



# THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

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

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 45, Folder 18, Southern Baptist-Jewish Scholars Conference,  
February 1982.

Rudin, A. James, Rabbi, Assistant National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York

Seidel, Jonathan, National Conference of Christians and Jews, Berkeley, California

Shiryon, Sandra F., Rabbi, Assistant Area Director, American Jewish Committee, Los Angeles, California

Signer, Michael A., Rabbi, Professor of Jewish History, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, California

Sparer, Malcolm, Rabbi, President, Northern California Board of Rabbis, San Francisco, California

Tanenbaum, Marc H., Rabbi, National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York

Waldenberg, Shelley, Rabbi, Temple Isaiah, Lafayette, California

Weiner, Ernest H., Area Director, American Jewish Committee, San Francisco, California

#### **SOUTHERN BAPTIST PARTICIPANTS**

Adams, Bob E., Associate Professor of Ethics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

Cate, Robert L., Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California

Chen, Peter, Assistant Director for World Religions, Interfaith Witness Department, Home Mission Board, Atlanta, Georgia

DuBose, Francis M., Professor of Missions, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California

Dunn, James M., Executive Director, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Eakins, J. Kenneth, Professor of Archaeology and Old Testament Interpretation, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California

Estes, Joseph R., Pastor, Beechwood Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky and Founding Director, Interfaith Witness Department, Home Mission Board

Gregory, Mrs. Christine, First Vice-President, Southern Baptist Convention, Danville, Virginia, and immediate past President, Woman's Missionary Union, Southern Baptist Convention

Harmon, Richard W., Assistant Director for American Christianity, Interfaith Witness Department, Home Mission Board, Atlanta, Georgia

Harrop, Clayton K., Professor of New Testament Interpretation, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California

Hendricks, William L., Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California

Igleheart, Glenn, Director, Interfaith Witness Department, Home Mission Board, Atlanta, Georgia

Lindsey, Robert L., Southern Baptist Representative, Jerusalem, Israel

McClendon, James W., Professor of Theology, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, California

McDaniel, Arie L., Western Regional Director, Interfaith Witness Department, Home Mission Board, San Francisco, California

Medema, Mrs. Jane, Christian Educator, San Francisco, California

Prevost, Tom, Pastor, Tiburon Baptist Church, Tiburon, California

Sheridan, George J., Eastern Regional Director, Interfaith Witness Department, Home Mission Board, Union, New Jersey

Smith, Kyle, Student, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California

Tang, Samuel Y. C., Associate Professor of Old Testament Interpretation, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California

Wginton, Travis, E., Pastor, Bethel Baptist Church, Norman, Oklahoma and Member, Board of Directors, Home Mission Board



*This conference is made possible by a grant from*

**THE NATHAN APPLEMAN INSTITUTE  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF  
CHRISTIAN-JEWISH UNDERSTANDING**

## **SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND JEWS: COMMUNITIES OF CONSCIENCE FACE A CHALLENGING WORLD**

A National Conference Co-Sponsored By



**THE INTERFAITH WITNESS DEPARTMENT  
OF THE HOME MISSION BOARD  
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION**

and the



**INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT  
OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

**FEBRUARY 16-18, 1982**

**Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary  
Mill Valley, California**

## INTRODUCTION

During this past decade, Southern Baptists and Jews have engaged in a number of notable meetings of minds and hearts. Many of these meetings were at the local or regional level and had broad based interreligious sponsorship. With this conference, however, we renew our relationships with each other on a national level.

Our dialogue has revealed shared values and common goals; it has also clarified fundamental differences of faith and self-understanding in an atmosphere of mutual respect and consideration.

Both Southern Baptists and Jews are communities of faith deeply rooted in Scripture. We understand these Scriptures in very different ways, but nevertheless believe they require of us concerned and concerted action to uphold the sanctity of human life and advance social justice, human rights, and religious liberty.

At this latest in a series of national meetings co-sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Jewish Committee, we hope to further clarify critical Biblical and theological issues and to discover ways in which we can work together as fellow citizens and fellow believers to combat bigotry, ignorance and suspicion within our own communities and within the wider society. Ultimately, we offer up our deliberations as a contribution to the building of a community of conscience joined together for the common welfare in an increasingly challenging, even threatening world.

Conference Chairpersons  
Dr. Glenn Igleheart  
Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

Conference Coordinators  
Dr. Peter Chen  
Rabbi A. James Rudin

## PROGRAM

### FEBRUARY 16, 1982

#### 2:00 p.m. THE CURRENT STATE OF BAPTIST-JEWISH RELATIONS

Sheldon Rothblatt  
Professor of History  
University of California  
Berkeley, California  
Presiding

Bob E. Adams  
Associate Professor of Ethics  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, Texas

A. James Rudin  
Assistant National Director  
Interreligious Affairs  
American Jewish Committee  
New York, New York

Discussion Groups

#### 7:30 p.m. HUMAN RIGHTS: THE RELIGIOUS IMPERATIVE

William M. Pinson, Jr.  
President  
Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary  
Mill Valley, California  
Presiding

Greetings:  
George Foos  
President  
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter  
American Jewish Committee

Welcome:  
William M. Pinson, Jr.

Marc H. Tanenbaum  
National Director  
Interreligious Affairs  
American Jewish Committee  
New York, New York

James M. Dunn  
Executive Director  
Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C.

### FEBRUARY 17, 1982

9:00-  
12:00 Noon

Arlie L. McDaniel  
Western Regional Director  
Interfaith Witness Department  
Home Mission Board  
San Francisco, California  
Presiding

#### 2:00 p.m. THE MEANING OF ISRAEL

Inge Lederer Gibel  
Program Specialist  
Interreligious Affairs  
American Jewish Committee  
New York, New York  
Presiding

Robert Alter  
Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature  
University of California  
Berkeley, California

Robert L. Lindsey  
Southern Baptist Representative  
Jerusalem, Israel

#### 7:30 p.m. COMMUNICATING OUR RELIGIOUS VALUES TO THE WORLD

Ernest H. Weiner  
Area Director  
American Jewish Committee  
San Francisco, California  
Presiding

William L. Hendricks  
Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion  
Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary  
Mill Valley, California

David Lieber  
President  
University of Judaism  
Los Angeles, California

### FEBRUARY 18, 1982

#### 9:00- 12:00 Noon WITNESS, MISSION, CONVERSION, TESHUVAH

Christine Gregory  
First Vice-President  
Southern Baptist Convention  
Danville, Virginia

and  
Immediate past President  
Woman's Missionary Union  
Southern Baptist Convention  
Presiding

Martin S. Weiner  
Rabbi  
Shorith Israel Congregation  
San Francisco, California

#### A SOUTHERN BAPTIST VIEW OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Robert L. Cate  
Professor of Old Testament Interpretation  
Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary  
Mill Valley, California

#### A JEWISH VIEW OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Michael J. Cook  
Professor of Inter-testamental and Early Christian Literature  
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
Cincinnati, Ohio

Joseph R. Estes  
Pastor  
Beechwood Baptist Church  
Louisville, Kentucky

2:00-  
4:30 p.m.

#### Discussion Groups PROSPECTUS FOR THE FUTURE

Malcolm Sparer  
President  
Northern California Board of Rabbis  
San Francisco, California  
Presiding

Glenn Igleheart  
Director  
Interfaith Witness Department  
Home Mission Board  
Southern Baptist Convention  
Atlanta, Georgia

Judith H. Banki  
Assistant National Director  
Interreligious Affairs  
American Jewish Committee  
New York, New York

#### JEWISH PARTICIPANTS

Alter, Robert, Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature, University of California, Berkeley, California

Banki, Judith H., Assistant National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York

Birnbaum, Linda S., Assistant Area Director, American Jewish Committee, San Francisco, California

Cook, Michael J., Rabbi, Professor of Inter-testamental and Early Christian Literature, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio

Ellenson, David H., Rabbi, Professor of Jewish Religious Thought, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, California

Geller, Laura, J., Rabbi, Director, Hillel Foundation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California

Gibel, Inge Lederer, Program Specialist, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York

Lieber, David, Rabbi, President, University of Judaism, Los Angeles, California

Mirel, James, Rabbi, President, Western Washington Rabbinic Group, Seattle, Washington

Rothblatt, Sheldon, Professor of History, and Associate Director, Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, California



Baptists, Jews Urged to Join  
Unified Human Rights Effort

(MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP))--Baptists and Jews were challenged to fight ~~against~~ for the ~~human~~ human rights of 16 million refugees and 600 million hungry and starving people in the world during a national Baptist-Jewish dialogue here.

The challenge came from Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, national director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, and James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington.

"The central moral issue of our time is a growing callousness toward human ~~and~~ suffering and an epidemic of ~~dehumanization~~ dehumanization around the world," said Tanenbaum.

He chided the governments of 39 countries of the world for spending \$500 billion on nuclear proliferation and arms expansion while 600 million ~~human beings~~ <sup>human beings</sup> ~~people~~ are dying of hunger and ~~malnutrition~~ malnutrition.

Tanenbaum was critical of Congress and the Reagan administration for proposing ~~an~~ an increase of \$50 <sup>b</sup> billion in defense expenditures, but not finding money for food stamps and aid to dependent children.

Dunn, in a ~~presentation~~ Baptist perspective of human rights, was even more harsh, saying the most blatant violation of human rights in America is aimed at women and children, most of whom are poor and hungry.

"It may be one of the most extensive and insidious violations of human rights perpetrated by the present crass crowd in the White House," Dunn insisted.

"In our public policies, domestic and foreign, the real motto is, 'Women and children LAST!,'" Dunn said.

Echoing ~~earlier~~ earlier remarks by Tanenbaum, Dunn charged that Americans have taken a stand against the most basic of human ~~rights~~ rights, the right of humanity to exist, by entertaining the possibility of a "limited" nuclear war and allowing



add one....human rights

the government to continue stockpiling overkill capacities.

Tanenbaum called for Baptists and Jews to join hands in seeking to bring about "universal, simultaneous ~~disarmament~~ disarmament" around the world.

"We must bring an end to so much moral anarchy, so much insanity, an end to war and bloodshed," Tanenbaum insisted.

Relating a personal experience of visiting refugee camps in Southeast Asia, Tanenbaum said he was moved by the despair of one ~~x~~ refugee who asked him, "Rabbi, do you know what it is like to see your wife ~~x~~ and children die before your eyes?"

But even worse, Tanenbaum observed, is the feeling of 16 million refugees that they are abandoned by the world, that their lives are meaningless, that no one cares ~~x~~ if they live or die, He observed.

"To visit the refugee camps in Cambodia and Laos is almost like experiencing the massive barbarism that ~~xx~~ occurred in ~~Naxa~~ Nazi Germany," Tanenbaum said. He told~~x~~ of seeing human ~~skull~~ skulls piled up on the ground as a result of a massive extermination of Cambodians who accepted~~x~~ Western ideals by the Pol Pot regime. In the last eight years, the Pol Pot regime exterminated four million people, one-half of the total population of Cambodia, Tanenbaum said. "It is not insignificant that Pol Pot regarded Adolph Hitler as his model and hero," the rabbi added.

He decried torture and massive human rights ~~xx~~ violations in 60 countries of the world, calling on Christians and Jews to unite in support of the oppressed.

"Christians and Jews may yet become the saving remenant that can save the human family from destruction ~~and turn~~ ...and turn humanity toward a course of sanity and reason," Tanenbaum concluded.

The dialogue, held on the campus of ~~Golden Gate~~ Baptist Theological Seminary, was jointly sponsored by the interreligious affairs department of the American Jewish Committee and the interfaith witness department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

# NEWS COMMITTEE

FROM THE

**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE** Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.....

NEW YORK, Feb. 5... The third national Southern Baptist-Jewish scholars' conference, sponsored jointly by the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, will be held February 16-18 at the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, California.

More than 40 of the nation's leading Southern Baptist and Jewish theologians and educators from every part of the country are expected to attend the meeting, the first of its kind to be held on the West Coast. The two evening sessions -- on Tuesday, Feb. 16, and Wednesday, Feb. 17 -- will be open to the public. The daytime sessions will be limited to participants only.

Similar conferences were held in 1969 at the Louisville (Ky.) Baptist Theological Seminary, and in 1971 at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In a wide ranging program that will examine Jewish and Southern Baptist views of the Bible, human rights, the meaning of Israel, religious witness, mission, and conversion, the participants will try to find common denominators that can serve as the basis for joint action toward basic humanitarian goals, as well as clarifying basic differences between the two communities.

In a joint statement, the co-chairpersons of the conference, Dr. Glenn Igleheart, Director of the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, AJC's National Director of Interreligious Affairs declared:

"Southern Baptists and Jews are communities of faith deeply rooted in Scripture. We understand these Scriptures in very different ways, but nevertheless believe they require of us concerned and concerted action to uphold the sanctity of human life and to advance social justice, human rights, and religious liberty. At this national meeting, we hope to further clarify critical Biblical and theological issues and to discover ways in which we can work together as fellow citizens and fellow believers to combat the bigotry,

- - more -

Maynard I. Wishner, President; Howard I. Friedman, Chairman, Board of Governors; Theodore Ellenoff, Chairman, National Executive Council; Robert L. Pelz, Chairman, Board of Trustees.

Bertram H. Gold, Executive Vice President

Washington Office, 818 18th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 • Europe hq.: 4 Rue de la Bienfaisance, 75008 Paris, France • Israel hq.: 9 Ethiopia St., Jerusalem, 95149, Israel

South America hq.: (temporary office) 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022 • Mexico-Central America hq.: Av. E. National 533, Mexico 5, D.F.

CSAE 1707



ignorance, and suspicion within our own communities and within the wider society."

The conference is titled "Southern Baptists and Jews: Communities of Conscience Face a Challenging World." It was co-ordinated jointly by Dr. Peter Chen, Assistant Director for World Religions of the HMB's Interfaith Witness Department, and Rabbi A. James Rudin, AJC's Assistant National Director of Interreligious Affairs.

The opening session, on Tuesday afternoon, Feb. 16, will feature an overview of "The Current State of Baptist-Jewish Relations." Rabbi Rudin will present the Jewish view, and Dr. Bob E. Adams, Associate Professor of Ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex., will present the Southern Baptist view.

At the open meeting on Tuesday evening, the subject will be "Human Rights: The Religious Imperative," with Rabbi Tanenbaum speaking from the Jewish perspective, and Dr. James M. Dunn, Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., representing the Southern Baptists.

At the evening session, the assemblage of scholars will also hear words of welcome from representatives of the host community -- Dr. William M. Pinson, Jr., President of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, and George Foos, President of AJC's San Francisco Bay Area chapter.

On Wednesday morning, Dr. Robert L. Cate, Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, will present "A Southern Baptist View of the Hebrew Scriptures." He will be followed by Rabbi Michael J. Cook, Professor of Intertestamental and Early Christian Literature at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio, with "A Jewish View of the New Testament."

"The Meaning of Israel" to the two faiths will be the subject of discussion on Wednesday afternoon, with a Baptist perspective presented by Dr. Robert L. Lindsey, the Southern Baptist Representative in Jerusalem, and a Jewish view presented by Dr. Robert Alter, Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California at Berkeley.

On Wednesday evening, the participants will turn their attention to the subject of "Communicating Religious Values to the World." Dr. William L. Hendricks, Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary will present a Baptist view, and a Jewish view will be given by Dr. David Lieber, President of the University of Judaism, Los Angeles.



On the final morning of the conference, Thursday, Feb. 18, the meeting will feature two more presentations -- by Rabbi Martin Weiner of San Francisco's Sherith Israel Congregation, and Dr. Joseph R. Estes, Pastor of Beechwood Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., the Founding Director of the HMB's Interfaith Witness Department. Their subject will be "Witness, Mission, Conversion, Teshuvah."

The conference will close on Thursday afternoon with a session that will include evaluations of the meeting and projections for the future. The two speakers who will propose a "Prospectus for the Future" will be Dr. Igleheart and Judith H. Banki, AJC's Assistant National Director of Interreligious Affairs.

2/5/82  
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EJP, REL, PP





# The American Jewish Committee

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N.Y.

February 2, 1982

Dear Participant in the Southern Baptist-Jewish National Conference:

We are delighted that you will be participating in the forthcoming conference. Enclosed please find a tentative program and the printed program will be sent out shortly.

The conference will begin with a luncheon at the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, California on Tuesday, February 16 at 12:30 PM, and we will conclude by 5:00 PM on Thursday afternoon, February 18th. Participants are expected to remain for the entire conference.

Out of town participants will be housed at the Howard Johnsons Motel, 160 Shoreline Highway, Mill Valley - telephone (415) 332-5700. Reservations have been made and room assignments will be forthcoming. If you are arriving at the San Francisco Airport, the enclosed instruction sheet gives the schedule for the Marin Airporter. We will arrange transportation from Howard Johnsons to the seminary.

The conference will provide three lunches, February 16, 17 and 18th and two dinners, February 16 and 17. Breakfasts can be obtained in the hotel. Evening sessions at the seminary will be open to the general public, but the other sessions will be limited to participants only.

Please fill out the enclosed card and mail it back as soon as possible, indicating your flight and time of arrival. Please record your expenses including food and transportation, and let me have them at the conclusion of the conference. We expect to have copies of the papers ready for distribution at the conference, and we intend to tape the sessions with the possibility of publishing the proceedings.

We anticipate a very profitable and meaningful three days in Mill Valley, and with best regards, I am,

Cordially yours,

*James Rudin*  
Rabbi A. James Rudin  
Assistant National Director  
Interreligious Affairs

AJR:FM  
Encls.

MAYNARD I. WISNER, President ■ HOWARD I. FRIEDMAN, Chairman, Board of Governors ■ THEODORE ELLENOFF, Chairman, National Executive Council ■ ROBERT L. PELZ, Chairman, Board of Trustees ■ E. ROBERT GOODKIND, Treasurer ■ MERVIN H. RISEMAN, Secretary ■ ELAINE PETSCHKE, Associate Treasurer ■ ALFRED H. MOSES, Chairman, Executive Committee ■ Honorary Presidents: MORRIS B. ABRAM, ARTHUR J. GOLDBERG, PHILIP E. HOFFMAN, RICHARD MAASS, ELMER L. WINTER ■ Honorary Vice-Presidents: NATHAN APPLEMAN, MARTIN GANG, RUTH R. GODDARD, ANDREW GOODMAN, JAMES MARSHALL, WILLIAM ROSENWALD ■ MAX M. FISHER, Honorary Chairman, National Executive Council ■ MAURICE GLINERT, Honorary Treasurer ■ JOHN SLAWSON, Executive Vice-President Emeritus ■ Vice-Presidents: MORTON K. BLAUSTEIN, Baltimore; ROBERT D. GRIES, Cleveland; RITA E. HAUSER, New York; MILES JAFFE, Detroit; HARRIS L. KEMPNER, JR., Galveston; JOHN D. LEVY, St. Louis; HAMILTON M. LOEB, JR., Chicago; LEON RABIN, Dallas; JOHN H. STEINHART, San Francisco; EMILY W. SUNSTEIN, Philadelphia; GEORGE M. SZABAD, Westchester ■

82-700-12

**TRANSPORTATION TO CONFERENCE:**

1. Marin Airporter Bus Service — Leaving San Francisco Airport, pick-up at luggage carousel level on Courtesy Island to Greenbrae destination.
2. Yellow Cab service from Greenbrae Bowling Lanes to Howard Johnson's. Ask for Yellow Cab phone number at Marin Airporter Desk in lobby of Bowling Alley. Cab service to Howard Johnson's 160 Shoreline Highway, Mill Valley. (approximately a 10 minute cab ride).

The cost of the Airporter is \$7.00 and the cab from Greenbrae to Howard Johnsons is approximately \$2.50.

If you are traveling in a group, the cab fare from the San Francisco Airport to the motel is approximately \$30.00 to \$35.00.

**AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES**

**Marin Airporter**

**(415) 461-4222**

**WEEKDAYS**

**LEAVE  
GREENBRAE**

6:00 AM  
7:00 AM  
8:00 AM  
10:00 AM  
12:00 PM  
2:00 PM  
4:00 PM  
6:00 PM  
8:00 PM

**LEAVE  
S.F. AIRPORT**

7:00 AM  
8:00 AM  
9:00 AM  
11:00 AM  
1:00 PM  
3:00 PM  
5:00 PM  
7:00 PM  
9:00 PM

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY**

6:00 AM  
8:00 AM  
10:00 AM  
12:00 PM  
4:00 PM  
6:00 PM  
8:00 PM  
9:00 PM

7:00 AM  
9:00 AM  
11:00 AM  
1:00 PM  
5:00 PM  
7:00 PM  
9:00 PM  
10:00 PM

Leaving SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT, we pick up at luggage carousel level ON COURTESY ISLAND.

Trips from NOVATO, IGNACIO and TERRA LINDA require 24 hour previous reservation.

**CHARTER BUS AND LIMO SERVICE**



PROGRAM FOR SOUTHERN BAPTIST-AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE MEETING, GOLDEN GATE  
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA - FEBRUARY 16-18, 1982

Tuesday

February 16

Afternoon Session

2:00 - 5:00 PM

Current State of Baptist-Jewish Relations

Professor Bob E. Adams, Southwestern Baptist Theological  
Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

Rabbi A. James Rudin, Assistant National Director,  
Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee,  
New York, New York

Evening

7:30 PM

Greetings: Professor Robert Pinson, President,  
Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley,  
California

Greetings: George Foos, President, San Francisco Bay Area  
Chapter, American Jewish Committee

Human Rights: The Religious Imperative

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Director,  
Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York  
New York

Dr. James M. Dunn, Executive Director, Baptist Joint  
Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D. C.

Wednesday

February 17

9:00 - 12:00 Noon

A Southern Baptist View of Hebrew Scripture

Professor Robert L. Cate, Golden Gate Baptist Theological  
Seminary, Mill Valley, California

A Jewish View of the New Testament

Professor Michael J. Cook, Hebrew Union College-Jewish  
Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio

2:00 - 5:00 PM

The Meaning of Israel

Professor Robert Alter, University of California, Berkeley,  
California

Dr. Robert L. Lindsey, Southern Baptist Representative,  
Jerusalem, Israel

7:30 PM

Communicating our Religious Values to the World

Professor William L. Hendricks, Golden Gate Baptist  
Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, California

Professor David Lieber, President, University of Judaism,  
Los Angeles, California

PROGRAM FOR SOUTHERN BAPTIST-AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE MEETING, GOLDEN GATE  
SEMINARY, MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA - FEBRUARY 16-18, 1982

Thursday

February 18

9:00 - 12:00 Noon

Inge Lederer Gibel, Program Specialist, Interreligious  
Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York, Presiding

Witness, Mission, Conversion, Teshuvah

Rabbi Martin Weiner, Sherith Israel Congregation,  
San Francisco, California

Dr. Joseph R. Estes, Beeckwood Baptist Church, Louisville,  
Kentucky

2:00 - 4:30 PM

Discussion Groups

Prospectus for the Future

Dr. Glenn Igleheart, Director, Interfaith Witness Department,  
Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, Atlanta, Georgia

Judith H. Banki, Assistant National Director, Interreligious  
Affairs, American Jewish Committee, New York, New York



SOUTHERN BAPTIST-AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE MEETING, GOLDEN GATE BAPTIST  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, MARIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA - FEBRUARY 16-18, 1982

JEWISH PARTICIPANTS

Alter, Robert, Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature, University of  
California, Berkeley, California

Banki, Judith H., Assistant National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American  
Jewish Committee, New York, New York

Birnbaum, Linda, Assistant Area Director, American Jewish Committee, San Francisco,  
California

Cook, Michael J., Rabbi, Professor of Intertestamental and Early Christian Literature,  
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio

Ellenson, David, Rabbi, Professor of Jewish Religious Thought, Hebrew Union College-  
Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, California

Geller, Laura J., Rabbi, Director, Hillel Foundation, University of Southern  
California, Los Angeles, California

Gibel, Inge Lederer, Program Specialist, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish  
Committee, New York, New York

Lieber, David, Rabbi, President, University of Judaism, Los Angeles, California

Mirel, James, Rabbi, President, Western Washington Rabbinic Group, Seattle, Washington

Rothblatt, Sheldon, Professor of English History, University of California, Berkeley,  
California

Rudin, A. James, Rabbi, Assistant National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American  
Jewish Committee, New York, New York

Seidel, Jonathan, Berkeley, California

Shiryon, Sandra, Rabbi, Assistant Area Director, American Jewish Committee, Los Angeles,  
California

Signer, Michael, Rabbi, Professor of Jewish History, Hebrew Union College-Jewish  
Institute of Religion, Los Angeles, California

Sparer, Malcolm, Rabbi, President, Northern California Board of Rabbis, San Francisco,  
California

Tanenbaum, Marc H., Rabbi, National Director, Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish  
Committee, New York, New York

