

Toward a Theory of Disproportionate American Jewish Liberalism

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The characteristic political liberalism of American Jews is now well documented. At least since the New Deal, the great majority of American Jews have backed a range of liberal causes and the Democratic party to a degree greater than any other white ethnoreligious group and second only to the blacks.¹ At the same time, Jews have risen to become one of the best-educated and most economically secure ethnoreligious groups in the United States.² What explains this profound and persistent attachment to liberalism among American Jews? Although numerous explanations have been proposed, none is satisfactory. Some of the existing theories explain why American Jews are, or have been, liberal; others help explain variance among American Jews in the degree of their liberalism. But none explains the basic anomaly: the *disproportionate* extent to which American Jews display liberal preferences on economic, political and social issues relative to comparable ethnoreligious and socioeconomic groups.

This article seeks to advance a new approach to explaining the disproportionate liberalism of American Jews. Specifically, it rejects the standard assumption that American Jews are predisposed by their experience among non-Jews in wider society—whether considered in terms of marginality, minority status or political interests—to be especially politically liberal. The central argument to be advanced here is that the pronounced liberalism of American Jews is best understood in terms of dynamics and tensions in their relation to the Jewish community as a religious body politic rather than in their relations with non-Jews or with non-Jewish society.

Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism

“Liberalism” in the present context refers to three general policy commitments—state welfare, civil rights and civil liberties—although foreign policy is sometimes included as a fourth dimension of a liberal political orientation where liberals are held to be noninterventionist and nonmilitaristic in international politics. In all four of these general policy areas, American Jews tend to be markedly liberal. So much is attested to by surveys of attitudes on policy issues, self-identifications with the liberal-conservative labels, and voting behavior.

Liberal economic concerns such as government intervention in the economy and welfare for the needy; civil rights commitments such as integration, tolerance toward Communists and nonconformists, and the prevention of discrimination against blacks, women and homosexuals in such areas as employment and housing; and civil liberty issues such as church-state separation, legalization of marijuana, limited regulation of pornography, and government funding of abortions—are all endorsed by Jews in proportions significantly greater than those of any other white ethnoreligious group, or by the population as a whole.³ Blacks, only marginally more liberal than Jews on economic questions, are considerably less liberal than Jews on all the aforementioned civil rights and civil liberties issues (with the exception of racial integration).⁴ Before the Vietnam debacle, Jews, compared with all Americans, white and black, were found to be the strongest endorsers of an interventionist U.S. foreign policy and of internationalist agencies such as the U.N. After Vietnam, Jews tend to be stronger advocates than other Americans of cuts to military spending, and are less willing to support the use of force in international affairs.⁵

In surveys of Jews and other Americans that were administered in the 1970s, Jews identified as liberals far more readily than did other whites, and somewhat more readily than blacks; at the same time, Jews were correspondingly more reluctant to identify as conservatives.⁶ By the late 1980s, Jews were exceeded only by blacks in their readiness to identify as liberals and in their reluctance to identify as conservatives.⁷ Compared with all Americans, white and black, Jews are on the average wealthier (though, until recently, exceeded by a few Protestant denominations), more urbanized (despite their continuing suburbanization), better educated, and overrepresented in professional occupations;⁸ yet in congressional and presidential elections they continue to support the Democratic party—the traditional champion of the “underdogs”—about 20 percentage points above other Americans; while Jewish support for the Republicans is correspondingly lower.⁹

Jews quite clearly display the effects of the standard lines of cleavage operating throughout the society and electorate at large.¹⁰ Yet at any given level of income, education and religiosity, and at any given age cohort, generation or region of residence, Jews are more likely to be liberal than other white ethnoreligious groups or the population as a whole.¹¹ Even in the academic and intellectual professions, Jews are found to be stronger liberals than their non-Jewish counterparts.¹² Some recent research suggests that the pronounced Jewish commitment to civil rights may largely be a product of educational attainment and demographic factors.¹³ On many questions treating integration, the differential liberalism of Jews disappears when controls are introduced. But this is not the case with the pronounced welfarism and civil libertarianism of Jews, which transcends their background socioeconomic characteristics.¹⁴

Problematic Explanations of American Jewish Liberalism

This profile of American Jewish liberalism suggests that the question is not one of explaining an undifferentiated “liberalism” or “leftist voting pattern,” as it has often

been addressed, but rather two specific and apparently more fundamental commitments to state welfare and to civil liberties.¹⁵ Strictly speaking, the issue is not why many American Jews are or have been liberals in these twin respects. The answer to that question is known: they have been influenced by any number and combination of sociological and political factors, among them an economically disadvantaged background (in the present or past); residence in a large city; high level of education and general intellectual orientation; and overrepresentation in the free professions. The question is, why are Jews *so* liberal? But here the issue is not why “the center of the Jewish political distribution is something of the order of fifteen to twenty-five percentage points to the left of the *American center*.”¹⁶ The key question is, why are American Jews as a group nine to fifteen percentage points more liberal across the relevant indices than other white ethnoreligious groups even after sociodemographic characteristics are controlled?¹⁷ Thus, the search is for a theory that can explain not only the liberalism of American Jews but, primarily, the disproportionate extent to which most American Jews display liberal preferences across socioeconomic cleavages—a phenomenon that sets them apart even from other liberal ethno-religious groups in the United States.

Six chief explanations of American Jewish liberalism continue to be advanced in the literature. The liberalism of American Jews is attributed to their “new class,” professional status (hence interest in postmaterialist values),¹⁸ their minority group status;¹⁹ social marginality, in which liberal universalism serves to undercut society’s dominant traditions;²⁰ the exercise of ongoing Jewish political interests;²¹ the legacy of immigrant Jewish socialism early this century;²² and Jewish values.²³

Each of these explanations, however, is inadequate. The new class argument fails to explain the disproportionate dimensions of American Jewish liberalism. The minority group thesis is mute as to why Jews are generally more liberal than virtually all other cultural and religious minorities in the United States, some of whose religions have even less acceptance than Judaism. The marginality argument, for all its ritual incantation, does not square with developments: the prized pluralism that has become part of contemporary American liberalism facilitates not so much universal estrangement as proud identification with one’s ethnic or religious group.²⁴ Nor is felt marginality linked singularly, if at all, to liberal politics: leftist-radicalism, nationalist chauvinism, conservative caution, conversion and assimilation, are all possible and known Jewish responses to the experience of social estrangement.

The majority of the East European immigrant Jews—let alone the overall Jewish population—were not radicals or socialists.²⁵ Moreover, given its license for centralized state control, socialism would seem to push in the opposite direction from that of civil libertarianism, one of the prime dimensions of American Jewish liberalism.²⁶ And while the political interest model highlights factors that affect the Jewish commitment to liberalism, it does not account for the basis of that commitment: despite the ostensible threats to Jewish interests from a left-liberal direction in the 1960s and 1970s,²⁷ American Jews still exhibited liberal preferences across a range of economic, political and social dimensions, and showed disproportionate support for Democratic candidates.

