

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Eric L. Goldstein, *Book Review Editor*

2006

Volume 9



Southern Jewish History

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Eric L. Goldstein, *Book Review Editor*

Editorial Board

Elliott Ashkenazi	Phyllis Leffler
Canter Brown, Jr.	Martin Perlmutter
Eric L. Goldstein	Marc Lee Raphael
Cheryl Greenberg	Stuart Rockoff
Scott M. Langston	Bryan Edward Stone

George R. Wilkes

Southern Jewish History is a publication of the Southern Jewish Historical Society available by subscription and a benefit of membership in the Society. The opinions and statements expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the journal or of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

Southern Jewish Historical Society OFFICERS: Sumner Levine, *President*; Scott M. Langston, *President Elect*; Marcie Cohen Ferris, *Secretary*; Bernard Wax, *Treasurer*. BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Wendy Lowe Besmann, Eric L. Goldstein, Jacqueline G. Metzel, Phyllis Leffler, Stuart Rockoff, Dale Rosengarten, Jack Rosensweig, Jim Schuyler, Phil N. Steel, Jr., Stephen J. Whitfield. EX-OFFICIO: Minette Cooper, Jay Tanenbaum.

For authors' guidelines, contributions, and all editorial matters, write to the Editor, *Southern Jewish History*, 2517 Hartford Dr., Ellenwood, GA 30294; email: Markkbauman@aol.com. The journal is interested in unpublished articles pertaining to the Jewish experience in the American South. Publishers who wish to submit books for review should email Dana Greene at greenedm@appstate.edu. For journal subscriptions and advertising, write Rachel Heimovics Braun, managing editor, 954 Stonewood Lane, Maitland, FL 32751; email: journal@jewishsouth.org; or visit www.jewishsouth.org.

Articles appearing in *Southern Jewish History* are abstracted and/or indexed in *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life*, *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, *Journal of American History*, and *Journal of Southern History*.

Southern Jewish History acknowledges with deep appreciation grants from the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation of New York and the Gale Foundation of Beaumont, Texas.

Copyright © 2006 by the Southern Jewish Historical Society.

ISSN 1521-4206

PERMISSION STATEMENT

Consent by the Southern Jewish Historical Society is given for private use of articles and images that have appeared in *Southern Jewish History*. Copying or distributing any journal, article, image, or portion thereof, for any use other than private, is forbidden without the written permission of *Southern Jewish History*. To obtain that permission, contact the editor, Mark K. Bauman, at MarkKBauman@aol.com or the managing editor, Bryan Edward Stone, at bstone@delmar.edu.

Rabbi Dr. David Marx and the Unity Club: Organized Jewish-Christian Dialogue, Liberalism, and Religious Diversity in Early Twentieth-Century Atlanta

by

George R. Wilkes

In 1900 one of the earliest interreligious organizations promoting Jewish-Christian solidarity held its initial meeting in Atlanta, Georgia.¹ The Unity Club brought a number of Atlanta's most prominent Protestant ministers together with the city's Reform rabbi, David Marx (1872–1962). Over the next twenty-four years, the meetings organized by Marx and his associates made a significant impact on city politics and society and were the subject of regular comment in the Atlanta press.² Atlanta was beset by religious and racial tensions exemplified by the race riot of 1906, the Leo Frank trial and lynching in 1915, and the revival of the Ku Klux Klan. In this atmosphere, the existence of the Unity Club was a public symbol of the possibility of inter-communal understanding and cooperation, albeit on a segregated basis.

While the Unity Club's existence was a public, political development, the club's activities also reflected the distinctive private religious, social, and political perspectives of its participants. Marx and his Protestant counterparts deliberately favored mutual Jewish-Christian understanding and friendship while advocating recognition of the differences they saw between their respective religious traditions. The Unity Club focused on regular private exchanges concerning issues of personal faith while its public activities were tied to the willingness of Protestant ministers and their congregations to join in nondenominational prayers at Marx's Reform synagogue. The club's history provides a window into the distinctive religious visions of Marx's liberal

Protestant counterparts.³ As his private diaries make clear, Marx was a pivotal member who made his mark in the club through an idealistic religious dedication. As a consequence of his dedication, he expended far more personal energy than was necessary to maintain the club's high-profile activities.

Born in New Orleans, Marx was part of the first generation of American-born Reform rabbis educated at Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati. After graduating in 1894, Marx took his first pulpit at Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1895, he was welcomed by a crowd of Christians and Jews at his next pulpit, Atlanta's Hebrew Benevolent Congregation. Marx soon became one of the state's leading Freemasons. His role in the creation of many social welfare programs in Atlanta also led him to intervene in Georgia politics. He remained at the Temple, as it was commonly known, after his formal retirement in 1946, occasionally leading services as an emeritus rabbi until his death in 1962.

Marx's extensive interfaith engagement owed much to a background that he shared with other Reform rabbis of his milieu. In Cincinnati, Marx was taught by many of the founding figures of what became known as Classical Reform, an optimistic nineteenth-century Jewish ideology that identified an ethical core to Jewish monotheism and rejected what was perceived as irrational ritual and ceremony. Classical Reform Judaism has, since its inception, been dismissed by its critics as both a misguided attempt to conform to American social norms and a misguided response to the lack of outright acceptance of Jews in American society.⁴ Nonetheless many among these two generations of American Reform rabbis—Marx's teachers and fellow students at HUC—believed that a reformed Judaism would appear the most rational religion for modern American society.⁵ This ebullient belief persisted well into the twentieth century after the optimism of previous generations of liberals had begun to fade. As late as 1921 one of Marx's closer collaborators, Rabbi M. P. Jacobson, delivered a sermon to Marx's congregation with the bold title "Judaism, the religion of the future."⁶ American Reform rabbis had publicly proclaimed as much in slightly more diplomatic language in their

Doctor David Marx.

*Rabbi of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, 1895 to 1946,
he was Rabbi Emeritus of the Temple from 1946 until his death in 1962.
(Courtesy of the Cuba Archives of The Breman Museum, Atlanta, Georgia.)*

1885 Pittsburgh Platform. While “Judaism presents the highest conception of the God idea,” they asserted that there was also a basis for cooperation with non-Jews since the spirit of modernity and that of Christianity and Islam might provide allies for the Jewish mission to establish truth, justice, and peace on earth. The messages of the Pittsburgh Platform and Classical Reform imbued in Marx through his education and the examples of his peers thus included stress on social justice and ethics as opposed to ritual observance and return to a Jewish state.⁷

By 1900, the desire to demonstrate Jewish-Christian solidarity and goodwill led to the creation of a few public initiatives in the style of the Unity Club. Service clubs offered a precedent of sorts. Since the founding of the Republic, Masonic lodges and other organizations called upon their Jewish and Christian members to place unity and common humanity ahead of doctrinal differences. In Marx’s day, commentators on the history of Jews in Georgia recalled how during the 1770s Jewish and Christian Masons in Savannah established a Union Society to agitate against British rule that, after independence, engaged in charitable activities.⁸ Religious liberals in the northeast had also established private associations by the 1890s, galvanized in particular by the experience of the interreligious assemblies at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. These comparatively *ad hoc* associations were Unitarian-led and focused on a common interest in a somewhat abstract, scientific, free, and liberal religion. The participation of some prominent Reform rabbis did not signal an attempt to discuss or encompass differences.⁹ In the northeast, Unitarians also formed unity clubs within their own congregations, and the choice of this title may at least partly reflect the role of Atlanta’s Unitarian minister in the club’s founding.¹⁰ By contrast with the initiatives of the Masons and Unitarians, however, from the onset Atlanta’s Unity Club encompassed prominent mainstream Baptists, Methodists, and Episcopalians who attempted to demonstrate respect for differences of belief as well as to underline what Jews and Christians held in common.

