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Three Major New Trends in Contemporary American Judaism

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Abstract: Since the end of the 20th century, there have been three major trends of change in American Judaism, namely, “de-ethnicity”, “de-sectarianism” and “gender revolution”. After the war, the “multiculturalism” turn of American society, the apparent decline of anti-Semitism and the accelerated integration of American Jews led to the obvious loosening of the old ethnic and religious barriers, which led to large-scale intermarriage and secularization in the Jewish community. The tradition of closely intertwined Jewish ethnic and religious identities was de-constructed by the wave of “de-ethnicity”. After the war, the continuous dialogue and reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity in the western society, as well as the tide of intermarriage among members of different religious groups, have also led to the increasingly frequent coexistence, mutual learning and infiltration between Judaism and other religions. The rise of the post-modern religious culture of “everyone can be a pastor” has led more and more Jews to alienate from the Jewish establishment, and to join the innovative Jewish religious movement, or the crosssectarian “outreach” movement. The tide of American liberalization and counterculture has boosted the surge of Jewish feminism and helped homosexuals get out of the marginal position. In various sects of the non-orthodox, women and homosexuals have gradually gained equal status with men in religious education, ordination and other fields. The “gender revolution” of “de-masculinization” has broken the long tradition of male domination in Judaism. These “advancing with the times” reforms mainly occurred in the highly “Americanized” non-orthodox movements. As a result, it also led to further differentiation between them and the orthodox groups committed to defending the Jewish tradition and the authority of religious law.

Key Words: American Judaism, De-ethnicization, De-sectarianization, Gender Revolution