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Readers of Joshua Loth Liebman's *Peace of Mind*

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reception

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Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal published once a year. It seeks to promote dialogue and discussion among scholars engaged in theoretical and practical analyses in several related fields: reader-response criticism and pedagogy, reception study, history of reading and the book, audience and communication studies, institutional studies and histories, as well as interpretive strategies related to feminism, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and postcolonial studies, focusing mainly but not exclusively on the literature, culture, and media of England and the United States.

Submission Information

Essays submitted for publication will be evaluated by at least two members of the editorial board. Contributors can expect a response in a timely fashion. Essays should follow Chicago style and should not exceed 6,000 words. Please submit manuscripts to Amy Blair, amy.blair@marquette.edu, or Department of English, Marquette University, Coughlin Hall, 335, P.O. Box 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881, OR to James Machor, machor@ksu.edu, or Department of English, 108 English/Counseling Services Bldg., Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

Society Information

The Reception Study Society (RSS) is a non-profit organization that seeks to promote informal and formal exchanges between scholars in several related fields: reader-response criticism and pedagogy, reception study, the history of reading and the book, cultural studies, communication and media studies, and any other studies engaging these primary areas. Bringing together theorists, scholars, and teachers from all of these areas, this association will promote a much-needed cross-disciplinary dialogue among all areas of reception studies, advancing teaching as well as research. The RSS is the only association to promote dialogue and discussion among all the diverse areas and scholars of reception study.

The RSS hosts a national conference every two years and, as an affiliated organization, sponsors panels at the Modern Language Association Convention, the Midwest Modern

editors' introduction

As the editors of *Reception*, we are pleased to introduce
this sixth issue of the journal, which offers both
reevaluations of classic work on audiences and
reception and examples of how an engagement with
reception can nuance and deepen our understanding
of fandom studies, periodicals studies, and religious
studies. Through a happy coincidence, this cluster of
essays also hovers around the cultural history of the
late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the
United States, and moments of "middlebrow" reading
and audiencing to which our first contributor, Joan
Shelley Rubin, gave daylight in her highly influential
book *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*.

   In this issue, Rubin's "Rethinking the Creation of
Cultural Hierarchy in America" reflectively reengages
with Lawrence Levine's seminal *Highbrow/Lowbrow*
with an important modification—if not upending—
of the declension narrative that tended to structure
discussions of popular and middlebrow culture in
the beginning of the twentieth century. Taking as a
case study the career of Robert Lawson Shaw, a mid-
twentieth-century choral conductor and popularizer
of choral works from "highbrow" classical composers
and folk composers alike, Rubin shows that cultural
hierarchization was accompanied at all points by
movements to bridge audience segmentation. Rubin
similarly asks us to recognize how much was gained,
by a wide variety of audiences, from the sacralization of
culture that resulted from Arnoldian aesthetic rhetorics
in the early twentieth century.

   Precisely this recognition drives Natalie Kalich's
work on the ways *Vanity Fair*'s editors mediated,
explained, and codified modernism for their eclectic,
discerning, and aspirational readership. In "'How

Fatally Outmoded Is Your Point of View?'": *Vanity Fair*'s Articulation of Modernist Culture to the Modern Reader," Kalich reveals the logic of the simultaneous, seemingly paradoxical, sacralization and popularization of literary modernism. Showing how *Vanity Fair*'s editors mainstreamed irony and disaffection, Kalich firmly establishes this mass-marketed periodical as a key location for the marketing of the ostensibly anti-popular modernist aesthetic and cannily reads the methods by which elite culture is made attractive to the aspiring audience.

Aspiring audiences are likewise the subject of Cheryl Oestreicher's article, "Readers of Joshua Loth Liebman's *Piece of Mind.*" The readers of this religious self-help manual were not aspiring to cultural sophistication, but they sought the kind of satisfaction, comfort, and inner peace that a burgeoning therapeutic culture was beginning to hold up as an ideal. Oestreicher finds in reader letters to Liebman evidence for the blurring of psychological and religious categories of self-understanding that have been posited elsewhere in theoretical histories of the period. This continued piecing together of archival evidence of reception is a valuable contribution to the historiography of reception. Oestreicher additionally demonstrates that Liebman's rabbinical background was no barrier to his attracting readers of all religious stripes but was in some cases an aid to their receptiveness to the wedding of spiritual and psychoanalytic approaches to mind.

Finally, Daniel Cavicchi's "Fandom before 'Fan': Shaping the History of Enthusiastic Audiences" offers a historical overview of the notion of fandom and a prolegomenon to future intersectional work between fandom studies and reception study. Like Rubin, Cavicchi takes as his focus the experiences of audiences of musical performances, finding in that rich history a long trajectory to the behaviors contemporary scholars term "fannish." His location of fan activity, of fan engagement and self-making through audience behavior, draws connections as well to a nineteenth-century moment when larger audiences with more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds were able to encounter more widely disseminated cultural productions. His call to extend audience studies to "individual research of pre-1900 audience practices in all their diversity" is one that this journal hopes to take up in future issues.