The following examination of the conditions in which the club prospered and declined begins with the contribution that

Marx made to Jewish-Christian relations in Atlanta. It then turns to developments outside the Jewish community that made the Unity Club and its annual union Thanksgiving service possible and that finally helped to explain its demise.

Marx's Dedication to Building Ties with Local Churches

In the course of his fifty-two years as rabbi of the Atlanta temple, Marx spoke at over thirty of the city's churches as well as to churches and seminaries in at least seven other cities in Georgia and Alabama. Men's and women's groups, Sunday schools, church dedications, inaugurations of ministers, no venue was too marginal, small, or far to accept. Churches were convenient sites for large meetings, and Marx could rely on sympathetic clergy to arrange engagements. Marx went to the larger or mainstream Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopalian congregations and to the smaller Unitarian, Universalist, Congregationalist, and Disciples of Christ churches, and also, from 1923, to Catholic institutions in Atlanta.¹¹ Varying in intensity and nature, Marx's relationships with the ministers of these churches were strengthened by the work of the Unity Club.

Marx developed some of his closest relations with churches serving the middle-class congregations situated near the Temple, both at its second site on Pryor and Richardson streets and then at its third and present site at Peachtree Road and Spring Street. A series of symbolic events in the nineteenth century had already underlined the appreciative relationship between the Protestant and Jewish congregations of Atlanta's city center: the Jewish community was welcomed for worship in the Masonic Hall during the Civil War, and prominent Christians gave prayers and sermons at the synagogue in 1875, 1877, 1880, and 1884.¹² Marx made the most of opportunities to build relations with neighboring churches, extending relations far beyond occasional and symbolic gestures. In 1903, for instance, he offered the use of the Temple building to the First Methodist Episcopal Church while they built a new edifice nearby.¹³ Neighborly relations quickly extended into a wide range of aspects of congregational and liturgical life.¹⁴ By the 1920s, Marx was welcoming local Baptist,

Episcopalian, and Methodist ministers to his pulpit, the Sunday morning Open Forum, and the Temple's section of the National Council of Jewish Women. Generally in the form of a speaker meeting, the Open Forum was initiated at the turn of the century, interrupted during World War I, and then resumed. Themes were chosen to appeal to Christians including the relationship between Jewish and Christian beliefs and practices.¹⁵ In 1930, fellow Unity Club members from four churches laid the cornerstone for the new temple edifice.¹⁶

Marx's public prominence was cherished by Jews in his community, viewing their rabbi's successes, as other Reform congregations across the country did, as evidence that as Jews they were also accepted by leading non-Jewish circles. Enough of his congregation appears to have either approved of or accepted these efforts since they tolerated the distraction from his congregational work. He was thus appreciated as an "ethnic broker" and an "ambassador to the Gentiles" in the eyes of his community.¹⁷ In a city which grew from 21,789 in 1870 to 154,837 in 1910, Jews numbered approximately 4,000 at the turn of the century. The slightly over one thousand second, third, and fourth generation German Americans who constituted Atlanta's Reform community were often anxious about their social status, particularly in the face of the wave of poor Russian Jewish immigrants who outnumbered them by approximately two to one.¹⁸

*Achieving Acceptance and Combating Antisemitism
or Pursuing a Universalist Ideology*

To what extent did Marx's evident dedication to building ties with local ministers and churches serve as a means for Marx to consolidate his own position and that of Atlanta's Jews in the city, and in what respect were they a valuable part of Marx's conception of his broader religious mission? For Steven Hertzberg, Marx's response, and his congregants' approval of Marx's Christian connections, should be assessed in the context of the lack of social contact between Atlanta's leading Jews and their Christian neighbors. The city's Jews did face a huge challenge to gain full acceptance into the Atlanta establishment.¹⁹ Indeed, the same was

true of Reform congregations across the country with rabbis for whom building better relations with local Christians was a major priority. Examples include Morris Newfield in Birmingham, Alabama, Edmund Landau in Albany, Georgia, Morris Lazaron in Baltimore, Maryland, Isaac Landman in New York City, and Henry Cohen in Galveston, Texas.²⁰

It is evident that Marx's commitment to good relations with churches in the area could benefit his congregants in several secular respects, some less clearly indicative of anxiety about antisemitism, some potentially more so. At his congregation's annual meetings, Marx frequently reported on his outside speaking engagements, suggesting in 1922 that they were cause for communal confidence and that he considered himself the congregation's "representative" on these occasions.²¹ In his addresses to Christian audiences, Marx often dealt forthrightly with Jewish perceptions and interests and did not shrink from embracing the interests of Jews in eastern Europe in spite of a reputation for condescension towards the Orthodox eastern European Jews in America whom he viewed as insufficiently acculturated.²² In late 1917, for instance, Marx spoke of the need for relief for impoverished eastern European Jews to audiences across southern Georgia, including Baptist and Methodist churches in three cities. These and other topics raised the need for a tolerant embrace of Americans with differing backgrounds and perspectives. Marx argued that, in the context of their common values, petty prejudices might eventually be marginalized.²³ His sermons and prayers at government institutions and at some of Atlanta's more well-heeled congregations, including St Luke's Episcopal Church, could also betoken a desire to encourage the acceptance of Atlanta Jewry into the local elite, while engagements at middle-class churches across town and elsewhere in Georgia could build bridges beneficial to congregants.²⁴

Although Marx's surviving speeches betray anxiety about the rise of antisemitism, they do not suggest anxiety about the fraternal ties he relied on in Atlanta. Thus, in 1922, he justified his church engagements to his congregants as an exercise in Jewish self-assertion that would inspire respect: "I know of no better

method of combating misrepresentation and misunderstanding than by disabusing the minds of men thru mingling with them in such gatherings and taking part in matters of general concern, with out [sic] sacrifice of principle, concealment of religion or the fear of being one's self and therefore, different." In 1923, he again informed his congregation that his outside engagements underlined that "The whole world is not anti-semitic or averse to fraternal relationship."²⁵

The congregation's anxiety could not have diminished following the recrudescence of antisemitism in Atlanta during and after the trial and subsequent lynching of Leo Frank in front of a large crowd in nearby Marietta in 1915. Frank, a prominent member of Atlanta's Jewish community although a New York transplant, was falsely accused of murdering a young female employee. Marx became involved in extensive efforts to have Frank acquitted. Twenty years after the lynching, Marx traveled to Marietta and addressed the First Methodist Church.²⁶ Marx spoke before the Marietta Rotary Club in 1923 and 1929. On at least two other occasions he also declined requests for talks in the town. The sermon he gave in 1935 at the First Methodist Church on the twentieth anniversary of Frank's murder was most symbolic since many prominent members of the congregation had participated in the lynching.²⁷

Threatening and isolating the Jews of Atlanta, the trauma surrounding the Frank case has prompted Eli N. Evans and Steve Oney to conclude that Marx's pursuit of strong ties with the Christian community represented the depth to which his Reform ideology committed him to assimilation into Atlanta's elite.²⁸ Thus their interpretation is a variation of Hertzberg's analysis. Although this is one possible explanation, Marx repeatedly asserted that the ties reflected his faith that human contact and religious inspiration could change hearts. As evidence of Marx's claim, he placed clear limits on what he would sanction in response to the fear of antisemitism, persistently arguing that compromise on distinctive points of a modern, rationalist Jewish identity, belief, or practice made antisemitic prejudice more and not less likely.²⁹ But again, the very insistence with which Marx sought to substantiate

*Atlanta's Hebrew Benevolent Congregation at its
second location, facing South Pryor Street at Richardson Street.
Dedicated in September 1902, the last service was held June 29, 1929.
(Courtesy of the Cuba Archives of The Breman Museum, Atlanta, Georgia.)*

such points could be understood both as showing that he believed in the power of Reform ideology to make a difference at a universal, human level and also as a response and tacit acceptance of the depth of prejudice that Jews faced in Atlanta and elsewhere in the United States.

