s onwards, as immigrant congregations slowly adapted to American conditions. By the 1870s, the Reform movement began to institutionalise. Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, Ohio initiated the creation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) in 1873, the Hebrew Union College (HUC) rabbinical school in 1875, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) in 1889.

By the closing decades of the 19th Century, a form of Reform Judaism developed in America which stressed the Jewish belief in Ethical Monotheism and the Mission of Israel. Classical Reform Judaism placed a heavy emphasis on belief and minimized many aspects of traditional ritual. The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 was the definitive statement of Classical Reform belief. This Platform became the quasi-authoritative position paper of the theology and ritual practice of American Reform Judaism from its conception until 1937, when a new and radically different Platform was adopted. In a famous (or infamous) statement, the Pittsburgh Platform stated that:

We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation. Meyer (1988: 388)

The Pittsburgh Platform was not the first attempt to codify a set of principles upon which American—or European—Judaism could be developed. The German Reformers held conferences in 1844, 1845 and 1846, at which a wide variety of both theoretical and practical issues were discussed and debated. In the United States, a conference was held in Cleveland, Ohio in 1855, at which Isaac Mayer Wise and Isaac Leeser attempted to agree on two basic principles that both traditionalists, as well as Reformers, could accept in terms of what the Torah and Talmud were and what they meant to religious Jews. In 1869 a group of mostly radical Reformers met in Philadelphia. But the 1885 conference became, by far and away, the most influential such gathering, and the Platform accepted at that conference became one of the core documents of American Reform Judaism. That is why the 1999 attempt to pass a new platform at Pittsburgh carried with it such strong emotional overtones.

It was also during this period that the Conservative movement began to crystallize as a more tradition alternative to Reform Judaism. But while Conservative Judaism was far more traditional in both attitude and practice than Reform, it did allow for the concept of religious change. Orthodox Judaism maintained a steadfast belief in traditionalist belief and Halachic behavior, which adhered completely to Jewish law. Reform Judaism began to be perceived by the general Jewish community as extremist and assimilatory. Many Eastern European Jewish immigrants compared the Reform temple to a Christian church, implying by their comparison that the Reform synagogue lacked any authentic Jewish religious content.

But as early as the 1920s, certain factions within the Reform movement began to re-embrace selected aspects of the Jewish tradition. After the rise of the Nazi party in Germany in 1933, many American Reform Jews began to slowly readopt a conscious ethnic identity that an earlier generation had attempted to stifle and deny. In 1937 the CCAR adopted a new Platform at Columbus, Ohio, which dramatically muted what many had perceived to be the extreme universalism of the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform. The Columbus Platform began with a statement justifying the need for a new platform. It opened with the comment that, 'In view of the changes that have taken place in the modern world and the consequent need of stating anew the teachings of Reform Judaism...' Meyer (1988: 388) that the CCAR felt it was proper to accept a new declaration of principles. The Platform distanced itself from some, but not all, of the religious conceptions expressed in the Pittsburgh Platform. The Reform movement began to take concrete steps to accept the reality of the Zionist movement and there were numerous signs that many of the once-rejected traditionalist symbols were beginning to make a comeback. This trend continued to gain momentum in the subsequent decades and is reflected in the 1976 San Francisco statement. Technically referred to as 'Reform Judaism—A Centenary Perspective,' this paper stated that, '...change has been and must continue to be a fundamental reality in Jewish life.' Meyer (1988: 391) The Perspective boldly argues that '...we are bound together like all ethnic groups by language, land, history, culture and

institutions.’ Meyer (1988: 392) An even more extreme departure from the Pittsburgh Platform could be clearly seen in the statement that, “Judaism emphasizes action rather than creed as the primary expression of a religious life...” Meyer (1988: 393)

But since 1976 the Reform movement has developed in new and somewhat unexpected directions. Rabbi Richard Levy used these dramatic changes, which included the Patrilineal Descent Resolution of 1983, the development of an outreach program to intermarried families and others, the establishment of a significant number of congregations with special outreach to gays and lesbians, and other innovations to justify the need for a new statement of religious principles. As we shall see, much of the subsequent controversy focused on practice rather than principle.

The Move Toward Tradition

On May 26, 1999, the CCAR met at the historic Rodef Shalom Congregation in Pittsburgh. This was the same congregation that had hosted the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform that had symbolised the rejection of Jewish tradition that was seen as the hallmark of Classical Reform Judaism. At 11:30 a.m., the rabbis voted to adopt a new Platform called ‘A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism’ by a vote of 324-68, with 9 abstentions. This was the culmination of more than a year of intense and sometimes acrimonious debate that began when Rabbi Richard N. Levy, then President of the CCAR, proposed an initial draft of a platform that advocated that Reform Jews consider trying out and perhaps adopting many ritual practices that had formerly been regarded as simply not practiced in a Reform context. The platform that Levy proposed would be the fourth statement of beliefs to be passed by the American Reform rabbinate in its history, the first being in Pittsburgh in 1885, the second in Columbus in 1937 and the third being a statement rather than a platform in San Francisco in 1976. During the course of 1998 and the first half of 1999, the proposed document went through six drafts. During this process, most of the references to specific ritual acts were removed in order to placate the 20%-25% of the movement’s members who were attached to greater or lesser degrees of Classical forms of Reform Judaism. The suggestion that Reform Jews might consider eating kosher food, taking ritual baths in a mikveh, and even wearing tefillin phylacteries was shocking to some Reform Jews and there were those who considered such proposals as an attack on their entire approach to religious life.

Reform Judaism magazine, the official organ of the Reform movement, published the third draft of what was then called the ‘Ten Principles for Reform Judaism,’ with a cover photo of Rabbi Levy with a tallit prayer shawl and a yarmulke, a skull cap.¹ While many people applauded the tone and the substance of the proposed platform, many others were distressed and saddened by what they felt was an abrogation of the historical positions of the Reform movement. There were letters and e-mails that attacked Rabbi Levy personally, suggesting that he would feel a great deal more comfortable in the Conservative or even the Orthodox movement. Others stressed the fact that because Levy had spent most of his career working for the Hillel Foundation, a Jewish University campus organization, he could not possibly understand the mentality of the congregational Reform Jew. For those who associated tradition with medievalism, Levy’s proposals struck a raw nerve and precipitated a major debate over the direction that the Reform movement should take.

