Editor's Introduction

Samuel C. Heilman

Published online: 15 May 2010
© Springer Science + Business Media B.V. 2010

As noted in the past, we occasionally ask leading scholars to organize and guest edit an issue of the journal. Before you is the second of these issues since we moved to our affiliation with Springer. With generous grants from the Berman and Posen Foundations, Professor Barry Kosmin has brought together an extraordinarily interesting and varied series of papers on the subject of secular Judaism.

While Judaism is often seen within the context of religion—and certainly much of the debate about what constitutes Judaism has been what defines ‘religious’—the set of articles before you demonstrates that within the framework of secularity there is much to say and think about Judaism. Indeed, as Professor Kosmin rightly points out, the great majority of Jews in the world today likely conceive of themselves in secular, cultural or ethnic terms. The religious establishment and the non-secular may see them either as a potential target for transformation or as a step away from assimilation and disappearance, but the practitioners of social science have long ago learned that such Manichean and absolutist thinking is far from being either accurate or useful. The social, religious, and cultural boundaries of Jewry and Judaism are far from fixed or resolved.

The hope is that *Contemporary Jewry* can, with this issue, inform and stimulate thought as well as lead to a more nuanced understanding of a people and a creed that have existed and changed for several millennia. My thanks to the Berman Foundation, the Posen Foundation and Barry Kosmin as well as all the contributors to the issue for aiding in this effort.

S. C. Heilman (✉)
Department of Sociology, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: scheilman@gmail.com