Both Rubin's and Cavicchi's pieces began life as plenary talks at two of our Reception Study Society conferences, in 2013 and 2011, respectively. The wealth of exciting scholarship and criticism that was presented at these two meetings is matched by the rich and multifaceted work that has appeared in new books published in 2012 and 2013. Ten of these are reviewed in this issue, and they span a range of subjects from literary studies and classical reception study to cultural studies, the history of the book, and mass-culture reception. Those interested in the first two areas will want to take a look at Charlotte Templin's

review of Marianne Egeland's *Claiming Sylvia Plath*, Andrew Hobbs's review of Robin Jarvis's *Romantic Readers and Transatlantic Travel*, and Ika Willis's review of David Hopkins and Charles Martingdale's *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*. Reviews in book history include Barbara Hochman's on *Writing with Scissors* by Ellen Gruber Garvey, Barbara Ryan's on *She Hath Been Reading* by Katharine West Scheil, and Stacy Erickson's on *Popular Reading in English, c. 1400–1600* by Elisabeth Salter. Of interest to scholars in cultural studies and mass-culture reception are Mike Chasar's *Everyday Reading* (reviewed by Rhonda Pettit), Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo's *Reading Beyond the Book* (reviewed by Yung-Hsing Wu), Anahid Kassabian's *Ubiquitous Listening* (reviewed by Daniel Cavicchi, in a second contribution to this issue), and Anouk Lang's *From Codex to Hypertext* (reviewed by Rebecca Gordon). In addition, this issue continues the feature begun with the 2012 issue of *Reception*: a bibliography of other new books of interest to scholars in audience and reception studies. The more than forty books in the field published in the last year and a half provide further testimony to the continued vitality and exciting work being produced today in reception study.

Before our next RSS conference in 2015 we will present a second special issue of *Reception*, coedited this time by Philip Goldstein and Patrocinio Schweickart and focusing on cross-cultural reception. The RSS is also partnering with CERES in Belgium to plan a first-ever international conference on reception studies in 2016. With so much critical momentum behind audience studies from scholars of literature, history, sociology, communications, and mass media, we anticipate a very bright future for reception study—and for *Reception*.

Amy L. Blair and James L. Machor, coeditors

Readers of Joshua Loth Liebman's *Peace of Mind*

CHERYL OESTREICHER

In 1946, Simon & Schuster published Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman's bestselling book *Peace of Mind*, a self-help manual that explained how psychiatry and religion together could help individuals achieve emotional and spiritual maturity, and ultimately happiness. At the time of its publication, Liebman was a rabbi at Boston's Temple Israel and was well known from his sermons on the NBC radio program *Message to Israel*, broadcast in Boston and New York City. Significantly, Liebman was, in the words of Matthew S. Hedstrom, the first "non-Christian author to reach a mass audience in the United States" and Donald Meyer has called *Peace of Mind* "the book first heralding the whole flood of postwar religious bestsellers."[1] The book reached readers on six continents, was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 173 weeks and the *Publishers Weekly* bestseller list for 147 weeks, and, by 1964, went into its thirty-eighth printing.[2]

The significance of *Peace of Mind* lay in the way Liebman blended religion, psychology, and self-help and the degree to which his readers accepted him as an expert in all three areas. Prior to World War II, self-help books were gaining momentum, largely owing to the popularity of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1937) and Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich* (1937). Religious authors such as Harry

Emerson Fosdick and Norman Vincent Peale also had a following. Psychology and psychiatry became a part of popular culture; discussions of personal experiences with psychoanalysis appeared in the *New York Times*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Vanity Fair* in the 1910s, as well as in books and movies such as Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945).[3]

By blending religion, self-help, and psychology, Liebman's book provided simplified views and easy methods for incorporating faith, God, psychology, and psychiatry into everyday life to achieve happiness. As a rabbi who counseled his congregants, he recognized that many people had emotional insecurities, but they often feared admitting them or dealing with their mental health. According to Joel Pfister, *Peace of Mind* provided a "therapy for the normal," giving its readers the tools of both psychiatry and religion to fulfill their quest for happiness. Both fiction and nonfiction bestsellers of the 1920s and 1930s reflected a reevaluation of religion and science, a search for new faiths and philosophies, and what John Tebbel has termed a "religious renaissance."[4] Liebman believed he was different from both clergy and psychiatrists because his goal was to bridge the gap between religious books that made the individual "feel more guilty and more sinful" and psychological books that added "to his inner confusion by making him feel somehow that he [was] a 'case history' in abnormal psychology."[5] Liebman expected his readers to accept his views on the compatibility of psychology and religion, but he invited them to interpret those views to best serve their beliefs in God, religion, psychiatry, and themselves. According to his readers' letters, they did both.

