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The Jewish Poor: New Facts

Naomi Levine

In 1970 the Commission on Urban Affairs of the American Jewish Congress published a report on "The Jewish Poor and the War Against Poverty." The report noted that, from the figures available, it was highly probable the Jewish poor were more numerous than had previously been assumed and were not being cared for properly by either government programs or private philanthropy.

Among the suggestions made in the American Jewish Congress report was the recommendation that, in New York, a citywide Jewish antipoverty council be created as an experiment to coordinate the activities of the Jewish community as they relate to the Jewish poor. This suggestion was accepted by the major Jewish organizations in New York and such a coordinating council has now been formed. The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies donated $40,000 to the council, and the city of New York has pledged almost a million dollars for programs and projects.

The American Jewish Congress also recommended that one of the functions of such a council should be the collection and maintenance of current data concerning the Jewish poor. For one of the basic problems in discussing the Jewish poor is the lack of available demographic data. Government departments do not keep a separate listing of Jewish poor. Similarly, poverty statistics are broken down into black and Puerto Rican and "others." The latter term includes, besides Jews, Italians, Poles, Greeks, etc. There is thus no source that one may turn to for reasonably current statistical information. This absence of reliable data has seriously hampered any intelligent handling of the problem of the Jewish poor.

We welcome, therefore, the recent statistical analysis released last month by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, entitled "New York's Jewish Poor and Jewish Working Class: Economic Status and Social Needs." The research for this study was undertaken by the Center for New York City Affairs, of the New School for Social Research. It is an important and long overdue addition to current efforts to understand the scope and demography of the Jewish poor.

The major findings of this report are:

140,300 families including 272,000 individuals, or 15.1 percent of the Jewish population of 1.8 million in the city, are poor or near poor.

190,300 families including 423,000 individuals are between the near poverty level and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) moderate level of living. These equal almost a quarter of the Jewish population and constitute the Jewish working class.

512,400 families including over one million individuals, about 60 percent of the Jewish population, have incomes above the BLS moderate level including 343,700 families with incomes above the BLS higher standard of living.

About half the Jewish poor and near poor are aged individuals or couples. About two-fifths are three- to five-person families including female headed

NAOMI LEVINE *is executive director of the American Jewish Congress.*

Christian Evangelism and Jewish Responses: An Exchange

Henry Siegman

Key '73, the ecumenical evangelical campaign, whose goal it is to "call the continent to Christ," has been labeled a threat to Judaism and Jewish life in America. Jewish reactions that have appeared in Jewish and Christian publications have been accusatory and hostile, and some have bordered on the hysterical.

The tone of this reaction has been set, not surprisingly, not by spokesmen of the Jewish religious community, but by officials of Jewish defense organizations. I believe it is important to examine the assumptions that underlie these responses before the process of mindless conformity—all too prevalent in Jewish life—has fully run its course and this defensive view of Key '73 has solidified into the "Jewish position." (Already, two religious organizations, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Rabbinical Council of America, have fallen in line and denounced Key '73).

Let me state at the outset that I disagree with the alarmist view of Key '73. I believe this view to be determined by considerations that are inimical to the real interests of religious Jewry. Furthermore, an examination of the issues involved will reveal a significant divergence that separates those for whom interreligious contacts—whether they favor or oppose them—involve fundamental questions of faith, and those for whom it is essentially a question of improved human relations.

Rabbi Solomon Bernards, Director of the Department of Interreligious Cooperation of the Anti-Defamation League, begins his article in *The Christian Century,* "Key 73—a Jewish View," with an affirmation of "the right of all Christian individuals to proclaim their witness as vigorously and forthrightly as they are able." But everything in his article which follows this affirmation really constitutes a denial of it. He states that "as a believing person, I welcome concerted efforts to give public visibility to religious commitment and principle." It becomes quickly evident, however, that his welcome stops short of tolerating a change in the secular lifestyle of our society. The prospect of an intensive religious atmosphere permeating our public life frightens him; he finds it "stifling" and "suppressive." While this is ultimately a matter of personal esthetics with which I do not quarrel, I *do* quarrel with two of his implications. First, one cannot affirm the right to "witness" but object to its obvious consequences. What Bernards finds so objectionable is precisely the life-style to which the Christian evangelist witnesses. Second, whatever one's own view of a life-style which encourages daily prayer and Bible study, it is clearly not a threat to Judaism and Jewish religious values. The very least one can say is that from a Jewish religious perspective, it is far less of a threat than our current secular life-style, which is contemptuous of piety, prayer and Bible study—which after all, are the very stuff of Jewish religious existence.

