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June 16, 1965

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum  
The American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56th St.  
New York 22, N. Y.

Dear Marc,

I marvel at the kind of communication I felt between us at lunch the other day.

Attached is a revised copy. You will note that I have used many of your suggestions. I think you may especially be interested in pages 16, 17, 18 and 19.

I marvel at your willingness even to talk with me about a theology that must be so deeply offensive to you, by its very nature. Thank you for your courtesy and your openness.

I devoutly hope that our activities pursuant to our conversation with Rabbi Shuster may be productive.

Warmly,

Eugene L. Smith  
Executive Secretary

ELS:rl  
Encl.

*Thanks for your good letter*

## ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVES

### JUDAISM

Between Jews and Christians there is an inescapable interdependence. It roots far more deeply than a desire to be good neighbors; than the eagerness of Christians to atone for centuries of anti-semitism; than a shared purpose to serve any common philanthropy. The deep interdependence of Jews and Christians is rooted in the redemptive mission of the covenant-making God. This interdependence has had profoundly formative influence upon both Judaism and Christendom for two thousand years. After these long centuries, we begin today to see the promise of a new openness to each other. In this encounter there is for Christians a rich promise not only of rewarding friendships, but even more of a deepened understanding of the origin and meaning of our own faith. Our Incarnate Lord lived as a Jew. To understand better the people whose life He shared is to understand Him better. To probe deeply our attitudes toward Jewish people is to probe the depth of our attitudes toward Him.

Our approach in this paper will be, as far as this writer is able to make it so, Biblically oriented. Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft stated recently that some of the main contemporary divisions in Christendom "are not between the churches, but between those people in all the churches who take their stand definitely upon the Bible and those whose thought is dominated by other considerations." The devout Jew will understand why a Christian approach in this matter must be Biblical. Had such an approach characterized Christians for the last fifteen centuries the ugly stain of anti-semitism would not have appeared. The devout Jew will not anticipate or respect any minimizing of the Christian faith for accommodations sake.



# I. THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES

The Jewish people are scattered throughout the nations. The Jewish faith is one, and the traveler feels at home whether he enters a synagogue in Berlin or Buenos Aires, in Minneapolis or on the Malabar Coast. But Jewish thinking, as that of the Gentile, is affected by its environment. American Jewry dwells in a land where men have been free, where discrimination diminishes, and where increasingly Jews and Christians are living as neighbors and friends.

Jewish participation in the establishment of a new civilization in North America has contributed immeasurably to that new life, and the process has created a new distinctively American form of Jewry.

The first Jews in this country came from the aristocratic Iberian group, via Brazil, Holland and the Caribbean. Their immigration began in 1654. The next major wave, starting in 1815, consisted of lower class Jews from the villages of south Germany. The year 1840 saw the first migration of the German Jewish intelligentsia. Strongly influenced by the Reform movement in German Judaism they found in the new country a congenial atmosphere for their convictions. It would be difficult to imagine a more dedicated or better equipped corps of reformers than the rabbis who formed the vanguard of this migrating intelligentsia. The movement for Reform gathered momentum until, by 1880, it probably comprised the majority of American Jews. It expressed a demand for a faith relevant to the contemporary world. Its classic principle is that Judaism is a progressive religion. In 1900 it was strongly anti-national. The Union Prayerbook of 1894 added many new prayers in English and omitted all references to the restoration of the Temple, and all prayers to rebuild Jerusalem and to re-unite the Jewish people

again in the land of Israel. It was also strongly anti-traditional. The influential "Pittsburgh Platform" of 1885 treated the evolution of religious thought through reason as a form of divine revelation.

The Conservative protest against reform was more vocal than numerical, until the turn of the century. When Conservative Rabbis in 1877 established the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York only eleven congregations in the nation supported the enterprise, and in a few years six of those synagogues affiliated with Reform. Reform, however, was counter-balanced by the influx between 1880 and 1920 of East European Jews having no affinity for such a movement. By 1920 they numbered 1,750,000 and Reform represented a minority social elite of perhaps 250,000.

The new settlers, industrious and ambitious, rapidly improved their situation both in education and in business. They were Orthodox. Conservative Judaism acquired strength as their children became Americanized, and sought a form of worship that would be modern, but not as extreme as Reform. It has a strong tendency to be liberal in theology but traditional in practice. It is not primarily a reaction to Reform, nor a retention of Old World Orthodoxy. Conservative Judaism has a left wing close to Reform, and a right wing close to Orthodoxy.