This study's purpose is to explore the breadth of a sample readership of *Peace of Mind:* how readers viewed Liebman, why they wrote to him, what problems they had, how they read and used the book, and how it contributed to and reflected their values, concerns, and religious and psychological culture. It draws on the personal papers of Liebman held by Boston University and Temple Israel, including readers' letters, reviews, advertisements, church programs, and other documents that provide evidence about the reception of *Peace of Mind.* Of the 1,497 letters examined, 898 constitute my sample of "fan mail" and are the foundation for this analysis.[6]

Few historians have thoroughly critiqued Liebman's book through its reception by readers, but three have provided brief analyses of its readership. Citing an unspecified number of Liebman's readers, Andrew Heinze speculated that most were women, Jewish, or both. He pointed out that women historically were often responsible for the "therapeutic tendencies" in both Protestantism and Judaism. Like Heinze, Matthew Hedstrom argued that, coming when it did, the book spoke to women who grieved for loved ones lost in World War II.[7] Heinze and Hedstrom were both right and wrong. Of readers who wrote to

Liebman, many were indeed women (though not most), but few specifically mentioned losing someone in the war, and both historians neglected to discuss Liebman's male readership.

Drawing on her analysis of 133 letters from readers, Rebecca Trachtenberg Alpert summarized the breadth of the book's reception and highlighted readers' psychological and emotional problems, requests for psychiatric referrals, and appeals for speaking engagements, as well as journalists' requests to write articles about Liebman. In addressing readers' problems with marriage, family, sex, and depression, Liebman provided assurance, counseling, copies of his sermons, and suggestions to see psychiatrists or clergy. Although Alpert showed that Liebman's readers had indeed achieved "peace of mind" from reading his book, at least according to their letters,[8] she provided no in-depth analysis of either their responses directly to the book's specific messages or their demographics. My deeper study demonstrates what types of readers read the book, how they interpreted religion, what knowledge they had of psychiatry and psychology, and how their reception of *Peace of Mind* aligned with Liebman's goal in writing a religious self-help book.

Liebman wanted his readers to make full use of his book, and indeed, for those who wrote him, *Peace of Mind* was a book to be read, reread, shared, discussed, kept, and given. Many kept it on their nightstands next to their Bibles.[9] One reader noted, "Your book already has been read and re-read, and I shall continue to turn to it through the years, for encouragement, guidance and solace."[10] Readers who actively used the book noted an improved emotional, mental, or spiritual state of mind through the deep connection they felt with it and the way it affected their lives.

Those who responded to Liebman's book did so for a variety of reasons: to praise *Peace of Mind*, ask advice about personal problems, seek assistance in finding a psychiatrist, have Liebman speak at a function, translate his book into other languages, request autographed copies, solicit book recommendations to learn about Judaism, inquire where they could buy the book, or just say thank you. Many who asked for advice told Liebman, "You're the only one I feel I can turn to." Thus Liebman excelled at relating to his readers, whether on a psychological, theological, or personal level. Initially, he wrote personalized responses, but later his replies became generic, thanking readers for writing and advising them to seek a psychotherapist or minister for assistance.[11]

Few of the 898 letters analyzed provide enough information to assess comprehensive sociological data, but an overview of location, race, occupation, gender, and religious affiliation suggests there was no single, predominant type of reader. Liebman's readers wrote from urban and rural areas in forty-four states and were concentrated in the Middle Atlantic area (31.7 percent) and New England (27.2 percent), followed by the Midwest (22 percent), with

the Pacific, South Atlantic, South Central, and Mountain areas accounting for a cumulative 19 percent. Unsurprisingly, there is a direct correlation to places where Liebman had name recognition, especially Massachusetts, New York City, Chicago, and Ohio, which together account for at least 47 percent of his readership.[12] He also received letters from foreign countries on six continents, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, England, France, Germany, Greece, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Rhodesia, South Africa, and Turkey.

Data on the race of Liebman's readers are sparse, but that he had at least a small African-American readership was not surprising. He participated in efforts to eradicate racial discrimination in Boston, spoke at Boston's NAACP annual banquet in 1943, and hosted NAACP Secretary Walter White at an event at his own Temple Israel.[13] At least one advertisement for his book appeared in a black newspaper, where a bookstore claiming "World's Largest Collection of Negro Books on Sale" recommended *Peace of Mind* as a Christmas gift. Additionally, Martin Luther King Jr. mentioned *Peace of Mind* in his sermon "The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life" in 1960, telling his listeners that "we have a legitimate obligation: be concerned about ourselves." In the outline to another sermon, King wrote, "People are more worried and frustrated than [ever] before" and made a note to discuss the religious books *Peace of Soul* by Fulton Sheen, *Peace of Mind* by Joshua Loth Liebman, and *A Guide to Confident Living* by Norman Vincent Peale.[14]

These references combined with the letters from self-identified African Americans of various backgrounds and education levels indicate that Liebman's message fit within black Protestantism. One reader invited Liebman to his "club belonging to a Colord Baptis Church," which had just started programs "for better regiliuous and racial understaning"; Howard University and an Alpha Sigma Phi chapter that had broken away from the national organization to allow the "admittance of Jews and negroes" invited him to speak at their institutions. A "Negro woman, age 33, of Christian faith and fairly well academically educated" asked for advice. Assistant Attorney General David L. Bazelon wrote that he "loaned a copy of your book to one of the Negro messenger boys in my Department," who read and then purchased it. Civil rights activist Lemuel Marshall Wells inquired about recording an album of Liebman's sermons.[15] Several other letter writers referred to programs or speaking engagements for eliminating racial and ethnic prejudice.

