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MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 2, Folder 16, "Jewish-Christian Relations: The Unfinished Agenda", 5 May 1970.



DRAFT OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION BY RABBI MARC TANENBAUM
AT SJU CONSULTATION, MAY 5, 1970, DALLAS

"JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS: THE UNFINISHED AGENDA"

- I. There is a conventional agenda whose issues have become relatively standardized, involving such key traditional questions as the following:
 - A. The theological dimension: an adequate theological understanding of Judaism as a living faith on the part of Christianity and Christians, and the companion question of an adequate theological understanding of Christianity and Christians on the part of Judaism and Jews;
 - B. the historical dimension: the amnesia of church history texts and the Christian pedagogic process regarding the major part of two thousand years of post-Biblical Jewish history and the inadequate, often polemical, treatment of Christian history in the Jewish teaching process;
 - C. Conversion, proselytization, and religious liberty;
 - D. the roots of anti-Semitism in certain forms of Christian tradition and teaching;
 - E. Ecumenism, Pluralism, the People of God;
 - F. contemporary issues: church-state relations, Federal aid to parochial schools, personal morality, divorce and abortion legislation, etc.;

- G. social justice concerns: racial justice, combatting poverty, peace and war;
- H. the international dimension: problems of world poverty, illiteracy, disease, economic development, Third World nationalism.

In each of the above areas I shall try to indicate where development and progress has taken place in facing these questions and seeking to resolve them on the part of Christian and Jewish leadership and institutions, and we will also seek to indicate where the agenda continues to remain unfinished. Once having established the "conventional" agenda, I would then move on to develop the second half of my presentation under the following categories:

II. The Jewish-Christian agenda has been significantly re-cast in light of the events of June 1967 in the Middle East. It doesn't seem possible for any Jew to discuss seriously most of the conventional questions without their being refracted now through the prism of the meaning of Israel to Judaism and the Jewish people, the emergent selfconsciousness of Jewish peoplehood. Here too there is a conventional way of interpreting this new agenda by describing the long historic continuity of the relationship of the Jewish people in the

Diaspora to Palestine-Israel. On the theological level, full presentation could be made on the theological and liturgical aspects of Israel in Jewish religious selfconsciousness.

There is a new and unconventional agenda which Israel raises and it is my thesis that this agenda is as important for Christian self-understanding as it is for the Jewish identity crisis. The following are three central questions which Israel poses, in my judgment, for the Christian identity and the crisis of theism both for Christians and Jews:

- A. Religious symbolism - in their effort to comprehend intellectually and spiritually the meaning of the Holy Land and Holy City for Judaism, I contend that the Jews are engaged centrally and fundamentally with seeking to make a credible intellectual case for the meaning of the divine and the transcendental in human existence. This is not unrelated to the current widespread debate over the divine presence in the Eucharist. A rational, technical culture has undermined belief in religious symbols, although psychoanalysis makes no sense at all apart from the use of symbols as a direct apprehension of reality. If Jews succeed in making a credible intellectual defense of the idea of the holy in relation to Israel, they will have made some significant contribution to the whole religious case for the sacred.

B. Universal and Particular

- 1) problem of language - fact vs. myth, poetic
 - factual language is discreet - oppositions
 - confusion when abstract is used to describe concrete
 - map is territory
 - universal is realized in particular field (Gestalt figure-ground)
- 2) philosophical-theological - dualisms
 - unity and multiplicity - essence vs. existence
- 3) historical - church universal in historical reality
 - spatial center - analogy - Israel modernity
 - African theology - WCC - Israel's struggle

III. Ecumenism - supercivilization vs. regional reality

- community without compromise, global pluralism
- double standard - reactionary