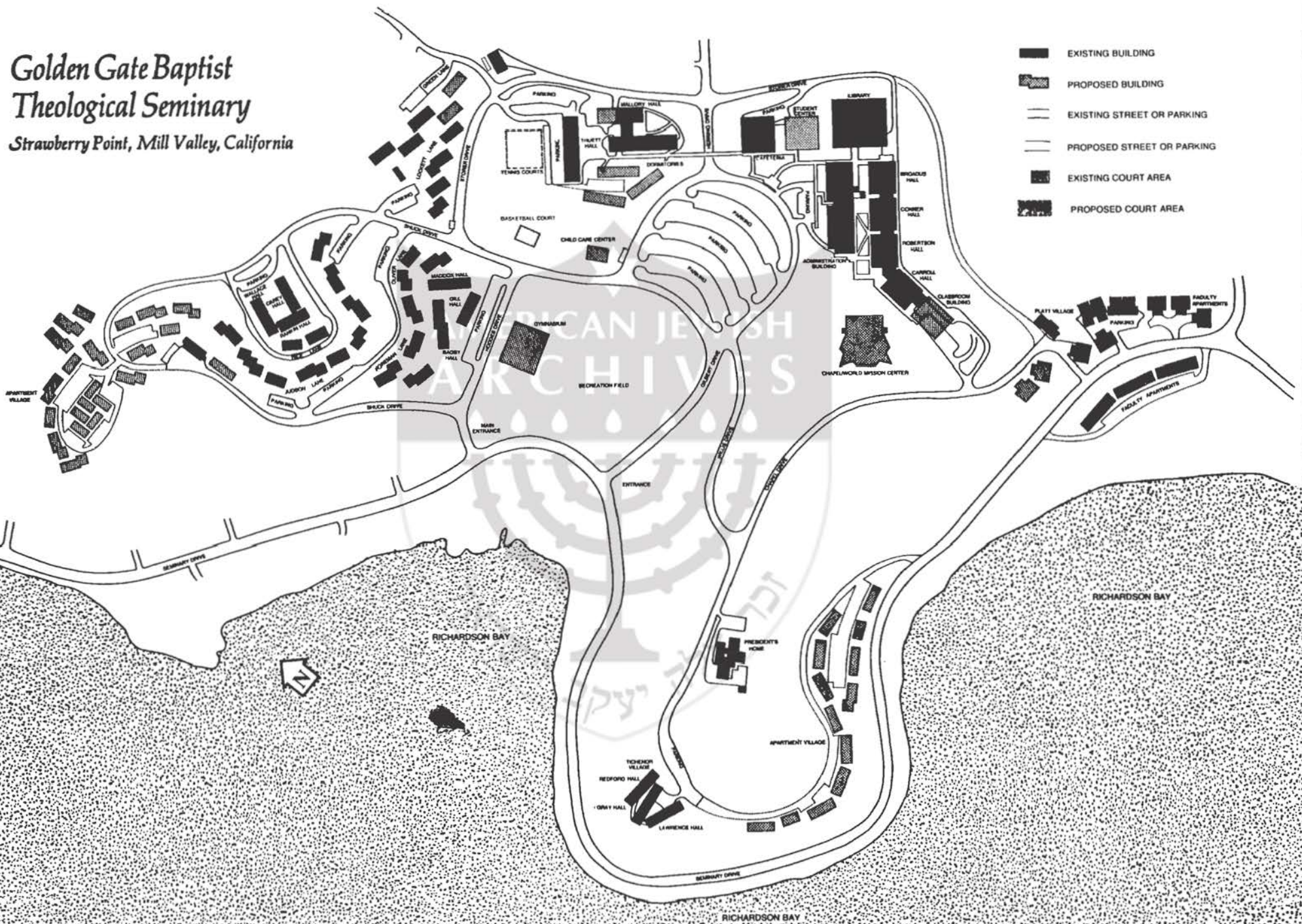
Waldenberg, Shelly, Rabbi, Temple Isaiah, Lafayette, California

Weiner, Ernest, Area Director, American Jewish Committee, San Francisco, California

Weiner, Martin, Rabbi, Sherith Israel Congregation, San Francisco, California



**Golden Gate Baptist  
Theological Seminary**  
*Strawberry Point, Mill Valley, California*





SMALL GROUPS FOR FEBRUARY 16 and 18  
JEWISH-SOUTHERN BAPTIST DIALOGUE  
GOLDEN GATE BAPTIST SEMINARY  
MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Group 1

Jane Medema, Convenor  
Sandra Shiryon, Recorder  
Robert Alter  
Clayton K. Harrop  
William L. Hendricks  
Robert L. Lindsey  
Arlie L. McDaniel, Jr.  
A. James Rudin  
Jonathan Seidel  
Martin Weiner

Group 3

Michael Signer, Convenor  
Bob E. Adams, Recorder  
Judith H. Banki  
Christine Gregory  
Glenn Igleheart  
Barbara Lesserts  
James W. McClendon  
Malcolm Sparer  
Samuel Y.C. Tang  
Ernest Weiner

Group 2

Tom Prevost, Convenor  
James Mirel, Recorder  
Linda Birnbaum  
Peter Chen  
Michael J. Cook  
Francis DuBose (18th only)  
J. Kenneth Eakins  
Joseph R. Estes  
Sheldon Rothblatt  
Kyle Smith  
Marc H. Tanenbaum

Group 4

Laura J. Geller, Convenor  
George J. Sheridan, Recorder  
Robert L. Cate  
James M. Dunn  
David Ellenson  
Inge Lederer Gibel  
Richard Harmon  
David Lieber  
Shelley Waldenburg  
Travis E. Wiginton



For Presentation at  
Southern Baptist-Jewish Dialogue  
Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary  
Mill Valley, California  
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THE IMPERATIVE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

A Baptist Perspective

AMERICAN JEWISH  
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By

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"Women are more like men than anything else in the world," says Dorothy L. Sayers. "They are human beings."<sup>1</sup>

It doesn't take much imagination to see that a black man is more like a white man than anything else in the world. A communist person is more like a capitalist person than anything else in the world. Someone rich is more like someone poor than anything else in the world.

The bond of humanity transcends all other categories animal, vegetable, and mineral. A little distance, as if we sat out on a space platform with an astronaut; a little perspective, if we could get somewhere in time and space to allow a better look at all our strivings -- that's what we need.

Each of us and all of us are so tiny compared to the universe, even the world.

Each of us and all of us are so much more important than things, all the stuff about us.

Each of us and all of us are so potentially dynamic, creative, capable of changing the face of the earth.

Each of us is so dangerous, such time-bombs capable of evil.

Each of us is so worthless physically (reduced to chemical value) and so valuable spiritually, to others.

Each of us is so similar. We hope. We cry. We dream. We hurt. We laugh. We bleed.

It is our faith that gives us the perspective we need. Sayers believed that male and female were simply adjectives

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, Are Women Human? (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971) p. 37

qualifying the noun human being and the substantive governs the modifier. This view is consistent with the biblical teachings regarding the oneness of the human family.

We are equal in our creaturehood. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:45)

We are one, being made like God. (Genesis 1:26-27)

We are one in our living, and dying and depending upon God. (Romans 14:7-13)

The overriding fact about us is our oneness. It is logically, historically, biblically from this oneness that human rights are drawn. The biblical teachings for Jews (Deut. 6:4ff) and for Christians (Mark 12:29ff) rest upon the phrase, "The Lord our God is one Lord."

Being made in His likeness we should reflect His oneness. We are, in fact, one human family. G.K. Chesterton reminded us that "we are all in a small boat on stormy sea and we owe each other a terrible loyalty."

Any honest humanism, true to its roots, will humbly admit affinity with John Donne: "any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."<sup>2</sup> Donne, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, drew his worldview from Scriptures.

<sup>2</sup> John Donne, Devotions XVII

Human rights then are not determined by social consensus, defined by the political process or hammered out in a secular exercise. Human rights are more than a fad, a political agenda, a current media attraction or an object of national policy.

Helmut Thielicke warned: "Human rights as abstract qualities, cut off from the soil of faith in which they had their origin are in danger of withering away."

Human rights are derived from the oneness of the human family. The common bond of humanity is given by God. Human rights are not bestowed by the State, merely recognized by it. The Declaration of Independence merely affirmed and acknowledged the immutable reality. The ethical monotheism of Israel, "the Lord our God is one Lord," is the soil, the stuff that binds all humankind. Separate man from this consciousness of being an actual or a potential child of God, and he becomes no more than an animal. Berdyaev pointedly says, "Where there is no God there is no man."<sup>3</sup>

But there is a profound entitlement program established by God and universal in scope. No political denials can diminish the divine entitlement to certain basic human rights.

The late F.J. Sheed was a great champion of full human rights even for lay persons. He died just November 20, 1981 at the age of 85. Many of us who are not Roman Catholics miss him. Frank Sheed said, "Being a man is in itself so vast a thing that the natural inequalities from one man to the next are a

<sup>3</sup> The End of our Time, trans. Donald Attwater (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1933), p. 80



trifle by comparison." It is this inestimable value placed upon individuals that has fueled Western life and thought. It is the confidence that our worth and our oneness are given, derived, the doing of the very Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

To question another's personhood, to treat persons as means rather than ends in themselves, to violate the sacredness of any God reflecting, God replicating human being is sin. That sin is not simply a violation of human rights, it is a sin against God.

The only universal thing about human rights today is their universal violation. And that is true however we use the term.

Much of our talk of human rights is a western way of talking. We are not dealing with a neat biblical category. In the West when we speak of human rights we are usually talking about civil, individual, and political rights. Those rights seem like luxuries to many of the world's people who wonder if they'll eat today.

At times personal rights and social rights will be in tension, for individual rights can be used to defend the privileged position of a few at the expense of the many, and on the other hand, the rights of the majority of society may be used to trample on the rights of individuals or minorities.

We dare not fall into the terrible dichotomy of choosing between the "West rights" of conscience, religion, belief, expression, privacy, and political freedom or the "East rights" to food, shelter, health care, education, a job.

We must insist on a Providential package not necessarily in the regular rhetoric of either Reagan or Brezhnev. When we speak

of human rights, we mean at least: "The right to be free from personal abuse by the government, that is, arbitrary, arrest and imprisonment, torture, unfair trial, cruel and unusual punishment, and invasion of the home.

The right to the meeting of vital needs, including food, shelter, health care, and education.

The right to enjoy civil, and political liberties, such as freedom of thought, speech, assembly, religion, press, movement, and participation in government."<sup>4</sup>

This is true because human rights are a religious imperative. They stem from the Shema. Love for one's neighbor issues from God's oneness.

Human rights rest comfortably surrounded as sub-categories in the wholeness, the fulfillment, the completion, the Peace of God that is Shalom:

. . . Reconciling the claims of the individual and the group,

. . . Hearing the cries for both bread and freedom,

. . . Realizing the need of every person both to be and to do,

. . . Helping folks hold to both the demands of the moment and dreams for the future,

. . . Righting the wrongs that come from denying either political or economic rights,

<sup>4</sup> "In the Public Eye", Rosemary Brevard, Royal Service, October, 1978, p. 47



. . . Healing the wounds of violated rights, physical or spiritual.

The religious imperative serves as a hedge, a guard rail to keep the people of God from falling into the definitional trap of either East or West. Rather, we see rights and righteousness as gifts of God. Human rights as derived from divine rights, an extension of an eternal dimension.

Those who trace the Human Rights heritage in our history back to John Locke need to hear his own words on the subject. Locke said not he "but the Baptists were the first and only propounders of absolute liberty, instant and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty."<sup>5</sup>

That's not a crass case of Baptist brags. It is, however, a reaffirmation that human rights, rightly understood are directly and indivisibly, at once and always, particularly and universally related to the imago Dei, the image of God in humankind. Our choosing, our compassion, our creativity, our cohesion (I mean our very hanging together) all come from our capacity to be like God.

Yet the ideal is meaningless without enfleshment. Hear Julius Nyerere: "We say man was created in the image of God. I refuse to imagine a God who is miserable, poor, ignorant, superstitious, fearful, oppressed, and wretched -- which is the lot of the majority of those He created in His own image."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration (1689)

<sup>6</sup> Maryknoll magazine, June 1971, p. 37.



It may just be a trite, cutesy way to invest meaning in a word that has such significance for Jews and Christians, maybe it's more than that. Break down the word atonement. It can read at one ment. (He) "hath made of one blood all nations."  
(Acts 17:26)

With genuine creativity we seem to have found an endless string of ways to deny human rights. By entertaining the possibility of "limited" nuclear war and allowing our government to continue stockpiling overkill capacities we take a stand against the most basic of human rights: the right of humanity to exist.

On Monday, December 21, the day that Elizabeth Taylor announced she was separating from her sixth husband, US Senator John Warner, the Gallup poll revealed that three of four Americans would support the plan, first proposed by George Kennan, for "an immediate across-the-board reduction by 50 percent of the nuclear arsenals now being maintained by the two superpowers," the United States and the Soviet Union. The Elizabeth Taylor story ran on page one of the Washington Post the following morning, with a photo of Taylor and another photo - this of Taylor and Warner in happier times - inside. The Gallup-Kennan story ran on the eighth page of the front section.

Norman Cousins reminds us that the year 1979 was the first year in human history when spending for destructive purposes exceeded \$1 billion a day. Since then we have begun to spend a million dollars a minute for tools of death. As long as the

world's resources are being squandered in this manner, any talk of making the planet more congenial to the human species is academic, any talk of human rights sounds hollow.

Cousins insists that "the danger of nuclear war is the number-one problem. The number-two problem is that many of the best minds in our country are not focused on the number-one problem."

By failing to deal with conservation, environmental, population concerns we trade away the God given resources of future generations. It is not so much that we have inherited the earth from our parents, as that we are borrowing it from our children. God intended for us to be caretakers of the earth not undertakers. We make the earth humanly uninhabitable. We realistically rob all unborn generations of the substance spoken of that which "in the beginning God created." Oh, if only more energy were spent caring for His creation instead of bickering about how long it took Him to do it.

By ordering our lives as such constant consumers we forget those who struggle for the basic human right. In much of the world the battle is to maintain bare life. Our talk of human rights must take into account the 40,000 children who starve to death every day.

One of the most effective blasphemies of the name of the Holy One; One of the most blatant obscenities in our culture; One of the most glaring denials of the Diety of Jesus Christ is our failure to care adequately for families with dependent children on welfare. There is great challenge in Mahatma Gandhi's words that "if God would come to India, he would come as bread."



A recent newspaper article told of a Florida city where transients were annoying the residents by hunting in their garbage pails for food. The city's mayor referred to the garbage-eaters as 'vermin,' and spoke of the possibility of dousing the garbage with kerosene. In a country where that kind of sentiment is publicly expressed, voluntary provision for the poor is going to be on the short side.<sup>7</sup>

By tolerating economic policies in this country that victimize whole segments of the population, as blacks are now being punished, we deny, in fact, our lip service to human rights. This is true no matter how pure the motives, sincere the beliefs of those who set forward long term economic re-ordering. When, in the short term, black families are being destroyed, more black young men cannot find work than those who can, and hope seems almost gone, it's time to re-evaluate economic policies.

Recognize human rights, of course! But we've stopped there. . . at recognition. We must build up the ethic that gives substance and meaning to them. That ethic is, I believe, an awareness of the oneness of the human family.

Wes Seeliger illustrates the rootedness of human rights in the oneness of the human family.

"I have spent long hours in the intensive care waiting room. . . watching with anguished people. . . listening to urgent questions: Will my husband make it? Will my child walk again? How do you live without your companion of 30 years?

<sup>7</sup> Martin Marty, Context, February 1, 1982, p. 6



The intensive care waiting room is different from any other place in the world. And the people who wait are different. They can't do enough for each other. No one is rude. The distinctions of race and class melt away. A person is a father first, black man second. The garbage man loves his wife as much as the university professor loves his, and everyone understands this. Each person pulls for everyone else.

In the intensive care waiting room the world changes. Vanity and pretense vanish. The universe is focused in the doctor's next report. If only it will show improvement. Everyone knows that loving someone else is what life is all about.

Why does it take the intensive care waiting room to drive home the brotherhood of man?<sup>8</sup>

Human rights cannot be safeguarded without passionate advocacy. That passion comes not from cool analysis, carefully weighed self-interest, awful oughtness or rational conclusion. Rather human rights will be watched, if they are monitored at all, by people who care. That compassion roots itself in solidarity. Solidarity is the full consciousness of our being a part of humanity. . . the deeply felt awareness of the oneness of the human race and the knowledge that all people, however separated, are bound together by the same fragmented human condition.

<sup>8</sup> Wes Seeliger, ONE INCH FROM THE FENCE (Atlanta: Forum House, 1973)

This solidarity lies at the heart of the gospel. The great message of the gospel is not that God came to take our pains away, but that in Christ he came to share them in solidarity with us.



## THE CURRENT STATE OF JEWISH-BAPTIST RELATIONS

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Baptist and Jewish communities in North America have related to one another since their beginnings. Sometimes those relationships have been felicitous for each, as when the Baptist founders of Rhode Island College, later Brown University, opened its doors to Jewish youth and gladly received contributions from Jews who supported the institution.<sup>1</sup> At other times, Baptists offended their Jewish neighbors by uncritically accepting a Christianity-old negative theological image of Jews and Judaism which was not only untrue but unfaithful to their own best understanding. Both Roger Williams and Isaac Backus were guilty of such uncritical acceptance, although Williams redeemed himself somewhat in the political and social sphere with his advocacy of separation of church and state, which he based on the concept of religious liberty and soul competence.<sup>2</sup>

Such ambivalence characterized the attitudes of Baptists toward Jews and Judaism from before Colonial times and since Colonial times until now. Twelve years before the organization of the Southern Baptist Convention, one Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey, a Jew converted to the Baptist understanding of the Christian faith, travelled through ten southern states. He visited 276 Baptist churches during his year long, 8,000 mile trip, urging them to act responsibly toward Jews. Frey insisted on the right of Jews to practice their religion and gain adherents to it, while at the same time viewing that religion as incomplete and unfulfilled.<sup>3</sup> That seemingly paradoxical stance has characterized Baptists, Southern Baptists, from their beginning in 1845 through 1980 and its now-immortalized phrase, "God doesn't hear the prayer of Jews" until



now. The "States' Rights Conflict," better known now as the Civil War, saw some ten to twelve thousand Jews serve in the Confederate Army, nearly double the number that served in the Union Army. Though they proved themselves to be loyal sons of the South, both they and their families bore the brunt of anti-semitic outbreaks during the closing months of the war--one more modern day example of scapegoating. Succeeding outbreaks of native Americanism, understood by many Southern Baptists as Christian Americanism, closely followed waves of immigrants to the United States. About 18 per cent of the fourteen million migrants between 1870 and 1930 were Jews, and the migration pattern shifted from central to eastern Europe and Russia. They were greeted with suspicion and hostility, and Jews among them experienced a renewal of antisemitism, led by such people as John D. Rockefeller, who was described as a "pillar of the Baptists."<sup>4</sup>

During the formative years of the Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist attention was drawn more than once to contemporary Jews and Judaism. As early as 1867, Baptists in annual session resolved to "labor and pray more earnestly for the conversion of Jews." From that year to 1921, the Southern Baptist Convention in annual session resolved some nine times to begin mission work among Israelites in this and other countries. In 1919, the Southern Baptist Convention petitioned the United States government to do all it possibly could to alleviate the suffering of Jews in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

In 1921, Jacob Gartenhaus, a converted orthodox Jew and graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was appointed by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to begin a Convention-level program designed as a witness to Jews, with a view to their conversion. Both Gartenhaus and other Southern Baptist leaders have consistently and simultaneously decried

Antisemitism as unchristian and utterly wrong while at the same time urged Southern Baptists to pray for the conversion of Jews to Christianity. In the 1948 and 1981 sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention, strongly worded resolutions condemning Antisemitism were adopted. The 1948 resolution probably came as a result of Southern Baptist awareness of the scope of the Holocaust, while the 1981 resolution was undoubtedly evoked by the August, 1980, statement by Bailey Smith, president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Home Mission Board sponsored endeavor headed by Jacob Gartenhaus, known in prior years as the Department of Work Related to Nonevangelicals and in 1982 as the Interfaith Witness Department, sponsored two dialogue sessions between Jews and Southern Baptist, one in 1969 in Kentucky and another in 1971 in Ohio. Jewish sponsorship of these events was done by the American Jewish Committee. During the ensuing years, various other dialogue sessions have been sponsored jointly by the Interfaith Witness Department and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. The most recent of these was held on the campus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, in January, 1982. In the same decade, American Jewish Committee and Interfaith Witness Department efforts have been channelled into broader encounters, such as the National Christian-Jewish Workshop, the last of which was held in the fall of 1981.

Encounters and dialogues at such national and regional levels have been paralleled by local encounters, dialogues and events on a local church-synagogue/temple level. During the years 1980-81, a survey revealed that at least thirty-six Southern Baptist Churches had such encounters or dialogues with Jewish communities and their leaders in their immediate areas. Initiative for such meetings came many times through representatives of the Jewish communities,



while at other times they resulted from initiatives taken either by the pastor of the local church or through the efforts of some representative of the Inter-faith Witness Department as he or she met with local church leadership.<sup>7</sup>

Although unreported officially, many personal contacts take place on a daily basis between Southern Baptists and Jews. These are, in a way, the most important of all, for they are the stuff of which human relationships, positive and negative, are made. Yet, on the Baptist side at least, such encounters are predisposed one way or another by the mental image which each participant holds of the other and of the group to which the other belongs. Enter again for Baptists the ancient theological image of Jews and Judaism which has been responsible for such negative charges as that Jews in Jesus' day were consciously guilty of deicide (Christ-killers) and that their descendants suffer an eternal curse as a consequence, that Judaism during Jesus' day was degenerate and has not changed since, that God has rejected and abandoned both Jews and Judaism. If such images are conjured up in a Baptist mind by the word, Jew, and a living Jew appears, then the image is all too easily applied to the living Jew, regardless of what he or she is like personally. In the same way, if such images are conjured up by the word, Judaism, and a synagogue or temple appears, the image is all too easily applied to the institution, regardless of its character.

Over and over again the ancient negative theological image of Jews and Judaism has been exposed and refuted as false by competent Baptist scholarship, although at times the ancient image faintly shows through like the first writing on a palimpsest.<sup>8</sup>

When Christians through the centuries have dealt with Jews and Judaism, they have always been guided in their dealings by their answers to four questions. These questions concern the validity of Judaism as a religion, whether or not



Jews should be free to practice their religion, whether or not Christians should seek to evangelize Jews, and what place Jews should occupy in the political, economic and social structures of society. The answers to these questions determine to a large degree how such Christians will relate to Jews and Judaism. The same Christians will also be guided by their own concept of the ideal society and the role they should play in realizing it, as well as by their own concept of the actual society which surrounds them and of their role in it.

Other Christian groups may not legitimately speak for Southern Baptists, just as Southern Baptists may not legitimately speak for them. We even speak with various voices among ourselves, and double woe to the Southern Baptist who claims to speak for Southern Baptists. Yet we can report the various ways in which we have spoken about Jews and Judaism. With considerable hesitation, I will try to interpret us to our Jewish friends and colleagues, while I invite questions, disclaimers and perhaps some degree of concurrence from my Southern Baptist compadres who are here. I shall address myself to the four questions.

1. The validity of Judaism. Southern Baptists might be a little puzzled by the question, for they would want to address both it and the second question simultaneously. Yet, when forced to consider it alone, most would probably consider Judaism as preparation for Christianity and would thus reveal little or no knowledge of the development of Judaism from the first century of the Common Era until now. This group would not be in a position to give a reasoned answer for lack of basic historical knowledge and understanding.

Other Southern Baptists who do have some knowledge of the history of Judaism would answer the question in one of two ways, depending on their own theological understanding. Some, with a particularistic and exclusivistic view of Christianity, would deny Judaism's validity in securing God's acceptance

of its practitioner. Others, with some leanings toward what is commonly called universalism, to the degree of their leaning would view Judaism as a valid religion. Quite frankly, I think that most historically literate Southern Baptists have a particularistic, exclusivistic view of Christianity. (Parenthetically, that theological understanding commonly called the two covenant theory seems to find small acceptance among Southern Baptists.)

As I stated earlier, Southern Baptists would be uncomfortable answering this first question without relating it to the second one, which concerns

2. Freedom for Jews to practice Judaism. Southern Baptists who are aware of their own history will unhesitatingly affirm and defend the right of Jews to practice their religion, as they affirm and defend the right of all religionists (and non-religionists) to practice their beliefs. It is at this point that Baptists differ from most other Christian groups.<sup>9</sup> A comprehension by Jews of the Baptist conviction on religious liberty, soul competence and separation of church and state is essential to fruitful, ongoing dialogue between the two groups. Unfortunately, Southern Baptists may be weakening in their stance on these issues, which weakening portends no ultimate good for ourselves nor for Jews.

3. Baptist efforts to evangelize Jews. This question obviously relates to the first one, and yet it differs. Probably most Baptists would in some sense question the validity of Judaism, as validity was defined in question one. Undoubtedly part of the theological reason for President Smith's now-famous remark was a negative answer to question one. Yet it must be understood that for most Southern Baptists, no religion, not even "Southern Baptists" understood as religion, is valid: what is valid is a right relationship to God mediated through Jesus of Nazareth. This "right relationship" is understood



as something that a person voluntarily accepts. Any kind of coercion or manipulation clouds or invalidates the entire subject.

What prompts Southern Baptists, at their best, when they witness to Jews, is their concern for what they consider to be the incalculably important and crucial relationship between an individual Jew and God, which, they consider, to be the same as between any other individual and God. Theologically, Baptists probably cannot posit any innately better relationship between a Jew and God than between any other individual and God. In this sense, a Jew is seen as having no advantage over anyone else. By the same token (and here Southern Baptists at their best utterly repudiate classical theological Antisemitism) no Jew is at a particular or peculiar disadvantage before God! Southern Baptists understand that each individual stands at the same level of need before God. Thus, to exempt any Jew from witnessing attempts would have to be understood as the worst kind of Antisemitism!

4. What place should Jews occupy in the political, economic and social structures of society? The answer to this question for a historically literate Southern Baptist begins at the point of Baptist rejection of the concept of geographic Christianity, of Christendom, of a territorial church. For Southern Baptists, church is composed, humanly speaking, of volunteers. The burden of being Christian is voluntarily accepted. To coerce Christian belief (indeed to coerce any belief) is impossible. To coerce Christian behavior is to create hypocrisy, out of which true Christian faith can not grow. Thus to restrict any person's activity in the political, economic or social structures of society on religious (Christian) grounds is unthinkable for all historically literate Southern Baptists. Those Baptists who militate in the so-called Moral Majority and would force or coerce Christian belief or enforce Christian behavior on



non-Christians ultimately undermine the very basis of Baptist understanding of the Christian faith: voluntary acceptance. Neither a person's acceptance of nor rejection of a particular religious belief and its attendant practices should, per se, neither open nor close the door to full participation in the political, economic and social structures of society. The nature of Baptist understanding of the Christian faith and its function in the world leads to the support of a pluralistic society insofar as religion is concerned.

