## Preserving American Jewish History

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

Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 3, Folder 15, "Gov. Jimmy Carter's Candidacy - The Fourth Great Awakening?", 1976.

## GOV. JIMMY CARTER'S CANDIDACY THE FOURTH GREAT AWAKENING? by Marc H. Tanenbaum

The nomination of Governor Jimmy Carter as Democractic candidate fork the Presidentcy of the United States has introduced a new element into the American national political scene but an old element in American society. For the first time in modern politics, a presidential candidate has publicly identified himself as an evangelical "born again" Christian and has spoken freely of his personal religious convictions and their relationship to his political behavior.

"The most important thing in my life is Jesus Christ," Carter has testified, "I turn to Him in prayer daily and before every decision I have to make which affects the life of others... I don't want anything that's not God's will for my life." (From an interview with the Associated Press, May 24, 1976).

The Democractic National Convention in July nominated Carter and his vice-presidential running mate, Separator Walter "Fritz" Mondabe, in a carnival-like demonstration of gubilant unity which keek gended, momentarily to give the impression that the doubts and misgivings about Carter-as-President were somehow resolved, and that the main task that lies ahead is mainly keek the conventional political one of producing a Democractic victory in November, and yet it is significant that during the weeks following the post-convention period, the same doubts and misgivings were given wide public utterance, and to a very large extent, much of that questionaing revolved about "the mystery" of what it will mean for America to have a "horn again" thought the mystery" of what it will mean for America to have a "horn again" Christian in the White House. Apartite that he usual has a may fast longitude for the content to the angle of the following arrests as wentors that he was for words to the angle of the following arrests as wentors that there have never for words the following and species for any fast of a meaning for any fast of any fast of a meaning for any fast of any fast of a meaning for any fast of any fast of any fast of any fast of a meaning for any fast of any fast of

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Governor Carter is himself obviously conscious of the ambivalences raised in the public mind, maximum especially in the non-evangelical world of northerners and liberals, by his profession of an Baptist faith. In an interview with the editor of the the World Mission Journal, a publication of the Southern Baptist Convention Brotherhood Commission, of which the Democratic standard-bearer is a trustee, Gov. Carter was asked what he thought was the reaction of non-evangelical reporters to his statements about his personal religious conversion. His reply:

"It is very difficult for anyone who has not had that experience to understand...Many of the newsmen who ask about this never had this experience. Some of them are downright cynical about it. It think it worries some of them." He added that "a lot of news reporters are mystyfied" by his spiritual autobiography. "I don't think they doubt my sincerity, but they just don't understand. I don't make a bigm issue of aix it, but neighbr do I hesttate to say publicly that the most important thing in my life is Jesus Christ." (May 13, 1976, RNS).

Generally in the past, as the Rev. James Wall, editor of the influential ecumenical weekly, Christian Century, has noted, it has been assumed that religious references by public officials were not to be taken seriously. But now out leading candidates are clearly not joking. They mean it. "

## ZHEXDENEREXMENT CHECK

While most of the attention has been focused on Carter's beliefs, the heightened publicity has also lifted up to public attention the evangelical commitments of both President Ford and Gov. Ronald Regan. President Ford, an Episcopalian, is also of an evangleical bent. He says that his religious faith is "a personal thing" and tells reporters that "I rely on for guidance from my God." His son, Michael, is a seminarian at the evangelical Gordon-Conway Seminary in Mass. The

The President's closest spititual sevisor, Michangn evanglist Billy Zoili, sends the President a weekly memo of spiritual guidance. The President has written to him, "Because I've trusted Christ tobe my Savior, my life is His."

Republican candidate Ronald Regan, a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), once a Sunday School teacher, now attends Bellaire Presbyterian church in Los Angeless, an evangelically-oriented congregation. Regan's wife, Nancy, says he prays before every major decision.