The Orthodox group was the first on the American scene with the pre-revolutionary Sefardic congregations, but it was the last to develop national organizations and is still the least organized. As any strongly traditionalist, right-wing group, it has extremist groups which refuse to cooperate even with other Orthodox Jews. A Conservative may observe the dietary laws, and the rules on Sabbath observance because of sentiment, or a sense of Jewish solidarity, or religious commitment. An Orthodox observes them out of a



deep sense of religious obligation, rooted in conviction of the literal revelation of Scripture.

The organizational structure of American Judaism is exceedingly multi-form. Some of the most conspicuous bodies--such as the American Jewish Committee--are primarily lay social action bodies. Others are organized for Zionist or anti-Zionist purposes. The one basically religious body which is inclusive of the three major divisions, is the Synagogue Council of America. Reform Judaism is organized in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Its theological school, the Hebrew Union College and Jewish Institute of Religion, with units in both Cincinnati and New York, is the oldest school of higher Jewish education in America. The counterparts of Conservative Judaism are the United Synagogue of America, the Rabbinical Assembly, and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. The major Orthodox organizations are The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, The Rabbinical Council of America, and Yeshiva University.

World War II, with the necessity of united action to care for Jewish refugees and for the half million Jews in the armed forces of this nation, brought a new unity to American Judaism. This unity has been increasingly manifest in the years since.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 confronted American Jews sharply with two questions: the nature of their relationship to this new political state, and thus the nature of their group identity in the United States. That some form of separate identity for Jews is desirable seems never to have been questioned. Concern for Jewish identity is felt in every Jewish group, and is notably manifest in discouragement of intermarriage

between Jews and non-Jews. The powerful communal awareness, the tenacious ethnic feeling, of Jewish people is a profoundly formative factor in Jewish life. The vast majority of American Jews have elected to remain in America, giving generously to aid the State of Israel and its citizens.

The Jewish people now comprise about 3% of the population of the United States; 5% in Canada. Most live in urban areas. The most dramatic aspect of present-day American Judaism is its at-homeness in the suburbs. In secular areas they show no difference from their Christian neighbors. Their children encounter continually the inevitable, friendly questions of other children in suburbia, "What is a Jew?" "Where do you go to church?" Many factors today tend to turn the Jew back to his religious rootage. The suburban synagogue is becoming more and more child-centered. Even a few years ago Reformed, Conservative and Orthodox Judaism seemed to be three ways of life offered to Jewish people. Signs multiply of a demand now of a wide-spread authentic demand for a distinctively Jewish style of living for Jews in America. This demand is the more poignant because of the fact that though Christians and Jews are friendly, and work together in many groups, on a week-by-week basis there is very little social life for the suburban Jew outside of Jewish circles.

The balance of this paper is an attempt to describe the opportunity and obligation which this new situation of the American Jew means for his Christian neighbor. This obligation is understandable only in terms of the indissoluble bond between Christian and Jew, which we will next consider. The writer hopes it will become clear that here, as in the other relationships we have considered, the definitive issue for the Christian is his love for Jesus Christ.



## II. THE INDISSOLUBLE BOND BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND JEW

### A. The Covenant

The Scripture shared by Jew and Christian affirms that God made a covenant with the descendants of Abraham, in order that (1) there might be a living relationship with them, and (2) all mankind might benefit thereby. As the prophets of Israel declared, that covenant did not originate in or depend upon the merits of people. Its origin was in God's sovereign action; its durability depends only on His faithfulness. The God portrayed by these Scriptures is a covenant-making God. Hebrew prophets described the Hebrew nation as unfaithful to that covenant. Jeremiah promised (31:31-33) that God will make a new covenant. It is not to be a cancellation, but a fulfillment of the old. It is not to be made with any nation, but with the people of God. It is not to be the kind of covenant known before but a new and living relationship that each member thereof will want to keep as the natural outcome of his fellowship with God.

The New Testament of the Christians teaches that in Christ God made the new covenant for which Jeremiah looked. Moreover, it affirms that God has done this within Israel. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the election of Israel. Israel, as the elect people of God, now finds her meaning and the "end" of her own election in Him. The word Israel has no plural. As Gentiles believe in Christ they are added each day to the one Israel that has been the People of God from the beginning. That is why in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek.

Yet the mystery remains that within the wholeness of the one Israel, a part continues to see its fulfillment apart from Christ. The one Israel, as the Christian sees the issue, is compounded of two elements: those who



believe in Christ and those who do not yet believe. The line between the two, of course, is not a straight Jew-Gentile line. Many a baptized Gentile loses his vision. Many an unbaptized Jew sees clearly that the basic law of the universe is the "death and resurrection" motif woven through the Old Testament. The church can never be the church as God has willed it until the schism that cuts Israel in two is healed.