Some of the responses were very harsh. A woman from Mequon, Wisconsin wrote, ‘Abandonment, hurt, outrage, violation, betrayal. These are just a few of the first words that came to

mind after I read Rabbi Richard Levy's proposal.' Bauer (1999: 4) Another reader wrote sarcastically: 'It was quite a surprise to read the contents of Rabbi Levy's article ... I did have to check the cover to make sure it said Winter 1998 and not Winter 1698.' Fribourg (1999: 8)

In response to the large volume of comments, and because of their depth of intensity, Levy, working with other CCAR and UAHC leaders, produced a fourth draft, which was discussed at the December 1998 UAHC board meeting. This draft was much more moderate in tone than the original draft had been. Yet, there were certainly a number of issues that caused difficulties for certain members of the UAHC board. Among many concerns, the primary issues centred on the urging of the reading and speaking of Hebrew, and the encouragement to make aliyah—moving to Israel—which many found disconcerting. But Judge David Davidson summed up the general response when he stated: 'The issue generated a lot of apprehension, some heat, and even some dismay, but after hearing Rabbi Richard Levy's very personal and very open presentation yesterday, the apprehension is largely dissipated and most of the heat is gone.' Davidson (1999: 17)

From that point on, the process leveled out. Although an announcement was made that no vote would be taken at the Pittsburgh conference, this decision was rapidly reversed and a new announcement went out to declare that the platform would be brought to a vote. Further, the leaders of the CCAR now united behind Levy in support of the new platform. They urged that it be passed as a way to show those who were watching that the Reform movement was moving forward and that the platform could serve as a stimulus for discussion and further study. While many found this a rather weak argument for the passing of a platform, by the time of the vote, there were very few who truly opposed the platform, at least among those in attendance at the conference.

The Rabbinic Evaluation of the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform

Most Rabbis agreed that the two-year long process of debating and voting on the Platform was relatively open. Although certainly a lot of the discussion and negotiation was done among a small inner group, that was inevitable in any process of this type. But almost all of those inner players made continual and sincere attempts to democratise the process as much as possible. After the vote, most of the Reform Rabbis who attended the CCAR conference returned home to speak about the importance of making a statement, being able to study and generally avoiding either a blunt analysis of the process, or taking a strong position on the Platform. Part of this was due to the nature of the Platform itself. And the final draft was sufficiently vague that it was difficult to generate either great enthusiasm or fervent hostility.³

Rabbi Richard Levy, however, reflected in the *Las Vegas Sun* article published by Stacy Willis that many Reform Jews are moving toward traditionalism in an effort to upgrade the quality of their lives, perhaps to bring holiness into their lives in a search for meaning. His views are seen clearly in some of the earlier drafts of the Platform, in which he writes that in 'Reform Jewish observance we know that what may seem outdated in one age may be redemptive in another...' Willis (1999)

Far more typical was Rabbi Aaron Petuchowski who entitled his July message in *Temple Shalom* 'The Value of a Snapshot.' Petuchowski stressed that what is important about the new Platform is that it is a statement by the membership of the CCAR, that it provides only a snapshot of where the Reform Rabbinate sees Reform Judaism at this time in its history. 'It is a snapshot. Just as a snapshot cannot convey the depth and breath of its subject, nor does this statement intend to

capture it all.’ Petuchowski made sure to stress the pluralistic nature of both belief and practice in Reform Judaism, and noted the importance of autonomy to Reform Jews, while exploring the wide range of practice and belief available to them. He cited the fact that the Reform movement had changed its attitude towards a Jewish state as an example of ‘the swinging pendulum of Reform ideology.’ Petuchowski (1999: 1 & 10)

The final version of the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform was neutral enough to please many Classical Reformers. For example, Rabbi Jeffrey Stiffman of Congregation Shaare Emeth in St. Louis had been one of those quoted in the Jewish Forward and elsewhere as having been very critical of the early drafts of the Platform. But after the conference itself, Stiffman wrote a brief note in his Synagogue’s newsletter to express his satisfaction with the final result. ‘The Platform has much less of an emphasis on ritual and more on social action than the earlier drafts. It is more balanced.’ Stiffman (1999: 2)

One of the few rabbis to express a strong opinion in his synagogue newsletter was Rabbi Mark Shook of Temple Israel in Creve Coeur, Missouri. Rabbi Shook wrote, ‘Following the convention there was more ‘spinning taking place than *dreydl* in *Kislev*.’ Shook (1999: 4) Rabbi Shook very bluntly argued that the final Platform that was passed at the actual conference was a very watered down version of what had been originally proposed. That is why he referred to the spinning that he believes took place in the aftermath of the vote.

The “Spin Doctors” have arrived in the Reform movement. Faced with the reality of a movement unwilling to be coerced into becoming “Conservative Lite,” the leadership of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) was forced to present a heavily watered down statement of principles for a vote at its annual convention in Pittsburgh.⁴ The principles voted on and passed by an overwhelming majority of the convention attendees bore little resemblance to the “Ten Principles for Reform Judaism” presented last winter to the Reform community in the pages of *Reform Judaism* magazine.⁵ What remained was an updated version of the Centenary Perspective-Version 3.1 instead of 3.0.⁶ Women, homosexuals, and intermarrieds were all accounted for in the new version. Interfaith activity was encouraged. Despite all efforts to portray the document as a move back to ‘tradition,’ whatever that is, nothing of the sort took place. Shook (1999: 4)

Shook expressed concern about the distortions in the press, and noted that very little had been said about the heavy opposition by Reform laity to the earlier versions of the Platform. But because the emphasis had been on the ‘return to tradition’ many Reform Jews were outraged over what they considered to be a betrayal by the Reform Rabbinate. He further noted that even though there was much debate⁷ about returning to tradition, the Principles ‘studiously avoided explicit mention of the traditions in question.’ Shook (1999: 4) He noted the Platform is in no way creative or reflective of original theology, making the final version of the Platform acceptable to everyone. ‘Nothing in the final adopted version of Principles contradicts Reform Judaism’s central principle. The individual Jew is still the final authority on that level of practice that is religiously meaningful. The *dreydl* spins both ways.’ Shook (1999: 4)