Of the letter writers in the sample, 277 gave their occupations. About one-fourth were clergy and more than one-half of those were rabbis; about 8 percent were in the medical field, including 6 percent who were psychiatrists or psychotherapists. These percentages indicate how readers within therapeutic fields, especially clergy, looked to Liebman for guidance in counseling methods.

Additionally, the reception of *Peace of Mind* by a preponderance of rabbis over other clergy demonstrates Liebman's influence within American Judaism. Other letter writers identified themselves as academics, teachers, businessmen, secretaries, soldiers, lawyers, librarians, booksellers, salespeople, students (middle school through advanced degrees), or journalists.

Of the readers who wrote Liebman, 51 percent were male and 45 percent female, 1 percent were spouses writing together, and 3 percent were unidentifiable owing to illegible handwriting or signatures by initials only. These percentages indicate that more men than women were interested in reading a self-help book about religion and psychiatry, contradicting Heinze's and Hedstrom's generalization. One factor that skews these results is the number of rabbis who wrote to Liebman, but removing these from the equation makes the readership 49 percent men and 48 percent women. Women asked for advice about marriage, children, friends, relatives, grief, careers, loneliness, and religion; men asked for advice about marriage, God, faith, employment, careers, grief, and relationships. Thus gender did not define *Peace of Mind*'s popularity, contrary to Heinze's and Hedstrom's assumption.

Liebman's readers identified themselves as Jewish, Baptist, Catholic, Christian Scientist, Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Unitarian/Universalist, nonreligious, agnostic, or believing in God but not adhering to a particular religious faith. Liebman's readership demonstrates that Americans were receptive to ideas outside their faith for how to achieve happiness. Of the 290 readers who claimed a religious affiliation (in about one-third of the fan mail analyzed), an overwhelming 69 percent were of his own Jewish faith, 19 percent were Protestant, and 2.1 percent were Catholic, with 3.1 percent identifying themselves more broadly as Christian. These statistics suggest that far more Protestants than Catholics, and far more Jews than either Protestants or Catholics, were open to the book's ideas. Many Protestants asked how they could learn more about Judaism, reflecting a growing acceptance of Jews in postwar American society. Though this group of letter writers did not include any who directly identified themselves as Mormons, Liebman responded to two who seemed to do so indirectly: one included pamphlets about the Mormon Church, which Liebman acknowledged had "points of similarity" with Judaism, while the other referred to a discussion of *Peace of Mind* at a Mormon church in Brookline, Massachusetts.[16]

Liebman's interfaith approach to religion was based more on emotion than doctrine. His writings and proclamations could be interpreted by individuals to suit the spiritual needs of any faith but were grounded deeply within Judaism and within contemporary rabbinical practice to "make Jewishness familiar to non-Jews."[17] American Jews prospered in the postwar era; as their income increased, they moved to the suburbs and defined themselves, according to

Nathan Glazer, "not primarily by religion but by secular culture." Indeed, historian Jonathan Sarna argued that Liebman's book "heralded Judaism's emergence as an intellectual, cultural, and theological force." As anti-Semitism declined, many people made an effort to learn more about America's "third faith."[18] Although *Peace of Mind* was certainly not the sole source for such an education, readers respected Liebman as a rabbi and often asked him for book recommendations to learn about Judaism.

Theologically, Liebman fit within contemporary Jewish and especially Reform Jewish thought. Sociologist Will Herberg argued that in the postwar era, religion no longer had "authentic" Jewish or Christian content but instead related more to society as a whole "because the very being of society as such must be regarded as part of the divine order of creation." Liebman's beliefs fell within the "liberal theology" of the postwar era, which held "that progress would come from freer and franker self-expression," although conservatives claimed it would lead to immorality. Liebman's continued encouragement of individuals to take care of themselves and accept others in order to create a better society was in keeping with Hasia Diner's assessment of the liberal Jews' "belief in progress and a commitment to western values, to America, and to the idea that people of good will could together eradicate prejudice and foster a common culture that tolerated difference."[19]

Essentially, Liebman wanted his readers to use religion to build a sense of community and to help them lead a moral life. He explained that the goal of inner peace was explored by "the saints and mystics, the poets and philosophers, who achieved peace of mind by other disciplines," such as Buddha, Maimonides, and Thomas à Kempis.[20] By citing a variety of religious figures, he demonstrated that many faiths had similar goals regarding God, life, happiness, and peace. This approach gave his readers a way to find their purpose in the world, relationship to God, and group fellowship and served as a guide to a moral and spiritual way of living.

