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“Catholics and Jews share a universal agenda . . . building a human community between people who share a very great deal as brothers and sisters who inherit a common covenant.”

— Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum



New York's Rabbi Tanenbaum 'Apostle to Gentiles'

By JIM CASTELLI
Staff Writer

When Marc Tanenbaum was about four years old, he would study his schoolwork and the Bible with his father every Sabbath afternoon: when the studying was done, his father would tell stories about his childhood in turn-of-the-century Russia, in the Ukraine. "Periodically," Marc Tanenbaum said of his father, "he had this great need to unburden himself; he would describe how his father had been the 'Jewish mayor' of a small village . . .

"One Good Friday, the Greek Orthodox priest began preaching about the passion, and worked the congregation up over the Jews as 'Christ-killers.' He created such a ferment and furor of hatred for the Jews that the congregation became a mob. They marched out of the Church, and the whole congregation paraded with the priest at the head of them, with his great crucifix glinting in the sun — I remember how vividly my father told the story — and they marched on my grandfather's house. They began screaming curses at the Jews as 'Christ-

killers,' and insisted that the whole Jewish village come together at the edge of the lake. In view of my father's family and the whole village, they made Aaron, my grandfather, walk into the lake until the waters covered his head, and he disappeared before the whole village. In the process, they said that he was the atonement of the collective guilt of the Jews for the death of Christ.

The story had a traumatic effect on the young boy. He was "literally haunted;" he had to find out "how could people believe that in carrying out the purposes of God, they had to destroy another people?" He studied Jewish history and Church history, saw the history of persecutions and pogroms of the Jews by the Christians, a history that was not included in the Christian histories.

Decades later, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum attended the Second Vatican Council as the guest of Lawrence Cardinal Shehan of Baltimore and Augustine Cardinal Bea. "It was one of the great emotional and spiritual experiences of my life to be

present at the basilica of St. Peter's at the moment the bishops were making interventions on the Statement on the Jews, and acknowledged the importance of the Catholic Church facing up to anti-semitism, deploring it, condemning it, rejecting it. At the time there were discussions of the various texts, and in the perspective of five years, it may not have been a great achievement, but in the perspective of 2000 years of history, it was an incredible achievement. The events since that time have demonstrated the validity of that evaluation."

Rabbi Tanenbaum is now in his twentieth year of ecumenical work, the last ten as Director of Interreligious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee; he is connected with virtually every ecumenical group of significance, is one of the most quoted religious leaders in America, an author, radio commentator (WINS), and has been dubbed the Jewish Community's "Apostle to the Gentiles"; as one Catholic put it, he knows more about

Catholic ecumenism than all but a handful of Catholics.

Rabbi Tanenbaum is realistic and hopeful about the future of Catholic-Jewish relations, noting that the two religions have a common tradition, and common interests:

"Catholics and Jews share a universal agenda... all Christians and Jews are concerned about the problems of peace and war, about overcoming racism and poverty, about national priorities, ecology, and the quality of life, aid to the developing nations. These are issues on which we can agree without very much difficulty.

"The real test of the strength of understanding between Catholics and Jews lies in their own particular agendas. The Catholic particular agenda has to do with the crisis in Catholic education, aid to Catholic parochial schools, problems of public morality — abortion, divorce, pornography. The Jews come to the Jewish-Christian table with their particular agenda; our priorities are support for the security and survival of the people in the state of Israel, support for the human rights of Jews, and other religious minorities, in the Soviet Union, the problems of facing Christian responsibility for certain traditions of teaching which have contributed to anti-semitism, and which continue to obtain today.

MORAL, ETHICAL INTEGRITY

"This issue is 'How do we help each other?', not on the basis of making a deal, a quid pro quo, but on the basis of the moral and ethical integrity of our own positions.

"I believe, for example, that as a matter of the morality and ethical integrity of the Jewish community, that we have a responsibility to be concerned with the almost five million children in the Catholic parochial schools, and in the quality of their education. I have been arguing, thank God, I think, with some response, for the Jewish community to re-evaluate its stance regarding the crushing burden that Catholic parents are carrying in terms of providing adequate education for their children in their schools, just as are Jewish parents, particularly in the Orthodox Jewish schools.

