



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

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

Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 6, Folder 10, Comments on a talk by Alexander Schindler,  
Undated.



For Joel Schengker

Comments on talk by Rabbi A. Schindler from

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Interreligious Affairs Director, AJC

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"There are an estimated 60 million 'unchurched' people in American life who are unaffiliated or unrelated to any church or synagogue in our country. From personal experiences, I can attest to the fact that there is a vast disenchantment with the spiritual hollowness of consumerism, materialism, and secularism. Two cars in a garage, paying the mortgage, the business rat-race, even swimming pools in the backyard - is that all that life is about? A deeply-felt, if still unarticulated, need exists for a moral and spiritual orientation that gives meaning and depth to human existence beyond what our culture presently provides.

Increasingly, thousands of such unaffiliated "spiritual seekers" have been turning to Judaism and have been spiritually and morally transformed by adherence to <sup>its</sup> ~~the~~ Biblical humanistic ideals and values, its distinctive life style of the disciplined golden mean between head and heart, and its powerful prophetic relevance for helping redeem the human condition from its pervasive dehumanization.

The question for Jewish leadership is not whether Jews should testify to their values and ideals and share them with spiritually starving people. The very existence of Jews and Judaism as a messianic people and tradition across 4,000 years and 30 civilizations is precisely such a testimony to the supreme value of life and moral values in the face of engulfing moral anarchy and dehumanization. That is a testimony more needed today than ever before. Indeed, our world today - the world of nuclear proliferation, pollution of the earth through toxic wastes, the insane arms race, the epidemic of dehumanization through widespread torture, terrorism, violence, abuse of human rights - will not survive

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Judaism first communicated to mankind/ at the Exodus and at Sinai.

The question for Jewish leadership is not whether but how. And the method is as important as the message, And that is to say that I agree with Rabbi Schindler about these crucial caveats:

1) Jews must respect the faith commitments of believing Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, and Greek Orthodox - and committed Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and others. Neither directly nor indirectly should any Jew ever seek to undermine the loyalty of committed believers to their historic traditions. On the contrary, it is the essence of Jewish belief that we should do everything in our power to affirm non-Jews in the fullness of their respective faiths, for Judaism affirms that "the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come" - that is, ethical believers are assured salvation outside the Synagogue.

2) When "unchurched" ~~are~~ people seek conversion to Judaism, we should seek to assure that they come to the Jewish faith because they seek to commit themselves to its affirmations, not simply because they reject their parents' religions. We should stand opposed to expressions of hostility toward other religions, and should repudiate all caricatures and stereotypes of other high religions. When seekers speak in such terms we should encourage them to study the true doctrines of their original faiths, and make decisions on the basis of honest knowledge and study and not on the basis of caricatures and misrepresentations.

3) Our programs of sharing knowledge about Jews and Judaism should be carried out with tact, taste, and in the spirit of "Torah Lishmah," ("knowledge for the sake of God"). We should avoid any programs that smack of hucksterism, boosterism, triumphalism, or imperialism. Judaism is firm in its repudiation of arrogance as a fundamental vice. There must be "fair

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"packaging" and avoidance of any suggestion of deception or fraud that has been so offensive to Jews when practiced by some sects and cults. "That which is hateful to you," ~~xxxx~~ Rabbi Hillel taught, "do not inflict on others." ~~xxxx~~ affirm the validity of religious, ~~xxx~~ ethnic,

Above all, we must ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ is that all groups come and cultural pluralism who central affirmation ~~xxxx~~ "The to the dialogue table as equals, by right and not by sufferance. The underlying assumptions ~~xxx~~ of the genius of American pluralism is the ancient Rabbinic teaching, "The competition of scribes increases wisdom." Let the sharing of Judaism with the "unchurched" take place with a spirit that encourages a creative competition for the advancement of truth, justice, peaceful coexistence, ~~xxxx~~ human fraternity, and civic peace.

And while reaching out to the "unchurched" let us not neglect to promote "Shalom bayis," peace within the household of Judaism. What good will it do us to gain a world of adherents from outside Judaism if the net result is the rending the fabric of the Jewish people through internal conflict and misunderstanding. So both must go hand in hand - building up peace and mutual love and caring within the Jewish people, among all branches of Judaism, while sharing that love and mutual respect with others who freely determine to share the fate and destiny of the Jewish people.

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