Interestingly, the Jewish values thesis has tended to be dismissed more readily

than the others. In Lawrence Fuchs's well-known version, the operative values are identified as *zedekah*, or social justice, which translates into a concern for individuals' welfare; *Torah*, or the respect for learning, which stresses intellectual independence and a rational approach to dealing with everyday affairs (social planning); and *nonasceticism*, which endorses a this-worldly rather than other-worldly point of view. However, it is routinely pointed out that Judaism contains as well many elements that can be regarded as highly conservative, and so it remains to be explained what presses most Jews to emphasize the liberal aspects of Judaism.²⁸ No less often, the point is made that observant Jews—those presumably “closer” to Jewish values—are generally less politically liberal than nonobservant but still identifying Jews.²⁹

Yet the fact that there are both “conservative” and “liberal” political inclinations in a living tradition should be no surprise. The crucial question is how and in what balance these political orientations dwell together. And while the greater liberalism of non- or less-observant Jews compared with more observant Jews certainly suggests limits to the explanatory power of Jewish values, it is necessary to compare Jews and non-Jews across levels of religiosity before the possible effect of Jewish values can be determined. Some of the Jewish values Fuchs isolates, and their theoretical implications, may rightly be challenged; but a cultural approach may still have something to contribute to the explanation of disproportionate American Jewish liberalism.³⁰

A Jewish Body Politic Model

When attention is shifted to the Jewish community as a body politic, two essential dynamics or tensions come into relief regarding liberal politics. First, certain political institutions or norms such as welfare and the recognition of individual interests are integral to traditional Jewish politics and society and have outlived the dissolution of those societies in the modern era. Second, the relation that most modern Jews bear to Judaism and their own Jewish communities is an essentially liberal one, which is experienced and internalized prior to acquiring the right to vote.

Welfare

The strong concern with welfare within Jewish communal life—what Fuchs terms an aspect of *zedakah*—has often been noted. Organized Jewish life, first in the semi-autonomous *kehilot* before Emancipation and later in Jewish communities within mass society, has generally displayed the responsibility of centralized communal institutions for the material welfare of its members, especially its members in need. To be sure, as Michael Walzer has pointed out, “every political community is in principle a ‘welfare state,’” since all “provide, or try to provide, or claim to provide, for the needs of its members as its members understood those needs.”³¹ Between claiming to provide and actually providing there is, however, a vast difference. The crucial point is that communal responsibility for the needy was not an abstract religious value in Judaism but had a social basis in institutions within

Jewish communal life.³² Welfarism is thus a political institution in traditional Jewish life, so much so that it makes of the Jewish community a “welfare state in miniature.”³³

Certainly, compared to other relevant groups, the extent of welfare within Jewish life is striking. Figures comparing charitable dollars given per capita reveal American Jews to be the most generous givers to charitable causes in the most charity-conscious nation on earth.³⁴ The tradition of Jewish welfarism also stands in some historical contrast to both American Protestantism and Catholicism. The predominant Protestant ethos in America, writes Will Herberg, “was almost from the beginning geared to an individualistic piety, in which right living by the individual was stressed, with the expectation that social justice would naturally follow.”³⁵ Consequently, in the wake of industrialization and urbanization in the late nineteenth century, mainstream Protestantism “began to serve as a means for ignoring and evading the social problems that were arising in the New America of big cities and modern industry.”³⁶ Among Catholics in America, a network of institutions operate a vast variety of social and educational services. Moreover, the Church leadership was often instrumental in developing progressive labor and social policies. Among the Church membership, however, “opposition, resistance, particularly indifference, have always been rife, and practice has not invariably followed in the line of policy.”³⁷

American Jewry exhibits almost the reverse pattern. The organized Jewish community, while agitating in behalf of its perceived political interests, strenuously denies that there is “a Jewish line” or “the Jewish vote” or “a Jewish party.” At the same time, most American Jews individually line up as staunch supporters of liberal policies and the Democratic party. Given the differences between Protestants, Catholics and Jews in political cohesion and in intensity of communal identification, it is perhaps not surprising that Catholics tend to be stronger supporters of welfare policies than Protestants, but less supportive of such policies than Jews.³⁸

Individuation

The status accorded individual interests within traditional Jewish politics and society is also notable regarding left-liberalism. Many traditional and religious cultures subordinate the individual member to the larger community or tradition.³⁹ In Catholicism, the individual has autonomous identity, but is governed by a rigid church hierarchy. Moreover, to an unusual degree, Catholics display deference and reverence toward their church authorities, even if they do not always abide by the dictates of Church leaders.⁴⁰ Significantly, researchers in the 1950s and 1960s found that while Catholics were generally more liberal than Protestants on economic-welfare issues, they were often considerably less liberal than Protestants on civil rights and civil liberties questions.⁴¹

In contrast, traditional Jewish politics and society accords significant recognition to individual interests as distinct from the interests of the community and its leadership. Individuation is a way of describing the individual-community relation in traditional Jewish societies: individual interests were recognized as legitimate, but always located within, and constrained by, the community. Assuming the obliga-

tions and privileges associated with communal membership, normative Judaism includes various laws that recognize the importance of individual agency.⁴² To be sure, there are cases, as in community members appealing to courts outside the community, where the full weight of censure was levied against “deviant” members.⁴³ The point, however, is not that communal interests rarely trumped individual interests; they often did. Nonetheless, the communalism of traditional Jewish life recognized the legitimacy of individual interests and provided fertile ground for their interplay with the broader interests of the community.

The characteristic “individuation” within Judaism may be seen in other respects. Whereas Christian worship—Protestant and Catholic—is conducted among congregants in union, Jews congregate to worship but most prayers are recited privately. In what is one of the most basic differences between the two faiths, Christianity emphasizes spiritual fidelity through “right motive,” while Judaism places the emphasis on “right action” according to the dictates of law.⁴⁴ What these different orientations imply for the freedom of “the self” is strikingly illuminated by Roger Owen, a former BBC journalist and Christian who undertook an Orthodox Jewish conversion in mid-life to please his Jewish parents-in-law to be:

No one asked me directly . . . whether I believed in God. This surprised me, for I was brought up as a Welsh Nonconformist. In our chapel “sincerity” was held in such high esteem that it was often affected. . . . I was faintly shocked to find that the nature of my motives in converting was dealt with in such a relatively perfunctory way. . . . Motives . . . it was surely implied, were not entities to be weighed and measured or inspected on a piece of Kleenex. No human art can decipher them. . . . With decent modesty the rabbis seemed to be telling me that their competence lay in humbler spheres. . . . Was there blood on the needle? Did he touch the sides? By concentrating their energies on such matters, they left my “self” alone, allowing me an area of privacy. . . .⁴⁵

Individualism

While welfarism and individuation loom comparatively large in traditional Jewish life, their social bases are very different in the period following the dissolution of traditional Jewish politics and society. Welfarism, as was noted, was a positive value within the traditional Jewish community in Europe and has continued as such, through transformed institutions, in the modern Jewish communities. And while individuation within Judaism can still be seen in comparison with other traditional cultures and religions, the dissolution of traditional Jewish societies meant that Jews were largely cut free from the authoritative, community structures and norms that were always balancing or offsetting their more individualistic interests. With the loosening of traditional bonds and communal ties, individuation increasingly became individualism.