Reactions from the Press and the Pulpit—and the Spin from Both

Most of the general press initially reported that the Platform was a ‘radical’ move toward traditionalism. *The New York Times*, in a front-page article the day after the vote, wrote that the Principles would ‘encourage the observance of traditional rituals ... that were set aside at the movement’s founding.’ *The New York Times* (1999: 1) This was typical of the reporting done by most of the general American news media, which emphasised the return to tradition and mentioned only in passing that the earlier drafts of the Platform had specifically mentioned many of the traditional rituals that Reform Jews might consider re-adopting. Ten days after the vote, *Time* magazine published an article on the Platform titled ‘Back to the Yarmulke’ Van Biema (1999: 65). And yet there is no mention of the yarmulke in the Platform. Although the *Time* magazine writer certainly knew this, the article seemed to convey the impression that the Reform rabbis had published the Platform primarily in order to urge the re-embracing of traditional practices. An Associated Press wire report said that the CCAR had ‘approved a return to traditional values such as the wearing of yarmulkes, keeping kosher and praying in Hebrew.’ While this may be true to *some* degree, the emphasis on a ‘return to tradition’ created a spin that could be seen as misleading, even inaccurate. Later newspaper accounts, however, such as the one published by the *Las Vegas Sun* three weeks after the conference by reporter Stacy J. Willis, stated that the Platform was far more a compromised document, rather than an unambiguous and dramatic move to the right, and that it reflected pushes and pulls in different directions. Willis (1999) Writers for many of the regional and national Jewish newspapers, in contrast, were much more likely to stress the fact that the final draft was ‘watered-down’ compared to the original proposal. *The New York Jewish Week* wrote: ‘The new Platform is seen as a victory for the Classical wing of the movement, which rejected attempts by Reform leaders to inject more tradition and observance into daily practice.’ *The New York Jewish Week* (1999)

Rabbi Sanford Akselrad of Congregation Ner Tamid in Las Vegas reflected about the Platform, ‘There is nothing in it about traditional ritual that wasn’t in the previous Statement of Principles, written in 1976.’ Willis (1999) It seems probable that one of the reasons the early news accounts presented such an unbalanced view was because many of these reporters had heard for months about the earlier drafts that were so traditional in their format.

And they had heard a great deal about the cover photo of Rabbi Richard Levy that had created so much controversy. Professor Lance Sussman noted some months after the conference that he saw schisms developing within the movement after the publication of the controversial Winter issue of *Reform Judaism*, and that the elected Platform was in part ‘...an attempt to keep the unraveling process from going out of control.’ Sussman (1999) As those who were part of the process clearly saw, the final drafts removed the controversial references to performance of specific rituals. Akselrad, who voted in favor of the final Platform, noted that many of the news reports had been misleading because there was no specific mention of mitzvot in the final draft of the Platform. He explained that the focus on traditionalism had occurred because the debate on defining the Reform movement had been going on for a long time. The overwhelming response of most pulpit rabbis was to equivocate, and many wrote articles in their newsletters, stating that the new Platform would provide opportunities for study, for discussion, and for dialogue. Many of those rabbis lean toward

traditionalists' positions, and they did not want to risk agitating those members in their congregations who were already upset by the direction of the Platform.²

There were numerous rabbis who were horrified that the media had distorted what had actually happened at Pittsburgh. Interestingly, Rabbi Paul Menitoff, the Executive Vice President of the CCAR, was not one of them. He stated:

I think by and large the media—as in many ways our own people—focused in on the dramatic or radical part of...the principles and that's the one under the Torah section that said we're committed to the ongoing study of the whole array of mitzvot, and to the fulfillment of those that address us as individuals and a community. Some of these mitzvot have long been observed by Reform Jews. Other ones, both ancient and modern, demand renewed attention. And as a result of the unique context of our own times. And that paragraph talks about traditionalism. It's a radical departure from a lot of what we were talking about before. And really in a very forceful way says that we as Reform Jews are open to the full range of our tradition, our sources, our sacred texts, and that we don't see any of that, of our roots, as being inferior to other segments of the Jewish people.

Menitoff went on to explain that it was natural for journalists to focus on the most visible expression of change because the press uses information in concrete terms, and traditionalism means the use of kippot, tallitot and keeping the kosher kitchen. He noted that out of almost 4,500 people who attended the last UAHC conference, almost 60% were wearing kippot. A list of headlines published in newspapers around the country brought home the fact that most journalists saw the Platform as a return to tradition, and Menitoff noted that he saw their take on the Platform as accurate and even descriptive of the situation, since there has been a resurgence throughout the Reform movement toward re-examining one's roots in Judaism. But for Classical Reform Jews, it was felt that too much change was taking place. Menitoff stressed the need for accommodation toward those Classical Reformers within Reform Judaism. He argued that their less traditional approach should continue to be seen to be just as valid as the more traditional approach, and that the spiritual and intellectual search for religious meaning for all Reform Jews should continue unabated in a pluralistic atmosphere. But there was nevertheless a great deal of concern and even fear.

Calming the Fears: Encouraging Ritual Participation v. Mandating Ritual Observance

A number of Rabbis felt that it was necessary to discuss the Platform in terms of the increasing amount of ritual in and out of the synagogue. Rabbi Steven Fuchs, the Senior Rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford, Connecticut, told of how he traveled to Columbia, Maryland over the Memorial Day weekend to perform a wedding at the congregation where he had served from 1973 to 1976. During this visit he was surprised at the number of congregants there who '...feared that Reform Judaism now requires adherence to keep kosher, wear yarmulkes and use more Hebrew in services.' Fuchs (1999: 1 & 4) Fuchs told them, 'Honestly, I do not think the Reform Judaism that the "Principles" describe is different in any way from the Reform Judaism I

have taught since I first became your Rabbi twenty six years ago.’⁸ Fuchs stresses that Reform congregants are alarmed by the new Statement of Principles because of the way it was presented in the media, and specifically referred to all that has been written on the subject since the conference. Fuchs (1999: 1 & 4)

Rabbi David Castiglione of Temple Beth El of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, argued that to only emphasise the move toward tradition is not a balanced perspective on the new document. Castiglione said that the Platform ‘accepts and encourages ritual participation. It doesn’t mandate ritual observance. But it’s also quite a difference from the previous Platform. Early Reform distanced itself from the exercise of ritual and concentrated on the intellectual pursuit of biblical scholarship and involvement in social justice.’ Bullard (1999)⁹