Most readers who wrote Liebman respected his insights into faith and God and praised his explanations: "It is unbiased from the religious aspect—and it is factual"; "It gave me an understanding of a dynamic, new thinking about religion and God"; "It transcends dogma to strike at the foundation stones of living"; "It is the greatest book since the Bible"; "It offers a religion while at the same time it transcends religions"; "modern approach to religious problems"; "helped me understand my religious beliefs better than anything I've ever read."[21] An agnostic wrote that it was "the most helpful book I have read from the point of view of its psychological achievement of bridging the gap that separated religion from our modern psychiatric conception of man."[22] Interestingly, many of the comments focused on the relationship between *Peace of Mind* and the Bible, with some readers equating Liebman's book with the

Bible and using both as personal manuals to deal with life's troubles and with other readers, through phrases such as "new thinking" and "modern approach," signaling their openness to amending or adjusting their religious views.

Readers were less interested in learning how to be better at adhering to their respective faiths but instead looked for solutions for dealing with life's issues. Inspirational literature from the 1930s and 1940s represented trends in popular religion: using religion to give life meaning, personalizing God, finding happiness through faith, and "favoring institutional religion."[23] Andrew Heinze argued that the popularity of this type of literature indicated that Americans felt the need to look beyond religion for answers to their questions.[24] To address this need, many clergy took their simplified interpretations of psychological theories and recast them within a religious context. By blurring the lines between psychology, faith, and religion, religious self-help authors reached wider audiences than they would have by confining themselves to strictly denominational beliefs.

Peace of Mind fit within this framework, and Liebman recognized that people did not search for answers from just one area but instead looked for guidance from a variety of sources. Philip Rieff argued that, although postwar Americans were still religious, they often turned to psychotherapy for solutions, creating a new "therapeutic" faith. Indeed, some received psychological counseling from their ministers, many of whom had no formal training, in churches, independent counseling centers, or hospitals.[25] The lines between religion and psychology continued to blur as clergy accepted the connections between the two and reframed them to suit their needs in their institutions and with their congregants. To communicate their messages to a wider public, they capitalized on Americans' growing consumerism and their turning to popular culture and the media for answers, authoring an ever growing number of religious self-help books. Although Liebman wrote *Peace of Mind* primarily for the general public, he also intended it to be a pastoral-counseling work, encouraging clergy to understand psychology and to incorporate psychiatric methods into their counseling and his readers of all faiths to expect such counseling from their ministers.

Along with Harry Emerson Fosdick and Norman Vincent Peale, Liebman combined contemporary psychology and religious ideas to create an affordable "everyman's psychiatry."[26] Baptist minister Harry Emerson Fosdick hoped to help readers "make sense of the religious experiences described in Scripture by reflecting on the ways that modern people seek religious meaning" and incorporated the thinking of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and William James into his books to show how psychology and psychiatry benefited religion. Protestant minister Norman Vincent Peale wrote *A Guide to Confident Living* (1948) directly in response to Liebman's *Peace of Mind*. Rooted in Jungian psychology, particularly the idea that one could not be complete without

a connection to the divine, Peale's *Guide* addressed fear, grief, success, marriage, and failure. Also responding to *Peace of Mind*, antipsychiatry Bishop Fulton Sheen wrote *Peace of Soul* (1949). Sheen's God-centric approach considered saving souls imperative and viewed psychiatric methods as an inadequate substitute that encouraged people to deny both God and guilt.[27]

A few of Liebman's readers compared *Peace of Mind* to other self-help books, including Harry Emerson Fosdick's *On Being a Real Person* and Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.[28] Carnegie's book was not a blending of religion and psychology, but it furthered the proliferation of secular self-help books to assist readers with their interpersonal relations. Fosdick himself promoted *Peace of Mind* by recommending it as Lenten reading, and Liebman described Fosdick as a "vigorous inspiration" and one of his great heroes "as preacher, writer and teacher."[29] Such comparisons reveal that some readers sought out and read multiple self-help books and placed *Peace of Mind* within that category.

Liebman argued that "religion and psychiatry were twin angels" with the same purpose: to help individuals understand themselves and their place within both physical and spiritual worlds.[30] Liebman's approach to psychiatry was relatively simple: people should look within themselves and talk out their problems. Though Liebman probably considered himself a Freudian, he bridged authentic Freudian psychology with contemporary neo-Freudian thinking. As a Freudian, he completely subscribed to the thesis that all emotional problems stemmed from childhood, but, like most neo-Freudians, he rejected Freud's thinking on sexuality. Though he critiqued contemporary culture, he discounted the neo-Freudian argument that societal, cultural, and even familial factors could create new issues in adulthood not related to repressed childhood memories.