The inconsistencies of Jewish ecumenicists who are associated with secular Jewish organizations sometimes boggle the mind. A major critic of Key '73 is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee. He has criticized vigorously what he sees as the pernicious implications of Christian evangelism for religious pluralism —its triumphalism and exclusivism. But it is only a matter of months since Tanenbaum attended a Christian Crusade meeting as Billy Graham's guest; since he and his organization have been promoting a film on Israel produced by Graham's organization, which in its complete version presents the State of Israel as a prelude to the Parousia (the second coming of Christ), a time when everyone—including all Jews—is expected to embrace Jesus Christ; since he has been calling on the Jewish community to reexamine its traditional alliances with liberal Protestantism and to consider new alliances with evangelical Protestantism; since he joined with Billy Graham and Bob Hope in a superpatriotic Fourth of July "Salute to America," which did little to advance the "pluralism" and "individualism" that are now seen as threatened by Key '73 (while, at the same time, in a different setting, he warned against the dangers of civil religion!).

Such embarrassing inconsistencies are the result of an approach to Christian-Jewish relations that is neither an authentic expression of Jewish faith nor takes seriously the Christian faith commitment. Rather, it is a manipulative approach, determined by considerations entirely extrinsic to the real religious interests of Judaism and Christianity.

Of course, I understand Tanen-

RABBI SIEGMAN *is executive vice president of the Synagogue Council of America.*

baum's "opening to the right." It is motivated by a belief that political power is shifting, or has shifted, to the conservative forces in America, and he believes it is therefore in the interest of the Jewish community to form new alliances with these forces. Whatever may be said in support of such a strategy—I am not personally convinced that even on pragmatic grounds the short-range advantages will not be more than cancelled out by long-range disadvantages—the fact remains that such considerations are extrinsic to the interreligious enterprise, reveal a manipulative approach, and ultimately trip over their own contradictions.

There is another problem that deserves comment, although it can only be dealt with marginally in the context of this article. Bernards, Tanenbaum, and others have urged Christians to recognize Judaism as a legitimate avenue of salvation for Jews. A major ground of their criticism of Key '73 is the refusal of evangelical Christianity to accept this notion. I believe that upon closer examination, this criticism must be seen as problematic, at best.

Whether or not Christianity confers a salvific status on Judaism is clearly a Christian theological issue, just as the question of the salvific status of Christianity in Judaism is an internal Jewish theological issue. A Christian understanding of Judaism can emerge only out of the Christian faith experience. There is a certain irrelevance to suggestions made by Jews to Christians concerning the status of Judaism in Christian faith, for no Jew can speak out of the Christian faith experience.

Furthermore, the moment the question of "status" ceases to be an internal theological issue and becomes a subject of "negotiations" across faith lines, then each side has a right to expect a quid pro quo from the other. While such give-and-take is desirable from a human relations point of view, it is obviously destructive of the religious integrity of the participants in the dialogue.

I do not personally entertain any great enthusiasm for Key '73. The emphasis on sin, the promise of easy salvation, its promotional and manipulative approach—none of these is calculated to inspire confidence in the depth of its spirituality. But surely, no one who has prided himself in his friendship with Billy Graham can suddenly feign outrage at what are after all the hallmarks of fundamentalist evangelical Protestantism. In any event, these are not "Jewish" reservations, and they do not offer grounds for Jewish objections to Key '73.

The threat to Jewish survival in modern society come not from Key '73, or related evangelical efforts. It comes, instead, from religious indifference, from the allurements of a secular and irreligious society. Intermarriage, which according to the recent CJFWF survey is approaching the 50 percent mark, is not the result of apostasy to the Church, but of indifference to Judaism, specifically, and to religion, generally. An intensely Christian environment, far from posing a threat, can in fact make for a more traditional Jewish community. The Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Immanuel Jakobovitz, wrote recently:

> It cannot be overemphasized that the danger to Judaism today no longer lies in the allurement of Baptism exercised by a devoutly Christian society. It may perhaps result in a handful of defections from the Jewish faith. Instead, it lies in the threat of indifference in a pagan society which has already claimed hundreds of thousands of spiritual casualties from traditional Judaism. [*Judaism*, Winter 1966]