The ancient covenant God made with Israel has not been canceled. Israel is that people with whom God has continued a special relationship for three thousand years. Into that covenant we Christians have entered through Christ. We are indissolubly linked together.

#### B. Our Indebtedness

There is no measuring the depth of Christian indebtedness to Jews. The transforming truths that God is one; that He is just; that His love outruns his wrath--these are Hebraic insights upon which the positive values of modern civilization rest. From the Jews we inherit the Covenant we share. To them we owe the recording and interpreting of the Messianic prophecies, which form essential background for seeing the Sonship of Christ in understandable outline. To them we owe the human matrix in which our Savior lived. To them we owe the writing of our Scriptures.

To Jews we owe our debt for the human participation in the first establishment of the church. It was Jews who first became Christians. It was Jews who determined to go beyond the Jewish community and carry the Gospel to us Gentiles. It was Jews who determined it was not necessary for a Gentile to become Jewish in order to become a Christian. When, as a result, Christianity passed over into the Greek world, it was the Hebraic elements in the Gospel that prevented our faith, humanly speaking, from disintegrating into yet another Greco-Roman form of religiosity.

With all the rest of mankind we share a further indebtedness in secular values for vast contributions by Jewish people: in medicine and mathematics; in science and the arts; in philosophy and law; in letters and philanthropy; in humor, and in many other fields as well. A particular indebtedness in the United States is owed to the Jew in his struggle for basic human liberties. Remembering the ancient and sustained denial to themselves of basic liberties in Europe, and threatened by varying degrees of anti-semitism here, Jewish leadership has seen that the rights of any one group are inseparable from those of all. The Jewish people in America have made a contribution vastly disproportionate to ~~its~~<sup>their</sup> number in preserving and strengthening the basic liberties of all Americans.

### C. Our Injustice

Anti-semitism is uniquely the Christian crime. From the first century to the twentieth, anti-semitism is a Christian creation and responsibility, whatever secondary causes may enter the picture. No people of history has ever been subject to persecutions as intense and sustained as those which Jews have suffered at the hands of Christians.

A wide range of scholars, Protestant and Catholic as well as Jewish\* show that from the first century Christians have developed "teachings of

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\*Flannery, Edward, The Anguish of the Jews, MacMillan Co.; Hay, Malcolm, The Foot of Pride, Beacon Press; Isaac, Jules, The Teaching of Contempt, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.; Knight, G. A. F., Jews and Christians, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1965, pp. 152 ff; Olson, B. E., Faith and Prejudice, Yale University Press, 1963; Parkes, James, Anti-Semitism: The Conflict of Church and Synagogue, Meridian Books.



"contempt" about Jews. These teachings gave rise to the banishments, killings, burnings, drownings, tortures, forced baptisms, segregation, restrictions on their human and religious freedom; confiscations of their property, curbs on their means of livelihood, burnings of their sacred books, mandatory attendance at church services to hear themselves denounced as perverse and godless people, with which Christians for centuries treated their Jewish neighbors.

In the Middle Ages it was not uncommon for Christian mobs to stream from their churches during Holy Week to beat, murder or otherwise maltreat Jews. A few Jewish communities were actually buried alive in mass graves after their persecutors had listened to sermons accusing the Jews as killers of Christ. The main victims of the Crusades were not pagans, but these supposedly deicidal people whose villages were invaded by Christian warriors journeying to Jerusalem. (Olson, B. E., "Anti-Semitism," Christian Advocate, April 22, 1965.)

The wall between Jews and Gentiles which Paul saw Christ as having broken down was re-erected by Christians beginning in the first century. The early debates between Christian and Jewish opponents, as in all schisms, produced distortions on both sides. The most monstrous was the Christian accusation of the Jews as being "killers of God," a deicidal race. Here is both denial of the degree of Roman responsibility for the crucifixion, and even more of the Christian truth that Christ died for the sins of all men, and that when each of us sins he participates in the crucifixion of Christ.

After Constantine Jews became a vulnerable religious minority. Restrictions were placed on pagans, heretics and Jews. The cults and heretical sects



died out or were suppressed, but the Jews remained. Their persistence seemed an affront to Christians. Medieval Christians sought to create a unified civilta catolica, which had no place for non-Christians. A deep depersonalization took place. "The Jews" became in Christian thinking a theological abstraction rather than real people. This tragic phenomena is still apparent in some theological circles.

Between the 11th and 15th centuries especially there were repeated decimations of Jews resulting from the Crusades and the Inquisition. Hitler's attacks upon them was only an acting out of what was implicit in the teachings of both Protestant and Catholic German Churches before World War II. The thundering silence of those churches during that mass murder is one of history's most eloquent affirmations of shared guilt.