To some extent, Liebman was an anomaly. As a rabbi who integrated psychiatric methods into his sermons and counseling, he aligned himself more with the Protestant clergy than with his fellow rabbis. Though Jews were open to psychology, Protestants were the first to integrate psychiatry and psychology courses into seminary education in 1925 and were strongly "shaped by the encounter between religion and science as well as by the interaction with their parishioners."[31]

Although psychology and psychiatry had already permeated American culture by 1946, the idea of combining religion and psychiatry to achieve mental health was new to some people, and Liebman's Jewish faith provided his readers with an as yet unrepresented perspective. Historian Nathan Hale described specifically how Freud and his theories entered American culture:

> By far the largest number of Americans—the millions of readers of *Everybody's, McClure's, Ladies' Home Journal,*

American Magazine, Good Housekeeping—knew Freud as the creator of a new scientific miracle of healing that had vague, yet insistent sexual elements. Freud's first work that became relatively popular was *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* published in America in 1920. However, *The Basic Writings* sold about 174,805 copies in the decade after it first was published in 1938, the date from which Freud's real popularity can be said to have started. The popularizations, especially those in mass magazines, demonstrate the eager acceptance by laymen, some of them patients, of the analysts' new role and self-image. Because of the arresting and novel subject matter of psychoanalysis—sexuality, dreams, childhood, etc.—Freud came to symbolize all the new developments in medical psychology. It was Freud who became most closely identified with the shift from a somatic to a psychological style.[32]

The popularization of Freud and psychoanalysis may have led Liebman to assume his readers were familiar with psychology, although he recognized that few related it to religion. For their part, many of his readers, some admitting their prior lack of knowledge about psychology, enthusiastically expressed their openness to the idea of combining psychology and religion: "[O]ne of the best books on psychology and religion that I have ever read. Most practical!"; "It spans the chasms separating philosophy, psychology and religion"; "For several years I have been working on a bibliography which combines psychol. and religion out of some books and this one shows their right relationship best"; "It ably points out the transitional course from the old religio-moral point of view to one more compatible with living in the modern World of the seven Sciences"; "[A]n enlightening and worthwhile attempt to clarify certain phases of both religion and psychiatry which are usually not very thoroughly understood by the layman."[33] These readers already believed in the benefits of combining religion and psychiatry as a therapeutic approach, confirming Liebman's ultimate goal in *Peace of Mind*.

Though Liebman claimed to equate religion and psychiatry in importance, he actually wrote more about how psychiatry benefited religion than the reverse, and this approach displeased some of his readers. One wrote, "The real problem however is that psychiatry needs the help of religion; the author fails to present this problem in its full and tragic depth and has nothing to contribute except commonplaces." Another wrote, "The author fails as a man of religion to add any new meaning in his correlation of psychology and religion."[34]

Readers' knowledge of psychology and psychiatry ranged from nonexistent to expert. Many found Liebman's perspectives and explanations helpful; he taught new methods to readers with little knowledge while simultaneously affirming contemporary views of psychiatry. One reader called him the "best and most humane psychiatrist." Many readers wrote to Liebman to ask for psychiatric referrals, often indicating, however, that they could not afford a therapist, did not know how to find one, or did not have one near their residence. Some readers viewed Liebman himself as a psychiatrist because he simplified Freudian psychology into accessible language for nearly any level of reader but also because they agreed with his perspective: *Peace of Mind* "advocated an attitude toward psychiatry I approve of"; "The finest book on 'Mental Health' I have ever read"; "a sane and forceful presentation of important ways that psychological factors enter into the business of living"; "psychological approach very practical."[35] A psychotherapist noted, "I am inclined to agree with Arthur [Mirsky] that the book represents the best statement of psychodynamics to appear; it will be most useful for students. I have recommended it to patients (it fills a long-felt want in this regard) and it is peculiarly adapted to the needs of patients' relatives to let them know something about the goals of psychotherapy."[36]

Some readers shared their experiences as psychoanalytic patients. Their letters provide examples of readers' knowledge of psychological terminology, examples of professional therapy, psychiatry, and views of successful or failed treatments. Given her weekly or more frequent sessions, use of terms like "instinct" and "taboos," and account of a present incident that "uncovered a fear which had been inplanted in me as a child," one reader's analyst was most likely Freudian. She wanted Liebman to "explain these things to me, or help clarify them for me, so that I can overcome at least a few of the frights which still remain with me." A Canadian woman mentioned she knew "plenty of 'neurotics'" and had "seized upon every means that I have known to keep from being 'neurotic.'" She reminisced about her childhood to understand her present situation and said that *Peace of Mind* gave her "courage to combat some of the evil results of past years and present influences." Another woman claimed that "doctors in my past have tried to impress on me that my 'bad background' was the basis of my troubles" and that her "thoughts are constantly turned inward trying to understand this fear or emotion." One mother, concerned about her "neurotic" daughter who was "disturbed by the fear of people talking about her" had tried to get help, but her family had instead become "victims of quacks and high priced sanatoriums." Though she was concerned about the family's financial situation, she knew her daughter needed "to be in constant touch with a doctor who knows about guilt complexes."[37]

Some readers offered details about the way they used Liebman's ideas in their lives. Members of Alcoholics Anonymous found solace in his words about

the rise of alcoholism. A New York City group invited him to speak, and three letter writers praised *Peace of Mind* for its helpfulness. One noted, "We have discussed practically the entire book at our meetings," and asked for copies of his sermons and other talks because "if there is any group that needs to keep looking for a better way of living and thinking, it is us Alcoholics." Another mentioned how her Alcoholics Anonymous group studied the book at their weekly meetings.[38]