Marx's engagement with Atlanta's African American church leaders provides further evidence of the tension between communal anxieties and the confident ideology of his fellow Reform rabbis. Marx was committed in principle to improved understanding between Atlanta's white and black communities, although within limits similar to those of his white Protestant colleagues. In 1906, after massive and violent demonstrations against blacks in

the city, Marx was appointed a founding member of the Civic League, a forum launched at a meeting held under the auspices of the Unity Club at the Temple. Designed to bring some of the city's more progressive white activists and dignitaries together with a black counterpart, the Negro League, the Civic League was founded by leading clergymen and political figures anxious that the rioting not lead to a permanent deterioration in interracial relations. Although Marx's public commitment in this area was as bold as the most outspoken of Atlanta's leading white ministerial supporters of interracial understanding, it was not more radical.³⁰ Between 1907 and 1943 he spoke at least five times at black churches, mostly in the Auburn Avenue area, whose ministers supported public dialogue with Atlanta's white liberals.³¹ A number of meetings at the Temple gave platforms for white civil rights activists from inside and outside the state, although not once does Marx's diary record a speaker from Atlanta's black community. When the Reverend Witherspoon Dodge, a prominent black colleague in the Civic League, invited the congregation to use his church during the building of a new sanctuary, the congregation declined on the ground that the church would not provide the conditions necessary for the Temple's normal Sabbath worship.³²

Marx's calendar was filled with engagements that were primarily Christian in nature. Marx was asked, for instance, to offer prayers at the Salvation Army meeting of April 20, 1921, and the Inter-Civic Council for Christmas meeting of December 18, 1921. While many of Marx's church addresses were focused on moral topics or aspects of the Jewish-Christian relationship that could have been directed at any congregation, Marx also addressed some of his audiences as Christian men and women with their own denominational history and identity. In 1906, addressing a neighboring Baptist church, he gave a sermon titled "Jew and Baptist," a topic to which he returned in 1930 when speaking to the Baptist World Alliance of the bond shared by the two communities based on support for freedom of worship and separation of church and state. Here, too, the nature of such engagements may be gauged both in terms of the religious messages which Marx presented and of the value of such appearances in strengthening

his associations with other prominent figures in the city, at the same time making an impression on their communities. Eli Evans notes that the warm receptions given by many southern churches to the charismatic rabbis who graduated from Hebrew Union College were cherished by those rabbis who threw on the image of the thundering biblical prophet which so appealed to their Christian audiences. Marx's evident enthusiasm for cultivating his profile among Christian Atlantans was mistrusted by traditionalist critics in Atlanta's Jewish community and something of their critique persists in the comments reported by Evans. There were commonly occasions noted in Marx's diary at which he spoke at a church only to introduce a new Christian minister, or at which he was otherwise playing second fiddle to another speaker. Marx also did not limit himself to symbolic appearances designed to break through barriers to communities that were beyond the normal reach of members of the Jewish community. In fact, he led prayers at churches long after he had already established close relations with both the minister and the congregation, a pattern which seems to suggest less concern for symbolic means of forging better relations than a natural consequence of the friendship he shared with his Christian counterparts. In April 1928, for instance, he joined a prayer meeting at the First Baptist Church and in 1934 at the Second Baptist Church on Ponce de Leon Avenue. Participants in meetings of the nascent National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) had to avoid joint prayer and spiritual reflection in order to maintain the trust of the Christian and Jewish organizations that were affiliated with it.³³ Thus Marx's engagement with the Christians of his neighborhood owed less to this new national movement for organized Protestant-Catholic-Jewish dialogue and more to the determined religiosity demonstrated in the intercommunal prayers of many of his colleagues in the Reform rabbinate.³⁴

The time that Marx invested in church meetings can be partially explained as a product of the friendships he formed with ministers in the Unity Club. Marx continued to speak to these small church audiences throughout his career. With more time on his hands after retirement, he spoke to more church meetings than

previously. Thus Marx's ministerial associations outstripped straightforward calculation of utility to his own rabbinical career. The social convictions and sense of religious and social mission with which he approached his church activities therefore demand closer examination.

*Special Relationships and
Marx's Universalist Intellectual Sympathies*

Marx dedicated his most consistent energy to the small Unitarian and Universalist churches of Atlanta. It was with these churches that Marx shared the greatest degree of theological and philosophical empathy.

Growing ties between Reform Jews and Unitarians from the last quarter of the nineteenth century had already prompted local communities to undertake many of the religious activities that would be seen in the Unity Club. These were undertaken notably through pulpit exchanges as well as through discussions among clergy and scholars concerning a liberal religion embodying the essence of both faiths.³⁵ Nowhere was this approach more celebrated than in the New Orleans of Marx's youth, under the tutelage of his rabbi, James K. Gutheim.³⁶

Rapprochement between Reform Judaism and Unitarian Christianity, however, had fierce critics within both movements and was the subject of heated polemics between and within the communities throughout the early twentieth century. For the critics, it mattered little that the two communities theoretically shared a belief in a liberal ethical monotheism that both defined in universal terms and that many proponents equated with the Judaism of Jesus.³⁷

In Atlanta, Marx and his Unitarian and Universalist colleagues developed friendships as sustained as those anywhere at the time. Regular pulpit exchanges developed from the turn of the century between Marx and his Unitarian and Universalist colleagues, C. A. Langston and W. McGlaughlin, and the three became founder members of the Unity Club. For Marx, the justification for contributing to the activities of other denominations was clear. As he wrote in 1907 in light of the links between communities and in

spite of the historical developments which divided them, "After the claims of denominational security have been satisfied, there is still some little that can be given those outside of the peculiar phase of denomination to which we belong."³⁸

Marx's relationship with the Unitarians and Universalists strengthened even more after the demise of the Unity Club. The membership of the Unitarian Church dwindled. In 1918 it united with the Universalist Church and the congregation was renamed the Liberal Christian Church in 1927. By that stage its continuing weakness left it without a minister. In response, Marx increased the frequency with which he gave sermons to the church and conducted burials for its members. In September 1926, according to his later recollection, he was asked whether he would "become its minister as of January 1927." His day book compiled nearer the time noted, "Declined invitation to fill pulpit Liberal Church." The Liberal Church minutes make no reference to this, noting only that Clinton Scott was unanimously elected minister.³⁹ Nevertheless, in 1929 and in 1930, years in which the Liberal Christian community had no permanent minister, Marx addressed the church's Easter services, a practice he repeated in 1936. In few other cases did Reform rabbis serve Unitarian congregations, the best known being Solomon Sonnenschein in St. Louis.⁴⁰ Marx's role was derided by Orthodox critics as indicative of his inclination towards Christianity but accepted by his own congregation. In 1933, for instance, the Temple and Liberal Christian Church held a union service, a practice no longer common in Atlanta following the demise of the Unity Club.⁴¹

Marx's universalist inclinations were given broader outlet through his position as a chaplain and Grand Master in the Free-masons (Scottish Rite), and his other activities as a chaplain in Atlanta's other service and fraternal organizations including the Shriners, Lions, Rotary Club, Kiwanis, and Elks.⁴² Marx's association with the Masons brought far greater contact with the Christian community than the Liberal Christian Church could offer. Marx's congregation was particularly keen on his Masonic ties, insisting in April 1912 that he go to the Shrine convention in Los Angeles rather than stay for Shavuot services.⁴³ A number of

colleagues from the Unity Club were also Masons and Rotary Club members. They joined their clubs in visiting Temple services or collaborating with Marx in the rituals or prayers given at club meetings, or in performing funeral rites for fellow Masons.⁴⁴

Marx impressed his congregation with the notion that his liberal universalism was not a timid response to antisemitism, but rather an outgrowth of the ebullient, optimistic faith central to Judaism. Thus, in 1922 he exhorted his congregation to identify forcefully and openly with their Jewish faith:

The answer to anti-Semitism is not more free thought but more Jewishness. The better informed and more spiritually minded the Jew is, the higher his place amongst his fellow men . . . without sacrifice of principle, concealment of religion or the fear of being one's self and therefore, different.⁴⁵

Even the Holocaust did not shake him from this emphasis on what he saw as a spiritually-grounded Judaism as witnessed by his forceful annual report of 1945:

What preserved Israel through the centuries of ghetto confinement, persecution and execration, was its prayers; its faith in God that Israel was to be His witnesses – yea suffer if need be to fulfill that mission. Israel had the dignity, the character and the humility to NOT regard itself as blameless and the world outside the sole cause of its misfortunes. It felt itself part of that world and not an alien. So Israel prayed CHOTOSI [sic] – I have sinned. The greatest enemy of Israel is not anti-Semitism. It is the loss of that inner consciousness of God's presence – the seeking to know God and to come into alignment with the universal moral oneness that pervades His creation. Gradually there will return to us many of our men who have known hell in the horrors through which they lived and fought.⁴⁶

Reform Judaism and the Social Gospel

A further key to the cohesion of the Unity Club ministers is the social teachings which Marx shared with many of his Christian colleagues. The nineteenth-century liberal optimism of Isaac Mayer Wise and the founding generation of American Reform Judaism focused primarily on religious and intellectual

*The Temple in its third and current location, c. 1950,
on Peachtree Road and Spring Street, dedicated October 16-18, 1931.
(Courtesy of the Cuba Archives of The Breman Museum, Atlanta, Georgia.)*

development at an individual level. By the 1880s, attitudes to the social problems of America's growing cities were beginning to be seen as structural or too deep to be circumvented by simply exhorting individuals to improve their station in society through moral discipline. The final paragraph of the Pittsburgh Platform thus adjured Americans to face the "problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society."⁴⁷ Many of the next generation of rabbis, Marx among the most active, recognized this to be a central part of the Jewish mission.

In Marx's day, students at Hebrew Union College were also registered for a degree at the University of Cincinnati. While there, Marx and his classmates were exposed to the new theological current, the Social Gospel, brought from northern seminaries

by Washington Gladden. Like Morris Newfield, a fellow student and lifelong friend who succeeded Marx at the pulpit in Birmingham, Alabama, Marx brought his civic commitments to his Christian colleagues almost as soon as he took up his position in Atlanta.⁴⁸

The impulse the two rabbis brought to the churches' social programming was evidently relished by some of the leading clergy of their communities. In Newfield's case, the scope for major reforming initiatives was somewhat limited by the realities of Birmingham and the businessmen who wielded influence within his congregation and similarly within the congregations of his closest Protestant acquaintances.⁴⁹ In Atlanta, Marx's social concern found a ready response from other members of the Unity Club.

The social teachings espoused by Marx and many of his fellow Unity Club members blended a moralistic opposition to political corruption, social degradation, and the stirring of tensions by racists with a consistent focus on social issues which commanded the attention of conservative moralists as well as liberals. During the Spanish-American War of 1898, Marx became a chaplain at nearby Fort McPherson, and he soon afterwards assumed the same position at the newly-built U.S. penitentiary in Atlanta. From 1899, Marx was involved in a number of child welfare initiatives as well as in municipal educational and health programs. This placed him in close and regular contact with some of the city's leading liberal Protestant ministers and, in particular, with the Reverend C. B. Wilmer, rector of St Luke's Episcopal Church, a prominent and controversial campaigner against political corruption in state government and racial strife and an ardent supporter of anti-poverty initiatives.⁵⁰ In 1904 and 1905, the Unity Club developed public interest in cooperation on social issues,⁵¹ and Wilmer and fellow Unity Club member and Unitarian minister C. A. Langston helped establish Atlanta's Associated Charities,⁵² movements with which the city's influential Evangelical Ministers' Association (EMA) refused to associate because they were insufficiently Christian.⁵³ In 1907, together with Marx and other club members, Wilmer and Langston established Ministers

for Associated Charities. The Unity Club's interventions into social affairs made it a natural partner for the mayor and governor when the city was rocked by anti-black rioting in 1906. The riots prompted the members of the Unity Club to focus attention on what one prominent Episcopalian member, C. T. Pise, called "Our Duty in the Present Crisis." Wilmer, Marx, and other club members were called upon for newspaper articles mixing social and religious commentary. Marx was thus invited to contribute a regular Sunday column to the *Atlanta Journal* in which he linked Jewish tradition with contemporary social analysis.⁵⁴ The Social Gospel gave a radical edge to the activities Marx undertook with his ministerial colleagues, although at the heart of Marx's commentary lay a stress on moderation, an approach appealing to a broad and even fairly conservative audience. In a column published in 1907, Marx summarized his view that the new social teachings underlined the insufficiency of old-fashioned moralizing: "Evils exist, crusading will not abolish them. Vices are regulated by law, not overcome. Morality is a matter of temperament, habit, training, education."⁵⁵

The responses to social and political problems soon also associated with the Civic League brought greater public attention to Marx and other Unity Club members. On the eve of World War I in Europe, Marx's group succeeded in forcing the repeal of the Bush Bill, designed to introduce Bible reading in Georgia's public schools.⁵⁶ During the war, Marx joined the executive board of the nascent Red Cross. When fire spread across Atlanta in 1917, he was placed in charge of civilian relief.

Marx's activist response to the social teachings of many liberal ministers in his day thus thrust him into the limelight, while placing him at the heart of a group of Christians who saw the need for a social liberalism that was at the same time a religious movement attempting to renew American society. The Unity Club did not make acceptance of social teaching a requirement of membership, but the charitable and political association of Marx, Wilmer, Langston, and other long-term members, dating to at least 1905–1906, made an impact on the public in the years preceding World War I and thereafter.

*The Unity Club and Motivations for Organizing
Jewish-Christian Interaction*

Marx's collaboration with Atlanta's leading Protestant clergy through the Unity Club is a clear sign of a mixture of ideological empathy, the natural development of neighborly relations, and an indication of the utility of cooperation between denominations in the flourishing, young cities of America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the members of the club were far from uniformly liberal either in theological or political terms. Moreover, such sympathies and ties existed in many cities and between many Jewish and Christian communities without leading to the establishment of a formally-organized club with a well-publicized program. In Birmingham, Alabama, Marx's colleague Rabbi Newfield created a less formal relationship with his Protestant colleagues that began as a group of friends desiring intellectual stimulation and subsequently galvanized cross-denominational support for Newfield's educational and social welfare projects.⁵⁷

The origins of the Unity Club in 1900 lay in a gathering of similar informality, with six ministers: Marx; the Unitarian and Universalist ministers, C. A. Langston and W. H. McGlaulin; one Episcopalian, C. B. Wilmer; H. Stiles Bradley of Trinity Methodist Church; A. E. Sedden, of the Christian (Disciples of Christ) church; and G. W. Bull, a Presbyterian.⁵⁸ Even as the club grew, its monthly meetings retained a social ambience, with members dining at each other's homes or marking member's departures to posts outside Atlanta with meetings held over dinner at leading Atlanta hotels. The club never sought to encompass a large number of ministers, but rather to select representatives of the mainline and more liberal denominations. Marx was always the only rabbi and the rabbis of the Orthodox congregations were excluded. In 1904 a journalist from the *Atlanta Constitution* construed the nature of the club in just such terms:

The club is composed of many of the most prominent ministers of the city, and was organized for the purpose of mutual benefits and the general good of religion. Meetings are held at regularly

appointed times at different homes in the city and interesting and instructive problems discussed.⁵⁹