Nor is the issue remote from us in America today. This writer was a student at Drew Theological Seminary thirty years ago when Dr. J. V. Thompson, under sponsorship of the National Conference of Christians and Jews and of the American Jewish Committee, launched a program for study of anti-Jewish references in the curriculum materials of the main-line Protestant Churches. After three decades of continuous study and reporting, the problem still continues. Robert E. Krenig, curriculum director of the United Church of Christ, says, "The number of people who say there is no problem appalls me." (Olson, "Anti-Semitism")

The Christian phenomena of anti-semitism is, in fact, a product of Christian rebellion against Christ. Franz Rosenzweig spoke in deep insight, "Whenever the pagan within the Christian soul rises in revolt against the yoke of the Cross, he vents his fury on the Jew." (Quoted by Will Herberg, "Judaism and Christianity," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXI 2 (April,

1953) p. 74.) In a psycho-analytic study of anti-semitism H. Sachor reports, ". . . It is not because they are 'good Christians' that the Europeans are instinctively anti-semites. It is because they are bad Christians, in reality repressed. . . pagans." (Quoted by Herberg Judaism and Modern Man, Farrar, Straus, Young, 1951, pp. 273, 274.)

The Christian injustices to Jews constitute an attack upon Christ. They have erected a barrier between Him and the people among whom He became incarnate. They have made His Cross a symbol to Jews of oppression, hatred, injustice. They have made it exceedingly difficult for many Jews to believe that any Christian could have any real concern for them except as possible converts to his particular Christian church.

This section cannot be closed without paying tribute to the Jewish people. By all the laws of reason their long nightmare of suffering and humiliation should have meant their disintegration or disappearance, or their submergence to the level of pariahs. Instead they have emerged from the holocaust unbroken in spirit, conscious of their dignity, and with a sense of mission and purpose. They retain their awareness of Israel's election, in a collective consciousness of themselves as a special people. There is a rich tradition of Biblical and Rabbinic scholarship. We can warmly admire the cohesion of the Jewish family; the sustained concern of Jews for learning and for social justice; their generous philanthropy; their relative immunity even in the slums from delinquency, alcoholism and drug addiction; and their immeasurably rich contributions in the professions and the arts as well as in business.

Against this background of our indissoluble bond with Jews, our deep



indebtedness and long injustice to them, we now look at our Christian obligation toward them in the pluralistic society of the contemporary world.

### III. THE CHRISTIAN'S OBLIGATION TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The Christian's guiding obligation to his Jewish neighbor is exceedingly simple. It is to recognize that the Jew is a person. On a secular level, this recognition characterizes Jewish-Gentile relations in many American communities. We can thank God that many Jewish children grow up today without feeling the sting of discrimination. Twenty-five years ago there was much more attempt on the part of Jews to escape the Jewish image. Especially in the upper economic levels there was more changing of names; more changing of faith in marriage. Today the Jew is more comfortable in being a Jew, although perhaps less sure of what that means. He has a deeper willingness for self-acceptance.

With the decline in discriminatory practices there is a great increase in intermarriage. In intermarriage there are probably more Christians becoming Jews than Jews who become Christians. In most cases, however, neither changes and the children grow up without either faith. The great majority of Jewish parents want their children to be married to other Jews.

With the new openness in relations, many opportunities are at hand for inter-faith cooperation. Within American Judaism there is a significant difference between those organizations which are basically under synagogue auspices and those which are not. Some of the latter, especially, have great prestige and financial strength. Every pastor of a local church will understand the values involved if we, in inter-faith projects with Jewish neighbors, seek to develop them <sup>primarily</sup> through the neighboring rabbis and the synagogue agencies.



On the distinctively Christian level, recognition of a Jew as a person means that he is entitled to know the riches in Christ. This awareness is not based upon any decision of ours. It is inherent in our faith. Its basis is not any judgment upon the Jew, or of ourselves; but the Christian evaluation of Christ. Moreover, the Christian, by the nature of his faith, is aware not only of the right, but also the need of a Jew to know the riches of Christ.