### Conclusion

The first Jewish-Baptist Scholars' Conference was celebrated in 1969. During three days in August, Jews and Southern Baptists presented, discussed and debated. Theological themes outweighed all else on the agenda: The meaning of Israel, The meaning of Conversion/Turning, The meaning of Messiah-- meanings given to those terms by Jews and Southern Baptists. The first session was given over to getting acquainted in historical perspective; the last, to social responsibility.

This week's agenda includes some of those same themes; The Meaning of Israel, Witness/Mission-Conversion/Teshuvah. We are confident enough to speak to each other of how one understands that which is precious to the other: our Scriptures. We can face crucial social issues together: human rights, communicating our religious values to the world. The changes and development are significant.

Some most important theological issues are probably unresolvable without one group or the other capitulating, ceasing to be what and who it is. Evidently for a Jew to become a Christian means to the Jewish community that he has ceased to be a Jew. We Baptists find that difficult to comprehend, yet must accept it as a given. To ask Southern Baptists to forego witnessing is to ask

them to leave off one of their reasons for being. This is surely the center around which other differences cluster. Yet Jews must also understand that we Southern Baptists recognize, support and wholeheartedly defend your right, under God, to practice to the fullest all the tenets of Judaism which, if you understand your faith in such a way, includes seeking converts to Judaism. This, to us the most basic human right, to worship the God one chooses (and by whom one is chosen) and to obey Him, is that out of which all others flow. When any one is hindered or stifled in the expression of this right, we must stand together in doing all we can, all we can, in securing its practice.

What we discover, what we discuss in all candor, our agreements and our disagreements, our common endeavors and goals, must be shared to the fullest extent possible with our respective peoples. This is the way we must face the future.



## END NOTES

1. Jacob Rader Marcus, American Jewry: Documents, Eighteenth Century. Primarily Hitherto Unpublished Manuscripts. No. III, Publications of the American Jewish Archives (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1959), pp. 222-24.

2. See Roger Williams, The Bloudy Tenent, The Complete Writings of Roger Williams, seven volumes (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), III, 4.

3. See Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey, Essays on Christian Baptism. Fifth ed. (New York: Printed for the author, Wm. H. Colyer, Printer, 1843), pp. 174, 266, 280-81, 291.

4. See Leonard A. Greenberg and Harold J. Jonas, "An American Anti-Semite in the Nineteenth Century," in Joseph L. Blau, Philip Friedman, Arthur Hertzberg and Isaac Mendelsohn (eds.), Essays on Jewish Life and Thought: Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) pp. 266-67, 277.

5. Annual Southern Baptist Convention, 1919, p. 116, unpublished.

6. See my unpublished dissertation, Analysis of a Relationship: Jews and Southern Baptists (Fort Worth: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1969), pp. 91-102.

7. The results of this survey, sponsored by the Interfaith Witness Department and carried out under my direction, are yet to be reported.

8. See my dissertation, pp. 103-140.

9. I am indebted to Ernst Troeltsch' understanding of uniqueness of Baptists at this point which concerns religious liberty. It is Troeltsch' contention that Baptists' repudiation of the concept of natural law as it applies to strictures on religious practices is basically responsible for their insistence on religious liberty and consequently on separation of church and state.



# News/Features

HOME MISSION BOARD / SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 17, 1982

MILL VALLEY, Calif. -- Explosive remarks by Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith 18 months ago that "God almighty does not hear the prayers of a Jew" have helped improve Baptist-Jewish relationships, a top official of the American Jewish Committee told a national Baptist-Jewish dialogue here.

Smith's remarks caused "a lightening flash that illuminated the entire landscape of Baptist-Jewish relationships, prompting sudden heat and light that comes only once in a generation," said Rabbi James A. Rudin, assistant national director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

Rabbi Rudin made the observation during the opening session of a national dialogue between Southern Baptists and Jews at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary Tuesday, in an address on "The Current State of Baptist-Jewish Relationships."

Although he explained he is not a "Pollyanna who sees cotton-candy good emerging from a highly-negative episode," Rabbi Rudin observed that Smith's remarks "have placed Southern Baptist and Jewish relations on a much more realistic and much more mature basis."

"We both know how far we have to go, how painful has been the hurt, and it has moved us to a deeper understanding of dialogue," Rabbi Rudin said.

"Smith's remarks have forced Baptists and Jews to re-examine their deepest and most profound religious commitments," Rabbi Rudin said.

The remarks angered and dismayed Jews who felt Smith had "de-legitimized Jewish life," the rabbi said.

"If there is no legitimacy to Jewish prayer, then there is no legitimacy to Jewish religious life, and then the next step is to say, 'there is no legitimacy to Jews,' Rabbi Rudin argued.

During the dialogue, an Oklahoma Baptist pastor, Travis Wiginton of Norman, Okla., disagreed with Smith's statements, but emphasized that "Bailey Smith is a sincere, honest person who believes what he believes and thinks you ought to share what you believe. It was a sincere, honest statement not made with malice," Wiginton said.

Smith was not present at the dialogue because of a schedule conflict, Baptist leaders said.

Rabbi Rudin emphasized he was "laid back" about Smith's remarks, but felt the dialogue would not be honest without dealing frankly with the latest "flash point" in Baptist-Jewish relationships.

Rather than emphasizing the negative, Rabbi Rudin stressed five things Baptists and Jews have in common: (1) similar congregational structure with emphasis on local rather than hierarchical control; (2) deep respect and reverence for the authority and integrity of the Scriptures; (3) an abiding commitment to the security and survival of the State of Israel; (4) a shared commitment to the separation of church and state in the United States, and (5) mutual involvement in the struggle to achieve human rights and religious liberty, especially for Christians and Jews in the Soviet Union.

The dialogue here is the third of its kind sponsored jointly by the American Jewish Committee and the interfaith witness department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Previous dialogues were held in Louisville in 1969 and Cincinnati in 1971. Last month another Baptist-Jewish dialogue was held between Southern Baptists and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Fort Worth, Tex.



## PROSPECTUS FOR THE FUTURE

Glenn Igleheart

We do not turn toward the future because we turn away from the past. We are able to face the future expressly because we have dedicated these days of dialogue to looking long and hard at the past and present pilgrimages of our peoples. Such a look is the ground for looking at the future.

Forty years after the Holocaust, it is time to move on into the next phase of Christian-Jewish relations, as an earlier generation of Jews moved from the crucible of Egypt and the experience of forty years in the wilderness in a new land. We must not forget these experiences, but build upon them to go beyond to new levels of discovery and dialogue.

A central symbol of Judaism is a burning bush, the tree that drew a man. A central symbol of Christianity is a cross, the tree that slew a man. These symbols reappear over and over in the sermons and writings of our respective peoples. But neither the bush nor the cross are the crux of the matter; it is the God who actively reveals himself in those theophanies.

We have gathered here under the tree of dialogue, invisible and fragile though it be. Here, too, the significance is not in the event, but in the way the event has made us conscious of the God who has met us here as we have met each other, the God who now goes before us into the future, urging us to follow him. This is the only ground for any fruitful future for Southern Baptists and Jews in their relations with each other.

I offer my own reflections on this future in the form of an acrostic:

- P is for PUBLICATION of the papers and insights of this dialogue. The things we have said to each other deserve to be heard by others in our faith-communities. Broadman Press, our denominational publishing house, is considering such a venture. Let us jointly resolve that others beyond this circle will hear of these days together and their potential for Baptist-Jewish relations, as well as a potential for broader Christian-Jewish break-throughs.
- R is for RIGHTS, religious and human. Since our last dialogue, I have been to Dachau, an experience so shattering to me that I cannot mention the word without my throat tightening and tears coming to my eyes. That experience is linked to this meeting for me, for it was in meetings like this that you have taught me about the agony of Dachau and its companion places. Standing on that parade ground, I vowed to God and to myself that I would not be silent when I had an opportunity to speak against anti-Semitism or the desecration of anyone's human or religious rights. Religious liberty is a precious commodity in short supply in our world. We must help each other in calling for and working for the rights of persons in each of our faiths to worship, live their faith, and to share their faith.
- O is for OVERSEAS TRAVEL, conducted jointly, to Israel and elsewhere. Most tourist trips to Israel concentrate on either Jewish or Christian sites, with little attention or understanding of the implications of the various locations on the daily calendar for other faiths. American Jewish travelers should visit some Baptist places in Israel, and vice versa. What potentials are there for jointly planned and conducted travel groups?



- S is for STUDY. More serious attention to each other's faith must become the agenda of more of us. Jews complained that Baptists know more about biblical Judaism than of contemporary Judaism. Baptists can also complain that few Jews seem able to distinguish between Roman Catholic and Baptist Christians. The slight exchange of students and of professors studying in each other's institutions needs expanding. This seminary regularly invites a rabbi in for discussion with the faculty. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has a course in Judaism which it offers in cooperation with the Jewish Chautauqua Society. Where are there similar courses or offerings in Jewish seminaries or institutions of higher learning? Rabbinical students will increasingly relate to Southern Baptist pastors and congregations as synagogues follow their members to the Sun Belt, and as Southern Baptists continue to establish churches on the east and west coasts. Which Jewish agency or institution will be the first to offer a regular lectureship on "Your Southern Baptist Neighbor" to Jewish seminarians?
- P is for PRAYER. The spiritually attuned come closer together than any others within our traditions. This vista offers many potentials for the next decade. Let worship--personal, family, and corporate--become a new bridge to meet the spiritual hunger in our land. Each of our groups loses disproportionate numbers of our youth to cult groups. Prayer, and all that goes with it, offers hope for retention of these persons.
- E is for EXPANSION of the conversation to include Muslims. Unusual opportunities exist in the United States for representatives of these three religions of revelation to meet each other in serious encounter and search.
- C is for COMMUNICATION. A long list of possibilities has surfaced here. We need to examine them and follow those which can be done soon. We need to look for models to follow, like the meeting of wives of rabbis and wives of Baptist pastors that took place recently in Miami. They learned they had a lot in common, and gained much from communicating with each other.
- T is for TEXTS, those materials we use to describe each other, and to discuss the ground between us. Who among us will write the pivotal books for the next two decades? There will be a unit on Judaism in the SBC Vacation Bible School curriculum for the summer of 1983. Where is there a similar treatment of Southern Baptists in Jewish publications? How often do we consult each other as we prepare material about each other?
- U is for UNDERSTANDING. The importance of having time to talk, to ask questions, to clarify and expand on positions presented, has been demonstrated over and over again in these days. There is therefore the need for more dialogues. The failure of the last dialogue we sponsored together was that it took ten years for us to meet again. Let us resolve no such interval of time will transpire before we engage in other efforts at understanding through dialogue.
- S is for SERVICE. Jesus told his followers that the greatest among them would be the servants. Servanthood is also a high aim in the Jewish community. How can we seriously consider serving one another? Let us search for the ways, and find them, and embark on them. As we minister to each other we will cross the threshold of the future, following the One who calls us.

## A SOUTHERN BAPTIST VIEW OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

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I can imagine no more impossible task than to try to set forth in one document or to describe in one brief period a statement which proposes to cover "A Southern Baptist View of the Hebrew Scriptures." Nor can I imagine anyone so foolish as to try to speak for all Southern Baptists. The very nature of Southern Baptists as a people, of Southern Baptist churches, and of the Southern Baptist Convention, places a premium upon our individuality and our individualism. At the same time, as a professor of Old Testament in a Southern Baptist Seminary, and as one who has spent more than fifteen years as a pastor in a Southern Baptist Churches, I do think I know what the mainstream thought of Southern Baptists is as it relates to the Hebrew Scriptures. However, I do wish to make it quite clear that what I am about to give is "a Southern Baptist's view of the Hebrew scriptures." This is strictly one man's opinion.

The Southern Baptist Convention has twice adopted statements of confessions of faith. This was done in 1925 and was revised in 1963. These statements were not creeds, but were intended to reflect a general consensus of those who made up the convention. In the introductory words to each of these confessions, the following statement is made: "the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.



Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience."

Furthermore, in both of these two confessions, the very first article has to do with the Scriptures. The more recent of these sets forth the following statement.

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.

The two major changes between this statement and the earlier one are found in the additional phrases that the Bible "is the record of God's revelation of himself to man" and that "the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ."

It is quite obvious that this statement, although it focuses upon the New Testament, also includes the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. It is equally obvious that this confession leaves us with only the broadest generalities concerning our specific attitudes toward the Hebrew Scriptures themselves. Therefore I shall attempt to be more specific as we consider the issue.

However, before proceeding further, I wish to digress for a moment to set forth a basic definition. By the "Hebrew Scriptures" I am referring to that portion of our Bible which we call the "Old Testament." Furthermore, since some Christian Bibles include that collection of books known as the Apocrypha, it is perhaps wise to be



aware that most Southern Baptists do not use the Apocrypha at all. Furthermore, I do not know of any Southern Baptists who would consider these books to be biblical in the sense of being authoritative for "faith and practice." Therefore, by the expression, "the Hebrew Scriptures," I am referring to those books which are contained in the Massoretic Text and which are normally collected under the categories of Torah, Nebhi'im and Kethubim. Within these limits, then, how does a Southern Baptists view the Hebrew Scriptures?

It appears to me that in order to answer this question fully, there are four other questions to which we must direct our attention. They are:

1. Why do we Southern Baptist Christians have the Hebrew Scriptures?
2. Why do we Southern Baptists accept the Hebrew Scriptures as an authoritative part of our Bibles?
3. What do we Southern Baptists see in the Hebrew Scriptures which has significant meaning for us?
4. How do we Southern Baptists use the Hebrew Scriptures in our "faith and practice," in our ministry and mission?

It is to these questions that I wish now to direct your attention. You might not have approached the subject in precisely this way, but we cannot answer the primary question without dealing with these. As we deal with these, our answer to the basic question will be unveiled.

### Why We Have the Hebrew Scriptures

The question is frequently asked, or at least implied, both by Christians and non-Christians alike, "Since Christians are followers of Christ, and accept the New Testament as their sacred Scriptures, why do they (or we) also accept the Old Testament?" The background behind this particular question lies in the fact that even a superficial reading of these two collections of materials appears to reveal vast differences in theology and religion. This is not a new discovery, and as a result, this question has been around from the very earliest days of the Christian Church, when there were those who saw the God of the Hebrew Scriptures and the God of the New Testament as two entirely separate beings. This movement made a concerted effort to eliminate the Hebrew Scriptures from the Christian Bible. That it failed is obvious. That it arose at all adds significance to the fact that I am posing the same question here. "Why do we Southern Baptists have the Hebrew Scriptures in our Bible?"

The first and most obvious answer is that it is printed there. But that merely pushes the question back one step. The next answer which then presents itself is the fact that our fathers in the faith accepted the Hebrew Scriptures. But that also merely pushes our question back another step. It still does not answer it. These two answers might be restated by the statement that Southern Baptists have the Hebrew Scriptures because Christians generally have received them and passed them on. But neither does this really answer our question. Southern Baptists are quite independent enough to have

ignored what other Christians do at this point if they so desired. We have certainly followed this path in other matters.

The answer to the question of why we have the Hebrew Scriptures is far more foundational than these initial suggestions. The fact that Southern Baptists have the Hebrew Scriptures at all rests upon the fact that these were the only Scriptures which the early Christians possessed. These were their Bible. This is true because the first Christians were Jews. The Hebrew Scriptures were the basis of their heritage and religious background. When Jesus read from the Scriptures, it was from the Hebrew Scriptures which he read. When the book of Acts portrays the apostles as preaching the gospel, it was in the Hebrew Scriptures that they found their text. When the gospel writers sought for a basis to proclaim the life of Jesus, they turned to the Hebrew Scriptures. It is questionable whether any author of any of the material within the New Testament was ever spiritually self-conscious enough to think or believe that he was writing Scripture. But they seem universally to accept the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative and binding upon themselves.

The early Christians had the Hebrew Scriptures when Christianity began. They kept them as the basis of their faith, practice, and proclamation. We accept these Scriptures from their hands, along with the New Testament Scriptures which they wrote. But we do not cast the Old aside merely because we have the New. We have the Hebrew Scriptures in the Old Testament because we understand ourselves as springing from this root. We may see their authority



for faith and practice in our lives shaped by the New Testament, but we do not see the Old Testament as having been cast aside.

#### Why We Accept the Hebrew Scriptures

The answer to my first question brings me face-to-face with the second. "Why do we Southern Baptists accept the Hebrew Scriptures as an authoritative part of our Bible?" Again, the first answer presupposes a completely uncritical approach, answering that we accept it because it is printed as a part of our Bibles. Deriving from this same attitude is the answer that we accept it because our pastors use it (occasionally), our Sunday School curriculum uses it, and sometimes we even have special Bible studies from it. Obviously, while these answers are true, they just will not serve as an adequate, reflective answer to my question.

Approaching the question from a different direction, then, it appears to me that we Southern Baptists accept the Hebrew Scriptures as a part of our Bible first of all because they were the Bible of Jesus. He whom we claim as Lord set the example for us in using the Hebrew Scriptures as his authoritative word from God. It is not of great significance to say that it was the only Bible which he possessed. That is beside the point. He did not have to use it, in this manner, but he did. He quoted the Old Testament as the authority for many of his actions. He also quoted the Old Testament as the authority for his personal spiritual life. He quoted the Old Testament as the basis for his proclamation. Finally, he quoted the Old Testament as the basis for interpreting his life and ministry to

his followers. Our reasoning moves from the fact that Jesus accepted and used the Hebrew Scriptures, to the conclusion that we who follow him should do so also.

But this is only the beginning of our rationale for using the Hebrew Scriptures, not the end. We Southern Baptists also use the Hebrew Scriptures because Jesus commanded, or at last commended, their use to his followers, as well as to those who opposed him. He commended their use to those who would have executed him, saying, "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me." (John 5:39) He further commended and commanded their use to his disciples, saying,

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an yodh, not a tittle, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:17-19, author's translation)

He furthermore pointed to his disciples those whose lives were most devoted to the study of the Hebrew Scriptures, commanding a devotion beyond theirs, saying, "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20)

At the same time, while commanding the use of the Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus set the pattern of their use for us by probing the principles which undergirded them, and the thrust of their

teachings. He took them and went beyond them, not lessening their demands but intensifying them. (cf. Matt. 5:21-48)

Furthermore, Jesus also demonstrated the use of the Hebrew Scriptures for his disciples. Following the hardly believable event of his resurrection, he used the Hebrew Scriptures to open the eyes of their understanding to the meaning of the events which had brought him to that place. There we are told that, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27) This was from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Apparently, based upon this use of the Old Testament, the early Christians also began to so use this material. The letters of Paul, the sermons in the book of Acts, and the gospel writers themselves all turn to the Old Testament as the basis for and the explanation of the ministry and message of Jesus and therefore, of the proclamation of their faith.

Now it is obvious that many of the New Testament references to Old Testament material were made to the Septuagint rather than to the Hebrew Scriptures themselves. This brings us to another approach to our question, why do we accept the Hebrew Scriptures rather than to the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures? There is no universally accepted answer to this. However, the more usual one is that since the Old Testament was and is the Bible of the Hebrew people, we will use what they (you) accepted as the authentic Hebrew Scriptures, not some other ancient version of this material. This applies both to



the identification of the books which are contained in it as well as to the language in which it is studied. Unfortunately, most Southern Baptists, even most Southern Baptist ministers, do not read Hebrew. Thus we have become the users of an English translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. But at least it is an English translation of the Hebrew, not of the Greek, or of some other language.

But back to the writers of the New Testament, they did not merely use the Old Testament as the proof-texts for their writing and proclamation, they also found that their faith actually grew from the roots of the major teachings of the Old Testament. In a very real sense, the early Christians saw their faith as the flowering of those roots which were the basic teachings of the Old Testament. In fact, the major teachings of Christianity do not appear to be fully understandable without first understanding the faith of Israel from which they grew.

#### What We See in the Hebrew Scriptures

This brings me to the third fundamental question with which I wish to deal: "What do we Southern Baptist see in the Hebrew Scripture which has significant meaning for us?" It is important that we consider the entire question, and not just part of it. Obviously, we see a great deal in the Hebrew Scriptures which is of interest and concern to us. Students of antiquity find a major resource here. Students of religion, both modern and ancient, also find here a significant basis for study and reflection. Students of literature and language also find here resources for study and investigation.

But while any and all of these are important, they do not address the question of "significant meaning" for Southern Baptists as a group of contemporary Christians, seeking to serve our God and to propagate our faith. To deal with our question adequately, we must not forget the area of "significant meaning." It appears to me that there are four basic, interrelated answers to this question.

First, we Southern Baptists see in the Hebrew Scriptures the foundation for our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. I hope that this does not sound either hostile or overly-aggressive. It is not meant in this way at all. For me, as for most of us, it is a simple statement of faith. We do understand Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of the messianic hope of the Hebrew Scriptures. We do see him as uniting in himself the concepts of Messiah and Suffering Servant, as well as those of priest and sacrifice. We see him as initiating the New Covenant to which Jeremiah looked and which was hinted at by Hosea and possibly Ezekiel. (Cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Hos. 2:16-23; Eze. 11:17-21) Thus we understand that the New Testament conception of Jesus grew out of the hope of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Second, we Southern Baptists see in the Hebrew Scriptures the basis for most, if not all of the foundational doctrines of our faith. I realize that it is quite easy for this statement to be misunderstood. There has long been a popular proverb among Christians that "the New Testament is in the Old, concealed; while the Old Testament is in the New, revealed." This statement does rhyme, it is memorable, and it has the sanctity of tradition behind

it. But this is not at all what I suggesting nor is it what I really believe. In no way do I believe that all of the faith of the New Testament can be found hidden within the images and faith of the Hebrew Scriptures. Nor do I believe that the sole, or even main purpose of the New Testament, is to explain the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures. What I do believe is that just as Christianity began as a sect and outgrowth of Judaism, so the Christian Scriptures in our New Testament set forth an understanding of our faith as an outgrowth or flowering of the basic faith of the Hebrew Scriptures. To use the formal categories of systematic theology, I (and I think, we) believe that the basic New Testament understanding of revelation, God, man, sin, salvation, and future hope all spring from the root concepts of these ideas which are set forth in the Hebrew Scriptures. The New Testament developments of these ideas may be, and frequently are, understood without reference to their Old Testament roots. But these New Testament developments attain a far richer meaning when they are seen as the outgrowth of a process of theological development which began with the faith of Israel as set forth in the Hebrew Scriptures.

As illustrations of these points, note that the entire New Testament concept of redemption takes on a new dimension of understanding when viewed against the background of the Hebrew Scriptures' concept of the kinsman-redeemer. Furthermore, the New Testament's presentation of baptism and the Lord's Supper attain a deeper meaning when seen against the background and with the understanding of prophetic symbolic actions. Beyond this, the New



Testament book of Hebrews becomes far more vivid in presenting its understanding of Jesus when it is seen against the background of the sacrificial codes of Leviticus and the historical narratives of the entire Old Testament.

Third, we Southern Baptists see in the Hebrew Scriptures the foundation for much of our religious practices. Admittedly, many of our religious practices do not seem to have any real biblical foundation, but of those which do, a significant number seem to spring from roots within the Old Testament. The roots of our understanding of the importance of religious education spring from Hebrew concepts such as this command from Deuteronomy:

Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess. (Deu. 31:12-13)

Furthermore, our emphasis upon tithing as a means of supporting the ministry and mission of the Church springs solidly from the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures. Again, it is admitted that we have not limited ourselves to this Old Testament understanding. But, we do at least begin with the prophetic proclamation of the tithe. Consider at this point the words of Habakkuk:

Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, "How are we robbing thee?" In your tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. (Mal. 3:8-10)

Far more significant than this is our understanding of social justice and practical righteousness. Here, too, the roots of these concepts run deep within the teachings of the law and the preaching of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. The admonitions to practical social concerns and the condemnations of those who do not exemplify such, serve as the basis for many of our actions in these directions. Furthermore, our failure in these areas has not rested in our failure to use or to understand the message of the Old Testament. It has rested instead in our private callousness and in our personal self-justification. Perhaps we should note that here, too, we did not learn the lessons which the prophets set forth in their scathing denunciations of those who drew near to God with their lips but were far from him with their hearts. We have recognized that the roots of these concepts were there and that they were to be obeyed. We, like their people, have just refused to obey. But that is not the fault of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Fourth, we Southern Baptists see in the Hebrew Scriptures the foundation of much of our worship. Occasionally, we have missed seeing some of the foundations which were also there. We have found in the book of Psalms the bases for praise, adoration, thanksgiving, confession and lament. To our detriment, we have far too frequently ignored what the psalter teaches us about the necessity of making lament a real part of worship. Furthermore, although we have frequently paid little or no attention to it, the sacrificial system and the ritual worship of ancient Israel has had a significant impact

upon the New Testament understanding of worship and its meaning. This should not have been surprising to us, for most of the early Christians were Jews, practicing the Judaism of their day.

In addition, the devastating attacks of the prophets upon empty forms of worship which were devoid of meaning have served to warn us of the same pitfalls. In other words, even as the Hebrew Scriptures have served to furnish us a foundation for worship, they have also pointed out to us the tragedy of meaningless worship, carried on through ritual forms, but without any impact upon the lives of the ancient or modern people of God.

So we Southern Baptists see in the Hebrew Scriptures the foundations of our faith and practice. We see there the foundations of our faith in Jesus as our Lord. We see there the foundations of the basic theological tenets of our faith. We see there the foundations of the private practices of our lives. And we see there the foundation of the personal and public worship by which we approach our God.

#### How We Use the Hebrew Scriptures

As is so frequently the case in matters of religion, there is not necessarily a direct connection between what people see in their scriptures and how they act, or how they really use those scriptures. So I would now direct your attention to the fourth of the fundamental questions which I originally posed. "How do we Southern Baptists use the Hebrew Scriptures in our 'faith and practice,' in our ministry and mission?"