Nonetheless the establishment of the Unity Club was a deliberate action since Atlanta already had the EMA. The latter also met monthly and originally encompassed ministers from the most conservative to the most liberal ends of the Protestant doctrinal spectrum. In April 1899, the EMA had changed its constitution to include a statement of Christian faith which the Unitarian and Universalist ministers felt unable to profess. Obviously the statement excluded Jews. Predictably, the Unity Club drew the opposition of the conservative members of the EMA because it included non-Christians as well as the most liberal Protestants.⁶⁰ The reestablishment of a ministerial forum including these religious liberals constituted a gesture of defiant pluralism on behalf of ministers from mainline denominations who, like Wilmer, also remained in the ministers' association. In light of this beginning, at the first meetings of the club, members delivered a series of papers elaborating on their basic beliefs and establishing the principle that each might differ in these, even while discussing their commonalities. A journalist picked up on the underlying tensions in an article written in 1902, asserting that the Unity Club "differs from the Evangelical Association of the city in that its members freely discuss church doctrines, thereby reaching a better understanding without yielding their individual views."⁶¹ The Unity Club's title, although it carried resonances of a liberal religious union that cannot have escaped its members and certainly did not escape its conservative Christian critics, was not intended to suggest doctrinal union but rather transdenominational respect and solidarity. A club which mixed dining and intellectual exchange established that respect and solidarity in a way that many other interreligious encounters could not. It implied a social acceptance that an address in a denominational forum might not. The sustained and intimate discussion promoted in the club carried with it a sense of equality as well, which symbolic appearances at churches and synagogues could not match. In an Atlanta dominated by well-to-do and middle-class Baptist and

Methodist churches, the club's Jewish and Unitarian members found many arenas in which they were seen as conspicuously different, or from which they were excluded altogether. The club thus served as both a symbol of acceptance and a refuge.

The club's most public innovation in the early years—joint Thanksgiving services, universally known at the time as “union services”—also reflected this combination of liberal religion and respect for pluralism. The concept of union services was already alive among Protestant congregations before the Civil War but with Union victory, unity and union took on new public meanings. Following President Lincoln's institution of an annual day of thanksgiving as the war ended, Protestant churches across the country began to join together for “union Thanksgiving services.” The first joint services for Protestant and Reform Jewish congregations were held in the North at the turn of the twentieth century.⁶² Atlanta's Universalist and Unitarian ministers conducted union Thanksgiving services for the first time in 1901, following their ejection from the Ministers' Association.⁶³ In 1902, the club announced its first such worship with the Temple, thanks to an invitation from Marx to conduct a joint Thanksgiving service in the congregation's new sanctuary. In a classic work on the southern Jewish experience, Eli Evans writes that this service was the achievement of which Rabbi Marx remained proudest throughout his life.⁶⁴

Club members announced to their congregations and the press that the services would be “entirely undenominational,” and that the ministers had approved of the service beforehand. Inclusiveness was a striking aspect of the union Thanksgiving services particularly since the Unity Club began in 1901 to boast fairly conservative Methodist and Baptist members. At each annual service the congregations came together to sing patriotic hymns and hear the ministers recite readings from the Scriptures that excluded the New Testament. The result, however, provided little succor to conservative critics of the club like prominent Baptist minister Dr. Len G. Broughton, who reportedly declared in a sermon after the 1903 service, “God looks with displeasure on any service which purposively leaves Christ out.”⁶⁵

*Dr. David Marx preaching from the bimah at the Temple.
The undated photograph is possibly from the early 1940s.
(Courtesy of the Cuba Archives of The Breman Museum, Atlanta, Georgia.)*

The dividing line between ministers willing and those unwilling to participate fully in club activities apparently turned around several issues besides such sectarian pluralism. Clearly, one was union with Jews and Unitarians. Members also took divergent positions on public evangelism. The scorn with which Wilmer treated instant revivals—what he considered flash-in-the-pan conversions at mass rallies—was well-known. His reaction was produced by the same social consciousness which led Marx to question the possibility of major change being affected by pure willpower.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, press reports recorded the club's involvement in Episcopal and Presbyterian-led revivals in 1903 and 1904, a period during which the inclusion of Unitarians and Universalists was still a matter of dispute. In June 1908, at the instigation of Universalist minister Dean Ellenwood, the Unity Club decided to hold its own nonsectarian "undenominational" public Sunday gospel services, or vespers, at the Casino on Ponce de Leon Avenue. How active Marx was in such affairs is unclear, although in 1917, he reportedly sat in the "Amen corner" at the revival meeting led by the well-known visiting evangelist Billy Sunday. Marx and the Unity Club also arranged public speaker meetings when the influential Unitarian Jenkin Lloyd Jones visited Atlanta in 1906.⁶⁷

The public, organized nature of club events partly reflected the position of Atlanta's clergy in the city's social and political life. The disproportionately large charitable contribution of Atlanta's Jewish community may have been a factor in the welcome received by Marx from Atlanta's Christian communities.⁶⁸ The Unity Club was not directly involved in charitable activities beyond collections for city charities associated with the Thanksgiving services.⁶⁹ However until World War I, conflict with conservatives in the EMA had implications with regard to the Associated Charities of Atlanta, which key club members supported. Broughton, the club's major critic, publicly underlined his willingness to cooperate with club members in philanthropy and good citizenship. In practice, this meant he would take money from its Unitarian and Jewish members, but the YMCA and the Tabernacle (Baptist) Infirmary, the hospital that Broughton sponsored, did not allow

Jewish, Unitarian, or Catholic board members as a provision of their constitutions.⁷⁰

The wider political significance of acts uniting Protestants and Jews was also unmistakable virtually from the beginning of the Unity Club. These activities initially only drew ministers and their congregants, but in 1904 this changed. In April, Governor Terrell gave a dinner for the club in which Mayor E. P. Howell also participated. That Thanksgiving, Terrell and Howell attended the union service at the Temple. In 1906, the year of the race riot, the Unity Club members were guests of another Democrat, Forrest Adair. Adair and the Unity Club coordinated their responses to the riot and laid groundwork for creation of the Civic League. The following month, the fifth annual Thanksgiving service drew the attendance of Terrell and Judge William Newman. In 1911, Marx gave a paper to a Unity Club dinner attended by New Jersey Governor Woodrow Wilson. Although most of its meetings were private, the club continued to invite prominent citizens to dinners as in 1913, when state Supreme Court Judge Lumpkin was invited.⁷¹

The Frank case and the war wrought change, and members struggled to continue Unity Club activities. A sense of isolation accompanying the Frank trial and lynching has been noted in much of the literature on Jewish life in Atlanta, and it is true that Marx's diary records few church appearances from then until 1921.⁷² Wilmer and other prominent Unity Club members joined Marx in his efforts to support Frank during Frank's imprisonment. The meetings of the Unity Club continued through the war, although Marx's war work in the Red Cross and civilian relief, in particular, led him in other directions. Closely associated with the religious department of the War Work Council at Camp Gordon, Marx saw that the Unity Club was publicly hosted at the camp in December 1917.⁷³

The end of the war might easily have breathed fresh life into the club's work. Across the country, the war gave military chaplains of different faiths daily experiences in cooperation, and the end of the war saw many of these ministers and rabbis return to their congregations prepared for more of the same. At precisely

the moment at which the brotherhood movement was becoming a byword for public association nationally, however, the Unity Club began to decline.

The Demise of the Unity Club

Marx last recorded that the Unity Club met in April 1924, although, according to his diary, the regular monthly meetings had been intermittent over the preceding years.⁷⁴ A number of factors brought about the end of the club and its sustained and organized approach to dialogue was not replicated in Atlanta for fifteen years.