I have pointed out in a different context that an interesting aspect of the secularist orientation of Jewish defense and social service agencies is the subtle way in which these agencies have historically misapplied the church-state separation principle to eliminate religious influence from American public life—as distinguished from the institutions of government. This they have done on the assumption that Jews are most secure in a secularized society in which religious differences are least visible.*

Such a view is wholly antithetical to traditional Jewish values. A policy aimed at weakening the influence of religion on society—in its public no less than its private manifestations—is a perversion of Judaism. Furthermore, the assumption that a Jew would not stand out in a secularized society is based on a conception of religion as a compartmentalized aspect of life, something to be expressed only in the privacy of one's home and synagogue. It should be clear that nothing could be as foreign to Judaism as such a view. The distinctiveness of a religious Jew should be most strikingly conspicuous in a secular setting.

The defensiveness of Jewish reactions to Key '73 is not only unwarranted; it is harmful to Jewish interests. By marshaling inappropriately the entire history of forced conversions, pogroms and persecutions, as Bernards does in his article, and to suggest, however indirectly, that these are the dangers that Key '73 poses, is to promote those feelings of hostility and bitterness which Bernards warns against in his article. That Christians cannot engage in evangelical witness without Jews invoking the specter of anti-Semitism and pogroms must clearly become a source of resentment.

What I object to most, however,

*"Is the Synagogue Becoming a Church, the Rabbi A Priest?" Henry Siegman, *Judaism*, Winter 1972.

are the imputations of Jewish insecurity and internal weakness implicit in this defensiveness—as if Judaism stands on so frail a reed as to be blown away by the slightest w that comes along. It is an implication that is not lost on Christian evangelists and, more importantly, on our own youth.

I do not for a moment believe that any significant number of Jews will be won over to Christianity by Key '73. Those few who will convert will do so because of our own failures, because we have allowed Jewish life to become so secularized, so emptied of transcendent meaning, that some of our children will turn to Christianity and to other faiths in order to fill a terrible spiritual void. The answer to this problem is not an offensive against Key '73; that would be a irection and utter waste of Jev energies and resources. What is needed is a painful reexamination of the priorities of American Jewish life. We have in recent years paid much lip service to the need for such a reordering of priorities. The r ber of Jews who will embrace Christianity during the course of Key '73 will constitute a measure of how wide is still the abyss between our rhetoric and our commitment.

Solomon S. Bernards

My published views on the implications for Jews of the Key '73 campaign of Christian evangelism currently being conducted in this country are to be found in two articles—"The Jesus Movement" and "Key 73—A Jewish View"—which appeared, respectively, in the November 1973 *ADL Bulletin* and the January 3, 1973 issue of *The Christian Century*.

On examining Rabbi Henry Sieg-

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man's unfair interpretation of my perspectives, I must admit that my initial impulse was simply to invite readers to look at my two pieces, compare them with what my critic says they mean, and let it go at that. After all, the day is short, and there is so much work to be done—why distract oneself with replying to irresponsible criticism? In point of fact, I invite interested readers to drop me a note (at 315 Lexington Avenue, New York City 10016), and I shall have both articles forwarded to them, so that they can judge for themselves.

But Rabbi Siegman has raised other issues—relating not only to Key '73, but to the broader questions of community wisdom and strategy concerning Christian evangelism, and these questions deserve discussion.

I judge the matter of Christian evangelism seriously. It is, in my view, an extremely sensitive and complex problem, fraught with serious implications for Jewish-Christian relations, and therefore requiring clear thinking, objectivity and tact. At the same time, no issue which has come on the Jewish community agenda in recent years has been more "grass-roots" than this.

The concern with Key '73 and related phenomena now being discussed by boards of rabbis, Jewish college-age and high school youth associations, women's groups, and Jewish community relations offices and organizations, is not contrived. It is a response to questions being raised by rabbis, educators, synagogue officials, and most of all, pathetically anguished and perplexed parents around the country, asking for guidance, insight and leadership.

What is the problem? We are currently in the midst of a mood of anti-establishmentarianism, wherein the established norms and structures of society are being questioned and rejected. The drug culture is the most prominent symbol of this revolt, but there are other manifestations, such as the astrology, witchcraft and Satanism cults. Other alternative life-styles have been offered, still in the anti-establishment mood directed to newly-discovered or newly-revealed faiths, such as the various Hindu and Buddhist oriented groups like Hari Krishna and others which are under the leadership of resident or visiting guru-teachers. Last but not least, there is the Jesus Movement: the Jesus Freaks, the Jesus People, and their most extreme expression, the Children of God communes.