This process applies to all traditional groups undergoing the forces of modernization. A shared consequence is that group traditions are inevitably reinterpreted in accordance with the prevailing social circumstances of its members. Among Jews this has meant typically that the ethical dimensions of Judaism are emphasized over its legal, ritualistic and nationalistic dimensions. Such associations are often cited as evidence for the Judaic roots of Jewish liberal commitments,⁴⁶ though in fact it is

Table 1 Degree of Respondents' Liberalism on Three Dimensions, by Church/Synagogue Attendance: Jews and White Non-Jews (in percent)

Church/Synagogue Attendance	Degree of Respondents' Liberalism					
	Jews			White Non-Jews		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
<i>Support for Liberal Tax and Spending Policies</i>						
Never	13	41	46	21	43	36
1-4 times yearly	11	42	47	21	51	28
5-10 times yearly	12	38	50	18	52	30
2-3 times monthly	8	37	55	25	45	31
Weekly	13	40	47	26	46	28
<i>Social Issues Liberalism</i>						
Never	6	29	66	16	36	49
1-4 times yearly	6	30	64	17	39	44
5-10 times yearly	4	34	62	23	44	33
2-3 times monthly	6	39	55	30	44	26
Weekly	13	50	37	50	37	13
<i>Support for Church-State Separation</i>						
Never	8	6	86	36	15	49
1-4 times yearly	9	6	85	43	16	41
5-10 times yearly	8	4	88	48	15	37
2-3 times monthly	7	1	93	58	10	31
Weekly	14	9	77	65	14	22

Source: Steven M. Cohen, *The Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism* (New York: 1989), 58-59. Reprinted by permission of the American Jewish Committee.

the social bases of Jewish existence that direct which elements of religious tradition are appropriated.⁴⁷ Not only the religious tradition, but the social distance from it, is crucial in explaining the liberalism of many American Jews.

Empirical Implications

By virtue of the contrasting traditions relating to welfare and individuation, one would expect *religious* or observant Jews to be more liberal on both welfare and civil libertarian issues than *religious* or practicing Christians. A 1988 national survey sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and analyzed by Steven M. Cohen provides data permitting such comparisons.⁴⁸ As indicated in Table 1, of Jews who attend synagogue weekly, 47 percent strongly endorse liberal tax and spending policies (welfare), compared with only 28 percent of those Christians who are weekly churchgoers. Similarly, 37 percent of such Jews return strong liberal responses on social issues (civil liberties), compared with 13 percent of their Christian counterparts.⁴⁹ Some of the difference in these and the previous figures is undoubtedly due to the influence of other variables; for example, relatively few Jews live in the South, a regional stronghold of political and social conservatism. Still, it has been seen how

other studies demonstrate that differential Jewish liberalism persists after such demographic factors are controlled. So it seems safe to assume that adjusting for demographic factors might reduce the percentage differences here between observant Jews and practicing Christians, but would not eliminate them.

A second empirical expectation follows from the different consequences of modernization on the traditional Jewish institutions of welfare support and of individuation. Welfarism has persisted in modern Western Jewish communities, albeit through transformed agencies and institutions; individuation persists within traditional Jewish religious communities and practices and assumes a new and often radicalized social base among those who "break" from the traditional life. Thus, one would expect nonobservant and observant Jews to be closer in the degree of their liberalism on welfare issues than on civil liberties. Again, this is borne out in Table 1.⁵⁰

Among those who return highly liberal responses on tax and spending policies, the range of difference between those who attend synagogue weekly (47 percent) and those who attend less frequently is no more than 8 percentage points. When the comparison is made with those who attend synagogue 5–10 times yearly, this difference drops to 3 percentage points, and to virtually no difference at all when compared to those who attend synagogue four or fewer times a year. In stark contrast, among those who return highly liberal responses on social issues, the range of difference between the weekly synagogue-goers and the others is as much as 29 percentage points. Moreover, whatever level of attendance is compared, the difference is never less than 18 percentage points.⁵¹ On civil liberties specifically related to church-state separation, the contrast is less dramatic but still present. The difference between weekly synagogue attenders and the less frequent attenders ranges between a low of 8 percentage points and a high of 16 percentage points.

Though markedly less liberal than Jews, gentiles exhibit similar ratios on these indicators. The difference between weekly churchgoers and less frequent attenders ranges between zero and 8 percentage points on tax and spending policies; 13 and 26 percentage points on social issues; and 9 and 27 percentage points on church-state separation. The common factor in the similar patterns among Jewish and Christian responses is probably attributable to the individualism bound up with breaking from religious tradition. Whatever the reason for the similarity among practicing and nonpracticing Christians on economic-welfare policy,⁵² the dramatic variation evident on social issues and civil liberties most likely reflects the oft-noted conservatizing effects—valuational and sociological—of religious commitment.

To sum up, the content of traditional Jewish political culture (welfarism and individuation) and the deauthorization of that culture over its members ("individualism") are plausible bases of three aspects of the Jewish commitment to liberal politics: 1) the disproportionate commitment of religiously observant Jews to welfare legislation and civil liberties relative to religiously practicing Christians; 2) the greater similarity between observant and less- or nonobservant Jews on economic-welfare questions than on civil liberties; and 3) the disproportionate commitment of nonobservant Jews to economic-welfare liberalism compared with other white ethnoreligious groups and Americans as a whole. Still outstanding is the question of

the disproportionate commitment of specifically nonobservant Jews to civil liberties compared with members of other white ethnoreligious groups.

Jews Confronting Jewish Authority

Why are nonobservant American Jews generally so liberal on civil liberties as compared to their nonreligious counterparts in other ethnoreligious groups? Indeed, of the four policy areas—economic-welfare, civil rights, civil liberties, and foreign policy—the ideological distance between nonreligious Jews and gentiles tends to be greatest on civil liberties.⁵³ Might this be linked to the finding that nonobservant Jews are typically more civil libertarian than observant Jews?

Among ethnoreligious groups, religious adherence is generally found to be inversely related to political liberalism.⁵⁴ The traditional content of religious values, and the emergent social pressures to defend and advance these values, tend to push the religiously committed toward politically conservative postures. Such factors, however, only address the question of the observed political differences among Jews of varying religiosity; they do not obviously explain the differential civil libertarianism of nonobservant Jews compared to members of other ethnoreligious groups who are not religious. The proposal here is that there is another, crucial dimension at work in the sociological account: a political dimension, as it were, overlaying the sociological one.

Judaism is a commanding and demanding tradition. Hence, modern Jews who continue to identify with the Jewish community and Judaism but who resist the demands for increased involvement of the former, and the commands for observance of the latter, are effectively living out a liberal relationship to their community and tradition. Well before Jews achieve electoral age, the majority of them already know what it means to stake claims of personal or familial independence and autonomy from the encroachments of authority. Because this resistance is an act in which limits are set on the authority of tradition and community to govern individual lives, it is quintessentially a political relationship. And, it is suggested, this has a political effect concerning the pronounced Jewish endorsement of civil liberties.