"At the same time, I think it increasingly becomes necessary for Catholics, as a

matter of moral and ethical integrity, to be concerned with the right of the people of the state of Israel to survive, in the context of the right of all nations in the middle east, and, indeed, all nations in the world, to survive without threat of destruction."

Confusion has existed

of their own ethnic ties to "the old country." He is distressed, however, by the efforts of about a half dozen people within the Catholic community dealing with the Middle East who have identified themselves with the most extreme Arab causes. These people, the rabbi charges, use the issue of the

as their own property, with Israel providing police security and guarantee of free access.)

AGENCIES OF RECONCILIATION

"The position we're trying to develop here at the American Jewish Committee," notes Rabbi Tanenbaum, "is that it is not for the benefit of the

'The issue is 'How do we help each other?'... on the basis of the moral and ethical integrity of our own positions.'

because of a tendency on the part of some non-Jews to identify Israel's right to existence with Israel's politics, but Rabbi Tanenbaum points out that what is at stake is "the moral, human, and legal issue of the right of one of the nations of the United Nations to survive, not to be continually threatened with harassment and war. It was only that appeal that Jewish leaders made to Christian leaders and the Christian community... Now, in the question of the politics of Israel, you have as much right to disagree as the Jews themselves. Israelis and the Jewish community have disagreed with the Israeli government on any number of issues." Rabbi Tanenbaum gave as an example the question of Palestinian self-determination, noting that what has been called the best case made by anyone in America for self-determination was made in Commentary, the journal of opinion issued by the American Jewish Committee.

Referring to the double standard of the new left, the rabbi criticized a policy which would support the right to exist of the Third World nations which couldn't last without outside assistance, while questioning the right to survival of a sovereign state validated by the UN and all the nations of the world.

PROBLEMS AND POLARIZATION

Rabbi Tanenbaum notes that large numbers of Catholics have intuitively understood the concern of the Jews for their co-religionists in Israel because

Palestinian refugees as a call to Christian charity, although the Arab governments have thwarted attempts to solve the problem because of the political advantages of keeping the refugees issue alive. If Catholic authorities do not discipline these people, the rabbi believes, a serious polarization of Jews and Christians can develop.

Rabbi Tanenbaum also spoke of the recent controversy involving an editorial in L'Osservatore Romano as an example of polarizing activity. The paper had editorialized in support of a letter written to the Pope by three Jordanian bishops, criticizing the "Judaization" of Jerusalem, and calling for the internationalization of the city. Rabbi Tanenbaum said "they didn't write editorials about the Jordanization of Jerusalem in 1948," and noted that Israeli Muslims still can't make pilgrimages to Mecca. While much has been made of the editorial, many people have denied that it expressed the thinking of Pope Paul; Msgr. John Osterreicher, director of the Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University, and Archbishop Pio Laghi, apostolic nuncio to Israel, have disowned the editorial as unrepresentative of the views of the pope.

(Rabbi Tanenbaum also noted that Abp. Laghi has been doing excellent, balanced work in Israel, and is in the middle of negotiations for "extraterritorialization" which would turn over Christian holy places to Christian authorities

peace of the world, or for the people of that area, for either Christians or Jews to support extremists, and that we ought to be engaged in trying to de-polarize the conflict, ought to be engaged in what we profess to be, agencies of reconciliation. We ought to be working towards solutions that will serve all the people in the area, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, because they're going to have to live together for a very long time."

Rabbi Tanenbaum praised Father Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., president of Notre Dame University, for his involvement in activities such as the Middle East Regional Social, Economic, and Development Program, which is working on plans to introduce a fast-feed nuclear reactor in the Sinai desert; this would convert the Sinai into "an agricultural-industrial complex which will serve the Egyptian people on one side, the Jordanians and the Israelis on the other, and will provide a basis for settling Palestinian and Israeli refugees... This is the kind of humane and morally concerned approach that we in the Jewish community want to work on especially with Catholics."