Turning our attention to the Jesus Movement, we find that these groups make no formal demands upon the prospect, no formal request to affirm a Christian creed, no formal affiliation with a church or a church organization—but zealous, endless hymn-singing, repetition of key New Testament phrases and passages, virtual deification of the Jesus figure, a very simplistic, literalist understanding of the Gospels, and a passionate search for other adherents.

In this context, the evangelistic organizations of a more normative inhibited type, but nevertheless ardently looking for converts—such as the Campus Crusade for Christ, the Youth for Christ, Young Life, the Navigators' Student Program, the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, the missions-to-the-Jews groups, and others—have found new opportunities for work. Their activities have been particularly focused on children, youth and young people. Contrary to regulations in some countries which require the reaching of the age of majority to change one's religion, there are of course no such restrictions in this land.

Jews have been affected by the Jesus Revolution, naturally. On college and high school, and even junior high school campuses, in the evangelical-conscious sectors of this country, on the West Coast, in the Bible Belts of the South and Midwest, and in pockets of zealotry in

the East, Jews have been attracted. They do not necessarily come from the ranks of those with little or no Jewish education, be it added, nor from homes where *Shabbat, kashrut* and other Jewish values are not respected and observed. How many Jews have been brought into the orbit of the Jesus groups it is difficult to say. Probably the number of "official" conversions to Christianity has been small, although every loss to the Jewish community, whether of one or of many, is seriously to be reckoned with. Very likely, there is a larger number of Jews, particularly young people, who, in one way or another, have been wrapped up in one of the Jesus groups, attending and/or playing in Gospel rock concerts, or dance performances, or rap sessions, or taking free recorder or Israeli dance lessons with guileful missionary-teachers, etc. Often, parents learn of these interests of their children long after extensive exposure to these groups, and after emotional involvements have been deepened, so that there is a *fait accompli* situation attended with much anguish and confusion, not to speak of dissension and the fragmenting of families into warring units.

We Jews have had contact with Christian evangelism for a long time. As a matter of fact, from the very birth of Christianity, disputes and arguments with Jews about whether or not their hoped-for Messiah had come were punctuated by proof-texts (Christian allegorical and figurative interpretations of Hebrew verses which "proved" to Jews that they had betrayed their own sacred Scriptures), and, when the proof-texts proved unconvincing, by that handy weapon of the frustrated, hateful name-calling. Thus Jews are vilified in numerous New Testament passages as spiritually blind, stubborn, demonically perverse, corrupt and degenerate, culminating in the climactic charge of having been responsible for the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. In addition, the Jewish religion is described as spiritless, mindlessly legalistic, without inwardness or creativity. The Fathers of the Church, in the centuries following its founding, decided that Israel, the religion and the people, had, in rejecting Jesus, forfeited its chosenness, and that the Church was henceforth the New Israel.

It is this invidious estimate of Jews and Judaism in the Gospel writings which infects and reinfects every generation of New Testament readers, and which reinforces and nurtures anti-Semitic attitudes in some 40% of Christians in this country today, as the research under the direction of Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, in the study, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism,* indicated. With a religious image of Jews which is touched with contempt, there is fertile ground for believing and accepting the numerous anti-Jewish stereotypes which abound in our society. Reading the Gospels with a literalist, this-is-the-inerrant-sacred-word approach, without historical perspective or theological sophistication, the adherents of the evangelistic groups caught up in the Jesus movement are willy-nilly nurturing the principal ingredients of anti-Semitic attitudes. For Jews who are affiliated with the Jesus groups, this immersion into New Testament literalism must be mind-blowing, and a sure introduction to intense self-hatred.

The current approach to Jews on the part of the evangelistic groups, as well as the missions-to-the-Jews groups, involves another dimension, which it is well that Jews be aware of. It is the persuasion of deception and fraud, of a new terminology, of smooth, honeyed words, of a relaxation of the requirements of formal conversion, of the assurance that one can be both a Christian and a Jew at the same time.

It runs something like this: the Jewish prospect is not asked to give up anything of his background—he can retain interest in the synagogue, in Jewish rites and ritual objects (some of the Jews for Jesus wear embroidered skullcaps and fringes dangling at their sides), in the cause of Israel, Soviet Jewry, etc.; no confession of Christian faith, no baptism, is for the moment required—all one need do is become a "completed Jew" and accept Jesus. Jews are not to be talked to in terms of Christ, conversion, the cross, virgin mother, missionary, or the Gospel —in their place one is to use recommended equivalents—completion or fulfillment instead of conversion, altar of wood in place of cross, mother of the Messiah for virgin mother, minister for missionary, good news for Gospel. It is advisable to express concern for the Jewish interests of the prospect, such as intermarriage, Israel, anti-Semitism, and the like.

