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sistence which, as we have seen, is not at all matched by an equal watchfulness over much more weighty aspects of Jewish Law, may be regarded as the typical minhagim of Jews coming from an Orthodox background. Inasmuch, therefore, as these practices partake of the love which Jews have always been bestowing on minhagim, they serve a very definite religious function, which must be conceded even by Jews of other ways of religious thinking.

This, indeed, may be the historic role and the raison d'être of organized Orthodoxy that, while Reform is forever exploring new avenues of "adjustment," setting little store by what has warmed the heart of the Jews in the past, Orthodoxy is "bringing up the rear," hanging on

for dear life to the minhagim in which previous generations have found an outlet for their piety, and thus maintaining our essential link with the past.

Yet we must not overlook the tacit acceptance of such disregard as is shown to the laws of sha-atnez, tzitzith and isur yichud, — to mention but a few items of the "Law of God". Of course, there are Orthodox Jews whose profession of belief is matched by their personal practice. But it will be generally conceded that they are a small minority among those who describe themselves as "Orthodox". Yet, by any meaningful definition of "Orthodoxy", they are the only Orthodox Jews. All the others, and that is the vast majority of American Orthodox Jews, differ only in de-

gree, but not in kind, from their Conservative and Reform brethren. Take, for example, the Jew who buys a suit without making sure whether that suit conforms to the law of Leviticus 19:19. This Jew may describe himself as "Orthodox", and he may observe as many of the remaining 612 commandments as he possibly can. Yet the mere fact of his refusal to submit to the law of sha-atnez indicates that he is "selective" in his religious observance. He may indeed select more mitzvot than the Conservative Jew does, and many more than the Reform Jew, but, by being "selective" he has ceased to be Orthodox. He has placed his own notions and ideas over and above the principle of absolute submission to the "Law of God." For, if that Jew really

believed in the divine authorship of this particular law, he would not grudge with the "Word of God." Where Orthodoxy is concerned with God and Torah, rather than with numbers, such a Jew would not be considered "Orthodox." It is in the nature of the denominational set-up of American Jewry that Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews try to vie with pack-ers of soap in boasting of the number of consumers. Official spokesmen of Orthodoxy are therefore men of Orthodoxy are therefore "fellow-traveller." The late Rabbi David Hoffman, one of the leaders of German Orthodoxy, seriously discusses in his Responses the question whether a Jew who transgresses the Sabbath law may be counted as one of the minyan. Only grudgingly does he answer this question in the affirmative (Melamed Leho'il, Part I, p. 288). But he adds that the pious should join only such congregations where a question of this kind could not arise in the first place. Questions of this nature hardly bother the American Orthodox Jew. This may be taken by some

to be an encouraging sign of "progress" within Orthodoxy,—on a par with the general acceptance of the English sermon and the condonation of the absence of the sheitel. But it may also indicate something else. It may indicate that the very attempt to formulate an "Orthodoxy" in Judaism was something artificial that could not do justice to the totality of Jewish religious expression in space and in time. For, let this be clearly understood, while there can be change within Orthodoxy, and Orthodoxy, as such, cannot change without ceasing to be what it is. Orthodoxy cannot remain "Orthodox" when it yields if only an inch of the ground on which it had originally taken its stand.

There may well be room in modern American Judaism for an "American Orthodoxy". But it will have to be just that, and no more. It cannot be identified with the Orthodoxy of another age and an-

other country. Attempts to effect such identifications can only lead, as we have seen, to logical absurdities. It is instructive to note that, historically speaking, Orthodoxy, as a formulated creed, arose in response to, or rather, in opposition to, the nascent Reform movement of 19th century Germany. A Samson Raphael Hirsch can only be fully understood when he is seen in relation to an Abraham Geiger, and against the background of the Napoleonic "Sanhedrin" which

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