Shortly after the Platform was passed, Rabbi Harry Danziger wrote an article announcing that he would start wearing a yarmulke at services. He wanted to make it clear, however, that this decision was not a direct result of the Platform:

Timing requires a disclaimer: What I share here has nothing to do with the much-publicised ‘Declaration of Principles of Reform Judaism.’ What is here was my intention long before that document was born. The place of the kippah or yarmulke has changed enormously in Reform Jewish life. For years, few American Reform Jews wore head coverings. It was virtually a symbol of being Reform to wear one no longer!¹⁰ Danziger (1999: 1)

Danziger writes that over the past several years this has changed, and noted that a number of rabbinic interns have worn yarmulkes on the Bimah during services and that the rabbis and cantor have worn yarmulkes at weddings and other ceremonial occasions when requested. He said that although he had not worn a kippah during regular services for some years, he has now found religious meaning in wearing it, and so would begin to wear it. The re-embracing of tradition was moving ahead at full speed.

The Return to Tradition: Understanding What It Means and What It Doesn’t Mean

The reporting of the final Platform touched on the reality that the Reform movement is moving in two different directions at the same time. This fact was pointed out by Professor Jack Wertheimer of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He argues that since the 1960s the positions taken by the Reform movement have been shaped by two very different impulses that seem to be almost contradictory. On one hand, the Reform movement has reintroduced many traditional rituals and practices that had been rejected by the Classical Reform synthesis, including the traditional wearing of yarmulkes and prayer shawls for men and now women, and perhaps most noticeably, the dramatic increase in the percentage of Hebrew being used in the Friday night services of many Reform temples. At the same time, the Reform movement adapted to changing social realities by sanctioning a dramatic change in the traditional definition of who and what is a Jew—the Patrilineal Descent Resolution of 1983, which accepted the children of Jewish fathers and Gentile mothers as Jewish if they were raised as Jews, even without a conversion. They went even further when they decided to ordain first women and then gays and lesbians as rabbis and cantors. These highly innovative responses to changing social trends reveal how acutely sensitive the

leadership of the movement is to the needs of the typical congregant. And they show a tremendous willingness to actively promote change in order to try to meet the needs of Jewish congregants who are very much part of a rapidly changing society.

These two partially contradictory trends were already present when the debate began over the proposed Platform. In September 1998, E. J. Kessler, a reporter for *The Forward*, a national Jewish newspaper headquartered in New York, wrote that the draft of ‘Ten Principles for Reform Judaism’¹³ was promoting ‘rituals and observances...that many associate with Orthodoxy.’ Kessler (1998: 1) He noted that the proposed Platform had been written for the most part by younger male rabbis who have become more observant of the mitzvot, who were finding holiness in these traditional aspects, and wished to move forward from the rational and modern ways of their German-Jewish ancestors to embrace a new spirituality in the traditionalism that has remained almost constant in those Jews of Eastern European heritage. While Kessler points out that ‘some exponents of Classical Reform Judaism’ opposed the document because of its advocacy of certain ritual observances, he also notes that other critics attacked the document for not being assertive enough about the importance of outreach to intermarried families and gays and lesbians.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, former President of the UAHC, responded to the first draft by stating that the language used in the draft was not inclusive enough and needed strengthening. Schindler accepted the trend toward traditionalism as authentic and legitimate, and pointed out that the language “continues trends manifest” in Reform Judaism for over the last century, and is therefore simply a continuation of pre-existing trends.’ Kessler (1998: 2) Schindler, however, believed that the Reform movement’s commitment to inclusivity was not being adequately emphasized.

But speaking to the author after the passing of the Platform, he emphatically argued that the Platform was of virtually no theological or even sociological significance. ‘It’s nothing. It’s nothing from nothing. It’s not good, not bad, it’s not really an advance over the Centennial issue [statement]...it is much to do about nothing. It really is. I mean it doesn’t go beyond anything that [Eugene] Borowitz said in the Centennial statement, not one iota. So I don’t know what all the hullabaloo was all about.’ Schindler (1999) But not all observers agree with Schindler. Many believe that the movement’s embracing of contradictory trends cannot continue forever, and that the Platform may serve to galvanise opposition to either neo-traditionalism or to the politically correct liberal social agenda. But it is certain that the religious trends affecting the Reform movement cannot be seen in isolation from broader sociological patterns influencing the entire American Jewish community and indeed all Americans.

The Different Understandings of the Platform and its Potential Impact

In trying to make some evaluations of the Platform’s meaning and likely impact, it is critical to put the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform in the context of the sociology of the Reform movement. It is important to stress the fact that the entire American Jewish community is in the process of coming to terms with and developing responses to the very dramatically changed situation that American Jews find themselves in at the turn of the millennium. This is partially due to changes unique to Jews and Judaism, but it is to a large degree part and parcel of the overall changes in American society as a whole. We Jews tend to see it from our particular perspective, but many if not most and

perhaps all of the same phenomena can be observed in other American ethnic and religious communities. Nevertheless, the American Jewish community will have to come to terms with the assimilatory process, and make decisions on how to develop concrete strategies for dealing with life in an open society.

The leaders of the Reform movement are certainly aware that when seen from a particular perspective, the American Jewish community is in crisis. They are also aware that the Reform movement has had a great deal of difficulty meeting the challenges that it faces. I believe that many Reform rabbis have a great deal of frustration precisely because they want to serve vibrant congregations who are dedicated to the study and practice of Judaism, this is not usually the case.¹⁴ Some rabbis cope with the situation better than others, but many are aware there is something very wrong with the average non-Orthodox congregation.

One of those rabbis who are aware that something is very wrong is Rabbi Richard Levy. Many fellow rabbis are surprised by this characterization because they see him as a positive-thinking and proactive person, one who is naturally optimistic. And he is. But as early as 1969, Levy wrote an essay entitled 'The Plight of the Reform Synagogue,' for *Judaism*, which stressed his deep concern for the future of the Reform synagogue. Levy wrote that he saw the American Reform synagogue in deep trouble, that 'It has generally defaulted on all three' of its traditional functions: as a beth Tefillah (a house of prayer), a beth Midrash (a house of study), and a beth Knesset (a house of meeting). Levy stated that while there are congregations that have been successful in providing the traditional functions, there are many more where prayer is irregular and insignificant for the majority of their members, serious study of Jewish ideas and books is nil, and meeting with others within the congregation are rare and only occasional events. Levy then described what he saw as the specifics of these multiple failures and made suggestions for building a more vibrant Reform congregational experience. In 1999, the trends that Levy saw in 1969 are far easier to spot. One sees repeated references to continuity and survival and assimilation and intermarriage in Jewish newspapers. Once in a while, an Orthodox leader may explicitly condemn the Reform movement for causing this situation, or more likely, for not doing enough to counteract it. And it is not only Orthodox rabbis who feel that the Reform movement may not be doing enough to counteract the currently escalating trends toward assimilation.