THE JEW IN SOVIET RUSSIA

Another area of obvious concern to the Jewish community is the plight of Jews in Russia, an area publicized by the militant Jewish Defense League. Rabbi Tanenbaum notes that "The Jewish community cannot afford the luxury of having a double

standard about extremism. We cannot, with one side of the mouth condemn the radical left, radical revolutionaries, and Black Panthers who are threatening Jews with bombs, and we can't condemn Arab terrorists, and then find reasons for supporting Jewish terrorists ... In terms of real effectiveness, the JDL has gotten publicity, but more for itself than for its cause; its publicity has distorted the cause and alienated many people." Rabbi Tanenbaum criticized the JDL for its alliance with Joseph Colombo, which he felt would alienate many people.

A sense of frustration and powerlessness has caused Jews, as well as the rest of society, to feel that they can't change things; the work of the JDL is satisfying because it produces instant gratification, "something is done," points out the rabbi, "but when people understand the work the Jewish institutions have done, they have second thoughts about the JDL."

Rabbi Tanenbaum notes that in the recent trial of Ruth Alexanderovitch in Russia, sentences were less severe than anyone had expected. He credits for this the communications system and networks of relationships that produced interventions by many religions, which created the pressure necessary to lighten the sentences.

"The caricatures of the establishment are just that," says Rabbi Tanenbaum. "We deserve criticism for all sorts of things, for we can always go beyond what we are doing, but the problem is that most people don't know what our institutions have done, and if there's a choice between telling people what we do and doing it, why there's no choice."

INTERRELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION

While the Jewish community feels that much progress has been made on the part of the attitudes of the Christian towards Jews, it has been suggested that the feelings of European backgrounds tend to distrust Catholics because Jews in Europe have had nightmarish experiences with Christians as anti-semites. Second generation Jews are cautious; while many welcome Vatican II, they want to wait and see if it will have any real affect. Third and fourth generation Jews, who have had greater interaction with their peers in the Catholic community, tend to be less suspicious, less hostile, and more open to creating new relationships.

"Isolation is a factor; when people don't relate to each other as persons, with common concerns and common fears, they tend to perceive each other in inherited mythologies and stereotypes. Our whole commitment here has been to build opportunities for commitment, for dialogue."

One area where Rabbi Tanenbaum feels there hasn't been enough dialogue is in the right to life. "There has not been enough communication between Catholics and Jews on the subjects of abortion, euthanasia, and related subjects, and it's unfortunate, because this has been seen as a 'Catholic thing,' and there's a regressive reaction to a pre-ecumenical period where 'this is the Catholics imposing their views on society.' For example, there is a plurality of views on abortion in the Jewish community, from a position identical to the Catholic, to a middle ground, to a totally liberal view.

"It's not too late for Protestants, Catholics, and

Jews to engage in serious conversations on what are the theological and moral questions raised, and if we finally disagree on the ways we deal with the question, certainly we must agree that crucially involved here is the whole meaning of human life and reverence for human life. My hope is that at an early day we can begin to come together on this. When you don't have adequate interreligious communication, you get polarization almost by default, and then a distortion of the issue itself."

CHRISTIAN ECUMENISM

One of the most important essays Rabbi Tanenbaum ever wrote was a recent piece "Is Christian Ecumenism a Threat to Jews?", syndicated by the New York Times Feature Syndicate. The basic thesis of the article was that an emphasis on Christian ecumenism which overlooks the Jews, especially in areas of social action, can lead to a structural situation in which Jews will become more and more isolated from Christian action, reversing the ecumenical trend.

Rabbi Tanenbaum notes that the reaction on the article has been positive; Protestant leaders (who, because of their own internal problems were more vulnerable to the charge than Catholics) have written the rabbi to tell him he was correct, and that they will make every effort to correct the situation. Catholic reaction has also been supportive.

In a pamphlet on "The Vatican Statement on the Jews — Five Years After," which was distributed worldwide Rabbi Tanenbaum gives generous coverage to the guidelines on Catholic-Jewish relations issued jointly by the dioceses of New York,

Brooklyn, and Rockville Center last year. Noting that it is still too early to determine where these guidelines will lead, Rabbi Tanenbaum pointed out that the newly created Committee on Catholic-Jewish relations in the Archdiocese was initiated by Cardinal Cooke as an outgrowth of the guidelines.

"It is ironical," says the rabbi, "that we spend so much of our time acting as a catalyst for Catholic-Jewish relations all over the world, while our own back yard is the most neglected area."