At this point we encounter the central issue today in the Christian's understanding of the Christian mission. This question is whether we essentially believe our missionary task is to spread the benefits of western culture or the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Admittedly, the Christian mission must minister to all needs of persons. Some needs of people do require the products of western culture. Those products are a valuable asset to be used by the Christian mission. The decisive need of man, however, is to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The crisis in Christian mission in our time is uncertainty as to whether that need is real. Many Christians today suffer from paralyzing uncertainty <sup>as to</sup> whether we are in the Christian mission essentially as agents of western culture, or of the universal gospel of Jesus Christ. The test comes in attitude toward our next door neighbor. Suppose that neighbor to be educated, well adjusted, prosperous, cultured, and either a purely nominal Christian, a Jew, a secularist or a Buddhist. Does he need to know that Christ is, indeed, his Lord, and will be his Savior if allowed? If we are not sure that such a neighbor needs Jesus Christ, how then can we say the primitive pagan of Borneo needs Jesus Christ? If my cultured and delightful neighbor who lives without Christ does not need Him, then there is no need for Christian mission among any people. Then our world wide job

is clear: let us simply send out our agents of western cultural colonialism and quit pretending we serve the gospel of Jesus Christ and the mission to which the New Testament calls us.

If, however, our essential confidence rests in the Christian gospel and our Living Lord, rather than in the artifacts of western culture, then we face inescapably the question of the special place of Jewish people in the Christian mission.

With this question Paul wrestled in his letter to the Romans. The dilemma he faced was acute. On the one side is the clear knowledge that God is no respecter of persons. On the other side is clear evidence that Jews have two advantages in regard to the Gospel. One is the covenant God made with them, and which He has not annuled. Another is the Jews' awareness of having been elected by God to this special relationship. The Biblical pattern of mission, therefore, is "First the Jew and also the Gentile."

For a Christian to speak of the need of a Jew for Jesus Christ is painfully difficult when our own mistreatment of the Jew (1) has shown how great is our own unacknowledged need for Christ and (2) has done so much to place obstacles between him and Christ. However, a Christian faithful to the New Testament cannot do otherwise.

The traditional patterns of Christian evangelism among Jews have suffered from a ludicrous reversal of the situation against which Paul fought in early Jewish Christianity. Paul insisted that a Gentile did not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. Today we force a Jew to become a Gentile if he is to become a Christian. A Jew ready to re-think the question of Christ is presented today with the socially abhorrent and



theologically gratuitous necessity of deserting his own community and joining a Gentile community if he should come to a confession of Christ's messiahship. Is it impossible to think of a fellowship of Christians, both Jew and Gentile, united in faith and mission? Is it impossible to think of an appeal to Jews within their own community that might mean not just the conversion of individuals, but the infusion of the Jewish community--already so rich in fellowship and achievement--with the riches of Christ? Is it impossible to think that thus God might heal the first great schism within the people of His covenant?

As Christians, we dare not hope for less. Individual discoveries of the grace of God in Jesus Christ are always reasons for gratitude. However, Israel has a destiny as a people. It is unthinkable that Israel should be absorbed into our divided churches by the multiplication of individual conversions, and lose the historic identity maintained for three millenia. Our aim should be nothing less than we should be used of God for re-uniting the two separated halves of the people of God.

We will not find it easy to be used of God for this purpose. Any action we may take involves a great risk, both for the Jew and for the Christian.

(1) The risks for Jews

For thirty centuries the religiously motivated Jewish people have staked their life on their faith. For twenty centuries they have done so under varying but often vicious forms of Christian attack. That faith has been a shield and a buckler. It is incomparably precious to them. Its values seem to them unquestionable. In the enforced inwardness of the life of a persecuted minority, the faith has burned bright as a warm and illuminating light.



Now, in the United States, Jews encounter what one distinguished Rabbi has called "the crisis of freedom." Now they find Christians in irenic, appreciative spirit, calling for open dialogue with them on matters of faith. To refuse such dialogue seems impossible. To accept it seems no less so, for several reasons.

One reason for <sup>Jewish</sup> hesitancy is the terms on which the dialogue is conducted. The Jew senses, rightly, that most Christians seem to believe that Jews remain Jews only because of a stubborn refusal to accept the truth of Christ. The Jew believes that he is faithful to truths revealed by God, and that he is prevented from being a Christian by his loyalty to vital realities especially in interpretation of the law and of eschatology. The devout Jew has to ask with urgency a series of questions about dialogue with Christians: Is the Christian ready to talk with me as a person, or only as a potential convert?; is there any equality in <sup>this</sup> ~~their~~ dialogue?; is the Christian who is seeking my conversion to Christ willing to accept the possibility of his conversion to Judaism?; will my testimony to the faith which has sustained my people so richly so long really be heard, or will I be listened to only as a device for turning me from that faith?; can a Christian believe that the faith of my people has a place in the divine economy, without thereby denying his Christian faith? The first risk the Jew runs in accepting an invitation to dialogue with Christians relates to the terms on which the dialogue begins.