The overwhelmingly positive reception of *Peace of Mind* came from Liebman's empathic understanding that, in 1946, after two world wars and a depression, Americans were lost, confused, and unhappy. Although he did not deeply discuss contemporary events, he offered hope and encouragement to readers on their path toward better mental health. Referring to Thomas Wolfe's 1940 novel *You Can't Go Home Again* and to what Susan Matt has called the era's "bittersweet yearning for a lost time," Liebman recognized that Americans could not "'go home again' to old theologies or ancient psychologies."[39] He encouraged his readers to let go of the past and to find happiness in the present and future. He offered his own personal stories about questioning God and emotional issues and provided current and real examples of his counselees' problems and the advice he had given them.

Liebman achieved his goal with *Peace of Mind* because he knew the emerging therapeutic culture that blended psychology and religion offered solutions for Americans on their quests for happiness. He provided instruction to the general public, showing his readers how to use both psychiatric and religious methods to find the happiness they sought. Their letters and responses indicated they often found "peace of mind" but also believed Liebman to be trustworthy as a psychiatrist, religionist, and friend. In a response to one letter asking for psychiatric assistance, Liebman noted, "Your seeking guidance is exactly what I hoped the book would do for people who either knew they wanted proper psychiatric help or who might not realize it was available."[40]

NOTES

1. Matthew S. Hedstrom, "Psychology and Mysticism in 1940s Religion: Reading the Readers of Fosdick, Liebman, and Merton," in *Religion and the Culture of Print in Modern America*, edited by Charles Lloyd Cohen and Paul S. Boyer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 249; and Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 327.

2. Keith L. Justice, *Bestseller Index: All Books, by Author, on the Lists of "Publishers Weekly" and the "New York Times" Through 1990* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998): 192; and *Publisher's Weekly*, March 30, 1964, 43.

3. Justice, *Bestseller Index,* 399–404, 413; Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 157–58; and Nathan G. Hale, *Freud and the Americans: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States, 1876–1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 141nn399–400.

4. Joel Pfister, "Glamorizing the Psychological: The Politics of the Performances of Modern Psychological Identities," in *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in American,* edited by Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 168; and John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States,* vol. 3: *The Golden Age Between Two Wars, 1920–1940* (New York: Bowker, 1978), 237–40.

5. Joshua Loth Liebman, *Peace of Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1946), 11.

6. This sample of 898 letters represents approximately one-third of the letters in the collections held by Boston University and Temple Israel. The fan mail excludes letters between Liebman and his publisher, requests to review and provide quotes for forthcoming books, inquiries about translations, appeals for speaking engagements, queries about price or where to purchase the book, requests for reprints, or permission to publish or quote. A letter is defined as fan mail if the writer specifically references reading the book, asks for advice, or thanks Liebman for writing the book. All letters are quoted verbatim, with misspellings and grammatical errors uncorrected.

7. Andrew Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 210–12; and Hedstrom, "Psychology and Mysticism in 1940s Religion," 254.

8. Rebecca Trachtenberg Alpert, "From Jewish Science to Rabbinical Counseling: The Evolution of the Relationship between Religion and Health by the American Reform Rabbinate, 1916–1954" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 2008), 139–46. Alpert did not clarify why she chose this number of letters or these particular ones.

9. Mildred G. Carlisle to Leibman, September 16, 1946, Box 34, Folder Psychiatrists, Joshua Loth Liebman and Fan Loth Liebman Collection, Boston University (hereafter cited as JLL/BU).

10. Ruby Todd to Liebman, July 26, 1946, Box 6, Joshua Loth Liebman Papers, Temple Israel, Boston (hereafter cited as JLL/TI).

11. By late 1946/early 1947, Liebman's responses to readers' letters were mostly the same text advising the writer to consult a local psychiatrist or clergy member.

12. At the time *Peace of Mind* was published, Liebman was the rabbi at Temple Israel in Boston, and his *Message of Israel* radio show was broadcast in both the Boston and New York areas. Prior to moving to Boston, he was a rabbi in Chicago, and he was raised and educated in Ohio.

13. "Boston Annual NAACP Banquet Huge Success," *Pittsburgh Courier,* February 20, 1943, 11; "Calls Solution to Race Issue Vital to Victory," *Afro-American,* February 20, 1943, 17.

14. National Memorial Book Store advertisement, *New York Amsterdam News,* December 7, 1946, 25; Martin Luther King Jr., "The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life: Sermon Delivered at the Unitarian Church of Germantown," December 11, 1960, Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project, Stanford University; King, "A Knock

at Midnight: Sermon Outline for the Youth Sunday Services of the Women's Convention Auxiliary, National Baptist Convention," September 14, 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project, Stanford University.