As it happens, Michael Walzer has come close to this argument by going beyond it.⁵⁵ Walzer contends that the Jewish “commitment to civil rights and civil liberties, to individualism and pluralism,” derives not only from the fact that diaspora Jews are a “vulnerable minority” but also from the fact that they are a “divided minority.” So the “liberal state doesn’t protect us only against coercion by non-Jews. . . . It also protects us against coercion by other Jews, against the community itself.”⁵⁶ This, however, seems to conflate the consequences of liberal politics with their (Jewish) motivation. Protection against coercion by other Jews certainly follows from the enactment of liberal politics, but it is not clear that this fear of Jewish coercion is what lies behind the Jewish commitment to civil rights and civil liberties.

There are many explanations beyond the scope of this essay of why Jews may not recognize the authority of Jewish tradition and community over their lives. What is crucial for the present argument is that limits are set on Jewish authority and are

effectively maintained through an ongoing process of choice. "Modernity," Peter Berger has written, "is a near-inconceivable expansion of the area of human life open to choices." And scholars have stressed how, in the situation of modernity, "loyalty to tradition [is] the result of a conscious decision."⁵⁷ But failing to abide by one's religious heritage is no less a decision. In a secular age, it may be a decision easier to make or maintain. In the case of most American Jews, religion may be pushed to the background of their lives. For all that, the weight of Judaism is always there, imposing in its commands and demands, existing to be followed. At certain times, such as Passover, Hanukah, and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; on certain occasions, such as circumcision, bar mitzvah and under the *hupa*, the Jewish wedding canopy—times and occasions that most American Jews still observe—the tradition looms even larger and the choice not more fully to observe it has to be made and remade. Disproportionate Jewish civil libertarianism emerges, then, not because the liberal state ensures the circumscription of Jewish authority, though this it surely does. It emerges because Jews, in circumscribing Jewish authority, are schooled in a liberal politics of limiting authority in general.

Two kinds of evidence are necessary if the political resistance thesis is to be sustained as a partial account of the disproportionate liberalism of American Jews. First, it must be shown that active resistance is involved among those who distance themselves, or are distanced, from their religious heritage. And second, evidence needs to be offered that American Jews are more active resisters in this respect than are people of other religious backgrounds.

Evidence of the first kind may be drawn indirectly from a recent study of the political consequences of disaffiliation and desacralization among Catholics and Protestants in the United States.⁵⁸ The study, carried out by Lynn D. Nelson, drew on eleven National Opinion Research Center (NORC) General Social Surveys conducted between 1973 and 1985 and included, all told, 16,844 respondents. The measure for disaffiliation was level of attendance at religious services, and for desacralization the belief or nonbelief in an afterlife or "a life after death."⁵⁹

Relevant aspects of Nelson's data are reproduced in Table 2. While American Jews as a group are more comparable to church members than to the uninvolved groups, the tables serve the purpose here in another respect. Since the proposed hypothesis is that resistance is involved in rejecting aspects of religious involvement—and that this experience cultivates support for civil liberties or the nonintrusion of government in areas of individual or private concern—the main interest in the tables is that they distinguish between the "unchurched" (those "with no childhood or current church preference") and "dropouts" (those "who were reared in a Christian church but claimed no church preference at the time of the interview").⁶⁰ This enables the effect of nonreligiosity as such to be compared with the effect of disaffiliation (or nonreligiosity in interaction with religious background). The relevant dependent variables are those that actually or potentially touch on civil liberties; namely, political liberalism, marijuana legalization, and abortion.

"Political liberalism" taps the degree of self-identification with liberal as opposed to conservative political views.⁶¹ In this sense, dropouts are significantly more politically liberal than the unchurched at their common minimal attendance level. As Nelson acknowledges, these "results suggest that disaffiliating has somewhat

Table 2 Unstandardized Regression Coefficients, with Sociodemographic Variables Controlled
(Independent Variables Standardized on Dropouts)

Dependent Variables and Attendance Rates	Church Preference							Uninvolved	
	Catholic	Liberal Protestant	Mainstream Protestant	Conserv. Protestant	Cultlike/ Pentecostal	Dropouts	Unchurched		
Political Liberalism									
Attend weekly	-.629*	-.811*	-.814*	-.955*	-.980*				
Attend intermit.	-.544*	-.617*	-.634*	-.711*	-.846*				
Attend rarely	-.486*	-.590*	-.556*	-.609*	-.363*	.000			-.320*
Marijuana legislation									
Attend weekly	-.304*	-.323*	-.307*	-.343*	-.413*				
Attend intermit.	-.225*	-.296*	-.254*	-.266*	-.266*				
Attend rarely	-.166*	-.194*	-.174*	-.179*	-.232*	.000			-.030
Abortion index									
Attend weekly	-2.330*	-.789*	-1.276*	-1.577*	-2.491*				
Attend intermit.	-1.108*	-.248*	-.550*	-.818*	-1.499*				
Attend rarely	-.593*	-.274*	-.292*	-.580*	-.741*	.000			-.195

different implications for political values than simply remaining unchurched after a childhood of religious noninvolvement.”⁶² To be sure, because the measure is one of self-identification with labels, there is no direct way of knowing how much these responses reflect attitudes on civil liberties as against civil rights, economic-welfare, foreign policy, and perhaps other concerns. However, some inferences to this effect can be drawn from some of the other data.

While the unchurched are significantly less “politically liberal” in self-identification than dropouts, they are significantly more liberal on the question of military spending. Given the opposing “direction” of these responses relative to the standard (dropouts), it seems a reasonable inference that civil liberties issues figure prominently in people’s associations with the liberal-conservative terminology. This much is supported by the direction of the responses on the two civil liberties issues that are directly canvassed. Both on the abortion index and on the question of marijuana legalization, the unchurched occupy a less liberal position than the dropouts, although the differences do not have statistical significance.

