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

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Box 43, Folder 10, Ratzinger, Joseph [Cardinal], 1988.

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Rabbis Refuse to Meet With Ratzinger Over Reported Remarks on Judaism

By **ARI L. GOLDMAN**

Several prominent American rabbis refused to attend a meeting yesterday with Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the close adviser to Pope John Paul II, because of what one rabbi called "the publicly declared views of Cardinal Ratzinger denying the ongoing validity of Judaism."

The meeting was initiated by John Cardinal O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York, and held at his residence on Madison Avenue. At least five officials of Jewish organizations attended despite the boycott.

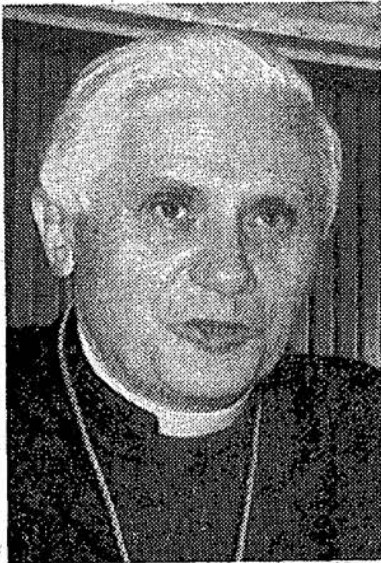
The organized decision of the rabbis not to attend was announced by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, chairman of International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. The organization has served for 22 years as the leading voice of the Jewish community in discussions with the Vatican.

Remarks Need 'Reflection'

Rabbi Tanenbaum said yesterday that Cardinal Ratzinger's views, as articulated in an Italian weekly last October "calls for the most thorough examination and reflection."

"A social event, while always pleasant in itself, is hardly the setting for such probing reflections," Rabbi Tanenbaum said.

Rabbi Tanenbaum said that Cardinal O'Connor's decision to convene the



Associated Press

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

meeting at his residence, while well-intentioned, had the practical effect of circumventing the official process of discussion between the Vatican and the Jewish community.

A spokesman for Cardinal O'Connor, Joseph Zwilling, said that the meeting was "private and unofficial" and that no public statement would be issued. Cardinal O'Connor attended the meeting, but it was primarily called as a session between Jewish leaders and Cardinal Ratzinger, who as the head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is the Vatican's chief monitor of theological orthodoxy.

Cardinal Ratzinger, who gave a lecture last night at a Lutheran Church in midtown Manhattan, was also unavailable for comment. He has, however, scheduled a news conference for this morning.

The Cardinal's Interview

In the Oct. 24 issue of the Italian weekly, *Il Sabato*, the Cardinal was quoted as saying that, in dialogue with Jews, Christians should pursue a "theological line" that Judaism finds its fulfillment in Christianity.

At the time, several Jewish scholars said that the comments could be a setback to Jewish-Christian relations since that dialogue had long been based on a respect by both sides for the independent validity of each faith.

In response to the criticism, Cardinal Ratzinger's office sought to clarify the remarks made in the interview, saying that his remarks had been badly translated from the original German interview. However, Rabbi Tanenbaum and others said that they were not satisfied with the explanation and asked the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations With Judaism to prepare a formal dialogue on the issue.

A Strain With the Vatican

Relations between the Vatican and Jewish leaders have been strained since last June, when the Pope met with Kurt Waldheim, the Austrian President, despite questions raised about Mr. Waldheim's activities as a German officer during World War II.

Among those who boycotted the meeting yesterday were Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, the Long Island rabbi who represented Jews in a public exchange with the John Paul II last September when the Pope visited the United States. Rabbi Henry D. Michelman, executive director of the Synagogue Council of America, which represents Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Congregations, also declined the invitation in protest.

Among those who attended the meeting were representatives of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and Rabbi Ronald Sobel, the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El. Participants refused to comment about the substance of the meeting. Rabbi Sobel would only describe it as "friendly and useful."