The cruel deception in this strategy is the claim that one can be a Jew and a Christian at one and the same time, as if to assume that Jewishness is mere ethnicity, mere family-togetherness, and is not indissolubly linked with Judaism and the Jewish religion. "God, Israel and Torah are one," is the way the mystical tradition puts it, and the millennial experience of the Jewish people affirms it.

Key '73 is in the genre of revivalist, fundamentalist Christian evangelism. It was mounted some six years ago by a core of evangelicals led by Dr. Carl Henry and the Reverend Billy Graham, who issued a call to all American Christians, regardless of denominational perspective, to unite in a consolidated, federated effort to call America to Christ. For a denomination to have resisted pleas to join in Christian evangelism, it would have involved taking an official stance against a crucial article of Christian faith, much as the responsible lead-

ership of these denominations found the appeal pietistic, monolithic, and narrowly focused on individual salvation to the exclusion of the social gospel. Thus, all of the mainstream denominations—with the exception of the Episcopalians, the northern Presbyterians and United Church of Christ—joined hands with 130 or so smaller denominations, institutions, and evangelistic crusade groups, in this effort. The apparent aim is to put the stamp of Christian pietism and fervor on American society, along with effecting a possible turn-around in church affiliation, attendance, giving, and zeal for converts. The success of these thrusts remains to be seen.

It is all a matter of one's point of view, I suppose. From the standpoint of the evangelizing Christian, he is engaged in an act of love, he is conferring a favor on a non-Christian, especially a Jew, in proclaiming the good news of Jesus the Christ. On the other hand, Jews, as the object of this proselytizing, perceive of Christian evangelism as another reminder of Christianity's view that Judaism is flawed, inadequate, like a three-legged table, unable to sustain itself. Furthermore, the appeal to convert is asking the Jew to commit spiritual suicide, to disappear as a faith-community.

Both of these reactions to Christian evangelism undermine Jewish-Christian relationships on the basis of mutual respect and trust. No dialogue of lasting or fruitful worth can be sustained when one partner to the discussion is committed to the spiritual obliteration of the other. This point was one which the late Abraham Joshua Heschel made repeatedly and with unflagging persistence at several dialogue seminars which I attended a number of years ago, at which he was a principal speaker. And, as he put it in an interview which he gave to *The Jerusalem Post* of July 9, 1965, "The idea that Judaism is a passing phenomenon and the hope of (their) conversion on the part of many Christians makes a genuine contact between Jews and Christians an impossibility. To put it bluntly, if we dedicate our lives to the preservation of Judaism, how can we take seriously a friendship that is conditioned ultimately on the hope and expectation that the Jew will disappear? How would a Christian feel if we Jews were engaged in an effort to bring about the liquidation of Christianity?"

In the light of the above, the concern which I have with Key '73, and its proponents, is that it has given a new status and legitimacy to proselytizing thrusts directed at Jews by evangelicals and missions-to-Jews groups, and therefore threatens to undermine the fabric of sound, ongoing relationships between Jews and Christians. No one is talking about Jewish fears of forced conversions today—this is utterly ridiculous. But the evident relish with which some evangelicals are looking forward to successes among Jews is disturbing. The magazine *Christianity Today*, fountainhead of evangelical Christianity, stated in an editorial (Dec. 8, 1972):

"The great problem for the Jewish community is that substantial numbers of Jews are turning to Christ and that Key '73 may accelerate the trend. But in a free society that guarantees religious liberty, this is a normal risk that all religions must assume."

We are, of course, prepared to take this "normal risk," but it does not mean that we do not have a corresponding responsibility to take three necessary steps: (1) alert the Jewish community to a calm, comprehensive insight into implications of the Jesus Movement and Key '73, (2) urge rabbis, educators, and community workers to proceed with the development of short-range and long-range programming approaches to young and old, in terms of studying the basic differences and the common ground between Judaism and Christianity, understanding the nature of Jewish identity, as well as developing greater rapport with the alienated and estranged among us; (3) call upon the people of goodwill within the Christian community to dissociate themselves from proselytizing efforts directed at Jews and to repudiate the dishonest strategy of the evangelicals and Jews for Jesus missionaries, as inimical to honest Jewish-Christian interchange.