15. Julius E. Johnson to Liebman, March 27, 1948, Box 30, Folder J Miscellaneous, JLL/BU; Murray Russell Pearlstein to Liebman, October 19, 1947, Box 34, Folder P Miscellaneous, JLL/BU; Frankie F. Dunklin to Liebman, February 4, 1948, Box 28, Folder DI Miscellaneous, JLL/BU; David L. Bazelon to Liebman, October 25, 1946, Box 38, Folder B Miscellaneous, JLL/BU; Lemuel Marshall Wells to Fan Liebman, November 18, 1958, Box 6, JLL/BU.

16. Liebman to Daisy Simons Wadsworth, July 15, 1946, Box 38, Folder W Miscellaneous, JLL/BU; Liebman to Mrs. Maurice Krass, March 26, 1948, Box 31, Folder KL Miscellaneous, JLL/BU.

17. Lila Corwin Berman, *Speaking of Jews: Rabbis, Intellectuals, and the Creation of an American Public Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 76.

18. Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 85, 106–8; Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2004), 272–75. Sociologist Will Herberg explored the idea that most postwar Americans identified themselves as Protestants, Catholics, or Jews in his book *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960).

19. Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 15, and *Judaism and Modern Man: An Interpretation of Jewish Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951), 134; Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 15. For a definition of liberal theology, see Nathan G. Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917–1985* (New York: Oxford University Press 1995), 57–59, 79.

20. Liebman, *Peace of Mind*, 21.

21. While promoting *Peace of Mind*, Simon & Schuster sent out "Information Please" cards to collect information about its readership, receiving at least 223 responses (not included in fan mail statistics). Specifically, Simon & Schuster asked "the reasons which prompted the purchase of this book." Information Please cards from Solner Hayward, J. Zimmerman, Mark. E. Connelly, Mrs. Phil Mossler, James S. Mahon, Leo E. Turitz, and Brett (illegible last name), JLL/TI.

22. A. V. A. van Duym to Dick Simon, March 7, 1946, Box 6, JLL/TI.

23. Louis Schneider and Sanford M. Dornbusch, *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 13–15.

24. Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul*, 93.

25. Susan E. Myers-Shirk, *Helping the Good Shepherd: Pastoral Counselors in a Psychotherapeutic Culture, 1925–1975* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 107–10.

26. Schneider and Dornbusch, *Popular Religion,* 11.

27. Carol V. R. George, *God's Salesman: Norman Vincent Peale and the Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 89–91, 131; Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers*, 259–60; Fulton J. Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York: Whittlesey House,

1949), 93–95. On Fosdick's goals, see Gary J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 363.

28. "Information Please" cards from A. Bell, Mrs. Robert L. Hogueter, and Mrs. Harry E. Egren, JLL/TI; Mrs. John Nelson to Liebman, Box 33, Folder N Miscellaneous, JLL/BU; E; Geoffrey Nathan to Liebman, March 23, 1946, Box 6, JLL/TI; Information Please cards from D. B. Allison and Charles Van Cott, JLL/TI.

29. James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 256; Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States,* 486–90; Liebman to Harry Emerson Fosdick, April 4, 1947, Box 39, Folder FO Miscellaneous, JLL/BU.

30. Liebman, *Peace of Mind,* 155, 163.

31. Myers-Shirk, *Helping the Good Shepherd,* 13.

32. Hale, *Freud and the Americans,* 430–31.

33. Information Please cards from Mildred Beaver, Mrs. Lucinda Mayr, Mildred K. McCullough, Preston Simmons, and Sally Ann Gross, JLL/TI.

34. Information Please cards from J. Choron and Mrs. C. Bennitt, JLL/TI.

35. Samuel L. Gargill to Leibman, April 3, 1946, Box 6, Folder Letters Regarding "Peace of Mind," JLL/TI; Information Please cards from Mrs. Robert L. Hogueter, Mrs. Harry E. Egren, George D. Swan, and Mrs. Kyle Boothe, JLL/TI.

36. Charles D. Aring to Leibman, April 5, 1946, Box 6, JLL/TI.

37. Rose Sandler to Leibman, May 29, 1948, Box 7, JLL/BU; Eva M. Somerville to Leibman, March 14, 1947, Box 34, Folder Psychiatrists, JLL/BU; Kathleen McMahon to Leibman, April 9, 1947, Box 41, Folder M Miscellaneous, JLL/BU; Mrs. O. M. Lyon to Leibman, September 6, 1947, Box 32, Folder LI Miscellaneous, JLL/BU.

38. Henry F. Grieme to Liebman, September 4, 1947, Box 29, Folder GR Miscellaneous, JLL/BU; Edward Friedman to Liebman, November 29, 1947, Box 28, JLL/BU; Iva Noon Stiles to Liebman, October 6, 1947, Box 36, Folder ST Miscellaneous, JLL/BU.

39. Susan Matt, "You Can't Go Home Again: Homesickness and Nostalgia in U.S. History," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 2 (2007): 470; Liebman, *Peace of Mind,* 28.

40. Leibman to Milton P. Jarrett, April 29, 1946, Box 34, Folder Psychiatrists, JLL/BU.

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