So when the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) voted at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, May 26, 1999, at the historic Rodef Shalom Congregation to adopt the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform, one could interpret the 324-68 vote as an endorsement of Levy's position that a greater degree of tradition could re-energise and revitalise the religious life of the 875-odd Reform synagogues in the United States. This is not the only way to interpret the adoption of this new Platform. One could see it as simply a move toward greater tradition. Those observers who have emphasised this approach have been careful to explain that as the Reform movement moves toward tradition, it does not mean the same thing as moving towards Orthodoxy. The Reform movement is not considering the adoption of any halachic standards. Even the proponents of progressive halachah, such as Rabbi Walter Jacob of Rodef Shalom and other disciples of the methodology of the late Rabbi Solomon Freehof, are not interested in instituting a binding system of Jewish law, certainly not one that would parallel the halachic approach of the Orthodox, or even the traditional Conservative.

While much of the debate over the new Platform centred on the so-called move toward tradition that the Reform movement is in the process of embracing, much of the subtext of the debate was an argument over how to interpret the recent sociological studies on American Jewry. The premise of Reform Judaism had been that it was possible to Americanise and yet be able to pass on a clearly identifiable, if perhaps attenuated, form of Jewish identity to the children and grandchildren and beyond. But since the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), this assumption has been called into question. Even worse, it is not at all clear how many Reform Jews still care. A number of recent journalistic reports suggested that the obsession with Jewish continuity and survival is something that worries the lay and professional leaders exclusively, and that most Reform Jews and most American Jews generally are just living their lives and what happens, happens. As the intermarriage rate has dramatically increased, the consensus in the Jewish community has dramatically shifted from rejection to grudging acquiescence and more recently to full acceptance. The Reform movement has attempted to react to the change in social context by proactively advocating and implementing new approaches to issues facing Jews and Judaism today.

The Patrilineal Descent Resolution

Many of the innovations that the Reform movement has undertaken in its response to the changing nature of American society have had mixed results. The Patrilineal Descent Resolution, for example, has been criticised for its awkward wording and deep ambiguity. Nevertheless, it has allowed many intermarried couples to feel welcome in their Reform synagogue, and even without the assumption that the non-Jewish spouse may imminently convert. And yet, many observers have suggested that welcoming these couples on such an informal basis has decreased the numbers of conversions. This may not be true—and if it *is* true it may be due to other factors—but there is a sense that while the Patrilineal Descent Resolution has been good in a number of ways, the good has also come with a price. Even those who are ambivalent or even skeptical about the effectiveness of the Patrilineal Descent Resolution are very unlikely to want to turn the clock back, because among other reasons, the Resolution only formalised what had been the informal practice in any case. It did sharpen the acceptance of such children who formerly might have been enrolled in a Hebrew school with the expectation that the bar or bat mitzvah and/or confirmation would be in lieu of a formal conversion, or would be regarded as a formal conversion. So, the feeling has been that the Patrilineal Descent Resolution has not really changed anything, but it continues to be seen as logical and necessary in the open society of the United States. To move in the direction of exclusion lacks logic when the overall sociological profile of American Reform Jews is taken into account. But it is becoming clearer that even with the most open, inclusive policies, the Reform movement is going to have a very rough time keeping the children of interfaith couples attached to their congregations, even nominally. Most of the studies that have been done recently have drawn at best a mixed picture, and at worst a catastrophe in the making.¹⁵

The Limited Influence of the Reform Rabbinate

There are powerful social forces that are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to go against, and it is highly unlikely that the future direction of the Reform movement will be determined primarily by one or another of the rabbis.¹⁶ It will be determined by how American society influences

individual Jews and the Jews as a community. Those rabbis who go with the flow of the times may have an easier time of it, and those who resist may have greater difficulties. There have been reports for many years that many Reform congregations will not consider rabbis who will not perform intermarriages. Now, recent reports indicate that some congregations will disqualify a rabbi from consideration if he or she will *not* allow unconverted Gentile spouses to perform specific ritual acts in the Friday night service, such as lighting the candles and saying the accompanying blessing.

Yet the rabbis as individuals and the Reform rabbinate as a collective are certainly committed to trying to maximise their impact and influence on the Reform laity. Similarly, the Reform lay leadership is likewise attempting to formulate its own response to the challenge that the boundaries issue presents to them, and to that end, they passed a very controversial resolution at the UAHC biennial in Atlanta in December 1995. This resolution concerned the enrollment policy of Reform religious schools. It was adopted by the General Assembly of the UAHC at that conference. The resolution stated that interfaith couples who were sending their children to other religious schools should not be allowed to enroll their children in a Jewish religious school in a Reform congregation. The resolution specifically encouraged synagogues to establish a clearly articulated policy that would offer enrollment to children in Reform religious schools, as well as Reform Jewish day schools, only to those children who were not receiving formal religious education in any other religion. This policy was a bold effort by the UAHC to set limitations on the openness that the Reform movement had exhibited toward interfaith families in the past. Yet the Reform movement had pioneered the entire concept of outreach, and indeed continues its strong commitment to outreach by utilising a number of different strategies, which include alternative family education programs, including innovative programs such as *Stepping Stones* and *A Taste of Judaism*.

Periodic Uplift Rather than Daily Routine

Bernard Susser and Charles Liebman of Bar Ilan University write that if one views what is happening in the non-Orthodox American Judaic world through the prism of the concepts of personalism and volunteerism, then there is a great deal of elasticity possible in how one defines Jewish identity. Indeed, it becomes difficult to define Jewish identity at all because personalism and volunteerism are very estranged from objective formalised boundaries. As one rabbi who is deeply influenced by personalism and volunteerism told me, 'I wanted a wide open congregation with no limitations of any kind. I don't like boundaries.' For a person who believes that episodic experiences can create a meaningful spirituality, there is very little motivation to look to law or any traditional definitions as a source of authority. The influence of personalism and volunteerism does a great deal to detach American Reform Jews and other Americans as well from the Jewish collective of which they still view themselves to be a part. But as their values become more and more connected to their personalist perspectives, they see their lives as more and more focused on their own personal directions. They feel less and less obligation to fit their own lifestyles into a predetermined mold.