The political effect of actively resisting religious traditions may help explain some observed trends among “dropout” and identifying Jews. In a study of the professoriat conducted by Seymour Martin Lipset and Everett Carl Ladd, faculty who were raised Jewish but professed no present religious affiliation tended to be more liberal, on various indices, than even nonreligious Jewish faculty (both groups were more liberal than their Christian counterparts).⁶³ And among identifying Jews, researchers of American Jewish political behavior have noted that the general inverse relationship between religiosity and political liberalism is often irregular. Table 1 shows, for example, that Jews who attend synagogue 2–3 times monthly are not only more liberal in their support of church-state separation than weekly attenders (93 percent to 77 percent), but are also more liberal than those who attend 5–10 times yearly (88 percent), 1–4 times yearly (85 percent), or who never attend (86 percent). In such cases, it is possible that a relatively high level of observance, and hence proximity to Jewish tradition and communal life, is precisely what sharpens the sense of setting limits to religious observance and involvement at all. Observant Jews, after all, appear to “know full well what is expected of the Orthodox Jew” and by how much they might fall short: researchers have found a high correspondence between how observant Jews classify their own degree of observance and how they would be classified according to ritual indicators.⁶⁴

Table 3 further illustrates the curvilinear relationship between religiosity and political liberalism among Jews.⁶⁵ Those Jews who have little or no Jewish communal involvement and religious adherence tend to be less, not more, politically liberal than Jews who have “minimal” or “moderate” involvement in these respects.⁶⁶

If the present argument is correct, secular Jews may be somewhat more conservative than more “ritually active” Jews not, or not only, because they are more assimilated to the more conservative American political mainstream,⁶⁷ but also because they are so far removed from the commands of their religious tradition and the demands of the Jewish community that their politics lack this dimension of resistance. Yet, unlike the “raised Jewish, but now ‘noness’” referred to above, secular Jews are not in the position of denying a Jewish identity, either.

Table 3 Public Opinion Questions by Ritual Observance Scale (in percent)

Ritual Observance	Secular	Minimal	Moderate	Observant
Presidential Preference (1980 election)				
Anderson	9	18	23	23
Carter	43	47	33	24
Reagan	44	30	42	50
Other	4	4	2	3
	100	100	100	100
Political Orientation (self-described)				
liberal (and radical)	36	40	26	25
moderate	39	48	54	48
conservative (and very conservative)	24	12	20	27
	100	100	100	100
Liberal Opinions				
defense spending	42	49	40	44
social spending	54	58	56	51
affirmative action	45	59	59	49
quotas	17	23	13	21
ERA	68	80	69	62
death penalty	19	23	12	16
homosexual teachers	57	74	70	57
busing	26	26	14	22
abortions	42	60	49	41
immigration	12	16	12	8
Party				
Democratic	45	70	67	69
Republican	24	7	12	12
Independent; other	31	23	21	19
N =	107	277	167	122

Source: Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York: 1983), 145. Reprinted by permission of Tavistock Publications (Routledge).

Who, then, are the more politically liberal Jews on the religiosity dimension? Further data reported by Steven M. Cohen offer some insight.⁶⁸ As judged by the forms and frequencies of religious observance, and as confirmed by self-descriptions, the most liberal Jews tend to come from the ranks of the Reform and Conservative wings of contemporary Judaism. Of the two most politically liberal groups on the ritual observance scale, “minimalists” and “moderates,” Cohen found that almost 60 percent of the former and more than 80 percent of the latter identify as Reform or Conservative. A large minority of minimalists (39 percent), however, does not identify with any of the main denominations. While there may be no surprise in these various categories of Jews tending to be more politically liberal than the Orthodox, the present task has been to explain the curvilinear pattern in Jewish liberal propensities across all levels of religious observance and affiliation. Again, we must bear in mind findings suggesting that, among “dropout” Christians and, arguably, “dropout” Jews, resistance against religious background enhances liberal values beyond mere secularity. In the case of identifying Jews, the social

condition of being both within the ambit of religious tradition and at the same time denying much of its authority, may well be the comparable spur to civil libertarianism.

But if the dynamic is a general one, there still remains the question why American Jews, in particular, should be so civil libertarian. To some extent, this question was addressed in passing when it was observed that, compared with Christianity, Judaism makes far more religious demands on its adherents. On the traditional reckoning, there are 613 commandments to be observed that govern every aspect of life, from what to eat and wear to sexual relations. In actuality, there are many more than this number, and they regulate the individual's personal and social life during every waking hour of the day. At the same time, Jewish communal life asserts its own demands on the communal members' time and energy, from organizational participation and communal activities to charitable giving. True, a demanding religious tradition does not necessarily bring forth resistance—but if this theory of disproportionate liberalism is correct, there should be evidence that American Jews, both on their own terms and in comparison with other groups, resist their religious tradition to a large and exceptional degree.

On its own terms, American Jewry is overwhelmingly irreligious. Less than 10 percent of American Jews identify as Orthodox; of the remainder, Conservative Judaism accounts for 35 percent, Reform for 38 percent, and about 20 percent report that they are "other" or "just Jewish."⁶⁹ Concerning ritual observance, the three holiday seasons of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Passover, and Hanukah are widely observed (though whether in a religious rather than a social sense is questionable). However, a host of prescribed religious practices, some of them quite central to traditional Judaism, are ignored by the vast majority of American Jews. For example, only about 18 percent of American Jews report "always" or "sometimes" using separate sets of dishes for meat and dairy products; about one fifth report regularly lighting Sabbath candles on Friday evenings. Almost 50 percent of American Jews neglect to affix a single mezuzah in their homes, while attendance at synagogue services exclusive of the High Holy Days is claimed by about one third only.⁷⁰ A minute fraction of American Jewish males wear yarmulkes (or some other religious head covering) in public or, for that matter, in private; only a fraction, too, observe the injunction to wear *zizit* (a fringed garment). Indeed, considerably more American Jews observe a non-Jewish "religious" custom: some 25 percent always or usually erect a Christmas tree during the festival.

The relative nonreligiosity of American Jews based on the traditional dictates of Judaism is accentuated when they are compared with other American ethnoreligious groups. Comparisons with Protestants of British, Scandinavian, German, Irish and other extractions; with Catholics of Irish, German, Slavic, Italian, French, and Hispanic extractions; and with blacks, reveal American Jews to be the most irreligious group on virtually every measure of religiosity surveyed.⁷¹ A few examples are worth highlighting.

The proportion of Protestants, Catholics and blacks who report attending church services two or more times a month exceeds that of Jews reporting similar synagogue attendance by a margin of more than four to one.⁷² Daily prayer is observed between five and seven times more extensively among Protestants, Catholics and

blacks than it is among Jews. The proportion of Jews believing in "life after death" ranges between one fourth and one third that of the other groups.⁷³ On one religious measure, however, Jews are found to be the highest scorers. American Jews are twice more certain than Irish Catholics of their religious convictions, and are considerably more certain than the other ethnic denominations. Most American Jews, it seems, may not extensively observe religious practices or hold religious convictions, but they are sure of them.

What has been identified as "active resistance" to religion appears to be a key factor, then, mediating political liberalism. Comparative data indicate that disaffiliating from religious involvement enhances civil libertarianism beyond the valuational and sociological effects of nonreligiosity. Something in the experience of knowing or feeling the weight of religious demands but personally electing not to follow them seems to be the basis of this effect. Political resistance against authority, it has been argued, is the best way of describing and understanding this relationship. In the case of American Jews, the liberal effects associated with this resistance appear to be especially pronounced for two reasons. First, the emphasis on ritual in Judaism means that a far greater number and range of religious duties is incumbent upon Jews as compared with practicing Christians (whose religion attributes central importance to doctrine). If observing the many rituals and regulations implies a burden, so does not or only partially observing them. Second, to a striking extent, whether judged by the tradition itself or by the comparison with other ethnoreligious groups, American Jews only partially observe their religion.