Rabbi Tanenbaum recently returned from a meeting with Christian and Jewish leaders in Minnesota, a meeting that was prompted by the article on Christian Ecumenism. "The leaders hardly knew each other, and this was in a heterogeneous community. The biggest gap was between the Protestants and Catholics; the image the Protestants had of the Catholic Church as a monolith was unbelievable. But as a result of spending two days in a retreat house, at the end there was such a sense of community that they resolved to meet annually.

"We have begun to establish institutes of this kind in every major city, and where we have, there are cells of people who have begun to look upon history not as a hitching post for the past, but as a guiding post for the future. The stereotypic ways with which they have always looked at each other begin to fall down, and they begin to look at each other as persons. A feeling of confidence and trust, a sense of mutual helpfulness begins to develop, and that's what we're all about — building a human community between people who share a very great deal as brothers and sisters who inherit a common covenant."

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De-Myth, SLU Graduates Told

The demythologizing of three cultural strains of thought currently enjoying widespread acceptance among western thinkers was undertaken by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum in a commencement address at St. Louis University.

Rabbi Tanenbaum pinpointed the "current mythologies" as: the notion that this is a "post-Judeo-Christian age;" the belief that today's institutions are essentially corrupt and must be destroyed; and the concept that the world community should be built on a western conception of pluralism devoid of diversity.

Unless these three thoughts are demythologized, he said, they will "contribute to the serious undermining of the very humane and civilized goals which they are intended to serve."

Rabbi Tanenbaum, national inter-religious director of the American Jewish Committee, was presented a honorary doctor of letters degree by SLU as a man who has "sought to heal the wounds of division" among men and "striven to build bridges to understanding in the spirit of brotherly charity." He was among 1,464 persons receiving degrees from the university in week-end ceremonies.

Not only is this not a post-Judeo-Christian age, Rabbi Tanenbaum insisted, but "this moment in history can in truth . . . be more accurately described as 'pre-Judeo-Christian.'"

Discussing the modern emergence of a "clear consciousness of the human family," Rabbi Tanenbaum said this consciousness has not arisen in opposition to the Judaic-Christian tradition but as a result of it.

"Anyone with the least religious and historic understanding would have to acknowledge in all honesty and integrity," he said, "that the deep-seated vision of the unity of mankind as we know it in the western world is unthinkable and unimaginable without its profound rootedness in the central Biblical and prophetic visions of Judaism and Christianity."

Rabbi Tanenbaum also asserted that "it is no accident that the boldest and most advanced development of science and technology have taken place in western civilization which has been decisively shaped by the Judeo-Christian view."



Richard C. Finke

At St. Louis University commencement exercises are from left, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, Father Paul Reinert, S.J., and John Joseph Cardinal Carberry.

"It is increasingly clear that the so-called third world will enter into the twentieth century to the degree that it appropriates modern scientific, cultural and technological devices," he said.

Thus, he said, "the crucial challenge for the Jew and the Christian in the Western world" is to assure that Judeo-Christian civilization mediates "the fruits and benefits of a scientific-technological development to the third world without the imperialism and triumphalism that has for so long dominated much of the posture of western man to non-western societies, religions and cultures."

"In that sense," he continued, "the third world represents the pre-Judeo-Christian-condition."

Discussing current anti-institutionalism, Rabbi Tanenbaum said its "most serious failing is that it de-

flects persons genuinely concerned about necessary social change from dealing effectively with a rational and legitimate reform and renewal that all institutions require."

He said institutions — including universities, churches and governments — can serve man and must be reformed rather than destroyed.

"In a free society the organization must never be allowed to become an end in itself for which the individual is just the means . . . it must never substitute its partial interest for the common weal."

But, he said, "the essential and real issue" requiring understanding today "is not that of the destruction of the 'establishment' but rather what is required of us to transform institutions in order that they serve in maximum ways the human purpose for which they were initially established."

Rabbi Tanenbaum said that "in many ways, modern society has become abstract in the experience and consciousness of man." Growing religious denominationalism and ethnic identification, he said, are "reactions against this 'abstract society' in which individuals feel powerless, frustrated and without control over their lives."