Let me in conclusion point out that all responsible agencies in the Jewish community are concerned about this problem, including all of the religious groupings in the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform traditions, as well as the Synagogue Council of America. Under the umbrella of the NJCRAC task force, these groups have drafted a series of memoranda intended to serve as guidelines for future action. While there is no warrant for an alarmist, panicky attitude, there is a basis for serious concern, not only for the smaller or the larger numbers of Jews who will be attracted to evangelical groups, but for the whole pattern of community relations in this country.

Marc H. Tanenbaum

There is so much in Siegman's article that is intellectually dishonest, cheap and polemical that it would take more space than I am allotted to demonstrate in detail just how potentially divisive and damaging it is to the Jewish community and to Jewish-Christian relations. Perhaps the best course for us would be to ignore entirely his malicious and unfounded statements. But since he does bear the honored title of "rabbi," and since his article does contain a number of unfortunate statements that can be used as proof-texts against the

best interests of the Jewish people, it is necessary that they not be allowed to go uncontested. I will confine myself to four major misrepresentations and distortions in Siegman's incredibly superficial article:

1) *Jewish reaction to Key '73*: It is quite revealing that Siegman does not cite a single text, quotation, phrase, or case history from the several research documents on "Evangelism and the Jews" prepared by the American Jewish Committee. Instead, he resorts to innuendo and invectives, caricaturing our analyses as "hysterical," "alarmist," "inimical to the real interests of religious Jewry," and that the reactions of "secular Jewish defense agencies . . . are not 'Jewish' reservations." That is hardly evidence for a serious argument or for a responsible critique of a significant issue. It is, in fact, little more than crude name-calling and an unbelievably arrogant defamation of any view that does not conform with his own as "un-Jewish."

So "hysterical" and "alarmist" is the position of the American Jewish Committee and of myself "as a major critic of Key '73" that *all* the national religious and communal agencies who constitute the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC)—including the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform congregational constituencies of the Synagogue Council (those "mindless conformists") — have agreed unanimously to send the background document that the AJCommittee prepared on "Key '73" and on "missions-to-the-Jews" groups to all the Jewish community relations councils and rabbinic associations throughout the country as the basis for helping Jewish communities to cope effectively with the actual problems of stepped-up proselytization activities in their neighborhoods and in their colleges and high schools.

And if the AJCommittee's position and my own are "accusatory," "hostile," "hysterical," "alarmist," and "not Jewish," those horrendous qualities apparently have not deterred Henry Siegman from approving personally the AJCommittee's background document on "Key '73" to which he gave the *hechsher* of the Synagogue Council as co-sponsor with the NJCRAC! Thus Siegman is perpetrating a shell game on the press, and on the Jewish and Christian communities, and he ought not to be allowed to get away with it. When you take into account the fact that his constituent organizations have endorsed the position taken by the American Jewish Committee in their sponsorship of the NJCRAC document, it is evident that the Jewish communal agencies are representing "the real interests of religious Jewry" far more authentically than does Siegman, who is obviously speaking only for himself. And the plain truth of the matter is that the organized Jewish community is in no way alarmist; it has a rational concern about a real problem, and it is coming to grips with it with a sane, balanced and sensible approach.

2) *"Faith" versus "human relations"*: Siegman's major attack on the so-called "secular Jewish defense organizations" is based on *his* assumption that a "significant divergence separates those for whom interreligious contacts—whether they favor or oppose them—involve fundamental questions of faith, and those for whom it is essentially a question of improved human relations." And obviously, we are asked to believe that the "interreligious contacts" of the Synagogue Council involve "questions of faith" while those of the AJCommittee and the ADL are based solely on "human relations," which he castigates as "manipulative" and as "extrinsic to the interreligious enterprise."

Why does Siegman deceive the Jewish community and raise false expectations in the Christian community when he knows full well that the Synagogue Council is officially forbidden to deal with "questions of faith" by force of an absolute veto that has been exercised consistently by the Orthodox rabbinic and congregational constituents of the Council? Why does he persist in lying about the actual programs of the Jewish communal bodies, when he knows full well that the AJCommittee and the ADL have done the pioneer and fundamental work in the clarification of theological issues with the leading scholars from all branches of Judaism and Christianity? As any serious, objective, and honest student of Jewish-Christian relations is aware, the major landmark achievements that have resulted in the growing Christian revision of negative and hostile theological perceptions of Judaism, the Jewish people, Israel, the Christian roots of anti-Semitism can be traced directly to the decades of creative initiative, serious theological scholarship, and hard work of the AJCommittee, the ADL, and other Jewish communal bodies.