Conclusion

Most American Jews are simultaneously party to inherited Jewish traditions and resistant to them, which together account for the various aspects of disproportionate American Jewish liberalism. At the heart of this account is a conception of the Jewish community as a quasi-body politic. Unquestionably more integrated and authoritative in their traditional form, modern and contemporary Jewish communities nonetheless retain significant political cohesiveness both through their institutions of governance, distribution and participation, and through at least the claims to authority of their shared religion. Dynamics associated with the continuing influence of these institutions (welfarism and individuation), and tensions in the relationship to religion and community (individualism and resistance to authority), are what underscore the disproportionate liberalism of American Jews.

By definition, any theory that, like the Jewish body politic model, accords explanatory significance to factors associated with Jewish community and religion must extend beyond the specific case of American Jewry. In fact, a left-liberal political orientation has, beyond a certain juncture, been characteristic of Jews in modern Western and Central Europe, and of Jews in many countries to which they subsequently immigrated.⁷⁴ To be sure, not every Jewish community in every country has always displayed predominantly liberal political attitudes and allegiances (insofar as they were able to be political actors at all). Nonetheless, the predominant liberalism of Jews has been amply demonstrated, such that the question may legit-

imately be posed, not why American Jews typically are so liberal in their politics, but rather why certain communities of Jews, including some American Jews, are *not* so liberal. Since the Jewish body politic model posits that modern Jews are both culturally and existentially political liberals, it suggests that inquiry be focused on the conditions overwhelming or undermining these liberal propensities.

Notes

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1. See Wesley and Beverly Allinsmith, "Religious Affiliation and Politico-Economic Attitude: A Study of Eight Major U.S. Religious Groups," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (Fall 1948), 377–389; Bernard Berelson, *et al.*, *Voting* (Chicago: 1954), 64–71; Angus Campbell, *et al.*, *The American Voter* (New York: 1960), 159, 301, 306; Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York: 1983), 139–143; *idem.*, *The Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism* (New York: 1989); Alan M. Fisher, "Continuity and Erosion of Jewish Liberalism," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (December 1976), 322–348; *idem.*, "Realignment of the Jewish Vote?" *Political Science Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (Spring 1979), 97–116; Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (Glencoe, Ill.: 1956), 71–111; Norman H. Nie, *et al.*, *The Changing American Voter* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: 1979 [1976]), 75, 214, 256–258, 383–385.

2. See George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion: American Faith in the 90's* (New York and London: 1989), 92–131; Seymour Martin Lipset, "A Unique People in an Exceptional Country," in *American Pluralism and the Jewish Community*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset (New Brunswick and London: 1990), 3–4.

3. Allinsmith, "Religious Affiliation and Politico-Economic Attitude"; Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 140–141; *idem.*, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 24–25, 43–46; Fisher, "Continuity and Erosion of Jewish Liberalism" 322–348; Fuchs, *Political Behavior of American Jews*, 103–109; Everett Carll Ladd, Jr. "Jewish Life in the United States: Social and Political Values," in *Jewish Life in the United States: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, ed. Joseph B. Gittler (New York: 1981), esp. 152–171; Gerhard Lenski, *The Religious Factor: A Sociological Study of Religion's Impact on Politics, Economics, and Family Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: 1963 [1961]), 135–153; Samuel A. Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties: A Cross-Section of the Nation Speaks Its Mind* (Garden City, N.Y.: 1955), 143.

4. Cohen, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 25, 43–46; Ladd, "Jewish Life in the United States," 55–56, 58; Lenski, *Religious Factor*, 135–153; Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: 1992), 84–92.

5. Cohen, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 44, 48; Fisher, "Continuity and Erosion," 338–42; Fuchs, *Political Behavior of American Jews*, 100–103; Allen D. Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity* (Knoxville: 1988), 129–137; Ladd, "Jewish Life in the United States," 160–161. It is important to stress that American Jews are not always comparatively liberal on every issue. Jews have resembled other Americans on the questions of the death penalty, affirmative action and defense spending (see Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 140–141, 143; *idem.*, *The 1984 National Survey of American Jews: Political and Social Outlooks* [New York: 1984], 10; *idem.*, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 43).

6. Fisher, "Continuity and Erosion," 346–347; Ladd, "Jewish Life in the United States," 154.
7. Cohen, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 39. Using data from the 1985–1989 General Social Surveys, Wald found Jews more liberal than black Protestants in ideological identification (*Religion and Politics*, 82).
8. See Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 76; Sidney Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry: Insights from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey," *American Jewish Year Book 1992*, vol. 92, ed. David Singer (New York and Philadelphia: 1992), 99–101, 110–116.
9. Paul R. Abramson, et al., *Change and Continuity in the 1988 Elections* (Washington, D.C.: 1991), 138–142; Alan M. Fisher, "The Jewish Voter in 1982: A Good Look, A Good Predictor," *Jewish Social Studies* 47, nos. 3–4 (summer-fall 1985), 292; Harold W. Stanley and Richard G. Niemi, *Vital Statistics on American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: 1994), 107.
10. See Allin Smith, "Religious Affiliation and Politico-Economic Attitude"; Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 143–150; *idem.*, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 52–60; Ladd, "Jewish Life in the United States," 153–171; William Schneider, et al., "Bloc Voting Reconsidered: 'Is There a Jewish Vote?'" *Ethnicity* 1, no. 4 (December 1974), 345–392; Allen S. Maller, "Class Factors in the Jewish Vote," *Jewish Social Studies* 39, nos. 1–2 (winter-spring 1977), 159–162; Lee Sigelman, "'If You Prick Us, Do We Not Bleed? If You Tickle Us, Do We Not Laugh?' Jews and Pocketbook Voting," *Journal of Politics* 53, no. 4 (November 1991), 977–992.
11. Cohen, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 52–59; Seymour Martin Lipset, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution: Change and Persistence in Social Structure* (Garden City, N.Y.: 1970 [1963]), 342–343; Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 94–97. Though Jews, as a group, obtain upper-middle class rank, there remains a sizeable group of Jewish poor (see Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, n. 9, 187). The comparison of lower-income cohorts is thus possible.
12. Seymour Martin Lipset and Everett Carl Ladd, Jr., "Jewish Academics in the United States: Their Achievements, Culture and Politics," in *American Jewish Year Book 1971*, eds. Morris Fine and Milton Himmelfarb, vol. 72 (Philadelphia: 1971), 110–120; Robert Lerner, et al., "Marginality and Liberalism Among Jewish Elites," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (fall 1989), 330–352.
13. See Tom W. Smith, *Jewish Attitudes Toward Blacks and Race Relations* (New York: 1990), 10–12, 24; John L. Sullivan, et al., "The Sources of Political Tolerance: A Multivariate Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 75, no. 1 (March 1981), 92–106.
14. The same applies to Jewish voting behavior. See Robert S. Erikson, et al., "Group Components of the Presidential Vote, 1952–1984," *Journal of Politics* 51, no. 2 (May 1989), 337–345; Lerner, et al., "Marginality and Liberalism"; Wald, *Religion and Politics*, 94–97. Using data from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (in which ideological self-identification is the sole measure of political liberalism) and linear structural relations analysis (LISREL), a recent study finds that the effects of socioeconomic variables on Jewish liberalism are small compared with those of religious practice and communal involvement. See Jerome S. Legge, Jr. "Explaining Jewish Liberalism in the U.S.: An Exploration of Socio-Economic, Religious, and Communal Living Variables." Paper delivered at the World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1993.
15. Foreign policy may constitute a third area of fundamental commitment, albeit one not clearly comparable to the ideological divide on domestic issues. This article will focus on the domestic environment.
16. Samuel C. Heilman and Steven M. Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials: Modern Orthodox Jews in America* (Chicago and London: 1989), 160 (emphasis added). Drawing comparisons with the American center—a statistical median or mode point based on the national population as a whole—simply focuses attention on precisely those kinds of social and economic characteristics in which Jews diverge from the national profile.
17. These figures were derived using the "estimate and subtract" method expounded by Charles S. Reichardt and Harry F. Gollob ("Ruling Out Threats to Validity," *Evaluation*