The Jew's second risk relates to the terms on which the dialogue may end. For two thousand years his people have suffered the wrath of Christians for no crime other than continuing to be Jews. Now a new approach is being made to try to persuade them to cease being what they are. It may be more

open, more irenic, more enlightened, but its clear hope is that now, at last, Jews will become Christians. The devout Jew does not believe that will happen. He asks, therefore, whether the end result of this new approach will only be a new bitterness against the Jew, and new sorrows for his people. The history of Christian treatment of Jews does not allow that question to be taken lightly.

(2) The risks for the Christians

Dialogue in depth between Jew and Christian threatens the Jew at points precious to him in his faith. It threatens Christians at points where many of us are lacking faith. Open encounter with devout Jews in exploration of the things of Christ may become very threatening to us in revelation of the sub-Christian nature of so much of our life and thought. The plain fact is that only if our churches are radically renewed in Christ can they adequately witness for Christ to the Jewish people. This renewal is required in worship, in theology, in our human relationships, in our churchly relationships. It is unthinkable that the unity of Judaism, maintained for three millennia, should now be lost by the individual conversation of Jews into our divided churches. Until we Christians are reconciled to each other in Christ, in unity manifest that the world may believe on Him, how can we think we are qualified on our side for reconciliation with Jewish people?

In light of these difficulties, the possibility of effective witness on our part would seem to be slight indeed. Nevertheless, in the providence of God, certain steps are now possible for us. Our willingness to take them cannot be predicated upon the expectation of measurable results within one generation, or several. We cannot yet know what God needs to do with us for



his mission and the redemption of His world. We only know that today He offers us these opportunities:

- (1) Restudy our own New Testament, to learn again the nature of the Christian mission, and the witness which Christ calls us to make.
- (2) Repent of any element of prejudice, open or latent, against Jews--in personal thought; and eliminate all vestiges of such teaching from our churches.
- (3) Learn the history of the Jewish people; enter into the record of their sorrows and joys; discover their objections to Christian teachings and the reason for those objections; try seeing Christian history through Jewish eyes.
- (4) Seek the establishment of joint Jewish-Christian groups for Old Testament study. Let Hebrews interpret to us the Hebraic basis of our faith. Learn the Hebraic categories of thought. If nothing else, this will greatly enrich our witness in Africa, for the African is much more Hebraic than Hellenic in thought forms. Moreover, therein we will come to a deeper apprehension of our own faith.
- (5) Where possible, let shared Old Testament study lead to shared New Testament study.
- (6) In study of any part of the Scripture, let there be no religious imperialism. It is never we who open men's hearts to Christ, but the Holy Spirit. It is never we who show the glory of our Christ, but the living Christ Himself. He is not an idea which we present; He is a living Presence who will tell us in the



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Rabbi Tanenbaum



Sister Mary David of the Sisters of Zion asks a question.



Rabbi Petuchowski

## Jesuits and Jews pioneer a path to understanding, better relations

Text and Photos by Geraldine Corrigan

ST. MARYS, Kans. — A pioneer institute on Judaism translated some of the Vatican Council's principles for Catholic-Jewish relations into concrete understanding for Jesuit seminarians at St. Mary's college here. Reciprocally, the four rabbis and two Jewish lay workers who spoke said the experience brought them "fresher feelings of friendship and sensitivity toward Catholics."

Planned as a high-level, theological learning experience, the encounter often burst the format of the theoretical. It ended on a note of conviction "to do something to turn the history-tide of the past 19 centuries from a rut of stereotyped misunderstanding to relationships of mutual respect and accurate knowledge."

Three areas of common concern were explored — the speakers aiming at depth and the listeners at openness of understanding. They agreed on several needs — for more research on Christian-Jewish relationship at the seminary level; for means of communication between Christians and Jews through direct contact, seminars, and specialized publications; for common areas of shared values and justice in such areas as poverty, the anti-poverty campaign and national affairs.

Guests were Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, New York, director of the Inter-religious affairs department of the American Jewish Committee; Rabbi Jakob J. Petuchowski, professor of rabbinics in the Jewish Institute of Religion at Hebrew Union college, Cincinnati; Rabbi Morris B. Margolies, Beth Shalom congregation, Kansas City, Mo.; Rabbi Elbert L. Sapinley, Temple Beth Shalom, Topeka, Kans.; David Rabinovitz, director of the Jewish Federation and Council of Greater Kansas City, Mo., and Sidney Lawrence, director of the Jewish Community Relations bureau, Kansas City.