The respect for particular group experience which has emerged in the United States over the past century is "a unique achievement in of American pluralism," Rabbi Tanenbaum said and should not be ignored in building a world community.

An earlier ideology identified Americanism with Protestant evangelicalism which contributed to the Western mythology upon which some thinkers wish to base global pluralism, he said.

"In a world in which two-thirds of the human family is neither white, nor Jewish, nor Christian, a refurbished western evangelicalism, re-

inforced by Anglo-Saxon hubris, or arrogant pride, can be the surest way of leading to disaster on a global scale," he said.

"If we have learned anything worthwhile from the American experiment, and particularly from the Jewish-Christian dialogue," Rabbi Tanenbaum continued, "it is the sure knowledge that Jews and Christians are learning to live together as brothers, are seeking to build community without compromise of their respective differences and are learning to celebrate the wisdom that unity in the midst of diversity may after all be the will of God."

Other speakers at Saturday commencement exercises at Kiel Auditorium included Father Paul C. Reinert, S.J., university president who conferred the degrees, and Michael Garanzini, student speaker.

Father Reinert warned the graduates against "being cowed by the seemingly insoluble problems of our

times" and urged them to meet the challenges the problems present.

"No one of you graduates can or should lightly dismiss the crisis of urban decay, environmental destruction, racial discrimination, our seemingly hopeless entanglement in Southeast Asia, the prospects for nuclear war, overpopulation and all the other frustrating problems of our time."

Neither, Father Reinert told the graduates, should they "succumb to the myth of regress, with its cynicism and stylish disenchantment" which is as "dangerous as naive optimism."

He urged the graduates not to be "ashamed of hoping, afraid to try" and said affirmation to life is "particularly appropriate for the graduates of a Catholic university, for ours is a faith of hope."

"We are the Resurrection People. It is your business as Christians to try."

ARCHIVES

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וְכֹד אֱלֹהִים יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל

Jews, Baptists Score Repression in USSR

Baptists and Jews share much in common, both in "rich spiritual heritage and in historic experience," including the contemporary experience of persecution in the Soviet Union.

This common ground was emphasized in a resolution unanimously adopted by a group of nearly 40 Baptist and Jewish scholars June 16 at the close of a four-day conference in Cincinnati on "The People of God: Jewish and Baptist Perspectives."

The resolution was offered by Dr. M. Thomas Starkes, secretary of the Interfaith Witness Department of the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board, one of the two sponsors of the second Jewish-Baptist Scholars' Conference. The other sponsor was the American Jewish Committee. Sessions took place at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, national director of the AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department, gave a summary report of the conference in which he called for "a joint secretariat for the purpose of exploring and implementing programs that will help overcome misunderstanding and build a community of mutual respect and trust between Baptists and Jews everywhere."

Rabbi Tanenbaum's report, also unanimously adopted by the conference, proposed that the new secretariat promote joint studies on Baptist and Jewish theology, joint consultation of seminarians of the two groups, sponsorship of regional and local counterparts of the scholars' conference, and institutes for lay people, particularly in the area of social justice.

The conference authorized the preparation of a joint document elaborating common principles and shared objectives. Among the issues to be explored are religious liberty, church-state relations, social justice and world peace, prejudice and anti-Semitism, and personal ethics and morals, particularly in relation to

the problems of drugs and alcohol.

Dr. Starkes' resolution called attention to the history of persecution of both Baptists and Jews in their struggle "to be loyal to their faiths built on the freedom of the individual concepts."

The resolution also expressed "deep concern over the denial of fundamental human rights of Baptists, other Christians and Jewish persons in the Soviet Union" and appealed to President Nixon "and the proper U.S. government officials to intercede" for Ruth Aleksandrovich and "other defendants of conscience who have been repressed."



College Dean

Sister Mary Ann Connolly, O.P., a native of Cincinnati, will become academic dean of Albertus Magnus college, New Haven, Conn., July 1. An associate professor of Spanish, she joined the Albertus Magnus faculty in 1965 and served as assistant academic dean during the 1970-71 college year. She is a graduate of Ohio Dominican college, Columbus, and received the Ph. D. degree from Yale university in 1969. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John J. Connolly, reside at 7681 Gwenwyn drive, Amberley Village.

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