Neither Henry Siegman nor the Synagogue Council were related in any way whatsoever to the Jewish community's activities that contributed to the adoption of the historic Vatican Council Declaration on non-Christian Religions which opened a whole new chapter in Catholic-Jewish relations. Nor to the 1961 Declaration of the World Council of Churches which called for revision of Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism, and the repudiation of anti-Semitism. Nor are they now related to any of the major programs which we conduct with every mainline Protestant denomination and the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States. (See the "Compendium on Christian Statements and Documents Bearing on Christian-Jewish Relations," available from the AJCommittee, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022). The truth is that were the Jewish communal bodies to aban-

don their interreligious programs on "questions of faith" *and* on "human relations," American Jewry would be left virtually bereft of any effective activity in this field.

Not only it is bad enough that he has made practically no significant, substantive contribution to this vital area, but in an irresponsible and potentially damaging way he is now trying to impede and undermine the constructive work of others. Henry Siegman declares: "A Christian understanding of Judaism can emerge only out of the Christian faith experience. There is therefore a certain irrelevance to suggestions made by Jews to Christians concerning the status of Judaism in Christian faith, for no Jew can speak out of the Christian faith experience."

That, of course, is a half-truth, and one that is truly "inimical to the real interests" of world Jewry. For 1,900 years the Christian community has had "a Christian understanding of Judaism," and for the most part it was negative and hostile. It can be demonstrated decisively that it was not until the Jewish-Christian dialogues, and especially the academic and theological dialogues, were inaugurated by Jewish communal bodies and Christian groups during the past 30 years or so that fundamental revisions took place in the Christian understanding of Judaism, resulting in the unprecedented appreciation of Judaism by growing numbers of Christians as a permanent, living faith community, with the consequent abandonment by many Christians of their conversion efforts among Jews.

For a variety of religious, social, economic, and political reasons, the evangelical Christian community associated with Key '73 is the last major Christian population that we are seeking to confront with the need to bring its "Christian understanding of Judaism" into conformity with the dynamic realities of the Jewish religion and Jewish communal life, as the Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants are well on their way toward doing. As a result of several years of painstaking and sensitive dialogue with major evangelical leaders, we have begun in recent months to see the first signs of positive changes and new thinking. (We are now preparing for publication a document surveying these changes as part of the impact of Key '73 and our work with it in various communities in the United States.)

Now Rabbi Henry Siegman comes along and pontificates that "there is a certain irrelevance to suggestions made by Jews to Christians concerning the status of Judaism in Christian faith." It is difficult and complicated enough to have to deal with hard-core fundamentalists who resist the revision of their attitudes toward Judaism and who prefer being left alone with their anachronistic, status quo theologies that reduce Jews and Judaism to stereotyped candidates for conversion, and nothing else. Why does Henry Siegman, a paid representative of the Jewish community, have to provide them with a *Jewish* justification and rationale for not wanting to change their views?

3) *Key '73 and evangelism*: So pervasive is Siegman's misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the basic issues raised by Key '73's ideology for America, for the place of Judaism in certain evangelical world-views, and of my activities in relation to the evangelical community that they can be characterized as nothing less than a perversion of truth and reality. In this limited space, I cannot deal adequately with all his distortions; and I must therefore invite the reader to read my document on "Evangelism and the Jews" which treats these issues more extensively.

Just several points: "an intensive religious atmosphere permeating our public life" that is based on a vision of America as a "Christian evangelical empire" does frighten me, and it should frighten any Jew who knows anything about the situation of the Jew in that America in which evangelical Christianity and American nationalism were regarded as synonymous. In such "an intensely Christian environment" Jews were second-class citizens, denied the right to vote and to hold public office. Such an "intensely Christian environment" that perceives Jews as "incomplete" and "unfulfilled" may make for a traditional Jewish ghetto, but it will not make for the support of a pluralism in which Jews continue to be full partners, free to be themselves religiously, culturally, socially, economically, and politically.