Review 13, no. 1, Feb. 1989, 3–17). The effect of social and economic characteristics on the proportions of American Jewish liberalism were estimated by applying the regression coefficients reported by Lerner, *et al.* ("Marginality and Liberalism," 346), in their multivariate analysis of Jewish elites, to the 15–25 percentage point range of differential American Jewish liberalism cited by Heilman and Cohen (see note above).

18. "New class" explanations of American Jewish liberalism are advanced, in part, in Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 137–138; *idem*, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*; and Ladd, "Jewish Life in the United States," 123–171.

19. Charles S. Liebman and Steven M. Cohen, *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences* (New Haven and London: 1990), 113–114.

20. Charles S. Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew* (Philadelphia: 1973), 135–159; Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 134–153; *idem*, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 34–36; Lerner, *et al.*, "Marginality and Liberalism," 347–348.

21. Peter Y. Medding, "Towards a General Theory of Jewish Political Interests and Behaviour," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 19, no. 2 (Dec. 1977), 115–144.

22. Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: 1976), 623. See also William Spinrad, "Explaining American-Jewish Liberalism: Another Attempt," *Contemporary Jewry* 11, no. 1 (spring 1990), 107–119.

23. Fuchs, *Political Behavior of American Jews*, 171–203.

24. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge: 1970), xxiii, xxxi–xlii. Liebman has more recently acknowledged the impact of American pluralism in his *Deceptive Images: Toward a Redefinition of American Judaism* (New Brunswick and Oxford: 1988), where he notes that "American Jews feel more secure today than they did in the past" (p. 85).

25. Arthur Liebman, *Jews and the Left* (New York: 1979), 1, 46, 52; Rodney Stark and Kevin J. Christiano, "Support for the American Left, 1920–1924: The Opiate Thesis Reconsidered," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31, no. 1 (1992), 62–75.

26. The same point holds true for the attribution of Jewish liberalism to the "communalism" of the East European Jewish immigrants, given its implied stress on shared values. See Henry J. Feingold, "American Liberalism and Jewish Response," *Contemporary Jewry* 9, no. 1 (fall/winter 1987/88), 19–45. While Howe's "socialism" and Feingold's "communalism" arguments may relate to the welfare dimension of Jewish liberalism, both underplay the extent to which Jewish welfarism predates the East European immigrant subculture.

27. As Schneider, *et al.* put it, by the late 1960s, "liberalism, to many Jews, now seemed to offer racial confrontation, economic insecurity, quotas, and a questionable commitment to Israeli security" ("Bloc Voting Reconsidered," 346). For data on Jewish attitudes, see Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 140–143.

28. See Liebman, *Ambivalent American Jew*, 140, who is repeatedly cited on this point.

29. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 143–147; *idem*, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 58; Liebman, *Ambivalent American Jew*, 142–144; Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, 160–173.

30. For a discussion of the theoretical literature and its problems, see Geoffrey Brahm Levey, "The Liberalism of American Jews: Has it Been Explained?" *British Journal of Political Science* (forthcoming).

31. Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: 1983), 68.

32. Lipset suggests that *zedekah* not be viewed as a religious value at all but rather as a particular adaptive strategy of Jews in the Middle Ages ("Unique People," 19). In correspondence with the author, he also points out that this form of traditional Jewish welfarism is "not found among Iranian, Iraqi or North African Jews living in the U.S. or elsewhere" (Lipset to Levey, 15 October 1991). For a description of welfare institutions and practices of traditional Jewish communities, see Salo W. Baron, *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: 1942), 290–350; and Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772–1844* (New York: 1970), chs. 11, 12.

33. Edgar Litt, *Beyond Pluralism: Ethnic Politics in America* (Glenview, Ill.: 1970), 119.

34. These comparisons are based on figures given in Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 56–57, 62, 72, 88, 91, 94; Arnold Dashevsky, “Sources of Jewish Charitable Giving: Incentives and Barriers,” in Lipset (ed.), *American Pluralism and the Jewish Community*, 203–225; and Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, 131–136. According to Lipset, “Jews now give about the same amount to non-Jewish causes as they do to those of their own community” (“A Unique People,” 19).

35. Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: 1960), 116.

36. *Ibid.*, 116–117.

37. *Ibid.*, 156–157. Nie, *et al.* find that, while Catholics generally held left-of-center views in the 1950s, their “attitudes were by no means as homogeneously or unanimously liberal as those of either Jews or blacks” (*Changing American Voter*, 258).

38. Fisher, “Continuity and Erosion of Jewish Liberalism,” 332–333; Mary T. Hanna, *Catholics and American Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1979), 123–129, 245 (n. 32); Lenski, *Religious Factor*, 155; Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (New York: 1987), 71, 74; *idem.*, *Religion and Politics*, 2nd ed., 84.

39. See, for example, Lucian W. Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics: A Psychocultural Study of the Authority Crisis in Political Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1968), 329.

40. Herberg, *Catholic, Protestant, Jew*, 146.

41. Fisher, “Continuity and Erosion of Jewish Liberalism,” 332–338; Lenski, *Religious Factor*, 155, 160, 169; Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*, 140–155. Since the 1960s—probably as a result of the combined influences of the civil rights movement and the Ecumenical Council—both these groups have become far more liberal in the areas of civil rights and civil liberties, with Catholics now sometimes returning more liberal responses than Protestants. See Hanna, *Catholics and American Politics*, 125, 129–139; Norman Nie, *et al.*, “Political Attitudes Among American Ethnic: A Study of Perceptual Distortion,” *Ethnicity* 1, no. 4 (December 1974), 326, 334–340; Wald, *Religion and Politics* (1987), 75; (1992), 88–89.

42. For example, on the importance of individual consent, see the talmudic tractates Sota 37b, Hagigah 6a, and Zevahim 115b. On self-sufficiency, see Shabbat 63a and the mishnaic tractate Sanhedrin 4:5. On privacy, see Baba Batra 2b, 59b, 60a. On the individual’s political obligations in Jewish law, see Geoffrey B. Levey, “Judaism and the Obligation to Die for the State,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (fall 1987), 175–203.