In beginning to answer this question, I must freely admit that we have far too often been guilty of abusing the Hebrew Scriptures.

This has taken several forms. I earlier referred to the proverb:

"the New Testament is in the Old, concealed; while the Old Testament is in the New, revealed." In trying to demonstrate the truth of that proverb, far too often we have been guilty of lugging a New Testament teaching, "lock, stock, and barrel," into an Old Testament passage. We have often tried to find the full New Testament concept of eternal life in the haunting words of the psalmist, who said,

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever. (Psalm 23:6)

At least let it be said that we Southern Baptists have been even-handed in this kind of abuse. We have just as frequently lugged our own preconceptions into New Testament passages as well. This is the process which biblical exegetes usually call eisogesis. That is reading into a passage something which is not there.

However, there is another kind of abuse in which we also have frequently engaged. This is the process of failing to see what is really in a passage. This is sometimes done in order to appear scholarly, or intellectual, or to avoid the risk of offending someone in our audience. This process has been called apogesis. This refers to reading out of a passage a teaching which is actually there. This is probably more often done by scholars than by lay-persons. It should not be done at all. I do believe that the majority of us, most of the time, are concerned with finding out what a passage

really says, so that we can use it properly. This brings me back to my question: "How do we Southern Baptists use the Hebrew Scriptures in our 'faith and practice,' in our ministry and mission?"

The first and most important way in which we use the Hebrew Scriptures is as a basis for understanding the New Testament. Studying the New Testament without understanding the Old is like trying to understand the roof of a house without knowing something of the floor plans, the locations and strengths of the walls, and the nature of the foundation upon which the house rests. You can understand something here without the more basic knowledge, but there are always gaps in knowledge and a certain amount of insecurity about our conclusions. I am in no way saying that a knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures is necessary for salvation in our view. What I am saying is that a knowledge of those scriptures is necessary if we are to appreciate the depth and richness of our faith and its heritage. We turn to the Old Testament therefore, as a key to unlocking some of the richness of the New Testament revelation of God.

Closely related to this, we also use the Hebrew Scriptures as part of the basis for understanding the faith and practice of many of those to whom Jesus ministered and to whom the early Christians ministered. This allows us to come to a partial grasp of the popular religion of the Jewish people who were the first targets of the early evangelists. It is only as we understand those whom these Christians were facing that we understand much of what they were saying and/or writing. For example, without a good knowledge of the Hebrew

Scriptures, the gospel of Matthew would be quite difficult to understand. That gospel had as a major concern the proclamation of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures. Without the Hebrew Scriptures, the multitudinous references would lead to more confusion than understanding of its proclamation.

This brings me to the second way in which we Southern Baptists use the Hebrew Scriptures, which is in proclamation and worship. Many of the psalms, for example, serve as the basis for hymns which we use. Just a hurried comparison shows the relationship between the following.

Praise the Lord! Ye Heavens Adore Him

Praise the Lord! ye heavens adore him;  
Praise him, angels in the height;  
Sun and moon, rejoice before him;  
Praise him, all ye stars of light.  
Praise the Lord! for he hath spoken;  
Worlds his mighty voice obeyed;  
Law which never shall be broken  
for their guidance hath he made.

(Hymn 11, Baptist Hymnal)

Praise the Lord!  
Praise the Lord from the heavens,  
praise him in the heights!  
Praise him, all his angels,  
praise him, all his host!  
Praise him, sun and moon,  
praise him, all you shining stars!  
Praise him, you highest heavens,  
and you waters above the heavens!  
Let them praise the name of the Lord!  
For he commanded and they were created.  
And he established them for ever and ever;  
he fixed their bounds which cannot be passed.  
(Psalm 148:1-6)

Many other references from the Hebrew Scriptures are reflected throughout the hymns which we use in worship, either as a single



reference or as the basis of the entire hymn.

In addition to these uses, almost half of the suggested scripture readings in our Baptist Hymnal are drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures. A hurried survey of the worship programs prepared by Baptist churches reflect many usages of passages from the Old Testament. They are used as calls to worship, benedictions, and scattered biblical readings. Another feature which such a survey shows is that a significant number of sermons are based upon Old Testament texts. This brings us to striking fact. In proclaiming the Christian faith, we Southern Baptists do so quite frequently by beginning with the Hebrew Scriptures. Our proclamation of the gospel begins with significant regularity from passages located in this portion of our Bible.

The third way in which we Southern Baptists use the Hebrew Scriptures is in religious education. Although the general emphasis of our Sunday School curriculum material is upon the New Testament, a significant portion of our lesson material does come from the Hebrew Scriptures. This is accomplished through the study of specific books within the Old Testament, emphasis upon specific theological or historical themes, and focus upon occasional series based upon character studies. Also, in annual denominational emphases, such as January Bible Study, Vacation Bible School, and Doctrinal Emphasis Week, the Hebrew Scriptures come in for a significant emphasis. We wish our people to know what the Old Testament contains, what it teaches, how it relates to the New Testament, and how they both

relate to contemporary life.

Finally, the fourth way in which we Southern Baptists use the Hebrew Scriptures is for ministry, mission, and outreach. The Old Testament has often served as the basis for our social concerns, as I have noted. The frequent admonitions of concern for the widow, the fatherless, and the resident alien rest heavily upon our consciences as do admonitions to justice for all. Again, our actions have not always been as bold as our proclamations. But we have sensed the prophetic concerns and have felt their demands upon our consciences.

We have also found within the Hebrew Scriptures an impetus for our mission and outreach to the world. Although the full missionary imperative which rests upon us is seen to be in the New Testament primarily, yet we have sensed through the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures the divine concern for those who are outside a redemptive, covenant relation with him. We have found in Jonah and in Ruth compassion for those who have no claim upon God. From Hosea we have felt the heartbeat of God's love. From Isaiah 40-66 we have sensed that this love reaches out to all people. So we use the Hebrew Scriptures as a basis for our missionary and evangelistic enterprise.

#### Conclusion

In summary, then, let me say that we Southern Baptists accept the Hebrew Scriptures as coming to us as a part of God's revelation of his will for humankind. We accept them and honor them because we see them as pointing to Jesus as their fulfillment and because he used them as a basis for his mission and ministry. We understand them as

a part of the inspired scriptures which we use, and we seek to obey them as speaking to us with divine authority. Admittedly superficial, this survey has sought not to give a final definition to our questions so much as to set forth a statement of faith. It is a basis for your beginning to understand us as you understand how we use the Hebrew Scriptures.





## A Jewish View of the New Testament

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Sometimes religious divisiveness can be sharp even between parties who share most of their essentials in common. The limited areas of disagreement become the focus of special attention, and eventually emerge as the breeding ground for intense hostility, especially when the parties are in competition with one another for the same adherents.

Judaism and Christianity of course originally had much in common, for Christianity was born within Judaism, emerging as one of a variety of Judaisms then current in early first century Palestine. In spreading outside Palestine, however, Christianity gained most of its new adherents from Gentile ranks; with time, this as well as other factors rendered the originally limited differences between the two religions more pronounced, and, despite the fundamentals they shared in common, a bitter hostility developed--and we see this hostility reflected in the New Testament literature.

In presenting to you a Jewish view of the New Testament, unavoidably I have to deal centrally with this problem of hostility--hostility toward Jew by Christian and toward Christian by Jew. For that which catches the eye of Jewish readers of the New Testament is the orientation of the New Testament toward Jews and Judaism, and that which defines a specifically Jewish view of the New Testament is the reaction of Jews to these particular traditions. It so happens that, whatever the causes, these traditions are often traditions of controversy and antipathy, the legacy of which remains to the present day, posing a difficult challenge to the many participants in this conference who sincerely wish to continue ameliorating the climate of discourse between Southern Baptists and Jews.

II

Back in the first century, we Christians and Jews began by sharing so much in common. We both believed in one God and refused to worship the Roman Emperor; we both accepted the Ten Commandments and the ethics of the Prophets; we both observed similar holidays and shared in common many of the same prayers; we both accepted the Jewish Scriptures as our Bible. Moreover, in the eyes of many a heathen, Christians seemed hardly distinguishable from Jews: Jesus and his initial followers were all Jews; Christian missionaries cited Jewish Scriptures, accepted fundamentals of Jewish theology, addressed audiences in Jewish synagogues, and drew new members from the ranks of Gentiles many of whom had originally been attracted by Jewish proselytism.

Where, then, lay the seeds of dissension occasioning a parting of the ways? It seems to me that, at its earliest level, the phenomenon started innocently enough, and in a virtually imperceptible manner. Judaism has a tradition of self-criticism, which commenced at least with the Hebrew Prophets of old. It was a hallowed tradition among the Prophets to castigate the unrighteous. The assumption of the Prophets was, however, that God would never break His covenant with Israel, possibly not even with the unrighteous of Israel, but rather was committed to keeping open the way of reconciliation--and the Prophets viewed themselves as instrumental in bringing that reconciliation to fruition.

Accordingly, when Jesus criticized the unrighteous in his day, he was only being true to the hallowed prophetic tradition of Judaism. But after Jesus died, there arose among some of his followers a kind of mutation of this hitherto hallowed tradition. For them, Jesus' identity became increasingly central, even eclipsing in importance the content of his message. Now, in the eyes of some early Christians, it was not the unrighteous who were castigated for their unrighteousness as much as it was the majority of the Jews who were castigated for their unwillingness to acknowledge the crucial interrelationship between



the crucified Jesus, on the one hand, and the forgiveness of one's sins and the attainment of salvation, on the other. In other words, Jews came to be criticized for placing their trust in observances and practices enjoined by their own Scriptures instead of placing their trust in Jesus as the Christ.

From a Jewish perspective, it seems that somehow the focus of Jesus' personal concerns became transmuted by some of his followers into a castigation of the Jews not for the unrighteousness of the few but for the loyalty of the many to the Jewish traditions which Jews believed Jesus himself would have agreed were valuable and valid. To Jews, this was surely an unexpected development, one which many Jews to this day do not fully comprehend. To Jews, it often seems as if early Christianity changed the image of the Jewish Messiah into an apparently non-Jewish image of a Savior-Deity--and then, secondly, castigated the Jews for not accepting Jesus as the fulfillment of a concept which was foreign to Judaism in the first place. Finally, there was a third stage to this progression: when the Jews refused to accommodate themselves to a Christology which was foreign to Judaism, some Gentile-Christians came to consider the Jews incurable apostates, and concluded that God had finally and irrevocably rejected His people.

When Jews today try to formulate their view of the New Testament, it is these considerations which unavoidably influence their perceptions. For indeed it was these considerations, this series of developments, which contributed to the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, and to the proliferation of anti-Jewish traditions in the New Testament writings, an anti-Jewish portrayal which in turn elicits and reinforces Jewish resistance to the thrust of the New Testament literature.

From today's vantage point, the following overview reflects not only what many Jews feel the New Testament is saying but also what prevents them from viewing the New Testament sympathetically:



While Jews of old believed that they lived in a covenant with God, and were the special and permanent objects or recipients of His chosenness, the early Christians came to believe--and wished to justify their belief--that they had supplanted the Jews in God's favor, that they had become the "New Israel." Moreover, while Jews believed that the Bible was already complete, the early Christians wished to persuade others that Christian theological beliefs were not only a continuation of the Jewish Bible beyond the termination point assumed by the Jews, but were indeed underpinned and justified by Jewish Scriptural texts. Still further, while Jews in early Christian times felt that the existence or non-existence of Christianity had no bearing on the excellences of Judaism, Christians came to feel that, for Christianity to assert its supremacy, Judaism had to be shown as being possessed of less value--and whatever value it was accorded had to be construed as a function of God's plan in preparing the way for Christianity.

In carving out its own identity through the process of dialectic with the mother religion, Christianity seems to have dissected Judaism into three components--at least, this is the impression which the New Testament imparts to many Jewish readers. The first component consisted of those elements of Judaism which Christianity appropriated virtually in their entirety and without significant alteration; as the most notable example, we can think of the Jewish Scriptures, albeit in Greek translation. The second component consisted of those elements of Judaism which Christianity would not simply adopt but also adapt through significant alteration, such as aspects of the Jewish calendar, patterns of Jewish worship, the synagogue structure, the use of bread and wine, and indeed the very way in which the image of the Messiah came to be described and understood. The third component consisted of those elements of Judaism which Christianity eventually abandoned completely, such as the Jewish dietary laws and circumcision. Once thus dissected and stripped, Judaism was then to

assume its status --well, to use a term admittedly infelicitous--it was as if Judaism was to assume its status as a kind of carcass no longer needed and certainly no longer vibrant. Completing this process, developing Christianity added the many innovations unique to itself: new institutions, new officialdom, and new rituals and practices.

The end result has been a sad one indeed. We have witnessed here a process wherein religious divisiveness became sharp even between parties who shared most of their essentials in common. The limited areas of theological disagreement came to be the focus of special attention, and eventually emerged as the breeding ground for intense hostility, especially because the parties entered into competition with one another for the same adherents. Ultimately, whenever Christian theology mentioned Jews or Judaism, the avenues of such expression came almost always and almost necessarily to be avenues of denigration.

### III

Many Christians have become painfully aware of these avenues of denigration, and they fully acknowledge that there is an anti-Jewish flavor to some dimensions of Christian theology. Further, they are both curious and troubled with regard to the question of whether this anti-Jewishness can be traced only as far back as the sermons and writings of those commonly termed the Church Fathers--i.e., Patristic literature--or whether the anti-Jewishness is indeed rooted in the texts of the New Testament itself.

Clearly, the way Jews feel about this matter will affect if not condition their view of the New Testament. Accordingly, concerned Christians often request Jews not to have their view of the New Testament determined or even influenced by what later Christian preachers themselves said--if New Testament



texts have been misused and abused for purposes of marshalling anti-Jewish sentiment, it would be unwarranted to attribute to the New Testament itself the sentiments of writers post-dating it.

At least five arguments have been commonly advanced by those who strenuously defend the New Testament from charges of anti-Jewishness--and assign such sentiments only to later writers:

First, since the New Testament is inspired by God, it cannot be anti-Jewish. The gospel is the ultimate revelation of divine love; as such, it could in no way have been designed to encourage the contempt of any people or to contribute to the growth of misunderstanding or hatred in the world. Moreover, Jesus spoke the language of love; he preached the turning of the other cheek and even the love of one's enemies. It would, therefore, be totally anomalous for those recording his teachings, and deeply committed to him themselves, to have written works which are anti-Jewish.

A second argument admits that there is harsh language directed against the Jews in certain sections of the New Testament, the gospels in particular, but avers that this is simply prophetic rebuke out of love. Even the Prophets had availed themselves of severe language in rebuking the Jewish people, and surely the Prophets are not to be adjudged anti-Jewish. Similarly, prophetic-like rebukes, as we often find them in the New Testament, are a kind of literary or oratorical style; maledictions against the Jews--whether by Jesus, or Paul, or the Prophets of old--were not meant to be final but were merely devices intended to shock people into repentance before it was too late.

A third argument advanced is the following: the gospels distinctly show us that only a part of the Jewish people opposed Jesus. Many passages indicate that the common people with whom he was so popular recognized him as their prophet. It was only the Jewish leaders, especially the chief priests and the Pharisees, who were responsible for the opposition and enmity which eventuated



in the Crucifixion. These are the ones portrayed in the New Testament as Jesus' enemies, not the Jewish people as a whole.

A fourth argument emphasizes that Jesus valued Judaism, and that Jesus and his disciples were Jews; so also was the earliest church in Jerusalem Jewish in tenor. Many of Jesus' teachings were specifically those of Judaism. How, then, could writers of the New Testament possibly have been anti-Jewish?

Fifth, and above all, it is argued that we should not confuse the interpretations of later preachers on the New Testament with the attitude of the New Testament itself. While a number of the Church Fathers and Christian homiletics were definitely ill-disposed toward Jews and Judaism, we should recognize that they read the New Testament in the light of events which took place much later--they interpreted the New Testament texts long after the New Testament was written, at a time in the third and later centuries when Christian preachers were forging new weapons for the church in her ongoing conflict with Judaism. Interpreting the gospel, they added their own errors and prejudices to the holy and eternal and infallible truths of the New Testament itself. These were interpretations of later preachers, however, and were not inherent in the New Testament texts themselves.

In responding to these five arguments, many Jews aver that the pejorative description of Judaism in later Christian theology takes its cue directly from the New Testament itself. For example, while not denying that Jesus valued Judaism, as did early Jewish-Christians, Jews nevertheless distinguish between the favorable attitude toward Judaism by Jesus and early Jewish-Christians, on the one hand, and the negative attitude toward Judaism by the later gospel writers, on the other. Jews believe that, quite possibly because of Jewish resistance to Christianity in the years after Jesus' death, the four Evangelists came to denigrate the very Judaism which Jesus himself had valued.

As for the argument that we should not confuse the anti-Jewish interpreta-

tions of preachers later than the New Testament with the attitude of the gospel writers themselves (that the preachers admittedly were, in some cases, anti-Jewish, but the gospels themselves were not), Jews advance the following response: just as later preachers may have been investing their personal biases into their commentaries on the New Testament, so also may the four Evangelists themselves have given vent to their personal ill-will toward Jews in their very act of describing Jesus' life in their gospels.

While Jews welcome the suggestion that the admittedly harsh language against the Jews in the gospels is simply prophetic rebuke out of love, at the same time there is the nagging feeling that the gospels' denunciations of the Jewish people far exceed any rebuke by the Prophets of old. In the Jewish perception, the Prophets were acting out of love for and loyalty to the Jewish people--the message of the Prophets is designed to solidify the bonds of God's covenant with the Jews. The rebukes in the New Testament, however, predict that God will choose another people to replace the Jews. While Jesus himself may have rebuked the Jewish people out of love, the particular intensity and animosity which characterize some of the denunciations attributed to him most likely reflect interjections of the Evangelists, not the sentiments of the historical Jesus himself, and these redactional elements are unavoidably to be construed as definitely anti-Jewish.

As for the argument that the New Testament, since it is inspired by God and constitutes the ultimate revelation of divine love, cannot be anti-Jewish, Jews do not wish to respond insensitively. At the same time, since Jews do not include the New Testament in their Bible, this argument is not seen as compelling by Jews.

The remaining argument, however, strikes a different chord--and this is that the gospels distinctly show us that only a part of the Jewish people opposed Jesus. A great many, indeed thousands according to the gospels them-



selves, became his followers. How, then, can the same gospels, which show us thousands of Jews accepting his message or at least eager to hear what he had to say, be considered by modern Jews anti-Jewish?

A Jewish response pursues the following lines: A different situation prevails today from what was the case in the first century. In the first century, a Jew could become a Christian and still remain a Jew. In this sense, it is true that the gospels are not biased against all Jews: they are only biased against Jews who do not accept Jesus. They are not biased against Christian-Jews, but they are biased against non-Christian Jews.

Today, however, from the Jewish point of view, there can be no such person as a Jewish-Christian. After nineteen centuries of a parting of the ways, the theological distinctions between Jews and Christians today are so formidable that no one today can genuinely be both a Jew and a Christian. This is particularly the case because the conception of the Messiah in modern Christianity seems to Jews quite at variance with the image of the Messiah affirmed by the earliest Jewish-Christians. From the Jewish point of view, a Jew who today professes belief in Jesus as the Messiah is a Christian by definition and not a Jew. In effect, then, the only persons mentioned in the gospels with whom Jews of today can identify is with those Jews who do not accept Jesus, and the gospels are harsh on these people.

Jews do not ask that Christians agree that parts of the New Testament are anti-Jewish but only that Christians understand how Jews can see it that way, especially given the fact that many Christian preachers have not only used the New Testament in precisely that fashion but may have felt justified in doing so because they believed the anti-Jewishness of their sermons derived from the New Testament texts themselves.



IV

Let us move now from the general to the specific. Which are the particular New Testament texts which are so compelling as to determine the Jewish view of the New Testament as a whole? In terms of chronology, we should begin with Paul--even though it is the gospels which are the more determinative of the Jewish viewpoint.

To Jewish ears, Paul seemed to be saying the following. The fulfillment which Jews have throughout their history been seeking has actually already taken place, but the Jews have failed to recognize what they have waited so long to see. Blindness in itself is unfortunate, but blindness to the fulfillment of one's own heritage is a tragedy beyond comprehension. The Jews were not chosen because of any merit; for election is not the result of anything we can do to deserve it. It was accorded the Jews only by the free choice of God. Yet what cannot be won by merit can indeed be forfeited by negligence, and not only can election be forfeited but, in the case of the Jews in particular, it has indeed already been forfeited. The Gentiles, who never pursued righteousness, have attained it, whereas the Jews, who have always pursued it have missed it altogether. The Jews have all along misunderstood the meaning of righteousness--righteousness is the status which God confers on those who humbly receive it through faith as His gift, whereas Jews have foolishly assumed that righteousness is a kind of life we can succeed in attaining based on obedience to the Law.

Since this is the way Paul has sounded to Jews, it is reasonable to assume that Jews have not been particularly receptive toward Paul, and all the more so is this the case with the even more severe theology of the Church Fathers. For with the Church Fathers, early Christian theology came to be redirected along lines which even Paul himself apparently never intended, and for this development there were three root causes.

One factor was the unavoidable observation that after Paul's death, Jewish resistance toward Christianity showed no signs of abating; accordingly, it was becoming increasingly difficult to accept Paul's contention, in Romans 9-11, that some day the Jews would after all accept Jesus as the Christ. A second factor was the following: Paul himself had been a Jew, and thus there had been in his case at least a measure of positive personal orientation toward those who were his fellow Jews; but this was a positive kinship with Judaism which later Christian spokesmen did not and probably could not share.

A third and undeniably central factor in these later developments was the calamitous fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 C.E., events heralded throughout the Roman Empire as the triumph of Jupiter over the God of Israel, but serving Christianity in particular as an astounding confirmation of the rejection of the "Old Israel" and the replacement of the Jews by the Christians as the "New Israel." While Paul considered the rejection of the Jews to be only temporary, and looked forward to their eventual salvation, the destruction of the Temple was an event so catastrophic in nature as to imply the permanence of the Jews' rejection and the intensity of God's wrath with His people.

What is instructive to note here is how all these developments led to a departure of developing Christian theology from the attitudes and interpretations advanced by Paul himself in his Epistle to the Romans. Whereas Paul had alleged that there existed a divine mystery whereby "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26), and that the hardening which had come over the Jews was only temporary, certain Patristic writings came to present the Jews as the hopeless enemies of the church; their rejection was now deemed permanent and their chances of salvation nil. Whereas Paul asked the question in Romans, "Has then God rejected His people?" (Rom. 11:1), with his answer being "By no means!" the reply of certain later church spokesmen was, in effect, "By all means!"



Whereas Paul in Romans had queried, "Then what advantage has the Jew?" (Rom. 3:1), and then had proceeded to spell it out in an affirmative fashion, when the later church asked the question, "Then what advantage has the Jew?" its answer seems to have been "None whatsoever."

Thus, for example, the Epistle of Barnabas espouses the extreme position: though God had indeed extended the offer of chosenness to the Jews, Israel had never really accepted the covenant of election in the first place. Immediately after the offer had been extended, Israel had taken to idol worship, building the Golden Calf, as a result of which God immediately suspended the proposed covenant which He had contemplated. God, we are told, thus never actually concluded the covenant with Israel; He decided to reserve it instead for the later Christians. This is surely a significant departure from the Pauline viewpoint in the Epistle to the Romans.

This kind of departure was carried one step further by Justin Martyr who, in his Dialogue with Trypho, contended that the whole purpose of God's making a covenant with Israel was not for Israel's benefit but rather for Israel's condemnation. Not only are the Law, circumcision, and the Sabbath no longer of any validity--they are actually evidence of God's rejection of Israel! Circumcision was a branding of the Jews, a punishment both for the slaying of Jesus and for "cursing in your synagogues those who believe on Christ" (14). "We too," Justin goes on to allege, "would observe the flesh circumcision, and the Sabbaths, and . . . all the feasts, if we did not know for what reason they were enjoined you, namely, on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your hearts" (18).

In sum, therefore, Paul's assertions to the effect that Israel's rejection was only temporary evolved into a conviction by others that she was never the elect and into the subsequent accusation that God's particular relationship to Israel was in essence to her disadvantage and damnation. Later Patristic writings,

moreover, in some cases intensified the anti-Jewishness of their predecessors. A number of the most grotesque examples are furnished by the sermons of St. John Chrysostom, to the effect that "the synagogue . . . is not only a theatre, it is a place of prostitution . . . a den of thieves and a hiding-place of wild animals . . . not simply of animals, but of impure beasts," and also to the effect that "the Jews in shamelessness and greed surpass even pigs and goats . . . . The Jews are possessed by demons, they are handed over to impure spirits . . . . Instead of greeting them and addressing them as much as a word, you should turn away from them as from the pest and a plague of the human race" (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 48, cols. 847-848 and 852).

In a way, it would be inappropriate for Jews today to consider Paul anti-Jewish, since Paul always regarded himself as the most authentic of Jews; nevertheless, many Jews do feel that if Paul's general orientation is not anti-Jewish it is, at the very least, mistaken. Regardless, the Jewish view of the New Testament is determined far more so by Jewish reactions to the gospels than by Jewish reactions to Paul, and it is with this subject that we reach the critical core of the matter.

V

Jewish views of the Gospel According to Mark are often occasioned by Jewish reactions to Mark's attitude toward Judaism as illustrated, for example, by his attitude toward the Jewish leaders. Six Jewish leadership groups are mentioned by Mark--"chief priests," "scribes," and "elders," Pharisees," "Herodians," and "Sadducees." Altogether, these various groups are mentioned fifty-two times. Since Mark portrays Jesus as repeatedly in controversy with these groups, and as always victorious over them in disputation, Mark gives the impression that Jesus is over and against the Jewish leaders of his time. To be sure, while in the early chapters of Mark, the masses who follow Jesus



are of course themselves mostly Jews, in the Passion Narrative we also find masses who call for Jesus' crucifixion. Accordingly, Jews often infer that, in Mark's view the Jews as a people (and not merely their leaders) rejected and condemned Jesus.