The revival of the Ku Klux Klan changed the political environment in which Unity Club ministers met. The Klan's anti-Catholic agitation made symbolic interdenominational solidarity appear less relevant without Catholic participation, particularly when anti-Catholicism became a feature of the presidential campaigns of 1924 and 1928. In response to the latter, branches of NCCJ began to organize across the country. Often organized under the banner "Protestant-Catholic-Jew," these efforts sought to combat the prejudicial politics of the Klan and its sympathizers through demonstrations of solidarity between ministerial representatives of all three groups. One of the features of a dialogue encompassing Catholic representatives was the avoidance of joint prayer, criticized by Rome as a marker of religious "indifferentism." Although the impact of the Klan on the reluctance of ministers to organize against prejudice in Atlanta is not clear, the NCCJ model did not lead to the creation of a new forum in Atlanta until 1939. In that year the NCCJ launched a local Round Table of which Marx became a prominent member.⁷⁵

Marx did not take the lead in this new dialogue in the manner of Morris Lazaron and other Reform colleagues. Indeed his early dialogues with Catholics were more circumscribed. In December 1923, Marx first recorded an appearance at a Catholic function, an address at a banquet commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. The few entries in his diary noting engagements at Catholic venues were similarly lay functions. Atlanta's Protestant and Unitarian

communities remained Marx's key points of reference. There were, for instance, no Catholic priests involved in the ceremonies associated with the groundbreaking and opening of the new temple sanctuary in 1930 and 1931.⁷⁶

The rise of the Klan did not diminish the public nature of Marx's interwar ecumenical contacts. The dinner-and-discussion format of monthly club meetings had always competed with the other public activities of the Unity Club members, but the war and the postwar transformation of Atlanta's congregational and civic life placed new demands on their time. Some of the energies with which Marx and his colleagues approached the Unity Club were probably temporarily directed to the establishment of a Good-Will Council within the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce in 1921. Within a year, Marx became the chair of the council as well as a member of the Inter-Racial Commission appointed by the governor, activities which absorbed much of his time in the interwar years.⁷⁷

Marx's public recognition and activities provided many opportunities for interdenominational gestures of solidarity despite the lack of a fixed reference point. In 1929, for the first time, Marx was invited to address the Christian Council,⁷⁸ the successor of the EMA and a body which, particularly during the war, had gradually abandoned its earlier hostility to cooperation with non-Christian institutions and charities.⁷⁹ In 1945, marking the fiftieth year of Marx's career in Atlanta, the Christian Council provided a radio slot for Marx and held a luncheon in his honor.⁸⁰ The limitations of the EMA had spurred individuals to start the Unity Club. From wartime onward Christian Council opinions and actions had changed from those of the EMA, making the Unity Club members less distinctive. As the brotherhood movement became widely accepted across political and denominational lines on local and national levels, the moment passed in Atlanta when liberal idealism was a key factor in sustaining the will to hold organized dialogue.

Conclusions

The Unity Club was born at a time of rapid change in Atlanta. For the city's small Jewish community, the changes

exacerbated its social insecurity, an insecurity that dramatically increased with the public disturbances of 1906 and 1915. In such circumstances, the sympathy and support of Marx's congregation for the activities of the club were naturally colored by a concern to combat antisemitism and break down the community's social isolation. Without such support, Marx might well have focused entirely on less organized forms of dialogue with his Protestant counterparts, or, like other early Reform rabbis, on the Masons and other service clubs.

Many of Marx's Protestant colleagues turned to the Unity Club for equally utilitarian gains. Atlanta's Reform congregation was prominent in the city's social and charitable activities. The club gave ministers of the more liberal congregations opportunities to discuss social and political affairs in private and also provided an important vehicle for public demonstrations of solidarity against religious and political extremism. This instrumental dimension to the club's activities helps to explain the club's prominence in local political affairs as well as newspaper coverage. In the years during and after World War I, by contrast, Atlanta's main Protestant ministerial association reversed its opposition to cooperation with liberal and secular organizations, and Unity Club members began to find other outlets for social welfare work.

The Unity Club's responses to pressures from this social environment were also shaped by two diverging sets of liberal ideas without which the club's character and attraction can not be understood. The more radical of these clearly appealed to a narrower group of ministers. The club's religious and social activities provided members with opportunities to demonstrate forms of ecumenical solidarity and worship that embodied classic liberal understanding of public tolerance and moderation that were not supported by all opponents of political extremism in the city. The club's meetings were likewise trumpeted to the press as proof of the capacity to dialogue about differences in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Club discussions also revolved around shared liberal values which appear to have meant as much to Marx as the fact of social acceptance. For Marx and his Unitarian and Universalist colleagues, the club provided a forum for sharing

ideas of liberal religion that Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish conservatives rejected. This dimension of the discussions meant it was not considered a model that could encompass conservatives interested in demonstrating solidarity against intolerance. After 1918, rather than broaden the club to include Catholics or more conservative Protestants and Jews, leading members created other good-will forums and soon the Unity Club began to decline and then ceased to function.

With Unity Club members from less radically liberal congregations, Marx shared a broader understanding of the interconnection between religious, social, and political moderation, well expressed in his article of 1907 and in the alternatives to conservative religious revival meetings led by Wilmer and Ellenwood. In supporting these initiatives, Marx was choosing partners who would alienate as much as appeal to Atlanta's less tolerant social circles. While the Unity Club was consistent with an aspiration to promote acculturation and acceptance, it therefore also reflected a liberal agenda which Marx adopted without apology.

The private nature of the club also held an attraction for members, particularly since meetings were held every month for well over a decade, and in less regular and well-attended form for twice that. The paper-and-discussion format of meetings fostered in-depth and sophisticated exchanges, whereas public dialogue could provoke conflict and misunderstanding. Similar exchanges were also promoted by Marx's contemporary Reform colleagues in other cities as were the union Thanksgiving services which constituted a key feature of Unity Club cooperation. These archetypically liberal gatherings bore little relation to the focused campaigns for "brotherhood" which spread across the nation during the interwar years, although then, too, Marx and other exponents of Classical Reform constituted the leading supporters for these efforts within the Jewish community. The complex web of motivations which spurred Atlanta's Unity Club were undoubtedly particular to their times, although the optimistic liberalism guiding its broad range of intimate social activities exerted lasting impact. After 1945, Jewish-Christian joint services and study circles multiplied across the United States and Marx

was a widely-acknowledged inspiration to the initiators of these ventures. A different side of his local activities was preserved in the testimonies of Christian colleagues following the establishment of the Atlanta Roundtable of the NCCJ, when he was recurrently praised for the friendships he fostered while building bridges across the city's denominations. The Unity Club had been largely Marx's creation, and when it disappeared he built these friendships by other means.

Marx's commitment to good civic and interdenominational relations was a typical Classical Reform response to the opportunities available to Jews in his day. It was, to be sure, a response whose more radical ideological bases were soon widely criticized within the Reform Jewish community. At a practical level, however, the links built by Marx and his colleagues were recognized by succeeding generations as an achievement of continuing utility. Marx's bold approach to extending his community's social relationships has been seen as a marker of both naivety and artful leadership. The Unity Club's contribution to his early successes in this field suggests another dimension altogether. The club rose to prominence through encapsulating the common interests of a circle who shared many of his liberal ideas. It collapsed when these liberals were drawn into a wider pluralistic engagement which clashed with the universalist vision that had inspired Marx. A parallel shift convinced subsequent generations of Reform Jews that Marx's Classical Reform did not provide a sufficiently robust pluralism to combat antisemitism and thereby foster their security and broader social interests. Given this, while Marx was recognized as a path-maker he also quickly came to be seen as a man limited by his background and milieu.

N O T E S

The author is grateful to the archivists at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, and the Cuba Archives at The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta. A number of individuals gave generously of their time and advice. In particular thanks are due to Mark K. Bauman, Janice Rothschild Blumberg, David Blumenthal, Lawrence Charap, Eric L. Goldstein, Scott M. Langston, Kevin Proffitt, Charles A. Rowland, IV, Sandra and Yonnie Schwartz, and Gary P. Zola.