If the current trends hold true, congregants of Reform congregations are going to demand more and more programming that can help them to feel Jewish on specific and exceptional occasions, rather than demand that their congregations provide them with the regular structure that would create the framework for ritual practices that are conducted weekly or even daily. Thus, it should

come as no surprise to us that Reform congregations rarely have daily minyanim, and that many do not even have Saturday morning services when there is no bar or bat mitzvah. And yet the UAHC Department of Adult Jewish Growth has created an impressive series of weekend retreats called kallot, held yearly in Waltham, Massachusetts, Santa Cruz, California, and Beloit, Wisconsin. For three days or so, hundreds of Reform Jews gather to celebrate their Jewishness and to experiment with new forms of Jewish spirituality. While this is certainly a sign of tremendous vitality, such yearly retreats are not going to overcome the increasing alienation from regular Jewish ritual practice that needs to be seen within a communal perspective and lived out in the context of a covenant community. Rather, it is another expression of personalism and volunteerism that emphasizes individual meaning and the individual's search for spiritual fulfillment that has been described by numerous American sociologists of religion. If such an ethos continues to dominate Reform Jewish life, it seems clear that whatever boundaries exist at present will slowly disintegrate. More and more Reform Jews will see them as stilted and artificial. More and more Reform Jews will commit themselves to a religious identity that places one's individual search for existential meaning above the needs of the Jewish community, as well as the dictates of the traditional Judaic understanding of God, Torah and Israel. So, while traditionalists may applaud the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform, they shouldn't get too excited. The Reform movement may simultaneously embrace tradition and jettison all semblances of Jewish traditional understandings of religious identity at the very same time. Much of the mixed response that the Platform has received is due to the fact that while many rabbis and intellectuals view the document in theological terms, most of the laity have focused almost exclusively on the references to ritual observances that were omitted from the final draft.

The Rabbinic Reaction Focuses on Theology While the Congregants Focus on Observance

Speaking to about 130 Reform Rabbis over a teleconference on August 17, 1999, Rabbi Eric Yoffie addressed a question that had been submitted in advance by Rabbi Herb Brockman of Congregation Mishkan Israel of Hamden, Connecticut. Brockman had asked him if there was a noticeable 'disconnect' between the leadership of the movement on one hand and many of the people in the congregations on the other. Brockman had suggested that most congregants see the Principles as a representation of the values and behavior of the *leaders* of the movement, while the *congregants* themselves see the Principles as having little prescriptive value for the way they live their lives.

Yoffie responded to this question by explaining how he believed the dynamic worked. He noted that in order to understand the strong reaction from so many of the congregants, it is necessary to go back to the third draft,¹¹ which primarily focused on theological issues. Yoffie remarked that in his role as the President of the UAHC he had traveled to a great many congregations throughout the country and during this time had heard and observed how people felt about the third draft of the Platform. A recurring theme that came out of these observations was centered on the questions of abandoning rationalism and subordinating modernity to tradition. While the rabbis reacted in one way to the third draft, the laity generally focused on the draft's references to Jewish practices, such as using the mikveh, wearing tefillin, observing kashrus, and learning and reading the Hebrew language.

So while Yoffie agreed that in some sense there is a wide gap between the Reform rabbinate on one hand, and the lay people on the other, it is not necessarily over the 'return to tradition' issue. Rather, it is over the rabbinic focus on the theory of Reform Judaism versus the lay concern with practical manifestations of Reform Judaism. He argued that it was not the advocacy over tradition that the congregants were concerned about, but what he terms the 're-ritualization of Reform Judaism.' He said that the issue is not a matter of tradition; the movement has already embraced patrilineality, gays and lesbians, and creative approaches to worship that cannot be defined as a traditional approach. Yoffie reminded teleconference participants that for more than a decade, Reform Judaism has been going through a process of re-ritualisation, and while the majority of the Reform movement has adapted to the changes, up to 33% of congregants at the present time remain uncomfortable with the process. It can be argued that the conflict already brewing among congregants was accelerated when the new Platform proposal came to light. Yoffie noted that he had observed a generational difference in ritual observance among a recent UAHC event, in which 20 older¹² officers were to be installed before 4,500 congregants. Not one of 20 officers wore a kippah, but over half of the congregants were wearing kippot and a smaller group was wearing tallits. Yoffie admits that there is a generational gap that is significant. But he does not believe that this was the only factor operating, and said that while the smaller percentage of congregants have been unhappy for the past ten years, they have been accepting and tolerant of the differences. So now the question is: why did one-third of Reform Jews who were uncomfortable with the process of re-ritualization go along with it for ten years or longer and then suddenly react so aggressively?

Yoffie believes that there are at least three reasons. The first is that the ritual practices are being introduced by Reform Jews and Rabbis who grew up as Reform Jews and have been aware of the need for more ritual. Second, the Rabbis have not traditionally imposed ritual or tradition on their congregations in the past. Third, many Classical Reform-oriented congregants went along with the changes because they understood that it was a widespread social change which was being willingly accepted and even embraced by the younger generation. Yoffie stated that they see it as a 'grass roots phenomenon,' changing the lives of their children and grandchildren, and even as these dissenters notice the difference, on some level they are delighted to see the young people embracing rituals they left behind years ago.

So that still leaves the question of why the third draft of the Platform provoked such a storm of hostility. Yoffie suggests, as an aside, the fact that the photo of Rabbi Levy, which many Classical Reformers perceived as of representing and extremely traditional image, was one factor. 'It would have been a totally different debate in the absence of the picture.' And numerous others have questioned: Is there potential conflict in making a strong statement on the cover of *Reform Judaism* and will it ultimately affect the Reform movement to a measurable degree? Yoffie further argues that many people saw the passing of the Platform as setting a standard for the movement, of which they were not part of the consensus because they viewed it as 'a credal affirmation, as an oath of allegiance, as a litmus test.' Yoffie (1999) But surely that is a reasonable inference for a Classical Reform Jew to make. If the movement was so concerned to not cause them to feel that way, shouldn't the CCAR have avoided proposing any new Platform? Or shouldn't they have made sure that everyone understood the actual nature of the proposed Platform—whatever that was—and made sure that people felt comfortable with the process before pushing ahead?