Mark's portrayal of the Jewish leaders may reflect a disposition not simply against the Jewish people but against Judaism itself. If he understood the scribes and Pharisees to be the forerunners of those who, after 70 C.E., were termed the rabbis--that is, those who fashioned the Judaism which emerged from the ashes of the Temple's destruction--then Mark's treatment of the scribes and Pharisees in particular may be instructive.

In the thirty-two mentions of scribes or Pharisees in Mark, neither group is ever presented in a complimentary fashion except for one pericope in Chapter 12--where a scribe is shown aligned with Jesus on the issue of resurrection and on the identity of the two greatest commandments. And many scholars would agree that this one favorable passage is not Mark's own contribution; rather, it entered his Gospel along with other passages of a pre-Markan collection dealing with the scribes. Elsewhere in Mark, however, the scribes and the other Jewish leadership groups serve mainly as a foil for Jesus--conflict is emphasized; possible commonality is downplayed virtually altogether. In certain sections of Mark, this attitude preserves that of Mark's sources; frequently, however, it stems from Mark himself.

I believe that, in some Markan pericopes, wherein Jesus' teachings are set in conflict with those of Jewish leaders, Mark himself has plugged the Jewish leaders into earlier traditions not initially mentioning them, a literary device creating controversies where in the original traditions none existed. This is the case several times with the "scribes" in Chapters 1-3, 7, and 9, with "Pharisees" in the beginning of Chapter 10, and with "chief priests," "scribes," or "elders" several times in Chapters 8, 10, and 11.

Turning our attention to the Gospel According to Matthew, the Jewish view of Matthew is largely occasioned in reaction to what Matthew says about the Jews and Judaism. Once again, the attitude toward Jews in Matthew is often one of denigration and, in fact, a denigration which may have been meant to intensify that by Mark.

The locus classicus, of course, is Matthew 23, where Matthew attributes to Jesus a seven-fold imprecation against the allegedly hypocritical practices of the scribes and Pharisees. While, elsewhere (Mt. 5:22, 39, 44), Matthew attributes to Jesus exhortations to turn the other cheek, to love one's enemies, and to consider sinful even the mere sensation of anger toward one's fellow, in Chapter 23 Matthew presents us with an image of Jesus dramatically at variance with these very dicta.

Matthew intensifies Mark in other instances as well. In the pericope on Tribute to Caesar, in Mark Jesus perceives that his Jewish questioners are hypocritical (12:15); but Matthew says Jesus perceived them as malicious (22:18). Thereby Matthew paints the Jewish leaders at least one shade the more sinister. In the pericope on the Great Commandment, in Mark we have a uniquely amicable discussion between Jesus and a scribe (12:28ff.), but Matthew rewrites the passage so as to edit out the camaraderie (22:34ff.). He also deletes the opening statement of the Sh'ma, perhaps so that the Great Commandment cited by Jesus will not begin with the words: "Hear, O Israel . . . ." When Jesus is on trial in Mark, the Jews seek true testimony against him, but find only false (14:55ff.). Matthew alters Mark so that the Jews seek false testimony ab initio (26:59ff.).

It is only Matthew who shows the Jews willingly accepting responsibility for Jesus' blood and also willingly saddling this burden of guilt on their children as well (27:25). Matthew also alleges that the Jews bribed soldiers to lie about how Jesus' tomb had become empty (28:12ff.). Matthew also introduces the Parable of the Marriage Feast (22:1-14) which, when interpreted allegorically,



as Matthew intended, emerges as overtly anti-Jewish; similarly, Matthew takes Mark's Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mk. 12:1-12) and adjusts it in an anti-Jewish direction, even beyond Mark's own endeavor along these lines (Mt. 21:33-46).

Now Matthew's attitude toward Judaism may be a somewhat different matter from his attitude toward the Jews. At least one passage in Matthew is commonly construed as reflecting Matthew's favorable disposition toward Judaism or its legalism. In Mt. 5:17ff., Jesus says: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them . . . ." But when examined in context, Matthew's confirmation of Mosaic legalism is but a function of his overall disparagement of Judaism. One of Matthew's purposes in the Sermon on the Mount is to demonstrate the inadequacy of Mosaic law in comparison to the new law introduced by Jesus to supersede it. We are presented with six contrasts between the law of Moses and the law of Jesus. The contrasts are, in my judgment, inappropriately drawn by Matthew. The six qualities said to typify the law of Moses are arbitrary and artificially constructed. Aside from those statements which caricature Judaism as one which is in addition glaringly false--namely, that Jewish Scripture instructs us to hate our enemies. The six qualities outlined do not typify or present a well-rounded picture of Judaism of the time of Moses, or of the time of Jesus or even of the time of Matthew, but they are reflective of Matthew's anti-Jewish disposition.

Matthew is concerned to present Jesus as the new Moses--from the details of Jesus' birth story through to his giving the law on a mountain; and Judaism is presented favorably only to the extent that it can be shown sufficiently worthy of being superseded by Jesus and his new and better law. Once subjected to this contrast, Judaism shows itself to be utterly inadequate. Paradoxically, Christianity is a radical break with Judaism by virtue of its radical improvement over it.

The Jewish view of the Gospel According to Luke is likewise largely con-

ditioned by reaction to Luke's treatment of Jews and Judaism--and at first glance the treatment of Jews and Judaism in Luke does not differ significantly from what we find in Mark or Matthew. Luke preserves many of the anti-Jewish notices of the other Evangelists. He also moves the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth up as early as Chapter 4, indicating thereby that Jesus was rejected by the Jews from the very beginning rather than only at a later stage of his ministry. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:29-37), moreover, has, as one of its subsidiary purposes, a denigration of the Jews, accomplished by an unfavorable contrast of them with the Samaritan. Some scholars have suggested that the antecedent story contained as characters a priest, a Levite, and a good Israelite; if so, then the substitution of a good Samaritan for a good Israelite would reflect an anti-Jewish bias either by Luke or by an earlier fashioner of this tradition.

And, in addition, the parables of The Great Supper (Lk. 14:15-24) and of The Pharisee and the Publican (18:9-14) similarly cast aspersions on the Jews.

Yet in other respects, the image of Judaism in Luke is distinctly more favorable than that which we encounter in either Mark or Matthew. Luke is the only Evangelist who, on several occasions, manifests a positive orientation toward Pharisaic figures. While, in Chapter 16, he does characterize the Pharisees as lovers of money, in 13:31 he also shows the Pharisees alerting Jesus that Herod the fox is in pursuit of him; and twice in Acts the Pharisee Gamaliel is portrayed positively. Moreover, Luke, in contrast to Mark and especially Matthew, does not stress the rejection of the Jews, though it is implicit in several sections of his Gospel.

These and other positive factors are, however, only a function of Luke's overarching concern to present Christianity as rooted in the heart of Judaism, to demonstrate that the early Christian believers--and especially the figures of Jesus and Paul--were faithful to Judaism and its institutions; to prove



thereby that Christianity is the true continuation of genuine Judaism, and that those Jews who have rejected Jesus are, by virtue of that rejection, inauthentic Jews. In order to accomplish these aims, Luke must express his orientation toward Judaism positively.

Significantly, Luke changes the passage, in Chapter 5, describing the old and new wine by adding the statement: ". . . No one after drinking old wine desires new for he says, 'The old is the good'"--some texts read "the old is better"; in any event, Luke has altered the meaning of the original text so that Christianity will not be considered something new; rather it is the continuation of something old, and that something old (Judaism) is something very good indeed.

This is why Luke repeatedly emphasizes how Jesus and Paul were faithful to Jewish observance. In the case of Jesus, this consideration underlies Lukan descriptions of Jesus' circumcision and his traditional ceremony of pidyon haben (redemption of the first-born), of his presence in the Temple at the age of 12, of his customary attendance in the synagogue. Luke tones down the scene of Jesus' cleansing the Temple, and never mentions that Jesus was accused of threatening to destroy the Temple because, for Luke, the Temple is symbolic of Judaism. So also is Jerusalem. Jesus' post-resurrection appearance occurs in Jerusalem environs, the geographical center of Judaism, rather than in Galilee, a region on the fringe. In the Book of Acts, meanwhile, Luke parallels Paul to Jesus: Paul, too, is tied to Jewish observance and spends much of his life, particularly the early years, in Jerusalem. Most of the significant discrepancies between the image of Paul in Acts and the views of Paul in his genuine Epistles issue from the role Luke assigns Judaism in his conception of Christianity.

Thus it is that, on the one hand, Luke's Gospel does not seem nearly as anti-Jewish as does Mark's or Matthew's; yet, on the other hand, the reason for

this is not Luke's love for Jews and Judaism per se but rather Luke's concern to portray Christianity itself as the continuation of authentic Judaism.

In sum, therefore, what basically emerges from each of the Synoptic Gospels is an animus against Jews and Judaism, though the manners in which this denigration is expressed vary from one Evangelist to the next. From a detached, academic perspective, we could make the following observation: It is readily understandable why anti-Jewish sentiments are imbedded in the Synoptic Gospels. Since Christianity was born within Judaism and yet became separated from it, a need developed for early Christianity to define its relationship to Judaism in a way in which Judaism did not feel the need to define its relationship toward Christianity. Early Christians had to explain to themselves in what way they were heirs of the promises of the God of Scripture, and what factors had occasioned their having supplanted the Jews as God's Chosen; moreover, they had to justify their departures from Judaism--both their non-observance of practices Judaism had long enjoined and their introduction of observances of which Judaism had come to express disapproval.

These factors explain the presence of anti-Jewish sentiment in the Synoptic Gospels, but it is difficult viewing them solely from a detached academic perspective. For regrettably the anti-Jewish passages have had severe repercussions throughout history on the outlook of many persons and on the fate of many persons.

The presentation of the Jews and Judaism becomes all the more severe in the Gospel According to John. Whereas in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus' enemies are specified as coming mainly from the leadership ranks--the Chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders, the Pharisees and Herodians, and the Sadducees--in John the enemies of Jesus are most often referred to simply as "the Jews." In other words, no longer do the enemies of Jesus seem to be only a segment of the Jewish people; now it appears that the entire Jewish people are held to have



been active persecutors of Jesus and responsible for his condemnation and execution.

Moreover, whereas the Synoptic Gospels clearly indicate that both Jesus and the early Christian community sprang up within the Jewish community, John creates the impression that Jesus and Christianity, on the one hand, and the Jewish people, on the other hand, belong to entirely separate camps. Jesus and his supporters are often described in a way that makes the reader of John apt to forget that they are Jewish.

In 13:33, for example, Jesus says to his disciples: "My children, for a little longer I am with you; then you will look for me, and, as I told the Jews, I tell you now, where I am going you cannot come." Here, Jesus is not talking to Gentiles about his own people--in such a case, he might indeed have used the term the "Jews" when describing his own people to Gentiles; to Gentiles he might indeed have said, ". . . as I told the Jews, I tell you now." But in reality Jesus is addressing not Gentiles but his very own disciples, and yet he gives the impression in John that both he and his disciples are somehow outside the Jewish people.

In 8:17, in discussing the contents of the Pentateuch with the Pharisees, Jesus asserts: "In your own law it is written:"--as if to imply that the Torah was the possession of the Jews but not of Jesus; Jesus does not say, "In the law it is written," or "in our law it is written," but only "in your law it is written," as if to imply that Jesus himself was not Jewish.

I still remember a day when I was in seventh grade. It was around Easter time, and in some connection or other a child in my public school class raised his hand and asked the teacher: "My mother said Jesus was a Jew; is she right?"--at which point almost everyone in the class ridiculed both him and his mother for such ignorance (and the teacher, incidentally, maintained that she did not know). Not surprisingly, Jews today are still by and large convinced that per-

haps the majority of Christians do not know that Jesus was Jewish, and Jews see the Gospel According to John as a fundamental source of this misconception. Or, as one scholar has phrased it, the Fourth Gospel takes Jesus the Jew, who was put to death by Gentiles, and makes him a non-Jew put to death by Jews (John Knox, Criticism and Faith [London, 1953], p. 74).

Many Jews who have read the Gospels would consider the Evangelist John to have been "the father of anti-Semitism." In 8:19, Jesus is said to have told the Pharisees: "You know neither me nor my Father," thereby implying that the framers of Judaism were actually ignorant of God; in 8:24, Jesus is said to have told the Jews that they will die in their sin; in 8:44, Jesus is said to have denounced the Jews with the words: "Your father is the devil and you choose to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning. . .; there is no truth in him. . . . He is a liar and the father of lies . . . . You are not God's children."

These passages affect Jewish readers very deeply, and Jews tend to focus on these passages to the exclusion of many other verses in John. And the critical point is the following: Jesus is, after all, identified with God Himself. This means that the Evangelist John has, in the Jewish view, attributed his own views to Jesus who is God--such that John's indictment of the Jews suddenly becomes the very sentiment of God Himself. The result is that God Himself is made the chief proponent of anti-Judaism--a highly dangerous result of a highly questionable literary license.

## VI

It is my feeling, and I am gratified to note, that Christian academicians and clergy are becoming increasingly aware of the sensitivities of Jews to the role in which Judaism has been cast in Christian theological formulations. Yet I am not convinced that prospects for the immediate future are especially sanguine.



To be sure, in the area of interfaith relations, many seemingly encouraging signs have been surfacing in recent years. Relations between rabbis and Christian clergy have, in many instances, become very warm and cordial, not only on the college campus and in the chaplaincy but on the community scene in general, where we witness the practice of interfaith Thanksgiving worship services and exchanges of pulpit assignments between Jewish and Christian preachers. I also note the extensiveness of interfaith cooperation in civil affairs, not to mention the promotion by Christian clergy and academicians of chairs in Jewish studies in American colleges and universities. Moreover, some efforts have been made, in producing Christian teaching materials, to edit out anti-Jewish references, and to present Judaism as having a valid basis of its own in terms of a covenantal relationship with God.

Nevertheless, of the old problems which still abide perhaps the most significant is the following: the average churchgoer usually remains untouched by whatever is accomplished on the level of their clergy in institutes such as this one. The spirit of camaraderie which often eventuates from the interfaith dialogue among Jewish and Christian clergy and academicians rarely filters down and becomes translated or implemented on the lay level. While Christian clergy learn more about Jews and Judaism through personal contact and through study, the average Christian churchgoer remains out of touch with these changing developments. For him or her, the most direct pipeline to Jews and Judaism remains the one provided by the Christian Scriptures which Christian churchgoers read and hear so frequently and which undoubtedly and unavoidably contribute to anti-Jewish feeling.

History has taught the Jewish people that, when anti-Jewishness resulted in physical harm for the Jews, that harm was not inflicted directly by the church as an institution but rather directly from the Christian masses, influenced as they were by the effect of the church's scriptural interpretation on

its indoctrinated faithful. It was the aroused Christian mob rather than the church itself that inflicted injury and death on the Jew. Accordingly, Jews do not pay as much attention to the Christian clergy as they do to the Christian laity, and the Christian laity read and understand Christian Scripture with less breadth of understanding than do their clergy.

Let me offer an analogy. Throughout Jewish history, the Jewish teachers have found a way of altering the spirit of Scripture even without necessarily producing changes in the text. The result is that Judaism is not dependent on Jewish Scripture as much as on emphases of Scripture as defined through the filter of rabbinic perceptions. The greatest authority in Judaism resides not in the Bible but in what the rabbis have said and continue to say that the Bible means. Hence, the rabbinic tradition not only may alter but even override Scripture.

From the Jewish and I believe the Christian perspectives, however, no comparable authority seems to reside in post-Biblical Christian compendia commenting verse by verse on New Testament Scripture, so that the average churchgoer is exposed to no authorized or authoritative filter through which the anti-Jewishness of the New Testament can be rendered null and void or, indeed, neutralized or even toned down. The New Testament anti-Jewish texts are very plain in what they say and, somehow, precisely because we do not live in the ancient historical context in which these texts were formulated--because these texts are uprooted from their first century context--these anti-Jewish sentiments have fermented over time so that today they may strike Christian listeners as far more compelling than they ever were even back in the first century.

The Church Fathers had the means for modifying the anti-Jewishness of the New Testament. Instead, for reasons which are no longer operative today, the Church Fathers intensified the damage to the point of possible irreparability; and the average Christian churchgoer is induced quite understandably to accept



the New Testament's disparagement of the Jews at face value.

Accordingly, Jews distinguish between the Christian clergy and the Christian laity. Jews believe that most of the Christian laity have absolutely no awareness that anti-Jewish animus in the New Testament should be understood in any way differently from what we read in the gospel texts themselves.

Jews are also persuaded that most Christian churchgoers view Judaism through the anti-Jewish stereotypes that have often been implicit or implied in Christian theology: that Judaism is a religion of law in contrast to Christianity, a religion of love; that Judaism teaches "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" while Christianity teaches turning the other cheek; that the ancient Hebrew Patriarchs were forerunners of Christianity rather than of Judaism; that the God of Hebrew Scriptures is a God of justice, wrath, and vengeance rather than the New Testament God of love, grace, and forgiveness; that the trials which Jews have had to undergo throughout history are manifestations of their punishment at the hands of God for not accepting Jesus as divine. If there is any hope for future accommodation and understanding between Jews and Gentiles, we must together manage to put this stereotyping behind us at long last, and to involve the Christian churchgoer as well as the Christian clergy in this process.

I would like to see the learning process go two ways, with Jews learning more about Christianity and doing so sympathetically. Yet many Jews are impeded in this process by the associations which the name of Jesus calls to their attention. Many Jews involuntarily cringe when they hear the name of Jesus, since over the centuries Jews have been maimed and killed by those who have considered their actions to be in the name of Jesus. Tragically, because the name of Jesus has been enlisted in campaigns which have brought terror to Jewish history, Jews today may actually have lost the capacity to be responsive to the precious teachings imparted by the Jew Jesus. It is perhaps this development above all others that has conditioned the Jewish view of the New Testament--preventing

Jews from discerning and distilling the meaning and relevance of Jesus' message for those of his own day as well as those of still later generations.





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Writing about the human prospect some years ago, Robert Heilbroner distinguished between short term and long term needs that had to be met in order to assure human survival. In the short run, he maintained, it would be necessary to increase productivity and arrange for more effective control both of human and natural resources to overcome the problems brought on by the population explosion and the deterioration of the environment. In the long run, however, this would not be enough since the human race would sooner or later deplete the finite resources of the planet. Mankind then would have to learn to live within realistic limits, to scale down both production and consumption and reeducate itself to accept the traditional values of personal inner growth and warm interpersonal relations. *as Cardinal arms of human living*

This is not the first time such a call has been sounded; Moses' injunction: "Man does not live on bread alone", immediately comes to mind. What is interesting is that Heilbroner is among a growing number of hard headed economists and social scientists who now recognize, as religious leaders have for centuries, that mankind depends not alone on the material goods of this world, essential though they are for its survival, but on the nourishment of the human spirit. In fact, time and again history has proven that the inner psychic resources of a people have been more important in its struggle to stay alive than the external circumstances in which it found itself. This certainly is true of the Jewish people which managed to overcome a number of devastating events in its long history, any one of which might have



destroyed a group with a weaker resolve. All kinds of historical explanations have been offered for its endurance: ranging from the anti-semitic <sup>wandering Jew story -</sup> to the highly flattering <sup>special favors</sup> For the believing Jew and Christian, none of these is sufficient since it does not take into account the divine purpose for the people of Israel's durability. Whether one seeks to understand its survival in exclusively human terms or views it from a theological perspective, however, one cannot but be impressed with the steadfast loyalty of this people to the divine promise and the ancient covenant of Sinai, a loyalty which was exhibited in a way of life designed to make God's presence manifest on earth.

The daily regimen of the Jew consisted of minute regulations governing his actions from the moment he rose in the morning until the time he retired. His purpose was to sanctify ~~his~~ life, and ~~what better way of doing that than by~~ leading it in accord with the divine will. No deed was too trivial to be exempt from this effort, not even the way he tied his shoes or washed his hands, for, as Abraham Joshua Heschel put it, the aim of Jewish religious living was "to <sup>the late</sup> ennoble the common". Every act that did this was a Mitzvah, a meritorious deed, whose function it was to purify man and strengthen him in his holiness.

This presupposed that human effort does make a difference, that men and women of flesh and blood are capable of behaving in such a way as to make the divine shine through their actions. It was, <sup>Judaism an optimistic religion</sup> of course, an article of faith derived from the famous statement in Genesis describing the creation of man: "And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them."

Much has been written on this verse, attempting to explicate the biblical view of the nature of man. Thus he is characterized as possessed of reason, of free will, of the ability to enter into communion with God, qualities found in none of the other creatures. Each of these interpretations has merit, but what stands out is the notion that, while the second commandment proscribes the imaging of God in any form, the human being is explicitly designated in this verse as His image on earth. This has at least two implications. The first is that every human being is of infinite worth. This is stated explicitly by the early rabbis in a well known Mishnah: <sup>200 CE</sup> "Anyone who saves one life is as one who has saved the entire world." Even the criminal condemned to death is to be treated with humanity and under no circumstances is either he or any ~~criminal~~ <sup>criminal regarded - not to feel pain</sup> other person to be degraded. The lowliest of all of the members of society, the slave, is not to be treated merely as chattel. He, too, has rights which are not to be ignored since one must never forget that the lowest and highest alike have been created by God in the identical manner. The rights of the orphan, the widow, the stranger--the most defenseless members of society--are to be protected scrupulously, lest God Himself, "the father of orphans, the champion of widows", feel compelled to intervene to plead their cause.

*Psalmist calls →*

The image of God, then, inheres in every man, confirming him in his right to live with dignity. But rights are not without obligations and the privilege of having been created in the divine image brings with it the responsibility of realizing the potential of that gift to the full. This is expressed in the remarkable injunction: "You shall be holy, For I the Lord your God am holy," remarkable because it suggests

*(Christians)*



that man can and should emulate God in His holiness. Clearly the rabbis reasoned, the text does not have in mind the divine quality of holiness which belongs to Him alone, which on occasion can manifest itself as an overwhelming lethal force. Rather they understood it as "that which is set apart or dedicated" and interpreted the command, to be holy, to mean that Jews were to distance themselves from all forms of immorality. Later sages added the positive meaning of striving for moral perfection. As early as the Tannaitic period, it was extended to include the notion of Kiddush Hashem, the sanctification of the divine name, which implies that God's reputation in the world, as it were, depended on the way Jews comported themselves. It meant, in other words, that how one lived and died was not merely a matter of personal taste or decision, that a human being had a responsibility to reflect well on his Maker in the daily concourse with others.

Until now we have treated the individual as if he were independent of his society and, while he is for the purpose of being considered responsible for his actions, the Bible recognizes, as all ancient cultures did, that man is made for community. This is apparent even in the linguistic usage of biblical Hebrew. Thus a single human being is designated as "Ben Adam", a member of the human family, or an Israelite is "Ben Yisrael", a member of the Israelite community. Even in death, one wishes to be "gathered to one's" kin and there can be no greater calamity than to be cut off from the community. Abraham is indeed enjoined to leave his ancestral home and kinfolk, but he is promised that he will be the father of a new and better social grouping. Even the prophets of Israel, who denounced their people for their crimes and foretold the dire consequences which awaited them, themselves refused to abandon the community in the hour of

Arch -  
Street  
House

Bringing  
God into  
disrepute

religion -  
family  
(brothers)

the catastrophic judgment. Hillel's injunction some hundreds of years later: "Do not separate yourself from the community" may have indicated that there were in fact groups that turned their backs on their people in times of stress, but his teaching always remained a norm for Jewish life. *Sense of solidarity among Jews*

The reason for this strong emphasis on community is not hard to find. Life was simply not possible without it. One was born into a family--the most elementary kind of community--was raised by its members, nurtured in its traditions and expected to follow its customs and practices. The other families in the village or clan represented an extension of one's own family, sharing its values and outlook on the world. Together with one's own blood relatives they formed the society in which the individual generally spent his life, looking to it for protection against outside enemies and for fair treatment by neighbors. It also functioned as a religious community, marking the special occasions in the life of the group and mediating the divine blessings to its individual members. *Blessings & curses in plural form (blessings)*

For the Israelite, and later the Jew, the community was of special importance, since it stood in a covenantal relationship to the deity. While he realized that many of the divine commandments were addressed to him as an individual, *TC in singular* he understood that most of them could be fulfilled only in the context of the community. He also knew that his very existence as a Jew depended on the community, that without it he was like a branch cut off from a tree which would only wither.

The importance of the community was dramatized by the three great pilgrimage festivals of the liturgical year when vast throngs came to

*Solomon & Gomerah  
10 rights*

*Customs, prayers  
dictated only  
in synagogue*



Jerusalem to offer up their sacrifices and rehearse what the Lord had done for their ancestors. Long after the Temple in Jerusalem and its sacrificial cult was gone, it was stressed in the worship of the synagogue, when the collective historic memory of the people was kept alive and prayers for its future restoration recited twice daily. Even the language of the prayer reflected the precedence of the community over the individual since all prayers were couched in the plural.

This impressed upon the individual Jew his responsibility for the well being of his community and reminded him that on its welfare depended his own and that of the members of his family. He was expected to be concerned not alone for the overall community and its institutions, but also for the day to day needs of his neighbors. This requirement was intensified by the heavy emphasis of the Pentateuch on social responsibility, spelled out in legislation requiring tithing and other measures to care for the needy. It was reinforced by the demand for social justice in the pronouncements of the classical prophets <sup>of Israel</sup> and, in large measure, accounted for the establishment of the prototype of the community chest before the second century of the Christian era. Everyone was required to contribute to it, even the poor, demonstrating that "Tsedakah" was not merely charity, an act of kindness, but one which righteousness demanded, as the term itself implied.