To challenge those evangelical assumptions about the nature of American society and the proselytizing view toward Jews implicit in the Key '73 campaign slogan and program objectives ("to reach every person in North America with the Gospel of Jesus Christ during 1973") is not a sign of "Jewish insecurity and internal weakness." On the contrary, only Jews deeply rooted in their Jewish faith and proud of the honor and dignity of their traditions and their people would have the security and the moral courage to confront such a movement and to demand an honest and just response to the legitimate Jewish questions that we pose. Those who provided justifications and rationales for Christians not to modify their misperceptions of Jews are the ones who suffer from a failure of nerve and basic Jewish insecurity which should disqualify them from representing the Jewish cause.

4) *Jewish survival and religious indifference*: In our document on "Evangelism and the Jews" we made clear that whatever defections of Jewish young people to Christianity we will experience will grow far more out of our own failures to

make Judaism a living, meaningful reality than from other causes. So, here too, Siegman offers us no new revelation. The only differences in our positions is that while Siegman merely talks about the "religious indifference" of Jewish young people as a threat to Jewish continuity, and the need for "reordering Jewish priorities," it is the so-called Jewish agencies which he constantly and falsely maligns as "secular"—such as the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds and the American Jewish Committee—that carried out the most extensive and searching analyses and programs dealing with the enrichment of Jewish religious, cultural, and social life. Let him produce a single document or program that can begin to compare with the task force work of the American Jewish Committee on the American synagogue, the American rabbinate, Jewish family life, Jewish youth, Jewish academicians, Jewish women.

And finally, the time is past due that the Christian as well as the Jewish communities come to terms with the fact that—contrary to Siegman's incessant polemic on the point—there is no single Jewish agency today, with the possible exception of what remains of the Jewish Bund—that professes an ideology of secularism. If Siegman has concrete evidence to the contrary, I challenge him to produce the documentation. If he has none, then let him stop his *chilul hashem* against legitimate and representative institutions of organized Jewish life. He is simply playing into the hands of the enemies of the Jewish people—including the proselytizers—who love nothing better than to have their stereotypes of the "secular Jew" confirmed and validated—by a Rabbi yet.

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On Jewish Counterculture

Norman L. Friedman

Within the past year, CONGRESS BI-WEEKLY (May 19 and September 8, 1972 issues) carried debates about the nature and significance of the so-called "New Jewish Movement." As an interested but nonpartisan observer, the current writer will briefly explore and analyze some prospects of the New Jews as a social movement, especially since they appear by 1973 to be at an important crossroads in their development.

First, a brief review and overview of what the New Jewish Movement (or "Jewish counterculture" or "Jewish Student Movement"—there is no uniformly-used name) has been and done is in order. The New Jewish Movement was an offshoot of the general student political activism and cultural rebellion of the 1960s, the Six Day War of 1967, and the ethnic pride feelings of recent years. It has included numerous themes and subgroups. Even before 1967, there were some Jewishly-oriented New Leftists who were seeking "radical" Jewish positions on social issues. After 1967, a number of pro-Israel radical Jewish militant groups blossomed (such as the Radical Zionists) who actively took up the causes of Israel and Soviet Jewry. Finally, a third major subgroup were the spiritual communalists, whose main focus was the building of alternative and intimate Judaic *havurot* (fellowships), for cooperative study and living, such as the now well-known Boston (1968) and New York (1969) *Havurot*. This thrust was related to the larger youth counterculture quest in the 1960s for less impersonal and more meaningful human contacts in small organic communities and communes.

These groups, though somewhat different in degree of political left-of-centerness, shared in a cultural critique of the mainstream Jewish "Establishment" as bourgeois, impersonal, elitist, and lacking in ethnic and/or spiritual fervor. All were preoccupied with the theme of seeking truly "authentic" Jewish identities and total "life-styles." Some individual New Jews were engaged separately in only certain subgroups and themes; others participated in a more overlapping and interlocking fashion in several, usually in relation to the size and particular history of the Movement in a given city.

By 1973, the various New Jews probably numbered at least about 2,500 partisans and fellow travelers in cities and on campuses across the country, mainly in the teens-to-early-thirties age bracket. They had defended Israel on campuses and had protested for Soviet Jewry. They had "confronted" Federations. They had founded about 60 "underground" style Jewish newspapers, as well as a national "nonpolitical" umbrella organization, North American Jewish Students' Network, which held conventions in 1971 and 1972. They had given birth to their own literary "little magazines," like *Response* and *Davka*. They had established various style *havurot*, and fashioned new "creative" religious services. Finally, they had a book about themselves, *The New Jews* (1971), edited by James Sleeper and Alan Mintz, and two others related to them, forthcoming in 1973: *The Jewish Radical* edited by Jack Porter and Peter Dreier, and *Con-*

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