Yoffie's central message is that the Reform movement continues to move into very different directions simultaneously. There is the 'return to tradition' and there is at the same time the stretching of boundaries so that movement is as inclusive as possible. And what is the message? The movement is changing and re-ritualisation of Reform Judaism is a dynamic that accurately reflects the belief structure of many of the congregants on a very wide scale. It meets the needs of our longtime congregants as well as the new generation of Reform Jews. We remain inclusive, pluralistic and embrace all in a healthy diversity.

Nevertheless, many Rabbis remain troubled by what they see as an attempt to 'spin' the Platform to avoid facing the mistakes that the leadership may have made. CCAR President Charles Kroloff states that in his view the Platform will be very valuable for the congregants, and noted that 98% of congregants he met with before the Principles were voted on believed it would be a good idea to clarify the meaning and practice of Reform Judaism, and that it would be helpful to congregants to clarify *their* understanding of Reform Judaism. Speaking at the August 17th teleconference, Kroloff praised the Platform as an 'extraordinary document' which is a tremendous source for study and for personal growth.' He wrote me that, 'It is a superb educational tool...it describes for ALL the world to see where Reform is and/or is heading, depending on your perspective. It helps Reform Jews arrive at self-definition. They don't have to accept any or all points, but it provides something clear to bump up against, to test ideas, to try out new and not so new ways of looking at things. Self-definition is important exercise for liberal Jews who sometimes feel like we are all things to all people.' Kroloff (1999a)

Kroloff hoped it would bring dialogue to the congregations, that they will be willing to discuss the larger questions, such as the reality of God and the issues of mitzvot, while encouraging the congregations to create their own commentaries, as the leaders are doing on a national level. Kroloff did not explicitly acknowledge any problem with the Platform or the process that was used in the writing and adoption of the Platform. He stressed that *nothing in the Platform is obligatory*, that the Platform points are basically voluntary guidelines within the very broad sense of the Reform movement. Kroloff (1999b) This may be true, but a Platform is a statement of what a movement believes and to what it aspires.

The Need for Theological Clarity

The Reform movement has come forward in recent decades with a series of bold new policies that have been welcomed by some as groundbreaking and criticised by others as breaking with thousands of years of Jewish tradition and destroying any possibility for Jewish unity in the future. But what has not been stressed enough is that most or all of these new policies were not ideologically driven innovations, but rather practical responses to the crisis of Jewish continuity that has been growing since the 1960s. Thus, these innovations were rear-guard actions that attempted to control the amount of damage that might be done to the integrity of the Jewish community. And as practical strategies, they have probably been partially effective. But by the late 1990s, it was becoming increasingly apparent to more and more reform rabbis that rear-guard actions weren't going to be enough. Further, it was starting to become clear that there wasn't a whole lot of room for very many more such innovations. Having accepted mixed married couples and gays and lesbians and in some congregations even accepting practicing Christians, it would seem that

inclusivity had reached its maximum reach and it would be necessary to find a new direction to keep the numbers up. But more than sustaining numbers, many rabbis felt that the Reform movement was in danger of becoming just a community of numbers. Having 700 family units or 900 family units or 1,300 family units may sound very impressive. But when many of these congregations are drawing only 30 or 40 or 50 people on a Friday night, and may not even have a Saturday morning service in the absence of a bar mitzvah, then it would seem that the level of intensity is so low that those truly interested in an intense spiritual community would by necessity need to look elsewhere. The push toward tradition that generated so much publicity may help to attract and retain many young Jews who are looking for something more serious. As Rabbi Leon Morris, the Director of The New York Kollel of HUC-JIR in New York writes:

Some will argue that a Reform document which mentions kashrut, tallit, tefillin and mikveh would alienate the masses of American Jewry with whom we rabbis are apparently out of touch. But what about all the serious Jews who leave our movement because they were never able to find the kind of religious community Reform claimed to be but never lived up to? I personally know many people who went to our summer camps and participated actively in our youth movement who reached a point where they felt that they outgrew the Reform movement. For those who do not become rabbis and cantors, there isn't enough the movement offers them. To be sure, there are notable exceptions. But in many instances, Jews who desire a framework for an impassioned engaging liberal Judaism feel frustrated and go elsewhere. What will we offer those who can't accept traditional claims of Revelation but desire to make Judaism the center of their lives? Can we engage the minds of those who insist upon making their own religious decisions but want a religious path of depth and meaning to follow? A Reform Judaism of the 21st century needs such people as our laity. Now, it may need to say to its own members what it has often said to the Jewish world at large: "It's time for change." For their sake, the time to chart a new course for Reform Judaism has arrived. Morris (unpublished paper)

Rabbis such as Morris feel that perhaps concurrently with the drive for inclusiveness, there is a need for a drive towards greater intensity. This, I believe, was one of the reasons, perhaps on a subconscious level, that so many supported a new Platform that would be perceived as a dramatic move toward tradition. But for this Platform to serve as a source of vitality for the Reform movement, it is going to have to be able to present a belief that American Jews can and will embrace. While there is very little interest in developing an explicit ideology favoring radical assimilation, neither does the American Jewish community have a clear conception of why it should not allow the natural process of assimilation to proceed. Bernard Susser and Charles Liebman are correct when they say that:

Among those who fill synagogues on the High Holy Days, a very significant percentage are there not to pray to a God about whose existence they harbor significant doubts, but rather in order to identify ethnically, historically, and culturally in the only way they know. Indeed, we would not at all be surprised if, in affiliating with a synagogue, the greater part of American Conservative and Reform Jews understand themselves as

making an ethno-cultural statement rather than a religious one. Susser & Liebman (1999: 97)

This is one of the main reasons why American Judaism is having so much trouble. Judaism was the accepted medium in the 1950s Eisenhower years for the expression of Jewish ethnicity. But as Jewish ethnicity has faded over the last number of decades, it has become increasingly unclear to the children and grandchildren and now great-grandchildren why they should feel that Judaism is so important to them. Unfortunately, a Platform such as the 1999 Pittsburgh Platform does not even begin to come close to presenting a coherent theology that can be taught and then embraced by increasing numbers of increasingly secular Reform Jews. While it may well be that the sociological processes that are pushing Jews in certain directions are very strong, indeed perhaps too strong to resist, a theologically clearer and stronger Platform could have provided the basis for a process of clarification that could fuel a true renaissance of Jewish religiosity in the Reform movement.