In sum, the religious Jewish world-view stressed the indispensability of both the individual and the community to implement the divine plan, the former charged with the realization of the potential implanted within him, the <sup>community</sup> ~~latter~~ with the fashioning of a people dedicated to the service of God. To be sure, the Kingdom of God on earth could not be established

If Israel was  
alone in our  
time, largely  
to recitation  
of prayers  
for restoration

by human endeavor alone and would come in God's good time. Still, the efforts of both the individual and the community were required to make it a reality. At times people could do no more than "wait" but even this was not to be passive but active, an orientation of both one's aspirations and deeds towards the hoped for good. The community and its individual members, then, had to reinforce one another in accepting "the Kingship of Heaven" and "the yoke of the Mitzvot"

here and now. The first was to be heralded by the daily recitation of the Sh'ma <sup>Deut 6:4</sup> in the morning and in the evening, the second expressed <sup>Acceptance of yoke of mitzvot</sup> in the round of practices, both ritual and moral, which punctuated the day. The conscientious study of the divine will, as revealed in Scripture and in the rabbinic classics was also part of this discipline, together with the cultivation of the intellect and the emotions.

*Secular  
knowledge*

The attitude of "watchful waiting" referred to earlier is best expressed in a third century prayer recited three times daily in the synagogue: "We therefore hope in thee, Oh Lord our God, that we may soon behold the glory of thy might, when thou wilt remove the abominations from the earth,--when the world will be perfected under the Kingdom of the Almighty, and all the children of flesh will call upon thy Name, when thou wilt turn unto thyself all the evil-doers upon earth...For the Kingdom is thine and to all eternity will thou reign in glory; as it is written in thy Torah; "The Lord shall reign forever and ever." "

Interestingly, this petition for the establishment of God's universal kingdom occurs after the worshipper expresses his gratitude for being part of the people first chosen <sup>by God</sup> to enter into <sup>this</sup> the service of God.

This introduces an apparent paradox, or, at the very least, a tension between the particularistic emphasis of the prayer and the universal



aspiration to which it gives voice. The first stresses the importance of being a member of the Jewish people. *Survival & continuity of the J. people* The second yearns for the day when all men, without distinction, will be united in God's Kingdom.

This is a tension which is ~~an~~ <sup>all</sup> pervasive in Jewish literature and thought. At times, the first of the poles has been stressed almost to the exclusion of the second, particularly when Jews have felt themselves to be isolated and under attack. The universalistic impulse has generally come to the fore, when Jews have been permitted to play an active role in the social and cultural movements of the age. At such a time, <sup>19th cent.</sup> the tendency to submerge the particularistic features and concerns of the group are great, leading to the danger of total assimilation. Actually, both the particularistic and the universal emphasizes are needed if the Jews are to continue to play the role they have played throughout history. To do that successfully, they must remain a distinctive group, yet one which is intimately bound to the destinies of other people. *as they have been for 3,000 years.*

Upon reflection, it becomes apparent that all communities with long historic cultures find themselves in a similar position. On the one hand, they rightfully take pride in the rich treasures of their heritage and do not want to see them consigned to museums or the dust bin of history. On the other, they must recognize that they, too, have a contribution to make to the entire human family. They can only do that, however, if at the same time that they cultivate their own traditions, they consciously stress the universal values inherent within them. *All cultures have universal values within them - no Jewish mathematics* Otherwise, they run the danger of sowing distrust and suspicion, something the human race can ill afford at this juncture in its history.

In other words, loyalty to one's group is natural, <sup>and desirable</sup> but it is a two edged sword. It can serve to restrict a person's vision and narrow his sympathies. It can also be inculcated in such a way as to deepen one's attachment to all of mankind. There are people who develop such an attachment as a result of a reasoned conviction. But they are rare in number and, even in their case, it often proves to be only cerebral. To be sure, genuine religious personalities have always been able to transcend the limitations of time and space, but they too have spoken the language of their people. We must not forget that people, like trees, have deep roots and it is through them that their most powerful emotions are nourished. <sup>but roots</sup> <sup>let be able to bear fruit</sup>

What we need then is not to sever the natural bonds of the primary community or ethnic group, but to open each of them to the universal ideal of a global society conceived in pluralistic form, so that diverse groups and cultures may learn to live together, governed by justice and freedom. If this can be achieved, the first major step will have been taken toward the establishment of a community of communities in which the negative forces of fear, egotism and aggressiveness are subordinated to those of love, compassion and transcendence.

It is here that the synagogues and churches have a major role to play, especially since both constitute covenant <sup>ed</sup> communities seeking to transform their faithful into a people of God. That is no easy task for it involves making the attributes of God that have been revealed to each of these communities--justice and love--effective in their affairs and in the lives of their members, as they relate to one another. Beyond that, they must teach their communicants that to be



a member of the people of God entails loving God, a love which transfers itself to men, all men because, in, Martin Buber's words, "real relationship to God cannot be achieved on earth if real relationships to the world and mankind are lacking. Both love of the Creator and love of that which He has created are finally one and the same". A Hasidic interpretation provides an apt illustration of this point. Commenting on the much cited verse in Leviticus: "Love thy neighbor as thyself", the rabbi calls attention to its concluding words: "I am the Lord", and observes: "God is saying to us: 'You may believe I am far away from you, but in your love of your neighbor you will find Me: not in his love for you but in your love for him'." To which Buber adds: "He who loves brings God and the world together."

This love should not however, be limited either to the members of one's own ethnic group or faith community. It is true that there is a great deal of insensitivity, and even cruelty, in the world. It is often hard to care for people who do not share our values and world view. We have to learn to accept this as a challenge to us rather than a reason to withdraw into our own <sup>personal</sup> shells. The world is difficult and far from perfect. That is why, Jewish tradition teaches, a man must view himself as a coworker with God in completing and perfecting His work of creation. We are not free to sit back and revel in the religious experiences mediated to us through our own religious traditions, their rites and symbols. Rather they ought to serve as a goad to reach out beyond them to bring the insights and strength they have provided for us to ever larger circles of people. This, too, is what it means to be part of the people of God, namely to work with Him to establish His reign on earth.

The vision of such a world community is at the heart of biblical religion and central to the Jewish faith. While contemporary methods of communication and travel have made its realization possible and the instruments of mass destruction made it absolutely necessary, that day is still not in view. It may indeed take a miracle, as some think, to save mankind, but as members of religious communities that do believe in miracles, we need not to lose heart. Rather, we should work together to reach out to the world, to keep alive the values of justice, love and compassion, without which no community can survive, and translate them into the Mitzvot, the religious imperatives of daily living, which our times require.

As separate faith communities, we will advance along diverse lines, *if true*  
*to our own backgrounds & goals*  
But if we are to work together, we must transcend the rhetoric which has fostered mountains of misunderstanding upon us and keep our hearts and minds open to learn from one another. While we continue to cherish the basic values of our own heritage, let us also stay alert to revelatory experiences out of which may emerge new values to help us deal with our complex times. Only in this way will we be able to communicate our values to the world and achieve our ultimate goal.

The book of Malachi concludes with a statement that Elijah is to return "before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the Lord." The ancient rabbis try to pinpoint what exactly will be his function at that time. Generally they agree that it will be "to prepare the way" for the coming of the Messiah, but there is no full agreement on what that will *prepare* involve. One rabbi maintains that he will separate the true from the false. Another that he will make up for the evils and injustices of the past. The majority, however, conclude that reconciliation is more important



than either the quest for truth or the satisfaction of the demands of an abstract justice. "It will not be his function", they maintain", to declare anything pure or impure, to reject anyone or draw someone else near. Rather, it will be his task to make peace in the world." It is ours as well.

David Lieber



## A BAPTIST VIEW OF ISRAEL

By Robert L. Lindsey

I was asked to speak at this time on what should be called "the Baptist view of Israel" but of course I must ask that my theme be more modestly stated, let us say: "a Baptist view on Israel." If it is true that-- as the old joke goes--where two Jews are there are three opinions, how much truer this could be said about Baptists!

Having lived so many years among Israelis as a Baptist I am sometimes asked if I really enjoy it. My answer is that it is not all that difficult since Baptists are so much like Jews. One of the reasons this is true is that Baptists tend to have wide-ranging differences of opinion on many subjects, and this would certainly be true of their ideas about Israel.

So what I can do is to present only the views of one Baptist who has lived and served an evangelical congregation in Jerusalem for close to forty years. This is not to say that I do not have strong convictions about the meaning of Israel to Jews, to Baptists, and to the world. I do have such convictions--and perhaps because they have emerged from so many years of observation and not a little tough-minded looking into the Scriptures we Baptists claim to follow they are the stronger--though I would not like to think they are dogmatic and, that with further enlightenment, they may not undergo change.

### A Little Personal History

Perhaps it is only right that I begin with a few words of autobiography.

I was born in Norman, Oklahoma at the height of World War I, the only son of a father who was for many years the Financial Clerk or Comptroller of the University of Oklahoma. While still a youngster attending a Baptist church whose pastor was characterized by much intellectual and spiritual ability, I experienced a born-again change of life that eventually set my feet in the direction of the Christian ministry. This interest was not without its problems for I was the product of a "progressive, Dawsonian-style" high school which was located physically in the very middle of the University campus so that my interest in what was taught as science was hardly of less influence than that of the First Baptist Church which I had attended from childhood with my parents.

Due to my pastor's teaching and the general interest in what we in that little Middle West town knew of the colonization by Jews in Palestine, I found myself wishing to visit this Bible land and indeed hoping I might stay long enough to learn to speak Hebrew with the thought that it would help me to understand the Old Testament. Rather remarkably the early part of the year 1939 found me on board a ship bound for Haifa, the B.A. in classical Greek behind me. After some months touring the country where it all happened, I spent a bit of time in a kibbutz near Nazareth learning my first spoken Hebrew, then moved to Jerusalem to live with a young family who as former settlers of a moshav had been burned out by Arab neighbors and now lived very modestly in Jerusalem.



From Zebulun and Ruth Weinstock I learned at firsthand much about Jews in general and Hebrew in particular. I scarcely need tell you that this experience was a kind of baptism into the ways and thinking of a people about whom I could have known nothing growing up in Norman, Oklahoma. I drank and slept and sometimes almost choked on the new culture and language I had set myself to learn, but, after fifteen months, when I returned to the States to pursue theological studies as World War II came to its bloody close I had a much wider understanding of the new land and its people than any other kind of experience could have given me.

Married and with two children, I returned as an emissary of Southern Baptists to Palestine-soon-to-be-Israel in 1945 and for most of the subsequent years I have been pastor of the little Baptist congregation in west Jerusalem. Today we think of the three hundred or so people who gather on our overcrowded premises each Saturday, Sabbath morning as a kind of international, inter-denominational body of worshippers who represent a fairly large percentage of Jerusalem's expatriate evangelicals.

Our congregation is very far from being the typical Southern Baptist Church, though I guess it is truly Baptist in its emphasis on Scripture study, preaching and prayer. We sing both English and Hebrew songs and hymns and with great regularity even the Shema after the morning reading of the Old Testament in Hebrew. Most of our congregants have been influenced by various forms of the movements emphasizing the Holy Spirit across Protestantism so that we find it natural to follow the modern beats in religious music and often have two or three trombones, a trumpet, violins and guitars helping out our very talented pianist who can hardly read a note of music but can find and play any chord or key heisted by a leader. It is all quite serious but also lots of fun!

Through the years and largely because of the needs of the small but active evangelical community in Israel I have worked constantly on problems our believers encounter and that has kept me ever alert to finding out all I can about the beginnings of Christianity in its Jewish environment. The Baptist community of course lives as a tiny minority in the modern Israeli context and there are insistent questions of adjustment and identity which need answering so that I find myself spending much time in teaching and explaining the relationship of Christians to Jews historically and empirically.

Since Baptists and evangelicals generally find their identity through serious study of the Bible as a whole and emphasize New Testament semantics as basic to a Christian stance many questions take on critical significance in the Israeli context. What, for instance, was Jesus' relationship to the Law or to the emerging rabbinic tradition of his time? What does the Apostle Paul mean by his almost mythic, sophisticated use of the word "the Law." Or, even more difficult, is Christianity a Jewish faith, and if so, how? How indeed are Jews and Christians related if, as everyone says, they must be?

My concern with these and similar questions long ago drove me to a close study of the Gospels, particularly those we call Matthew, Mark and Luke. Working a number of years ago on a new Hebrew translation of the Gospel of Mark, I was so impressed by the Hebraic character of the Greek text that I felt the consistent early tradition that the first story of Jesus was written in Hebrew must be considered seriously. So strongly did this Hebraic character strike me in working on the translation of the Gospel of Luke later that I found it necessary to revise the earlier



conclusions my teachers had taught me about many points of relationship between Luke and Mark. Despite Matthew's use of Mark it still later became evident to me that with patience and proper techniques it was possible to come to a far more reliable picture of the person and life of Jesus than is commonly held by scholars today.

All this has colored what I must now briefly put forth as "The Baptist View on Israel," that is, my Baptist view on Israel, and here's hoping it comes fairly close to the view many Baptists would have.

#### Jewish and Baptist Approaches of Necessity Very Different

Unquestionably we Baptists must recognize that the approach to the meaning of Israel, whether we speak of modern Jews as Israel or of Israel the State, is at least on the theological level quite different if you find yourself a Jew or a Baptist.

For most Jews Israel as the Jewish people, that is, Jewry, is what it is because of bonds felt to be largely ethnic and the State of Israel is first and foremost a refuge for those Jews who have had to, or want to live there. Without this understanding of the Zionist movement the motivation for the rebuilding of the Jewish State, from Herzl onwards, would remain a conundrum.

Yet anti-Jewishness alone cannot account for the immense energy Jews of the world have expended in bringing into existence and maintaining the nation of Israel. I believe that more than one Jewish historian has suggested that the historic habit of Jews in which tzedaka or alms have regularly been collected by some Jews to help other Jews can partly explain this phenomenon of widespread Jewish concern for Israel the State and its people. No doubt this is part of the explanation.

More ideological and philosophical is the explanation of David Koigen:

We (Jews)...long for nothing as intensely as we do for history, for the events and deeds of nations, in consequence of which common, inescapable destinies are forged. We indeed are characterized by our belief in history, in the historical, in that which must and will come about.<sup>1</sup>

For what it is worth, I have written in another place that the Jewish struggle to revive life and meaning in the old-new land of Palestine is in essence a "return to history, the term 'history' here meaning that activity, relationship, principle or principles by which, presumably, the course of world events may be perceived as meaningful."<sup>2</sup> I wrote this a good many years ago and still find it helpful. Clearly I am indebted to Mr. Koigen.

However, another way which has appealed to my Baptist mentality and experience is to think of the return to Zion as a kind of modern Jewish equivalent to the personal redemption of the evangelical. Where we see the need for deliverance from sin, the Jew has seen the need for deliverance from anti-Semitism. Where we see salvation as a "transference from the Kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God's dear Son" the Jew, or at least the emigrant to Israel who has Zionist aspirations, sees salvation in his physical transference to his Homeland. Where we see our redemption as involving a personal decision to follow the Lord, the Zionist who goes to Israel usually has to make a similar and conscious decision to do so. As we see



the Christian life as made up of constant struggle against the power of sin and Satan so the personal, daily task in Israel is thought of indeed as a milchemet chaiyim, struggle to exist. Ideological Zionism even has an eschatology; it is called kibbutz hageluyoth, the in-gathering of the exiles; by which is meant the process of encouraging a Jew anywhere to immigrate to Israel.<sup>3</sup>

The Baptist or evangelical who may have read what I have just written above will almost certainly view this picture of self-salvation with much amazement. He will not be able to avoid feeling intense sympathy with the desire of Jews to escape the awful sword held above their heads even in so-called Christian countries. He will also rejoice in the miraculous way the Jewish people have managed to sculpt out of an intransigent part of the world the viable if tiny island of refuge called Israel. He will doubtless say, "Praise the Lord. The exiles are returning home. The Jews needed and deserved this miracle."

But he will also feel that the analogy drawn surely underlines the failure of Zionism to deal with the deeper personal needs of human beings, for "the best-laid plans of mice and men" do so steadily turn sour in personal and social experience and we are left, if not with sin and Satan, with the demonic. For the evangelical salvation is ever and anon the finding of a harmony with a Power who beckons from his supernatural environment above this physical world and reminds him through pain and death that final redemption is extraterrestrial.

Here the Baptist is far closer to the Pharisee of the first century, or at least the second century, for the Pharisee's hope seems to have been transmuted into the certainty of haolam haba and techiat hameitim, the world to come and the resurrection of the dead.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish-Christian belief that Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil while teaching of the world to come and himself rising from the dead to prove it is of course the source of the evangelical's certainty today. The Pharisaic view, though still strongly a part of the Orthodox Jewish faith and very much alive among even some politically-oriented Orthodox movements in Israel, seems largely to have given way among most modern Jews to a belief that the success in attaining a self-identity involving Jewish statehood is sufficient for any modern definition of Jewishness.

All this of course raises the question whether the national revival in Israel is not indeed a new kind of Messianism, unlike perhaps the frightful episode attached to the personal Messiah Shabbatai Zevi, but nonetheless messianic. Many Jewish writers of our time do so interpret the return to Zion. I find it really quite painful and just a bit frightening to hear Israelis not infrequently go on to utter the concomitant of such an interpretation: "Are we not very close to a new chorban bait, destruction of the Temple?" Perhaps one can even say that the glory of the Jewish consciousness of history allows for such a prophetic sense of pride and nemesis, though my own understanding of prophecy is that the worst prediction can under God be changed by repentance.

Once again I am not here trying to take sides with the usual Jewish way of interpreting the rise of Israel or with the way in which the evangelical may easily see this rise. I am simply trying to underline the basic differences in the way the two groups think. Of particular importance, I think, is the fact that the Baptist finds the idea of self-salvation and especially such a salvation as can be limited to man's terrestrial experience to be not only shallow but shocking. The recognition of these



essentially different ways of approaching Jewish statehood is of the greatest importance.

### Two Popular Views Held by Evangelicals and Many Baptists

It is safe to say that those we can call Protestant and Baptist theologians, which are a relatively limited group, tend to minimize either the State of Israel or the Jewish people as a whole in any discussion of Christian identity. It very commonly occurs that a young student of the ministry will publicly address his theology teacher in the seminary with the question "Where do the Jews fit into all this?" Rare is such a teacher-theologian who will not likely repair to the quotation of Paul's famous "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond or free, neither male nor female" as his simple, and perhaps simplistic, answer, thus dismissing the subject we are discussing as irrelevant to Christian life and thought.

I have already suggested that for anyone who attempts to shepherd an evangelical congregation in Israel this kind of explanation of the relationship of Jews and Christians without more appeal to historical, theological roots is shallow and just a bit cruel. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is an excellent example that early Jewish Christians did not think this way. The agony Paul feels in trying to explain why his brethren according to the flesh had increasingly moved away from Jesus and his expression of ~~belief that this would not remain true for always~~ is so poignant that one wonders how it is possible for any Christian, ~~much less an evangelical~~ theologian, to treat this subject so cavalierly. Sad to say, it is nevertheless a fact.

However, when one turns to the sincere but radical and flamboyant preaching about Jews so often heard in evangelical fellowships and churches it may be a bit easier to forgive the seeming indifference of our theologians. For many of these preachers and teachers the ancient land of Israel is but the coming scenario for a change in spiritual history in which the so-called Gentile Church is soon to be supernaturally raptured at the second advent of Christ, which will introduce scene number two, at which time the gathered Jews in Israel will face Russia and her allies as Gog and Magog at Armageddon but be delivered by the personal return of Jesus, which will in turn introduce scene number three, the personal reign of Jesus on earth for a thousand years the details of which are dwelt upon according to fertile imagination of each speaker and lecturer.

The attraction of this widely-held view is so great that it not only attends the powerful parachurch Christian media, but has led to the creation of evangelical pressure groups who actively lobby for the political goals of the State of Israel. So deeply are many people impressed by this popular theory of the future that some even end up in Jerusalem waiting for the next event, however that may be defined in the mind of the visitor.

In my experience most Jews and Israelis who hear firsthand such theories find themselves either amazed or amused, or both. For most such schemes are far removed from the Israeli reality. Life in Israel is perhaps too mundane, filled as it is with the problems involved in holding a job or buying groceries or paying taxes or trotting off to three weeks of army reserves. Nevertheless so great is the need of Israel today for friends that we increasingly witness the top political leaders of the country addressing groups involved in such schemes.



Thus a kind of hesitant recognition that these groups must be accepted for the very reason that they are so vocally pro-Israel has developed recently in Israel. It is certainly true that the widespread friendliness to Jews and the State of Israel found popularly among Christians in the United States is related to the constant and ceaseless reiteration of these themes by influential speakers and evangelists, not a few of whom are Baptist.

I suspect that many thoughtful evangelicals and Baptists, including the Baptist contingent in this conference, find themselves for Scriptural reasons alone fully as hesitant about the much-trumpeted plans of these good people as are modern Israelis and Jews. Yet I and many others are happy that so many Christians of evangelical conviction are interested and enthusiastic about Israel and her people. Baptists and evangelicals badly, perhaps desperately, need to brush shoulders with real Jews in the real Jerusalem if for no other reason than to learn what their own faith is all about. An Israeli friend of mine who works in the Ministry of Tourism in Jerusalem claims this just may be the main reason and main mission of Jews today!

Nevertheless many of us find the methods of Bible study used by our evangelical futurists, their denial of a future role for the Church, their glorying in the bloody future of the little Jewish remnant in Zion, and other such details of their schemes, quite questionable both from the standpoint of Jesus' teaching and from that of the Bible as a whole. We would all say that Jesus spoke of returning to this earth in some kind of supernatural glory for the purpose of winding up the present period of redemptive history but we search in vain to find him teaching that an Israel returning to Zion is the precursor of his second coming. When we separate the now interlocked and interlarded prophecies of the Destruction of the Temple from those of the Coming of the Son of Man it seems to many of us that the Coming is to be understood as a planet-wide event in contrast to the Destruction which occurred in 70 A.D. and affected only Jerusalem and the little land of history.

Some of us would have to add a more general objection to some of the forms of Christian political interest and support we observe today. I am speaking of those views which make so much of the return of Jews to Israel that a kind of idolization of each Jewish person or of the State of Israel itself develops.

I listened not long ago to a talented Christian singer who had composed a song blessing Israel. One part of the song went something like this:

You are yet in clothes of infancy,  
You are still withdrawn and silent.  
But your God will pull you, draw you,  
Make all nations worship at your feet.

Now, apart from the fact that no self-respecting Israeli or Jew I ever knew would be able to stand this kind of groveling worship, it is plainly opposed to the words and tenor of the entire biblical revelation: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him it is that you must serve!" It is somehow incredible that Christians of any kind would fall victim to this kind of idolatry, especially those who claim to read the Bible.



I am sometimes accused of being unkind when I label this type of Christian thinking Christian horoscopy, but it is quite clear that Jesus, like the Pharisees, strictly opposed the fortune-telling involved in speculation about the future. "Watch," he said again and again, "for you know not the day or the hour." To watch certainly means to expect the imminent Return. Our popular eschatologists seem much more interested in the pyrotechnic aspects of their constructions of the future than in the Coming of their Lord.

### Some Failures to Find Meaning for Israel

It fell my lot some years ago to study and comment on the writings of many Jewish and Christian authors who had attempted to suggest relevance to the continuing existence of the Jewish people and the reestablishment of the Jewish State. For Christians, if not for Jews, the subject may be considered critical, for whether Judaism and Christianity are separate faiths or not or whether they are facets of the same faith, in some way the Jewishness of Christianity cannot be denied, especially by the Bible-centered, believing Christian. I am not even sure one must not speak of the Christianity of Judaism if for no other reason than that the first-century repulsion of the Jewish-Christians left its negative image on all subsequent Judaism. In any case I came to several conclusions which can perhaps be set down here.

My first conclusion was that no single Jewish reformulation of Jewish meaning or identity had succeeded in gaining total Jewish acceptance during the modern period. The still current debate in Israel over "Who is a Jew?" has for the present ended legislatively in the formula "A Jew is a person with a Jewish mother who has never changed his religion." But what this means is not at all clear logically or legally and symbolizes the apparent impossibility of any general Jewish definition of identity, much less meaning or mission.

The second was that while the Zionist attempt to rescue Jews was praiseworthy by Jews everywhere the redefinition of Jewishness as essentially national and Hebraic continues to be accepted by most, more by default than by conviction. The Zionist contention that all Jews must emigrate to Israel or face final and complete assimilation and disappearance has had to be replaced by the Israeli agreement that it is possible to live as a Jew in either New York or Tel Aviv, Los Angeles or Jerusalem; both kinds of Jewish existence may be considered viable. Perhaps you can call this a kind of inner-Jewish acceptance of pluralism but it means that the all-or-nothing Zionism some once preached has gone by the board and Zionist ideologists have had, willy-nilly, to return to the kind of Zionism Echad Haam advocated: the Jewish State as the cultural center feeding and nourishing the Diaspora.

The third conclusion I reached was that when Christians attempt to define what is the meaning of the continuing Jewish reality they are rarely more successful than their Jewish counterparts. Inevitably they go beyond the simple Pauline position that even a divergent, unbelieving Israel is still an Israel beloved by God and will yet find its way to the Messiah Jesus.

The thinkers we usually call "liberal" or "modernist" tend to try to find meaning for Jews as "witnesses against paganism" or "the elder brother" of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, this last a suggestion of Franz Rosenzweig who hoped to find Jewish meaning vis a vis Christendom by supposing the parable meant by the elder son represented the historic



Jewish body moving through history as "always with the Father" in contrast to the prodigal son who represented the Church with its Gentile background which could only return to the Father in ignorance, humility and repentance.