¹ "David Marx—Diary kept by Rabbi Marx in which he recorded conversions, funerals, weddings and other occasions at which he officiated, as well as lectures and speeches he delivered as a rabbinical student and rabbi, and other miscellaneous material, Birmingham, Ala., and Atlanta, Ga., 1887-1952" (hereafter cited as Marx diary), file SC-7862, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter cited as AJA). According to Marx's diary entries for 1911, 1913, 1914, and 1922, the club had an executive committee. According to the *Atlanta Constitution* (January 19, 1922), Universalist minister John Rowlett was secretary of the club in 1922. No records from the club have survived in Atlanta's archives. The bound diaries of David Marx preserved at the AJA represent a re-typed version of an earlier, more detailed, manuscript compiled every year or every few years. The original diary covering 1921–1930 is at the Cuba Archives of The Breman Museum, Atlanta (hereafter cited as Cuba Archives).

² *Atlanta Constitution* in particular regularly published details of the Unity Club's public events and private meetings. See, for example, "Unity Club Met Yesterday," *Atlanta Constitution*, February 17, 1905 (hereafter "Unity Club Met Yesterday").

³ The chief sources of unpublished material from Christian churches used here, including the minutes of the Protestant ministerial association, are at the Atlanta History Center. The Unitarian and Universalist church records are at the Special Collections and Pitts Theological Library at Emory University, Atlanta.

⁴ See the recollection of Marx in Janice Rothschild Blumberg, *One Voice: Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild and the Troubled South* (Macon, GA, 1985), 25.

⁵ See, for example, Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Cincinnati, 1988), 289.

⁶ "Calendar, 1921-30," entry for April 15-17, 1921, Container 15, Folder 15, Cuba Archives (hereafter cited as Calendar, 1921-30).

⁷ Pittsburgh Platform, paragraphs 1, 5, 6, in *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* (hereafter cited as CCAR Yearbook) 45 (New York, 1935): 198–200.

⁸ "A Page from Early American History," *Atlanta Journal*, May 5, 1907.

⁹ On the limited extent to which these encounters promoted a recognition of or respect for the faith and traditions of the other communities represented, see Egal Feldman, *Dual Destinies: The Jewish Encounter with Protestant America* (Urbana, IL, and Chicago, 1990).

¹⁰ Wayne B. Arnason, *Follow the Gleam: A History of the Liberal Religious Youth Movements* (Boston, 1980).

¹¹ Marx diary, December 12, 1923.

¹² "History – notes and recollections re the Temple, 1867–1935," Container 13, Folder 6, Atlanta Temple Records, Cuba Archives, and Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: 1845–1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 49, 70, 173.

¹³ Marx diary, 1903.

¹⁴ Marx and his ministerial colleagues often participated in each other's events, including cornerstone laying ceremonies and funerals. Jewish symbols also were introduced at this time on the altars of two local Disciples of Christ and Episcopal churches. Interview with Reverend Pete Dingledey at Peachtree Christian Church (opposite the Temple) conducted by author, October 22, 2004; Susan E. Leas, *Alive in Atlanta: A History of St. Luke's Church, 1864–1974* (Atlanta, 1976), 85.

¹⁵ Calendar, 1921–30, e.g. January 9, 16, March 27, November 27, December 4, 11, 1921.

¹⁶ Rabbi's Report to the Atlanta Temple Annual General Meeting, 1930, Atlanta Temple Records, Container 2, Folder 3 Annual Meetings, reports of rabbis, 1917–1949, Cuba Archives (hereafter cited as Rabbi's Report with date or year).

¹⁷ Mark K. Bauman and Arnold Shankman, "The Rabbi as Ethnic Broker: The Case of David Marx," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 2 (Spring 1983): 51–68; Janice Rothschild Blumberg, *As But a Day to A Hundred and Twenty, 1867–1986*, rev. ed. (Atlanta, 1987), 48. On the concept of ambassador to the gentiles see Malcolm H. Stern, "The Role of the Rabbi in the South," in *Turn to the South*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Waltham, MA, 1979), 21–32; Blumberg, *As But a Day*.

¹⁸ Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 35.

¹⁹ Ibid., 71–72.

²⁰ Like Marx, a close colleague, Newfield supported the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism (ACJ). See Mark Cowett, *Birmingham's Rabbi: Morris Newfield and Alabama, 1895–1940* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1986). Newfield's papers are at the AJA. Rabbi Edmund R. Landau Papers are at the Cuba Archives. Lazaron was one of the founders of the National Conference of Christians and Jews as well as a leading voice in the American Council for Judaism. His papers are at AJA. See Andrew Heinze, "Morris Lazaron," in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark. C. Carnes, XIII (New York and Oxford, 1998), 309–310. Landman was also an ACJ supporter. See Lance J. Sussman, "Towards Better Understanding: The Rise of the Interfaith Movement in America and the Role of Rabbi Isaac Landman, 1880–1946," *American Jewish Archives* 34 (April 1982): 35–51. Cohen was another ACJ supporter. See Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbis and their Work* (College Station, TX, 1999), 58–79.

²¹ Rabbi's Report, 1922.

²² Numerous entries in Calendar, 1921–30; Bauman and Shankman, "Rabbi as Ethnic Broker," 58.

²³ Marx diary, October 31, November 1, November 7, 1917; Rabbi's Report, 1922.

²⁴ Marx diary, e.g. December 16, 1897, November 21, 1900, May 7, 1906, January 1, 1912.

²⁵ Rabbi's Report, October 9, 1923.

²⁶ Marx diary, 1935.

²⁷ Calendar, 1921–30. For a history of the congregation noting some of its leading families, see Lucretia M. Hammons and Betty Carr, *A Higher Obligation: The Story of the First United Methodist Church of Marietta, Georgia* (Marietta, GA, 1983). On Marietta citizens involved in the lynching, see Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York, 2003), 513–514, 608.

²⁸ Eli N. Evans, *The provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1973), 242; Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise*, 12, and index referring to material on 613.

²⁹ Rabbi's Report, 1922.

³⁰ "Civic League Planned by Committee of Ten," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 30, 1906; David Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005).

³¹ Marx diary, July 18, 1907, June 1939, 1940, 1943, and February 1926; Calendar, 1921–30. According to the diary, he also spoke at the February 7, 1932, Colored YMCA Rosenwald Memorial Services, and at a "Negro Forum" at Wheat Street Baptist Church on April 24, 1932. His records do not suggest that he spoke at the church of fellow Atlantan, Martin Luther King, Sr., father of Martin Luther King, Jr., nor do they note whether he met prominent Atlanta academic and civil rights activist W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt) DuBois.

³² The records concerning the rejection of the offer do not provide any additional information. Rabbi's Report, 1930.

³³ Calendar, 1921–30; Marx diary, May 5, 1906, August 1930, 1934; Evans, *Provincials*, 95. See William Simpson and Ruth Weyl, *The Story of the ICCJ* (Heppenheim, Germany, 1985), 14–17 and "Pioneers in Jewish-Christian Dialogue," *SIDIC* 30:2 (1997): 5.

³⁴ For reports on some of the more prominent initiatives, see *New York Times*, June 7–8, 1897, July 1, 1901, November 27–28, 1902, April 25, 1910, November 21, 1910; Lawrence Charap, "'Accepting the Truth from Whomsoever Gives It': Jewish-Protestant Dialogue, Interfaith Alliances, and Pluralism, 1880–1910," *American Jewish History* 89 (September 2001): 261–277.

³⁵ See Benny Kraut, "Reform Judaism and the Unitarian Challenge," in *The American Jewish Experience*, ed. Jonathan Sarna (New York, 1986), 89–96.