43. See, for example, Irving A. Agus, *Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg: His Life and His Work as Sources for the Religious, Legal, and Social History of the Jews of Germany in the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: 1947), 54–124.

44. In a number of places, the Talmud explicitly states that the laws should be obeyed even in the absence of faith; see, for example, Pesahim 50b. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, 41–42, 84–87.

45. Roger Owen, “On Becoming a Jew,” *Commentary* 84 (Nov. 1987), 60–61.

46. See, for example, the many allusions to the “teachings of Judaism” made by participants in the symposium on “Liberalism and the Jews,” *Commentary* 69 (Jan. 1980).

47. Jerold S. Auerbach, “Liberalism and the Hebrew Prophets,” *Commentary* 84 (Aug. 1987), 58–60.

48. A limitation of the data is that they were not subject to multivariate analysis.

49. See also Liebman and Cohen, *Two Worlds of Judaism*, 181, n. 3.

50. Similar patterns have been found among elite Jews. See Lerner, *et al.*, “Marginality and Liberalism,” 341 (Table 6).

51. The pattern is also in evidence in earlier surveys reported by Cohen in *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 145. It should be pointed out that the comparisons are drawn between weekly synagogue attenders, on the one hand, and all other levels of attenders, on the other, on the grounds that anything less than weekly synagogue attendance already entails or implies a significant break with traditional Jewish observance. Indeed, even daily attendance at synagogue services has been found to significantly differentiate among Orthodox groups (Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, 60–61).

52. Talcott Parsons offers a possible explanation inasmuch as he argues that modern Western society culminated from a process of differentiation at a time when Christianity prevailed. Hence, many Christian ethical values are implicit in modern institutions despite their apparent "distance" from Christianity. See his article "Christianity and Modern Industrial Society," in *Religion, Culture and Society*, ed. Louis Schneider (New York: 1964), 273–298.

53. Ladd, "Jewish Life in the United States," 155–162; Lerner *et al.*, "Marginality and Liberalism," 342.

54. For a recent discussion, see Steven A. Peterson, "Church Participation and Political Participation: The Spillover Effect," *American Politics Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1992), 123–139.

55. Michael Walzer, "What Kind of State Is a Jewish State?" *Tikkun* 4 (July/Aug. 1989), 34–37, 126–128.

56. *Ibid.*, 35.

57. Peter Berger and Jacob Katz, respectively, quoted in Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, 16.

58. Lynn D. Nelson, "Disaffiliation, Desacralization, and Political Values," in *Falling from the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy*, ed. David G. Bromley (Newbury Park: 1988), 122–139.

59. This discussion will be limited to disaffiliation. Thirteen social and demographic variables were controlled in Nelson's study: sex, race, age, education, occupational prestige, income, marital status, number of children, size of place of residence, region of current residence, region of residence at age 16, size of place of residence at age 16, and family income at age 16 (see *ibid.*, 129).

60. *Ibid.*, 128.

61. The "political liberalism" question was worded as follows: "We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale?" A second version added: ". . . or haven't you thought much about this?" (*Ibid.*, 138 [n. 14]).

62. *Ibid.*, 133.

63. Ladd, "Jewish Life in the United States," 164–166.

64. Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, 56–57.

65. A variety of evidence suggests that this relationship is not a reflection of other background factors. First, the relationship remains evident in a multivariate study of Jewish elites (see Lerner, *et al.*, "Marginality and Liberalism," 338, 341), though on the unorthodox composite measures of liberalism used, it is seen on indices of "system alienation" and "collectivist liberalism" rather than on "expressive individualism"—the closest measure of civil liberties. Second, while some curvilinearity is also observed between Jewish liberalism and income (see Cohen, *Dimensions of American Jewish Liberalism*, 56), peak levels of Jewish liberalism vary with income bracket according to the dimension of liberalism in question. Third, although when analyzed by education, Jewish liberalism tends to peak among those with some graduate school experience (*ibid.*, 54), the ritual observance profile of this education cohort varies considerably from that of the more liberal Jews when analyzed by religiosity (see *idem*, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 82, 144–145). Fourth, the curvilinear pattern between religiosity and Jewish liberalism is also in evidence among an earlier generation with a somewhat different sociodemographic profile (see Joseph Zeitlin, *Disciples of the Wise: The Religious and Social Opinions of American Rabbis* [New York: 1945], 140).

66. Using NORC General Social Surveys from 1972–1975, Hanna (*Catholics and American Politics*, 121, 137) reports similar findings for white Catholics of European descent who identify as liberal. For non-southern, white Protestants, the pattern is also present but less pronounced.

67. See Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 138.

68. *Ibid.*, 144.

69. Unless otherwise indicated, for these and the following figures, see Goldstein, "Profile of American Jewry," 129–138, 170–173.

70. Figures here and in the next sentence are drawn from Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 56, 72–74; Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, 2–5 and ch. 6; and Liebman and Cohen, *Two Worlds of Judaism*, 126–127.

71. Andrew M. Greeley, "Ethnic Variations in Religious Commitment," in *The Religious Dimension: New Directions in Quantitative Research*, ed. Robert Wuthnow (New York: 1979), 113–134. Patterns of reported religiosity among American Christians have remained stable over the last several decades (see "Opinion Roundup," *Public Opinion* 11, no. 3, Sept./Oct. 1988, 24–25)—but see note below.

72. A word is in order about these—and perhaps the following—figures, given a recent study indicating that actual church attendance among American Catholics and Protestants is likely to be half of that claimed in surveys based on self-reports (C. Kirk Hadaway, *et al.*, "What the Polls Don't Show: A Closer Look at U.S. Church Attendance," *American Sociological Review*, 58, no. 6, Dec. 1993, 741–752). Clearly, even halving the cited ratios would leave Jews dramatically irreligious compared to the other groups on these measures. Of course, the figures for Jews may also suffer from this self-report inflation—though given the modesty of the figures, this seems unlikely. Indeed, the extent to which Protestants and Catholics apparently feel the need to report forms of religious commitment seems to underscore further the relative irreligiosity of Jews.

73. The contrast in religiosity between American Jews and Christians is also evident in earlier surveys. In the mid-1960s, 71 percent of Protestants and 80 percent of Catholics said they "believed in heaven." For Jews, the figure was 6 percent. See Andrew M. Greeley, *The Denominational Society: A Sociological Approach to Religion in America* (Glencoe, Ill.: 1972), 137.

74. See, for example, Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Oxford: 1983); J. A. Laponce, "Left or Centre? The Canadian Jewish Electorate, 1953–1983," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 21, no. 4 (December 1988), 691–714; Peter Y. Medding, "Factors Influencing the Voting Behaviour of Melbourne Jews," in *Jews in Australian Society*, ed. Peter Y. Medding (Melbourne: 1973); Peter Pulzer, *Jews and the German State: The Political History of a Minority, 1848–1933* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: 1992).