The difficulty of such suggestions as Jewish "witness against paganism", which attaches some kind of mission to Jews, lies in the fact that Jews are not by any means the only groups witnessing against the paganism of our times. The difficulty of the use made of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son and the elder brother, a use picked up by some Christian liberals, is that apart from the fact that the parable could not have meant originally what it has come to mean in its usage by Rosenzweig (the elder brother in Jesus' analogy is the religious establishment whose rigidity cannot accept his prophetic voice) the portrayal of the modern Jewish community as the unforgiving, unloving, bitchy elder brother is so unkind and pejorative that it can only be described as anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic in the extreme. I know there are Jews who suffer from the selbst-hass syndrome who might happily accept such a description but I cannot imagine that Rosenzweig had this aspect in mind or that the liberal-Christian usage was sufficiently perspicacious: someone blundered.

AMERICAN JEWISH

About the only thing we can learn from these forced analogies invented or adapted by Christians is that Christians look for Jewish mission or meaning in relation to Christianity or Christendom, a thing Jewish thinkers like Rosenzweig would readily agree to. The suggestion of Maimonides that Christianity somehow represents the Jewish mission to the Gentiles promised in Scripture runs in the same direction. The relationship of Jews and Christians is so acidly clear that even the academics have had to describe our western tradition as Jewish-Christian to make sense of it.

The radical evangelical eschatologists are, at least on this point, right. The Jews are somehow related, or to be related, positively to redemptive history. It is a crude and I think unbiblical construction which must suppose the Church is Gentilic and that prophecy can only be satisfied if one gets rid of the Church so the Jewish people can return to the center of divine care and world redemption. This is but to carry the Jewish and Christian separation into the golden age or millenium these believers talk about with such esoteric certainty. Surely any view of a time when the lion will lie down with the lamb must include the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers, if we can use even this analogy.

I am, however, much more concerned with the distortions so easily inferred by the proponents of this kind of eschatology. In their worst form we can get the attempt of a mad man like that of the person who tried to burn down the Aksa mosque several years ago: if the Temple must be rebuilt is it any sin to help the process by getting rid of the present abomination on the Temple site?

This way of thinking says, for example, that to fulfil prophecy it is essential that all the Jews of the world come to live in Israel: any who leave now are worse than traitors. A few months ago I heard a good friend of mine who is in the radical eschatology camp berate an Israeli audience for allowing, as it were, Jews to leave the country: a half-million Israelis have managed to deny the faith and revel in the economic advantages of Europe and America; they should be stopped in some way. This is an attitude once fairly common in Israeli political circles, for Zionism has had its radicals too, but to find it among evangelicals (my friend is not a Baptist, thank heaven) is hard to take. It is not beyond imagination to suppose that some such Christian radical might, given the right opportunity, bring pressure on some foreign government to limit the immigration of Israelis to their land in accordance with the radical view of prophecy. Such things have happened before.



There is surely something wrong with a system of thought which brings an evangelical Christian even to consider such a political step. The glory of the Bible's view of God is that in the end he leaves man free to refuse his offers of blessing and of course Jesus is so described in our New Testament sources. "Shall we call down fire on these Samaritans who have refused to allow you to spend the night on your way to the Passover in Jerusalem?" asked the disciples. Jesus answered, "Why, you don't know what kind of a spirit animates this idea in you! The Son of Man has not come to destroy men, but to save them." Is an evangelical free to do what his master would not do?

Perhaps it is my Baptist upbringing which drilled into my head the idea that men must be really free to think and believe as they are led which makes me overly suspicious of anything political but I really cannot believe that the Church has any business limiting God's free and Holy Spirit in the way I have mentioned above.

#### Suggestions for a Baptist View on Israel

Having spent so much time in criticism of the attempts by Christians have I, can I give, some suggestion attributing meaning to the Jewish presence in the Christian world and to the emergence of the Jewish State? Let me with a little bit of fear and trembling try.

I have already hinted that for me Paul's position in chapters nine to eleven of the Epistle to the Romans is basic and, I think, maximal. Paul sees some general kind of Jewish acceptance of the lordship of Jesus in the future when Israel feels it can no longer insist on a separate chosenness unknown to the Jewish-Christian movement. "And so," says Paul, emphasizing the future psychological crisis involved in rejecting one's feeling of divine separation, "all Israel shall be saved."<sup>6</sup> I suspect that we are further along in the fulfilment of his prophecy than most of us realized. Since the days when Joseph Klausner's JESUS OF NAZARETH raised a storm in Jewry fifty years ago nearly a hundred Jewish authors have written books in praise of Jesus the Jew, each in his own way making peace with the historical Jesus. When Christians make their own particular kind of peace with this Jewish Jesus, as some of us already do, we shall probably wake up one morning to find Jews and Christians are nearer being Jewish-Christians.

Meantime the twenty-eighth verse of Romans, chapter nine, states succinctly the theological position Christians ought to find easier to understand than they do. "If we are talking about my unbelieving brothers in the flesh," says Paul, "it is true that because you Gentiles were welcomed into the fold of Israel without circumcision by us Jewish Christians my brothers have been put off and are hostile to the Gospel. But, don't forget our forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were saved and chosen and because God entered history with them their descendants are beloved, the object of his special concern."<sup>7</sup> I am paraphrasing, of course, but this seems to be the meaning of Paul's words.



What is important here is that Paul is not saying that his unbelieving Israel is chosen or saved or fully right with God but that does not prevent God loving them intensely. They are "beloved to God."

My personal debate with many Christians, and not a few Baptists, is over my insistence that the right theological word about Israel is the word "love of God," or "loved of God." Paul deliberately limited the biblical word chosen, which in Jewish parlance is equal to our evangelical "saved," to his forefathers, whom in another place he makes the fathers of the believers from Gentile background as well. In other words he relates the Israel of his time to salvation in Jesus as negative but to the history of salvation as positive. He could have said, with John, "Salvation is of the Jews."<sup>8</sup> It is the evangelical habit to separate positive theological entities into sheep and goats, saved and unsaved, and saints and sinners but this dichotomy is not the only way Scripture describes men and groups. "Give no offense to the Jews, the Gentiles or the Church of God,"<sup>9</sup> Paul says in another text. There are groups which help in the spread of the Gospel by the very nature of their spiritual stance as related to the revelation of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Such are many groups of traditional Christians. Such is the Israel Paul is talking about. Thank God, he loves them. And, though this is not easily understood, he uses them.

If I am unsaved and therefore unchosen, it is better to admit it and be honest. God still loves me! Is this not the essential evangelical doctrine? I suspect all the evil of the Christian-Jewish conflict through the ages could have been prevented if Christians had just printed this text above every church and monastery. If God loves the Jews I must love the Jews. That is really the devar hageulah, the word of redemption. It is just that simple.

What I now have to suggest is just a kind of fleshing out of the contention that the evangelical needs to learn to see purpose in any body or group which retains in its tradition the written word of God. This is particularly true of Jewish tradition in its Hebraic forms.

The revival of Hebrew culture in the State of Israel holds, in my experience and estimation, great promise for the possibility of understanding the beginnings of Christian, or Jewish-Christian, faith. Again, looking at the purpose and meaning of Israel from the standpoint of such purpose and meaning to Christians, one must say that the very meaning and interpretation of Jesus is dependent on the right use of the only real tools we have to get that understanding, namely, early rabbinic texts and the Jewish reading of and use of the Old Testament in Hebrew.

This is really my field and I must wrestle with the temptation to expand ad infinitum. I will resist the temptation but ask your leave to mention the fact that for many years I have had the privilege of working weekly with Professor David Flusser of the Hebrew University. We stay glued to the Greek text of our Synoptic Gospels, talking, debating and arguing over small and large points. As an Orthodox Jew, Flusser is alive to hundreds of rabbinic texts. My specialty is analysis of the Greek texts. Both of us carry on our discussions in Hebrew and both of us are constantly seeking to read the Hebrew behind those parts of the material which are clearly translations. I will not tire you with the details but the essential picture of Jesus we keep discovering and rediscovering is very different from the pale portrait modern academic theology has given us in this century. It is exciting, very exciting.



My point is that this kind of Jewish and Christian dialogue has been made possible by the cultural possibilities of modern Israel. I, the green lad from the plains of Oklahoma, come to Jerusalem and spend years studying Hebrew, then start translating the Gospel of Mark from Greek to Hebrew. Flusser, the European philologist who learns his Hebrew long after Latin and Greek in Jerusalem, begins to teach Christian origins at the University. We meet. A spark ignites. We spend twenty years working on the sources so important to Jewish Christianity. It could happen only in Israel. Really. Literally.

I have concentrated on my own experience but this sort of thing goes on constantly in Jerusalem. Surely this is a purpose, a mission, a meaning for Israel. Perhaps it is indeed not the purpose of one of my friends who has the future all pinned down: he says to Israelis, "Look, this country, your country, is going to be the greatest country in the world. Your borders will stretch from sea to sea. Your army will police the world." No, that I cannot believe is the way anyone who wrote the New Testament could talk. But maybe, just maybe, the purpose I suggest is more important.

And one more purpose, more practical and useful. Israel the land is, as someone has said, the second Bible. This is true for Israelis who love to roam the countryside looking for each nook and crook, Bible in hand. Some hundreds take the government guide course for two years, Old and New Testaments as textbooks. The moshavniks and kibbutzniks near Affuleh will tell you about Saul and Jonathan as they point to the Hill of Moreh and the mountains of Gilboa. They will talk of Solomon and Megiddo, of the Witch of Endor, of Deborah and Tabor. And they will tell you a tale about the Mount of Precipitation, only partly accurate, where Jesus was led to be thrown down by the people of Nazareth but escaped by flying to Jerusalem! Never mind. They are talking about a country that talks to them, that is Jewish, yes, but is also Christian.

Nearly half of all the tourists who come to Israel are Christian pilgrims. The Government Tourist Corporation bucks the religious establishment with fervor as it builds a baptism site on the Jordan for these tourists. Tourism means jobs for Israelis and remains the biggest industry in a little country trying to lift itself into the industrial twentieth century. Sometimes I kid my Israeli friends and tell them they have become a nation of tourist guides, the curators of the greatest museum in the world. And, at least for Christians, what could be more important?

And, again, who but modern Israelis would have the time, the energy and the interest to kiss these stones back to life? These are the People of the Book. They are the people who can make it live. We Baptists and evangelicals humbly thank them.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>David Koigen, "Christian Mystery and Jewish Moral Drama," Commentary, II (August, 1946), p. 1979.

<sup>2</sup>R. L. Lindsey, Israel in Christendom, p. 134 (Dugith, Baptist House, Jerusalem, 1961).

<sup>3</sup>Lindsey, "Israel's Coming Crisis Over Jewishness," Commentary, XVI (July, 1954).



<sup>4</sup>Ellis Rivkin, "The Meaning of Messiah in Jewish Thought," Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation, Mark H. Tanenbaum, editor (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids), 1978, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup>Luke 9:54, 55 (Textus Receptus).

<sup>6</sup>Romans 9:24, 25.

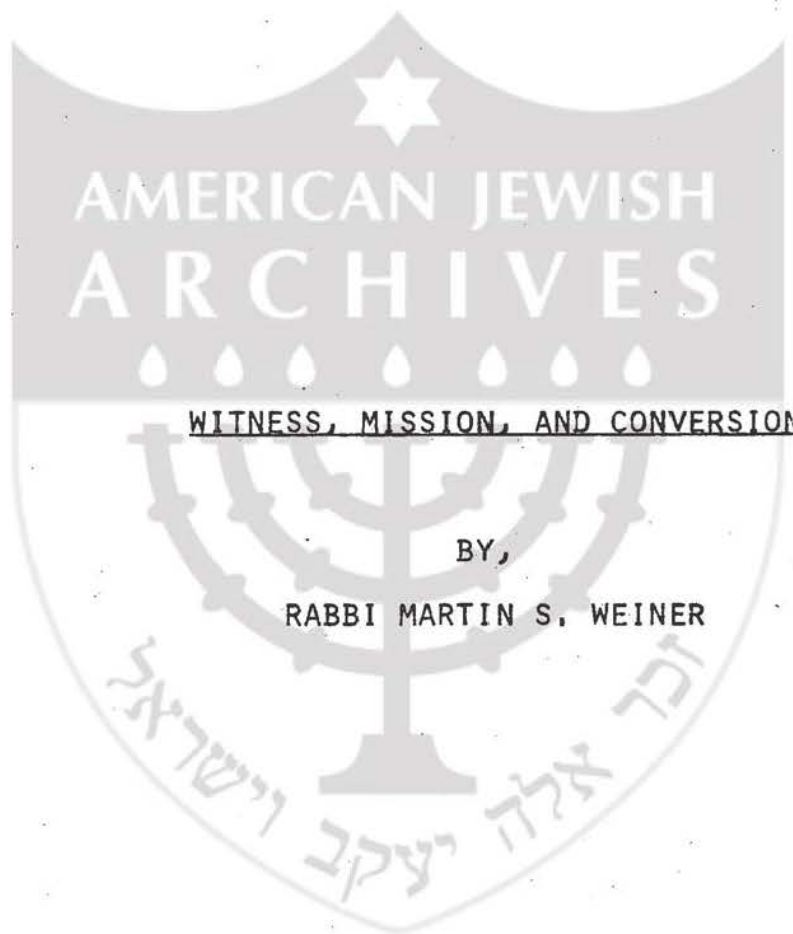
<sup>7</sup>Romans 9:28.

<sup>8</sup>John 4:22.

<sup>9</sup>I Cor. 10:32.



BAPTIST-JEWISH DIALOGUE  
FEBRUARY 18, 1982





MY FRIENDS,

IT IS AN HONOR TO SHARE IN THIS RELIGIOUS AND SCHOLARLY EXPERIENCE. AS I PREPARED MY COMMENTS FOR THIS PAPER I REALIZED THAT MY COLLEAGUE, DR. ESTES, AND I MIGHT HAVE A SPECIAL PERSPECTIVE TO PRESENT TO YOU FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT AS PULPIT MINISTER AND RABBI. I CANNOT SPEAK FOR DR. ESTES, BUT MY SCHEDULE BECAME SO HECTIC IN THE LAST WEEK OR TWO WITH A SERIES OF FUNERALS, BABY NAMINGS, AND COUNSELING SESSIONS THAT I BEGAN TO QUESTION MY SANITY IN AGREEING TO BE HERE. AH, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY NO TO JIM RUDIN AND MY DEAR FRIEND ERNIE WEINER.

THE ANSWER WAS YES. THIS MORNING I HOPE TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE INSIGHTS, MANY OF THEM RATHER PERSONAL INSIGHTS, ON THE TOPIC: WITNESS, CONVERSION, MISSION, ~~(AND TESHUVAH)~~

ALLOW ME TO BEGIN WITH TWO BRIEF STORIES. THEY ARE FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE. THEY REPRESENT TWO EXPERIENCES NEARLY THIRTY YEARS APART. ALTHOUGH CERTAINLY NOT EARTH SHAKING ON ANY GRAND SCALES OF EVENTS, BOTH INSTANCES TOUCHED MY SPIRIT IN A MOST PROFOUND WAY.

THE FIRST STORY, I WAS TWELVE YEARS OR MAYBE THIRTEEN YEARS OLD. I WAS A MEMBER OF THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA. IT WAS SCOUT SABBATH, A ONCE A YEAR EVENT IN WHICH I JOINED MY SCOUTMASTER, A VERY GENTLE AND GOOD MAN, IN ATTENDING A CHURCH SERVICE WITH THE CHRISTIAN MEMBERS OF MY TROOP. AS LONG AS I LIVE I WILL NEVER FORGET MY FEELINGS THAT MORNING. IT WAS DURING THAT PERIOD PRIOR TO EASTER WHEN THE NEW TESTAMENT READING INVOLVES THE STORY OF JESUS' FINAL DAYS, ESPECIALLY HIS TRIAL AND HIS APPEARANCE BEFORE PILATE. I TRULY DO NOT RECALL THE EXACT GOSPEL, VERSE, OR CHAPTER WHICH WAS READ. I DO REMEMBER THAT THE MINISTER, SEEMED LIKE A VERY SINCERE AND KIND MAN. BUT THE PASSAGE WHICH HE READ CLEARLY

ACCUSED THE JEWS, MY PEOPLE, OF KILLING THE CHRISTIAN SAVIOR. I SAT IN THE PEW ON THAT SUNDAY MORNING. I FELT SICK AT HEART. I WAS AMAZED AND TROUBLED. I REALIZED THAT MANY TIMES DURING THE YEAR, ESPECIALLY AROUND EASTER TIME, MY FRIENDS AND THEIR PARENTS, GOOD PEOPLE WITH WHOM I HAD CAMPED AND WORKED ON MERIT BADGES, HEARD THESE READINGS FROM A SACRED TEXT IN A CHURCH. SO MANY QUESTIONS EXPLODED IN MY YOUNG MIND? WHAT EFFECT DID THESE READINGS HAVE ON MY FRIENDS AND THEIR FAMILIES. DID THEY BLAME ME FOR JESUS' DEATH AS THE SCRIPTURES PROCLAIMED? DESPITE THEIR FRIENDSHIP AND CONCERN WERE THEY REALLY SUSPICIOUS OF ME, THEIR JEWISH FRIEND?

AFTER THE SERVICE MY SCOUTMASTER, MR. WEST, WALKED WITH ME UP TO THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH WHERE THE MINISTER GREETED US. MR. WEST QUICKLY EXPLAINED THAT I WAS JEWISH. HE IMPLIED THAT I MIGHT HAVE BEEN A LITTLE UPSET WITH THE SCRIPTURAL READING AND COMMENTARY. THE MINISTER WAS MOST SYMPATHETIC. HE EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN AND DEEP REGRET. HE SAID, "I'M TRULY SORRY IF YOU WERE TROUBLED. BUT THAT IS THE PASSAGE WHICH IS ASSIGNED FOR THIS PARTICULAR SUNDAY. I SIMPLY HAD TO READ IT."

"I SIMPLY HAD TO READ IT"? IT WOULD BE A NUMBER OF YEARS BEFORE I HAD A SOPHISTICATED KNOWLEDGE OF JEWISH HISTORY AND THE ROOTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM. BUT I HAVE A FEELING THAT ON THAT SUNDAY MORNING ON THE STEPS OF A LITTLE NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH IN SAN FRANCISCO, ABOUT SIX BLOCKS FROM WHERE I LIVE NOW, I COMPREHENDED A UNIVERSE OF HISTORY AND AN ULTIMATE OF INSIGHT ABOUT PEOPLE, SOMETHING BEYOND ALL MY LATER COURSES IN HISTORY, <sup>Sociology</sup> THEOLOGY, AND EVEN TWO SEMINARY COURSES IN NEW TESTAMENT.

IN THE THIRTY OR MORE YEARS SINCE THAT DAY, I HAVE DEVOTED A GOOD PART OF MY ENERGIES AS A RABBI AND COMMUNITY LEADER TO



BUILDING INTERFAITH AND INTER-GROUP UNDERSTANDING, I HAVE WORKED WITH COUNTLESS PRIESTS AND MINISTERS IN TRYING TO BREAKDOWN THE WALLS OF PREJUDICE AND MISUNDERSTANDING WHICH AFFLICT ALL OF US,

YET IN A SENSE I REALIZE THE RECOLLECTION OF THAT SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE SO LONG AGO IS STILL WITH ME. THE MEMORY CAME VIVIDLY TO MY MIND AS I BEGAN TO STRUGGLE WITH THE ISSUES IN THIS PAPER. I ASSUME THAT WE ARE DEALING HERE WITH THE ELEMENTS OF WITNESS AND MISSION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A DEVOTED CHRISTIAN. THE STORY OF JESUS'S LIFE, HIS SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS, HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION ARE THE VERY HEART OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. THE MINISTER IN HIS SERVICE ON THAT SUNDAY MORNING FELT THAT HE MUST BEAR WITNESS TO THE TEACHINGS OF GOSPEL. HE FOLLOWED THE ADMONITION OF MARK, "GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE," HE BROUGHT THAT MESSAGE TO HIS CONGREGATION, AND SADLY TO ME. (MARK 16:15)

I HOPE THAT I AM BEING REALISTIC ABOUT THIS MEMORY. I DON'T BELIEVE THAT THIS WAS PART OF ANY GRAND DESIGN TO EMBARRASS OR TO MISSIONIZE THE JEWISH KID IN THE CONGREGATION. AS A RABBI I FREQUENTLY READ ASSIGNED PORTIONS FROM THE TORAH WHICH TROUBLE ME. I WISH THAT ANOTHER PASSAGE WAS AVAILABE. IN FACT SOMETIMES I DELIBERATELY CHOOSE ANOTHER PASSAGE, FOR THAT MINISTER IT WAS PROBABLY JUST ANOTHER SUNDAY MORNING AND A CHANCE TO BRING THE GOOD NEWS -- GOOD NEWS WHICH TROUBLED ME GREATLY.

ALLOW ME TO COME FORWARD NEARLY THIRTY YEARS TO AN EVENT WHICH HAPPEND LAST YEAR. A YOUNG MOTHER IN MY CONGREGATION PHONED ME AND ASKED ME TO SPEAK WITH HER DAUGHTER. THE GIRL, LET US CALL HER SARAH, IS NOW SIXTEEN YEARS OLD. FOR SEVERAL YEARS SHE HAD LIVED ALTERNATELY WITH HER MOTHER OR HER FATHER. THE PARENTS ARE DIVORCED, ALTHOUGH THE RELATIONSHIP IS QUITE AMICABLE, BOTH

PARENTS ARE JEWISH. WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THE MOTHER'S REQUEST, THE GIRL WAS LIVING WITH HER FATHER. THERE WERE VERY FEW JEWISH STUDENTS IN HER HIGH SCHOOL. THE GIRL IS A BIT SHY, NOT PARTICULARLY MATURE FOR HER AGE. IN HER NEIGHBORHOOD THERE IS AN OUTSTANDING YOUTH PROGRAM. IT IS A GROUP SPONSORED BY A LOCAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH. SEVERAL HUNDRED TEEN-AGERS BELONG TO IT. THEY HAVE FANTASTIC TIMES AT REGULAR WEEKLY PROGRAMS WHICH ARE FILLED WITH WHOLESOME ACTIVITIES INCLUDING BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER. THAT YOUNG GIRL, WHO ATTENDED MY RELIGIOUS SCHOOL FOR A FEW YEARS, REACHED OUT TO THE FRIENDSHIP OFFERED HER BY HER CHRISTIAN CLASSMATES AND THE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH. ALTHOUGH SHE WILL ATTEND SOME JEWISH FAMILY EVENTS SUCH AS A SEDER AND HOLIDAY SERVICES, SARAH NOW CONSIDERS HERSELF TO BE A CHRISTIAN. SHE HAS FOUND CHRIST. WHEN I SHARED A VERY WARM AND FRIENDLY CONVERSATION WITH HER, SARAH CARRIED HER BIBLE AND QUOTED SCRIPTURES. SHE CONVEYED GREAT SATISFACTION IN HER NEW FAITH.

SARAH AND I PARTED ON VERY GOOD TERMS. I HOPE THAT SHE WOULD ALWAYS CONSIDER ME A FRIEND. YET I REALIZE THAT SARAH IS PROBABLY LOST TO JUDAISM, MAYBE FOREVER.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I WAS VERY SAD. TO A SCHOLARLY AUDIENCE SUCH AS THIS I NEED NOT QUOTE ALL THE TRAGEDIES OF JEWISH LIFE: THE POGROMS AND THE HOLOCAUST, AND THE CONTEMPORARY DANGER OF ASSIMILATION AND A LOW BIRTHRATE ARE RAPIDLY DIMINISHING OUR NUMBERS. ALL THE AWESOME HISTORIC EVENTS, ALL THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED IN THE REALITY OF THIS ONE YOUNGSTER, SARAH, WHOM WE LOST.

MY FEELINGS OF SADNESS WERE COUPLED WITH A TINGE OF ANGER. I THINK YOU CAN GUESS WHY. I TRULY FELT THAT THE GAME WAS NOT BEING PLAYED FAIRLY. AS I WILL EXPLAIN SHORTLY, I AM VERY MUCH OPPOSED TO MISSIONARY ACTIVITY ON THE PART OF MY OWN PEOPLE.



FOR ALL THE OBVIOUS REASONS I AM GRAVELY TROUBLED, I WOULD SAY EVEN OFFENDED, WHEN MY CHRISTIAN NEIGHBORS SEEK TO CONVERT JEWS, I AM ESPECIALLY TROUBLED WHEN IT COMES TO APPROACHING TEEN-AGERS, THE REASONS ARE OBVIOUS. EVEN THE MOST MATURE AND SO-CALLED WELL-ADJUSTED YOUNGSTERS GO THROUGH DIFFICULT YEARS IN THEIR ADOLESCENCE, IT IS A TIME OF QUESTIONING AND SEARCHING AND EVEN CONSTRUCTIVE REBELLION AGAINST HOME AND PARENTS IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH ONE'S SENSE OF SELF. I AM APPALLED WHEN OTHERWISE SENSITIVE AND WELL-MEANING RELIGIOUS LEADERS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS AGE OF VULNERABILITY TO TEAR A CHILD FROM HIS/HER HERITAGE. YOU CAN IMAGINE MY FEELING ABOUT SARAH'S SITUATION. AS THE CHILD OF DIVORCED PARENTS, ALTHOUGH BOTH VERY LOVING AND COMMITTED TO HER, SARAH WAS AN EASY PREY TO THOSE WHO WISHED TO IMPOSE A NEW RELIGIOUS SPIRIT ON HER. I TRULY FEEL THAT IT WAS UNFAIR, A VERY HALLOW VICTORY FOR THE MISSIONARY.

AS I UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF WITNESS AND MISSION, THE BELIEVING CHRISTIAN FEELS AN OVERWHELMING SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, ALMOST COMPELLED TO SHARE HIS OR HER FAITH IN JESUS WITH OTHERS WHO HAVE NOT SO TO SPEAK "FOUND THE LORD." I HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT THIS SENSE OF MISSION WITH BAPTIST FRIENDS. I BELIEVE I UNDERSTAND ITS DEPTH AND MEANING, BUT I AM NOT REALLY CERTAIN. THE DRIVE TO BEAR WITNESS IS INTEGRALLY A PART OF THE CHRISTIAN SOUL. IT IS AS NECESSARY FOR THE BELIEVING CHRISTIAN, AS BREATHING. YET THAT COMPULSION, SPIRITUALLY NECESSARY DRIVE, CAN TRULY INFRINGE ON MY SPIRITUAL RIGHTS AS A JEW. I AM TROUBLED BY IT. I AM OFTEN DEEPLY OFFENDED BY IT.