³⁶ Scott M. Langston, "Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," *Southern Jewish History* 3 (2000): 83–124; Langston, "James K. Gutheim as Southern Reform Rabbi, Community Leader, and Symbol," *Southern Jewish History* 5 (2002): 69–102.

³⁷ The polemic in Reform sermons on Unitarianism is treated in Kraut, "Reform Judaism and the Unitarian Challenge," 92–96.

³⁸ David Marx, "Orphan's Day," *Atlanta Journal*, September 30, 1907.

³⁹ Marx diary, September 12, 1926; Calendar, 1921–30; board of trustees' minutes, Liberal Christian Church, September 16, 1926, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta Papers, RG 26, Folder 3, Pitts Theological Library, Emory University.

⁴⁰ Marx diary; Benny Kraut, "A Unitarian Rabbi? The Case of Solomon Sonnenschein," in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, ed. Todd Endelmann (Tearneck, NJ, 1987), 272–308;

Dana E. Kaplan, "Rabbi Samuel Freuder as a Christian Missionary: American Protestant Premillennialism and an Apostate Returner, 1891–1924," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 50 (1998): 70.

⁴¹ For comments by Orthodox critics, see Evans, *Provincials*, 243.

⁴² Notes on his engagements for these clubs are scattered throughout Marx's diaries. See, for example, diary entries for December 7, 1902, July 4, 1903, on multiple occasions in 1923 and 1941, and multiple entries for each of the years covered in the Calendar, 1921–1930.

⁴³ April 24, 1912, Atlanta Hebrew Benevolent Congregation records, "History – notes and recollections re the Temple, 1867–1935," Container 13, Folder 6, Cuba Archives.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Rabbi's Report, 1922.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Rabbi's Report, 1945.

⁴⁷ Pittsburgh Platform, paragraph 8, CCAR *Yearbook* 45 (1935): 198–200.

⁴⁸ For Gladden's impact on Jewish students, see Cowett, *Birmingham's Rabbi*; and Mark Cowett, "Rabbi Morris Newfield and the Social Gospel: Theology and Societal Reform in the South," *American Jewish Archives* 34 (April 1982): 52–54.

⁴⁹ For more on Newfield, see Kerry M. Olitzky, *The American Synagogue: A Historical Dictionary and Sourcebook* (Westport, CT, 1996), 29.

⁵⁰ Marx's social and political activities are briefly outlined in Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 71, and Arnold Shankman, "David Marx," in *Dictionary of Georgia Biography* ed. Kenneth Coleman and Charles S. Gurr, II (Athens, GA, 1983), 694–696; Susan E. Leas, *Alive in Atlanta: A History of St. Luke's Church, 1864–1974* (Atlanta, 1976), esp. 75–83.

⁵¹ See, for instance, "Unity Club Met Yesterday."

⁵² "Dr. Langston Episcopalian," *Atlanta Constitution*, July 11, 1905.

⁵³ Atlanta Evangelical Ministers' Association Minutes, March 6, 1905, MSS 686, Box 3, Folder 7, 161, Atlanta Historical Center. See also Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 166–167.

⁵⁴ Marx diary, September 18, 1907, "To Unity Club," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 13, 1906, *Atlanta Journal*, September 8 and 30, 1907.

⁵⁵ David Marx, "Moving On," *Atlanta Journal*, September 22, 1907.

⁵⁶ Notes by Marx on events of 1914, Container 13, Folder 6, Cuba Archives; Marx diary, July 14–15, 1913. See also Blumberg, *As But a Day*, 69.

⁵⁷ Olitzky, *American Synagogue*, 29.

⁵⁸ Marx diary, 1900.

⁵⁹ "Dinner Given To Unity Club," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 15, 1904.

⁶⁰ Evangelical Ministers' Association Minutes, April 3, 1899, MSS 686, Box 3, Folder 7, 53–54, Atlanta History Center; *Atlanta Constitution*, November 30, 1903, March 14, 1904, January 29, 1905, and July 16, 1906.

⁶¹ "Short Items Concerning Men and Public Affairs," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 16, 1901; "Temple to See Union Meeting," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 18, 1902.

⁶² The first reports of joint services between Protestants and Reform Jews in the *New York Times* date from June 8, 1897, and July 1, 1901. The first reported union Thanksgiving service in the *New York Times* is from Detroit, dated November 28, 1902. The 1902 Atlanta service was not reported nationally and other such services may easily also have passed without notice.

⁶³ First Universalist Church, Board Minutes, December 4, 1901, Papers of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, Box 60, Folder 1, Pitts Theological Library, Emory University.

⁶⁴ Hebrew Benevolent Congregation Board Minutes, October 30, 1902, "History—notes and recollections re the Temple, 1867–1935," Container 13, Folder 6, Atlanta Temple Records, Cuba Archives; Evans, *Provincials*, 241, and compare also Blumberg, *As But a Day*, 59.

⁶⁵ Programs for the Thanksgiving services were commented on beforehand and recorded in detail afterwards in the *Atlanta Constitution*. See, for example, "Temple to See Union Meeting," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 18, 1902 (first quotation); "Unity Service Was Criticized," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 30, 1903 (second quotation).

⁶⁶ Leas, *Alive in Atlanta*, 55; *Atlanta Constitution*, November 30, 1903 (for Broughton's comments); Marx's article "Moving On," *Atlanta Journal*.

⁶⁷ *Atlanta Constitution*, March 14, 1904, January 29, 1905, May 28–June 1, 14, 21, 1908; *Atlanta Journal*, December 10, 1917, cited in Bauman and Shankman, "Rabbi as Ethnic Broker," 55; "Dr. Jones Lectures Today," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 16, 1906; Marx diary, March 16, 1906.

⁶⁸ Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 136.

⁶⁹ "To Celebrate at the Temple," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 21, 1904.

⁷⁰ "Unity Service Was Criticized," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 30, 1903. On the active role of Broughton in the YMCA board's decision to exclude Jews, see Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 167.

⁷¹ "Dinner Given To Unity Club," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 15, 1904; "To Unity Club," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 13, 1906. Adair again welcomed the Unity Club to dinner at his house in 1910; "Social Items," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 14, 1910; "Unity Club Holds Services," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 29, 1906; "Unity Club Entertains Distinguished People," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 10, 1911; "Unity Club Dinner," *Atlanta Constitution*, December 16, 1913.

⁷² Marx diary; Bauman and Shankman, "Rabbi as Ethnic Broker," 57, 66 n. 22.

⁷³ C. B. Wilmer to Leo Frank, May 17, 1915, folder 2.95, and reply from Frank to Wilmer, May 18, 1915, folder 2.6, Correspondence of Leo Frank, Leo Frank Collection, Brandeis University Library, Special Collections, Waltham, MA; Leas, *Alive in Atlanta*, 75–76, 80–83. For general accounts of the Frank case noting Marx's prominent role, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York, 1968), and Olney, *And the Dead Shall Rise. "Atlanta Unity Club At The Camp Tonight,"* *Atlanta Constitution*, December 13, 1917, 2.

⁷⁴ Calendar, 1921–30.

⁷⁵ Simpson and Weyl, *Story of the ICCJ*, 14–17, and SIDIC, 30.2 (1997): 5. On Protestant ministerial responses to the Klan in Atlanta, see Leas, *Alive in Atlanta*, 75–83; Will W. Alexander, *The Reminiscences of Will W. Alexander* (New York, 1972), 189–190; Marx diary, 1941.

⁷⁶ Marx diary, December 12, 1923; David Marx papers, Container 16, File 2, Cuba Archives.

⁷⁷ Marx diary; Calendar, 1921–30.

⁷⁸ Marx diary.

⁷⁹ See 1905, Evangelical Ministers' Association Minutes, MSS 686, Box 3, Folder 7, Atlanta History Center.

⁸⁰ *Southern Israelite*, September 20, 1945; *Atlanta Constitution*, September 20, 1945.