As it stands, the Platform begins with a section on God. This section begins with the statement: 'We affirm the reality and unity of God, even as we may differ in our understanding of the divine presence in our lives.' A statement that is so vague is not going to provide the theological basis on which the Reform movement can build a feeling that a Reform Jew must have a sense of religious obligation. Without a sense of religious obligation, it is going to be impossible for people to justify making a strong commitment to ritual observance as a system. Making this theological argument for a commitment to religious acts is essential for breaking what sociologist Rodney Stark describes as the free rider problem, in which so many members of a religious organization ride free for the benefits that the organization offers without actively working to produce 'religious goods.' As a result, the Reform synagogue may find that an even greater percentage of congregants begin to free ride, rather than playing an active role in the religious, cultural and social lives of the congregation.

Conclusion

The Pittsburgh Platform that was accepted was the result of a long and very open process. This process was carried out in a very liberal movement that has an acute appreciation for the importance of transparency and actively consulting with its various constituencies. Many people, lay people as well as rabbis, have commented on how Rabbi Richard Levy traveled around the country and met with them to explain the process of building a final document and then listened to them, truly listened, in a way that made them feel that it wasn't just an elaborate show, but rather a true consultation that was taken very seriously. A number remarked that comments they made to Levy or others found their way into subsequent drafts. Even at the convention itself in Pittsburgh, a huge amount of time was devoted to amendments and proposed changes. Because of all of this input, other programs had to be canceled, and an extra morning of dealing with the proposals had to be added. As a consequence of this extra time, the final vote was taken at the historic Rodef Shalom Congregation, rather than at the hotel. This openness is a tremendous asset for the Reform movement, but it also makes it virtually impossible to create a document that is strong and unequivocal in both its theology and its approach to ritual behavior.

Notes

I would like to thank Pat Thorpe for her help in the preparation of this manuscript.

1. While the photo did not show Levy wearing tefillin, which he does put on every morning, the reaction to the photo was nevertheless very emotional, both positively and negatively.
2. Another reason was that the rabbis probably weren't sure themselves what the Platform actually meant. They certainly understood that it wasn't the unconditional embrace of tradition that much of the press suggested it was. But what was it? Therefore, the safest political tack to take was to draw attention to it and to suggest that it was an opportunity to study more about Judaism and deepen one's insights. Who could object to that?
3. Rabbi Lance Sussman was one of the few who vigorously opposed the Platform at the conference and continued to critique it in writing, afterwards.
4. The Principles voted on and passed by an overwhelming majority of the convention attendees bore little resemblance to the "Ten Principles for Reform Judaism" presented last winter to the Reform community in the pages of *Reform Judaism* magazine.
5. Gone were explicit references to kashrut and mikveh. Gone were the self-conscious expressions of Reform angst over what Reform Jews do not do.
6. Shook is referring to the fact that when computer programs come out in updated versions, they are frequently labeled 3.1 instead of 3.0, and that they reflect the fact that they are a more advanced version of the same operating system. So too, Shook argues that the final Pittsburgh Platform is simply a slightly updated version of the 1976 Centenary Perspective, which he identifies as dating from 1975 rather than 1976.
7. Shook argued that the importance of the debate at the CCAR conference was inflated well beyond its actual importance. 'Our history as a movement demonstrates time and again, that no one remembers or cares about the contents of a CCAR debate.'
8. Fuchs explained that it has become common form any rabbis, cantors, and congregants to wear kippot and tallitot during services. Further, many Reform Jews will observe at least some of the traditional dietary restrictions and the overwhelming majority of Reform synagogue kitchens, while not kosher according to Orthodox standards, do not serve pork or shellfish.
9. In recent years there has been an upsurge of interest in various forms of ritual activity.
10. Danziger explains that this is no longer true. Today, some Reform Jews wear yarmulkes and some don't. He also clearly states that it is not the case that those people who are from Conservative or Orthodox backgrounds wear yarmulkes, while those who are from Reform backgrounds do not. Rather, there is no direct correlation between a person's religious background and whether they wear a yarmulke or not.
11. This was the draft that got the most attention because it was published in *Reform Judaism* magazine.
12. These officers tend to be older because to be installed as a UAHC officer, one must have served at least 20 years to be considered for such a position on the UAHC Board.
13. The title 'Ten Principles for Reform Judaism' was used for the first three drafts of the Platform; the fourth through sixth drafts were called, 'A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism.'

14. Instead, many of them are officiating at a constant stream of life-cycle events, and visiting large numbers of people in the hospital, many of whom they do not know. The non-Orthodox congregation has become a service station for those needing particular services at any given time.
15. To give one example, Bruce Phillips of Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles did a 1993 survey on mixed marriage, in which he re-interviewed 580 of the respondents who participated in the 1990 NJPS. Kessler (1999: 1 & 2) As is well known, the 1990 survey reported that 52% of marriages that involved Jews between 1985 and 1990 were intermarriages. Phillips found that only 18% of children in the intermarriages that he looked at were being raised exclusively as Jews. Thirty-four percent were being raised exclusively as Christians, and 25% were being raised in both religions. Phillips' study also reported that whereas only 19% of these intermarried families had a family member who belonged to a synagogue, 33% of these families had a family member who belonged to a church. While this and other studies by no means mean that all is lost, they do indicate that in a society that is overwhelmingly Christian, or at least generically Gentile, it is extremely difficult to perpetuate Jewish identity, even under the best of circumstances. When the parents are intermarried and there is only one Jewish influence in the house, and that parent may be ambivalent, or even harbor latent hostility toward Judaism or Jewish communal life, this will dramatically increase the difficulties.
16. Long gone are the days when an Isaac Mayer Wise could build an entire movement by having a charismatic personality and being willing to travel up and down the Mississippi River, dedicating synagogues and selling his newspaper without stop. Indeed, it could be argued that even Wise succeeded to the extent that he did because he went with the flow rather than trying to fight against it.

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