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Box 3, Folder 19, "Messianism and Human Survival", May 1977.



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A CALL

The phone--a well-known voice, unseen,
breaks in my sleep of solitude. I wake
and hear my name.

Is such the voice
that God will use to hear Him? "*Samuel!*"
Like he, I can just whisper: "*Here I am.*"
Again my name--and my response comes stronger.
Again--then silence draws me out into the night
to look for stars, to ask: "*What Must I do?*"
The road is endless and the task "*at hand*"



(though I see barely where the next step leads)
is lit and undeniable. Perhaps I have to wait
for one who follows--or stand still and learn
the song of brook and thunder, rise and leave
the dearest place (God, with obedience, grant me joy)
Or find the violet, the chickweed stars
and step aside, let others pass who rush to deeds --
The well-know Voice has called. My name.
"*Here I am.*"--and my day begins to dawn.

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QUOTED SUMMARILY

Messianism and Human Survival

"Messianism is within history; messianism is actual change in the quality of life of people. We believe the Messiah will come. And we will know he will come when we see that there is an end to war, bloodshed, hatred--and when there is a universal condition of fraternity, care, love, and justice for all members of God's human family. There are messianic elements which have fed the notion of conquering the world. The Soviet Union has a form of secular messianism; it proselytizes all over the world and thinks now with nuclear power it can bring about the hegemony under its rule. We have had a tradition of manifest destiny which was a distortion of our messianic impulses in the world.

"When you allow those to go uncriticized, unsubject to judgment--and if they take place outside of a frame of reference in which the value of human life is not upheld as the ultimate sanctity--then you have the possibilities of an apocalypse, and Jews are not very big on apocalypse.... So, it's messianism that has to be advocated in history, in society. Apocalypticism is one of the great enemies that all of us face together.

"Jews and Christians stake their existence as religious people first on the basic conviction of the preciousness of every human life--at the center of the Jewish and Christian ethos is this feeling that the human being is created in the image of God. But if you look around the world today, religious fanaticism is tied up with every political ideological conflict which is leading to the daily massacre of human lives....

"It goes to the issue of the role of religion in one's life. If one perceives his faith as the sole source of salvation for mankind, that you are a true believer and only people who share your own convictions have a claim to truth and value, and everyone outside of your own little church or synagogue is a heretic or infidel who has to be liquidated, then you have laid the foundations for holy wars.... It's always struck me as

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"In the pluralism of America, in the diversity of all the religious, racial, ethnic communities that exist here...we have come to understand that happy New Testament phrase that--in my father's house there are many mansions and that each one of us has a right to live in those mansions by right and not by sufferance....

"I think we need to come to terms with the fact that the reason for being, both Jews and Christians, is that they have represented, certainly historically, the custodians of moral and ethical traditions.... They have had a certain stance with regard to life and relationships between peoples which has given them a responsibility to do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God.... The problems today are fundamentally moral ethical questions. There is an obligation to enter into dialogue--not in the sense that we have all the answers, but to raise the right questions...and face them together as a common obligation.... If we do nothing more but open up that kind of national dialogue with people in government, in law, in business, in police enforcement, in social welfare, we'll create a new kind of ethical sensitivity without which the society will not prevail. Humanity has the potentiality of glimpsing the vision of divinity as it commits itself to a God who makes moral claims on his people....



Marc H. Tanenbaum

"Several billion people understand that at the heart of all religious ideological systems is the basic issue of reverence for human life. And if one can articulate that, mobilize commitments to that, translate that into political actions, we can change policy.... There are hundreds of thousands of people living today because religiously committed Christians and Jews cared--cared enough to...use their moral influence and their organizational power....

"If we can do that on the food issue, we can do it on the other issues of fundamental human survival. Which is to say, to put an end to the arms race in the world, not unilaterally, but to begin to mobilize...the whole Eastern Orthodox world to begin to raise questions with their governments--and to begin to press them to recognize in their self-interest, if not in terms of their basic values, that we've got to move away from this brink of imminent disaster. I think we can. I think the time is very short, the obligations are very great, but if we have enough leadership from Christians and Jews in the Western world with the kind of communications that exist today, we can probably bring some sense to the heads of governments before it's too late." □

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