Attendance was voluntary for the 150 Jesuits-in-training, but all 11 sessions were crowded and the response loud. Three Notre Dame de Zion Sisters attended. Their community devotes its energies toward better relations between

the plight of the Jews in the past — though painful to all — is a necessary prelude to meaningful Jewish-Christian relations in the present.

"OUR PRESENT relationships are the main show," he said. "We do not want to be mired down in the past. But until Christians generally recognize the inner soul of the Jew in terms of his plight in history... we will talk in and around and above each other."

"Jews think that Christians dismiss the past with too much of a let's-get-on-with-it attitude. At the point at which Christians and Jews begin to identify, there must be sensitivity. We can and must confront each other with understanding. But if we continue only to meet as icebergs — with seven-eighths of the facts under water — the realities of history will be our albatross. We must identify the problem of accumulated mistrust, enmity, half-truths so we can tell each other, 'I know it; I understand.'"

The stands of the modern American Jew on church and state, religious freedom, pluralism cannot be understood or trusted by Christians without an understanding of Jewish history, he said. Such stands took irreligious and Jews who prejudicially regarded as irreligious people as long as Christians base their brotherhood on "superficial togetherness," Rabbi Tanenbaum said.

An all out effort, he said, on the part of adult Christians and Jews today — "involving the mysterious and providential, but still the very active conversion of hearts" — can stop the history-tide of anti-practices and habits, get men out of the ruts of ghettoization and "with God's help transmit an openness to our children."

GERMAN-BORN, English-educated Rabbi Petuchowski gave what he called "A" reform Jewish point of view of religious thinking.

He did initial battle with several Christian stereotypes of Judaism before summarizing his own understanding of the covenant.

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Reflecting on the text, "Love the Lord your God with your whole strength," he said, "The law cannot tell me to love. A command cannot address itself to my emotions. The law can tell me, 'Don't rob your neighbor' but not to love. Still, right here is where revelation truly comes in. There is only one occasion in life when the commandment to love is in order: the moment of aroused love. The lover declares his love to his beloved and commands response."

"The Fathers of the Synagogue and of the Church were not prudes when they made the Canticle of Canticles a love story between God and man. Man feeling divine love is addressed by the Divine Lover in the great covenant command. Out of man's expression of love for God grows love for neighbor, the next command: 'Love your neighbor for he is as thou art. I am the Lord.'"

BRIEFLY TRACING the history of rabbinic teaching, he said that it survived a "debunking stage", during which revelation was regarded as mere inspiration, and periods of confused philosophy. "The Jewish people of my generation no longer stalk the earth so proudly as they did when they thought they were particles of one great spirit stalking around. We have found that God is God; man is man and there is a gulf. It can be bridged — not by an incarnation — but by revelation, by outreach from both sides. God so loved the world that He gave man the Torah and the revelation of His love."

Rabbi Petuchowski said that the greatest problem facing the Jews today is one of education and that the only answer to the problem is the parochial school. "Anything else is makeshift in training the individual Jew in the necessary task of handling texts for and by himself," he said. The rabbinate, he explained, is "a fairly recent thing". Rabbis are not ordained priests but learned laymen who until the 14th century made their livings as water carriers, wood choppers, tent makers and physicians. They earned merit for their scholarship and acceptance from other rabbis.



ourst the format of the theoretical. It ended on a note of conviction "to do something to turn the history-tide of the past 19 centuries from a rut of stereotyped misunderstanding to relationships of mutual respect and accurate knowledge."

Three areas of common concern were explored - the speakers aiming at depth and the listeners at openness of understanding. They agreed on several needs - for more research on Christian-Jewish relationship at the seminary level; for new means of communication between Christians and Jews through direct seminars and specialized publications; and for more emphasis on social justice in such areas as racism, the anti-poverty campaign and national affairs.

Guests were Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, New York, director of the Inter-religious affairs department of the American Jewish Committee; Rabbi Jakob J. Petuchowski, professor of rabbinics in the Jewish Institute of religion at Hebrew Union college, Cincinnati; Rabbi Morris B. Margolies, Beth Shalom congregation, Kansas City, Mo.; Rabbi Elbert L. Sapinsley, Temple Beth Shalom, Topeka, Kans.; David Rabinovitz, director of the Jewish Federation and Council of Greater Kansas City, Mo., and Sidney Lawrence, director of the Jewish Community Relations bureau, Kansas City.

Attendance was voluntary for the 150 Jesuits-in-training, but all 11 sessions were crowded and the response loud. Three Notre Dame de Sion Sisters attended. Their community devotes its energies toward better relations between Christians and Jews. One Presbyterian minister was in attendance.

A practical outcome of the institute was an offer made by Rabbi Tanenbaum and accepted by the Jesuits that the American Jewish Committee provide the seminary with a small but selective library of Jewish literature. Another was an agreement to "work together" in preparing a handbook on human relations for seminarians.

RABBI TANENBAUM came to the Institute equipped with more knowledge of current events in the Catholic Church than most of the Catholics present possessed. At the request of American bishops, whom he did not identify, he was "on deck" in Rome for consultation during the last session of the Vatican Council.

Rabbi Petuchowski brought a personal depth of rabbinic scholarship and a scripture and tradition-steeped facility for communicating the relevance of his beliefs.

Rabbi Margolies and Sapinsley achieved a special rapport with their audience because of their concerns and involvements in actual pastoral work. Rabinovitz and Lawrence contributed a clear picture of the charitable and social structures in the Jewish community on the American scene.

During the institute such terms as *Jew*, *pharisee*, *rabbi*, *revelation*, *tradition* were defined in contexts new to most of the seminarians. Jewish interpretation of basic principles - "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God," "Love thy neighbor as thyself," "An eye for an eye" - contradicted the usual understanding that Christians have of what Jews believe.

Much time was spent in documenting the generalities and particulars of anti-semitic teachings throughout the Christian era; the history of oppression and violence to Jews culminating in the Nazi extermination attempt was detailed.

Rabbi Tanenbaum told the seminarians that an accurate facing of the facts on

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The stands of the modern American Jew on church and state, religious freedom, pluralism cannot be understood or trusted by Christians without an understanding of Jewish history, he said. Such stands look irrational and Jews will be prejudicially regarded as irreligious people as long as Christians base their brotherhood on "superficial togetherness," Rabbi Tanenbaum said.

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Many people, even among the Christians he respects the most, still have a wrongly-based hope, Rabbi Petuchowski said, and the hope is that a Jew like him would write an Old Testament theology textbook. "But this would be an impossibility for a believing Jew," he said. "We always read those texts through the spectacles of tradition, which is still developing today." The rabbinic tradition has through the centuries taught Jews "the Torah speaks in the language of men," that "the gates of interpretation are never closed," that "Scripture did not come to teach us the chronology of creation." Judaism claims to be the religion founded on scripture which is a different thing from claiming to be the religion of the Bible. "For quite some time now we have not been sacrificing animals," he added. "But we are a religion based on the Bible and possessing a living tradition."

The old slogan "Christians believe in creeds; Jews believe in deeds" was Rabbi Petuchowski's second stereotype-target; he called it a "half-truth." "While the Christian Church at the Council of Nicea was trying to achieve conformity in belief, the Jewish rabbis in council were trying to achieve uniformity in the pattern of living. But the rabbis would not have been concerned with deeds had their primary concern not been theological and Christians certainly address themselves to behavior."

A GENERALIZED attitude toward Jews is further reflected by what Christians think Jews believe by the "eye for an eye" phrase. Rabbinic tradition holds this to mean that "if you injure another or are injured you must pay or be repaid a monetary compensation to the extent of the injury," he said.

Like other speakers Rabbi Petuchowski said that Christians too often take New Testament rebukes of Jesus to persons in his audience as a condemnation addressed to all Jews; they fail to see the Old Testament basis of his teachings and their positive moral relevance for all men.

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"Today," he said "in the rabbi-centered synagogue, the congregant feels secure in knowing that his rabbi knows. This is an inner-Jewish problem and it will probably be some time before we raise up a generation of scholars."

RABBI TANENBAUM in a major exchange of views during a discussion period urged the seminarians to become informed of the present persecution of Jews in Russia, Latin America and other areas of the world.

Neo-Nazism in Argentina has produced 150 recent episodes of death for Jews there, he said. This has included the machine gunning of businesses, burning of synagogues and violence "in the tradition of contempt" toward Jews of all ages. He described the Jews in Argentina as living in "a state of terror" and in need of a religious appeal to be made by Christians for their safety.

"It is to the eternal glory that Pope John, realizing the failure of Christians to apply their principles in dealing with Jews, put such affairs in the hands of Cardinal Bea."

Recalling his own experiences at the last session of the Vatican Council, he said, "There we had 35 cardinals from 22 countries speaking on Christian-Jewish relations. Thirty-one of them vied with each other as to who could condemn anti-semitism in the strongest words - words not heard for 2,000 years - words not 'absolving' Jews in regard to 'deicide' but affirming relationships between Christians and Jews as living, authentic witness of the Word of God and worshippers of the One True God."

The final vote was 1,770 to 280, he noted and quoted Fr. John Courtney Murray, S.J., who told him "This has been the greatest day in the history of the council. On no other issue has there been such strong feeling."



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