HOW CAN WE WORK OUT THIS DILEMA? POSSIBLY THE KEY INVOLVES THE KIND OF INTERFAITH STUDY PROGRAM WHICH OUR AJC CHAPTER INITIATED HERE IN THE BAY AREA. MY OWN SYNAGOGUE AND THE TIBURON BAPTIST CHURCH, WITH ITS DEVOTED MINISTER TOM PREVOST, SHARED A SERIES OF

STUDY GROUPS, SERVICES, AND DINNERS OPENED WINDOWS OF INSIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING FOR EACH OF US, JEW AND BAPTIST. THROUGHOUT THE EXPERIENCE, I FELT THE STRONG COMMITMENT, A SENSE OF PERSONAL WITNESS AND MISSION ON THE PART OF OUR BAPTIST FRIENDS. THERE WAS A FULL SHARING OF INFORMATION. BUT THERE WAS NOTHING WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED AS PROSELYTING(PROSELYTIZING). IN ESSENCE, OUR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS SAID TO US, "AS BAPTISTS WE MUST BEAR WITNESS TO THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST -- HIS LIFE AND HIS DEATH. THAT IS OUR MISSION." BUT ONCE EXPRESSED, THEY DID NOT TAKE THE NEXT STEP AND SAY, "WHY DON'T YOU CONSIDER THIS MESSAGE ALSO." THEY RESPECTED OUR LOVE AND COMMITMENT TO JUDAISM. I HAVE THE DEEPEST RESPECT FOR THE WAY THEY APPROACHED OUR DIALOGUE. I BELIEVE IT MIGHT SERVE AS A MODEL OF SUCH EXCHANGES.

INCIDENTALLY, EVEN AS A RABBI, I HAVE EXPERIENCED THE OTHER EXTREME. LAST AUGUST THERE WAS A MEETING OF JEWISH COMMUNAL LEADERS WITH SOME EVANGELICALS, NOT SOUTHERN BAPTISTS. AT THE CONCLUSION OF OUR EXCHANGE ONE OF THE PREACHERS OFFERED A CLOSING STATEMENT. HE CULMINATED HIS PRESENTATION WITH A PRAYERFUL HOPE THAT SOMEDAY I WOULD FIND JESUS AND BE ABLE TO OBSERVE CHRISTMAS AND EASTER ALONG WITH MY TRADITIONAL OBSERVANCES OF PASSOVER AND YOM KIPPUR. I WAS APPALLED. IF THE MAN WOULD SAY THAT TO ME, WHAT MIGHT HE SAY TO A STRUGGLING JEWISH TEENAGER. IF THE MAN HAD THE CHUZPAH TO SAY THAT TO ME, WHAT WERE THE LIMITS OF HIS DESPERATE MISSIONARY ZEAL. I WONDER!

I AM DESPERATELY TROUBLED BY THIS KIND OF APPROACH WHICH THREATENS THE VERY EXISTENCE OF MY PEOPLE.

NOW MY FRIENDS, WE COME TO NOW THE NEXT OBVIOUS QUESTION. IF I FEEL SO STRONGLY ABOUT CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITY TOWARD THE JEWS, HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT THOSE LEADERS OF AMERICAN JUDAISM



WHO ARE SPEAKING ABOUT SOMETHING CALLED "OUTREACH", A TERM WHICH SOMETIMES SOUNDS SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE JEWISH MISSIONIZING TO THE GENTILES.

ONCE AGAIN, FOR A KNOWLEDGEABLE GROUP SUCH AS THIS ONE, I'M SURE THAT IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO TRACE THE WHOLE HISTORY OF JUDAISM'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CONVERSION. NEEDLESS TO SAY IN THE BIBLICAL PERIOD IT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN VIEWED FAVORABLY, WE NEED ONLY RECALL THAT OUR GREATEST PROPHET, MOSES, CHOSE A NON-ISRAELITE WIFE, OF COURSE, WHO CAN FORGET THE BEAUTIFUL MOABITE, RUTH, WHO CHOSE JUDAISM WITH THE IMMORTAL WORDS: "THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, THY GOD MY GOD."

DURING THE RABBINIC PERIOD, THE DOMINANT ATTITUDE OF JUDAISM WAS OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE TOWARD REACHING OUT AND WELCOMING CONVERTS. THERE ARE MANY VERSES IN THE LITERATURE WHICH STRESS GOD'S LOVE FOR THE PROSELYTE: "DEARER TO GOD IS THE PROSELYTE WHO HAS COME OF HIS OWN ACCORD THAN ALL THE CROWDS OF ISRAELITES WHO STOOD BEFORE MOUNT SINAI."

APPARENTLY THERE WERE STRONG MISSIONARY EFFORTS BY JEWS DURING THE GRECO-ROMAN PERIOD WITH A MOST SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH IN NUMBERS. THE FAMOUS NEW TESTAMENT LINE BEARS WITNESS TO THIS PHENOMENON: "WOE TO YOU, SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, HYPOCRITES! FOR YOU TRAVERSE SEA AND LAND TO MAKE A SINGLE PROSELYTE,... (MATT. 23:15)

AS WE KNOW ALL THIS CAME TO AN END BY THE EDICT OF CONSTANTINE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY. CHRISTIANITY WAS ESTABLISHED AS THE OFFICIAL STATE RELIGION OF THE EMPIRE. TO CONVERT TO JUDAISM BECAME A CAPITAL OFFENSE. THE JEWISH PEOPLE ENTERED THE LONG CENTURIES OF MEDIEVAL DARKNESS WHICH ONLY ENDED WITH THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

ALTHOUGH THERE IS A STRONG BASIS FOR PROSELYTIZING IN OUR ANCIENT PAST, JUDAISM HAS NOT BEEN A MISSIONARY RELIGION FOR MORE

THAN 1600 YEARS.

IN RECENT YEARS WE HAVE WITNESSED STIRRINGS WITHIN AMERICAN JUDAISM TO REASSESS THIS PATTERN IMPOSED UPON US FOR NEARLY TWO MELLEENIA. IN FACT IT IS MY BRANCH OF JUDAISM, REFORM JUDAISM WHICH HAS TAKEN THE LEAD IN THIS NEW DIRECTION.

AN HISTORIC MOMENT IN THIS PROCESS CAME ON DECEMBER 2, 1973, SHORTLY AFTER OUR COUNTRY WAS HORRIFIED BY THE JONESTOWN MASSACRE. RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER, THE PRESIDENT OF OUR UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS, THE BODY REPRESENTING MORE THAN 700 REFORM CONGREGATIONS, SPOKE BEFORE A MEETING OF HIS BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND SAID:

"MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ARE SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING. TRAGICALLY -- AS THE GRISLY EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK HAVE ESTABLISHED -- MANY SEEKERS HAVE FALLEN PREY TO MYSTICAL CULTS WHICH LITERALLY ENSLAVE THEM,

"...JUDAISM OFFERS LIFE, NOT DEATH. IT TEACHES FREE WILL, NOT SURRENDER OF BODY AND SOUL TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING. THE JEW PRAYS DIRECTLY TO GOD, NOT THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY WHO STANDS BETWEEN HIM AND HIS GOD. JUDAISM IS A RELIGION OF HOPE AND NOT DESPAIR, IT INSISTS THAT MAN AND SOCIETY ARE PERFECTIBLE. JUDAISM HAS AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF WISDOM AND EXPERIENCE TO OFFER THIS TROUBLED WORLD, AND WE JEWS OUGHT TO BE PROUD TO SPEAK ABOUT IT, FRANKLY, FREELY, AND WITH DIGNITY."

RABBI SCHINDLER CALLED UPON HIS LEADERSHIP TO ESTABLISH A PROGRAM OF REFORM JEWISH OUTREACH. WHAT WERE TO BE THE GOALS OF THIS OUTREACH PROGRAM, MOST OF THEM WERE POSITIVE AND NON-CONTROVERSIAL. THE OUTREACH TASK FORCE WAS ASKED TO CONSIDER THE NEEDS AND THEN PROVIDE PROGRAMMING IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS: THE NON-JEWISH PARTNER IN A MIXED MARRIAGE, THE CHILDREN OF MIXED MARRIAGES; PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALREADY DECIDED TO SEEK CONVERSION TO JUDAISM, AND PEOPLE WHO



HAVE RECENTLY CONVERTED TO JUDAISM. SO FAR NO PROBLEM.

BUT ONE OR TWO LINES IN RABBI SCHINDLER'S MESSAGE MADE HEADLINES AROUND THE RELIGIOUS WORLD. HE CALLED UPON THE TASK FORCE ON REFORM JEWISH OUTREACH TO LAUNCH A "CAREFULLY CONCEIVED PROGRAM AIMED AT ALL AMERICANS WHO ARE UNCHURCHED AND WHO ARE SEEKING ROOTS IN RELIGION."

THAT ONE WORD "UNCHURCHED" MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SIXTEEN CENTURIES A RESPECTED WORLD JEWISH LEADER WAS SUGGESTING THAT JEWS TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN REACHING OUT TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS, POSSIBLY BORN CHRISTIANS, WHO CURRENTLY HAVE NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION.

THE STATEMENT WAS NO CASUAL SLIP OF THE TONGUE. LATER IN HIS SPEECH RABBI SCHINDLER STRESSED: "LET ME NOT OBFUSCATE MY INTENT THROUGH THE USE OF COSMETIC LANGUAGE. UNABASHEDLY AND URGENTLY I CALL ON OUR MEMBERS TO RESUME THEIR TIME HONORED VOCATION AND TO BECOME CHAMPIONS FOR JUDAISM...THESE WORDS IMPLY NOT PASSIVE ACCEPTANCE BUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION."

IT'S NOT QUITE THE PTL CLUB, BUT IT'S AS CLOSE AS ONE WILL GET IN JEWISH LIFE. THE SUGGESTION ABOUT REACHING OUT TO THE "UNCHURCHED" INSPIRED A STORM OF CONTROVERSY.

RABBI SCHINDLER'S PROPOSALS WERE STUDIED FOR MORE THAN THREE YEARS BY A JOINT TASK FORCE COMPOSED OF RABBIS AND LAY LEADERS. THE TASK FORCE THEN PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS WHICH WERE VOTED UPON BY THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF REFORM JUDAISM TWO MONTHS AGO IN BOSTON. THE FOUR THOUSAND DELEGATES REPRESENTED NEARLY 500 REFORM JEWISH CONGREGATIONS FROM THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.

WHAT WERE THE FINAL PROPOSALS WHICH CAME BEFORE THE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE IN BOSTON LAST DECEMBER. IN MODERN TIMES JEWS HAVE WELCOMED THOSE WHO HAVE SOUGHT US OUT FOR CONVERSION USUALLY INSPIRED BY MARRIAGE TO A JEWISH PARTNER. THE FIRST FOUR RESOLUTIONS WERE PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THEY WERE REALLY NON-CONTROVERSIAL AND AFFIRMED CURRENT PRACTICE. THEY INVOLVED OUTREACH TO "THE NON-JEWISH PARTNER IN A MIXED MARRIAGE, THE CHILDREN OF MIXED MARRIAGES, INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM CLASSES AND CONVERSION STUDY PROGRAMS, AND FOLLOW-THROUGH PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE RECENTLY CHOSEN JUDAISM."

THEN CAME THE FIFTH AND FINAL RESOLUTION RECOMMENDED BY THE OUTREACH TASK FORCE. IT WAS ENTITLED, "REFORM JEWISH OUTREACH TO PERSONS OF NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE". WE NOTE THAT RABBI SCHINDLER'S ORIGINAL PHRASE, "THE UNCHURCHED", HAD BEEN MODIFIED TO "RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED". I SUPPOSE THE NEW WORDING SEEMED TO SMACK A LITTLE LESS OF JEWISH MISSIONIZING.

KEY LINES FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO THE FIFTH RESOLUTION READ, "THE TASK FORCE HAS CONCLUDED THAT SEEKING CONVERTS IS ENTIRELY WITHIN THE HISTORIC TRADITIONS OF JUDAISM. THE TASK FORCE BELIEVES THAT ANY PROGRAM OF REFORM JEWISH OUTREACH SHOULD PRIMARILY INVOLVE COMMUNICATING WITH DIGNITY THE MESSAGE OF JUDAISM TO UNAFFILIATED JEWS AND TO NON-JEWS WHO HAVE NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE --- A MESSAGE THAT EXPLAINS THE VALUES, HISTORY, AND TRADITIONS OF JUDAISM AND THE



JEWISH PEOPLE AND THAT EMPASIZES THE RICH, WARM, AND OPEN TRADITION OF OUR FAITH AND THE UNIQUENESS OF JUDAISM, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, LETS PEOPLE KNOW THAT JUDAISM IS NOT A CLOSED SOCIETY BUT WELCOMES THOSE WHO WISH TO ENTER ITS RANKS."

PLEASE UNDERSTAND I HAVE READ THE INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOLUTION, THE RESOLUTION ITSELF DID NOT ACTUALLY USE THE WORDS "RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED." ITS KEY SENTENCE READ SIMPLY, "THE TASK FORCE ON REFORM JEWISH OUTREACH RECOMMENDS THAT REFORM JUDAISM COMMUNICATE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE HISTORY, TRADITIONS, BELIEFS AND VALUES OF JUDAISM -- THAT JUDAISM IS A LOVING, MEANINGFUL, SPIRITUAL RELIGION THAT WELCOMES ALL WHO WISH TO EMBRACE IT."

VOTING AGAINST THAT IS A LITTLE LIKE VOTING AGAINST MOTHERHOOD AND APPLE PIE.

THE RESOLUTUION ALSO CONTAINED A WARNING WHICH WAS NOT IN RABBI SCHINDLER'S ORIGINAL PROPOSAL, BUT WHICH OBVIOUSLY WAS INSPIRED BY THE PROCESS OF CONTROVERSY AND NEGOTIATION. HERE IS THE WARNING: "THE TASK FORCE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT REFORM JUDAISM SHOULD HAVE PROGRAMS OF OUTREACH DIRECTED TOWARD ADHERENTS OF OTHER RELIGIONS."

THERE IS THE ESSENCE OF THE FIFTH RESOLUTION --WHAT WE MIGHT CALL THE "JEWISH MISSIONARY "RESOLUTION. IT CALLS FOR A PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM ABOUT JUDAISM. IT ONLY MENTIONS THE "RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED" IN THE INTRODUCTION, NOT THE BODY OF THE RESOLUTION. THE RESOLUTION DOES CARRY A WARNING ABOUT NOT DIRECTING OUTREACH TOWARD THE ADHERENTS OF OTHER RELIGIONS.

HOW DID THE FOUR THOUSAND DELEGATES VOTE ON THIS RESOLUTION? THE FIRST FOUR PARTS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. AFTER MUCH DEBATE THE FIFTH PART OF THE RESOLUTION PASSED BY A SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY, NOT UNANIMOUSLY.

ALTHOUGH THE FEW SENTENCES OF THE ABOVE RESOLUTION MAY SOUND VERY MODEST TO OUR BAPTIST COLLEAGUES PRESENT, THEY REPRESENT A MINOR REVOLUTION IN THE JEWISH WORLD.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE DEBATE ON THIS ISSUE, I FOUND A BIT TROUBLING. ONE REFORM JEWISH LEADER, RABBI BALFOUR BRICKNER, SENT LETTERS TO THIRTY ONE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT LEADERS. RABBI BRICKNER, FOR MANY YEARS THE HEAD OF THE REFORM MOVEMENT'S COMMISSION ON INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, WISHED TO ELICIT THE RESPONSE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS REGARDING RABBI SCHINDLER'S PROPOSALS.

SOME OF THOSE RESPONSES BY CHRISTIAN LEADERS WERE BRIEFLY QUOTED IN THE SPECIAL PACKET ON OUTREACH WHICH WAS GIVEN TO EACH OF THE DELEGATES AT THE BOSTON CONVENTION.

FOR INSTANCE, DR. EUGENE FISHER OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS WAS QUOTED AS FOLLOWS: "AN ACTIVE JUDAISM WHICH VIGOROUSLY PROCLAIMS ITS OWN UNIQUE MESSAGE TO THE WORLD AND OPENLY INVITES ALL INTERESTED IN EXPERIENCING THE RICHNESS AND DEPTH OF ITS RELIGIOUS TRADITION IS SOMETHING TO BE WELCOMED IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY."

A PROTESTANT LEADER, PETER BERGER, WAS QUOTED AS FOLLOWS: "JUDAISM WILL CONVINCE ITS OWN ONLY IF IT SUCCEEDS IN CONVINCING OTHERS...A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY WILL INCREASINGLY FIND THAT IT WILL BE PLAUSIBLE TO THOSE WITHIN IT, ONLY IF IT CAN MAKE ITSELF PLAUSIBLE TO OUTSIDERS."

SOME OF YOU MIGHT SAY, "WHAT LOVELY SENTIMENTS." IT MIGHT SURPRISE YOU TO KNOW THAT I AM VERY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THEM.

THEY REPRESENT A MIND SET WHICH I FIND VERY TROUBLING. IN THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY, IN ESSENCE THE ARGUMENT GOES, "YOU JEWS CAN'T REALLY BE SERIOUS ABOUT YOUR BELIEFS BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT



WILLING TO COME OUT HERE AND TRY TO CONVERT US." THE IMPLICATION:  
"WE JEWS WILL BECOME STRONGER, IF WE CHANGE THE FAITH OF OTHERS."

THAT'S NOT MY FEELING AT ALL. I HAVE AN ULTIMATE RESPECT FOR  
MY CHRISTIAN NEIGHBOR'S FAITH. AS LONG AS IT INSPIRES HIM OR HER TO  
BE AN ETHICAL AND CARING PERSON AND FULFILLS HIS OR HER  
SPIRITUAL NEEDS, I DON'T EVER WANT THAT PERSON TO BECOME JEWISH."

I MUST ADD A COMMENT ABOUT THE ELECTION PROCESS AT THE BOSTON  
BIENNIAL. ONE FEATURE OF THE DELEGATE VOTING PACKET TROUBLED ME  
GREATLY. OF ALL THE CHRISTIAN COMMENTS MADE TO RABBI BRICKNER ONLY  
THE ABOVE TWO BY FISHER AND BERGER WERE ACTUALLY QUOTED FOR THE  
DELEGATES. LET ME SHARE WITH YOU SEVERAL OTHER CHRISTIAN COMMENTS  
WHICH THE DELEGATES NEVER READ:

KRISTER STENDAHL WONDERED WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DISTIN-  
GUISH BETWEEN OUTREACH TO THE "UNCHURCHED" AND "NON-PROSELYTIZING."  
HE ASKED: "IF YOUR MISSION IS NON-PROSELYTIZING IS THERE ALSO  
A WAY IN WHICH A CHRISTIAN MISSION TO JEWS CAN BE SEEN AS NON-  
PROSELYTIZING." HARVEY COX RESPONDED WITH A SIMILAR WARNING:  
"I AM OPPOSED TO CHRISTIANS TRYING TO CONVERT JEWS. I DO NOT EXTEND  
MY OPPOSITION TO THE CASE OF SECULAR JEWS FOR WHOM JUDAISM HAS CEASED  
TO HAVE ANY PERSONAL MEANING..." INTERESTING -- IN ESSENCE DR. COX  
SAYS "IF YOU BOYS WANT TO START MISSIONIZING, THEN SECULAR JEWS  
ARE FAIR GAME."

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A CLASSIC BIT OF EDITORIAL LICENSE TOOK PLACE IN CHOOSING  
WHICH PASSAGE WOULD BE QUOTED FROM THE LETTER WRITTEN BY EUGENE  
FISHER. IN ADDITION TO THOSE POSITIVE WORDS WHICH APPEARED IN THE  
PACKET, FISHER ALSO ASKED THE ULTIMATE QUESTION, "WHAT DOES 'NON-  
RELIGIOUS' MEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF A TRADITION WHICH DOES NOT MAKE  
THE SAME DISTINCTION IN THE SAME WAY BETWEEN SAVED AND SECULAR,

RELIGIOUS AND PROFANE, AS WHICH PREVAILS IN CHRISTIANITY AND WHICH EVEN IN CHRISTIANITY IS A MATTER OF CONSIDERABLE INTERNAL DEBATE."

FISHER ASKED RABBI SCHINDLER FOR MORE CLARIFICATION AS TO WHETHER THE DEFINITION OF THE UNCHURCHED INCLUDED THE MILLIONS OF LAPSED CATHOLICS IN THE WORLD. HE CONCLUDES WITH A "BARBED" QUESTION: "DOES NOT THE CHURCH HAVE A PRIOR CLAIM TO WORK AMONG THIS GROUP?" I WOULD RESPOND WITH A ROUSING, "YES!"

AS A RABBI AND A LEADER OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY, I WOULD LIKE FIRST CRACK AT THOSE SO-CALLED SECULAR JEWS THAT HARVEY COX JUST THREW ONTO THE PROSLYTIZING PLAYING FIELD. YOU SEE I FEEL THAT THESE CHRISTIAN RESPONDENTS RAISED ISSUES WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN SHARED WITH THE DELEGATES WHO VOTED ON THAT FIFTH OUTREACH RESOLUTION. IT BOTHERS ME GREATLY THAT THE COMMENTS WERE NOT INCLUDED.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE THE KEY ISSUE HERE FOCUSES ON THE TERM "RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED." WHERE DO WE FIND SUCH A PERSON? I SUPPOSE WE COULD CONSIDER SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL TO BE ANYONE WHO IS NOT OFFICIALLY A MEMBER OF A CHURCH OR SYNAGOGUE. BUT THERE OUGHT TO BE A BROADER DEFINITION. I SUPPOSE IT COULD BE APPLIED TO SOMEONE WHO CONFESSES "I HAVE NO RELIGION," OR WHAT ABOUT THE MORE FAMILIAR, "I AM AN AGNOSTIC !" EVEN, "I'M AN ATHEIST."

I'M SURE THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO COULD HONESTLY BE CATEGORIZED AS "RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED." BUT I REALLY WONDER, ALLOW ME TO SPECULATE A BIT WITH YOU. I BELIEVE THAT MANY PEOPLE GO THROUGH VARIOUS STAGES IN THEIR LIVES -- ESPECIALLY DURING COLLEGE YEARS WHEN THEY COULD EASILY RESPOND WITH THE WORDS, "I DON'T HAVE ANY RELIGION OR I'M AN ATHEIST." OR WHAT ABOUT THE PERSON WHO IS EMOTIONALLY WOUNDED THROUGH A BROKEN LOVE AFFAIR OR DIVORCE



OR THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE. FOR A TIME SUCH A PERSON COULD HONESTLY RESPOND WITH ANGRY CONVICTION "I AM NOT RELIGIOUS," "I'M AN ATHEIST,"

BUT WHAT HAPPENS A FEW YEARS LATER. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT MY BAPTIST COLLEAGUES PRESENT, BUT I KNOW QUITE A FEW COLLEGE AGNOSTICS WHO ENDED UP AS SYNAGOGUE PRESIDENTS, JEWISH EDUCATORS, EVEN, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, RABBIS.

I WONDER IF OUR BAPTIST FRIENDS HAVE ANY SIMILAR EXPERIENCES.

I FIND IT TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO USE THE TERM "RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED" TO DESCRIBE A FERTILE FIELD TO BE PLOWED FOR CONVERTS. I THINK IT OFTEN REFERS TO VULNERABLE AND TROUBLED INDIVIDUALS, BORN INTO CHRISTIANITY OR JUDAISM, WHO COULD VERY EASILY FIND THEIR WAY BACK TO THOSE FAITHS GIVEN TIME AND SENSITIVE RELIGIOUS GUIDANCE.

THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANOTHER FAITH TO SEEK OUT SUCH INDIVIDUALS.

AS A JEW, I FRANKLY DON'T WANT CHRISTIANS SEEKING OUT MY "RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED JEWS", AND I CERTAINLY DON'T WISH TO TAKE UP THE PRECIOUS TIME AND ENERGY OF OUR LIMITED JEWISH EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES WITH A CAMPAIGN TO "SNAG A FEW NEW SOULS FOR JUDAISM".

WE HAVEN'T WORKED THAT WAY FOR SIXTEEN CENTURIES. I DON'T WANT TO START NOW. I STILL PREFER THE WORDS WHICH I REPEAT TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO COMES TO ME FOR CONVERSION. THE RABBIS OF OLD SAID: "ALL GOOD PEOPLE HAVE A SHARE IN THE WORLD TO COME." IN A MORE MODERN SPIRIT, "YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE JEWISH TO BE SAVED." BEING A BAPTIST WOULD BE WONDERFUL.

I BELIEVE A KEY QUESTION IN ALL THIS CONTROVERSY IS, "WHO TAKES THE INITIATIVE?"

AS A RABBI, I DO WELCOME CONVERTS INTO JEWISH LIFE. MOST OFTEN IT INVOLVES A MARRIAGE SITUATION IN WHICH THE NON-JEWISH PARTNER SEEKS ME OUT IN ORDER TO UNIFY THE HOME RELIGIOUSLY.

IN THE MINORITY OF CASES WHERE MARRIAGE IS NOT INVOLVED, AS A RABBI, I NEVER REACH OUT TO THE NON-JEWISH INDIVIDUALS. THEY MUST SEEK ME OUT AND EXPRESS A GENUINE INTEREST IN EXPLORING CONVERSION, OR THE TERM WE PREFER AT MY SYNAGOGUE -- AFFIRMATION OF THE JEWISH FAITH.

AT THIS POINT I WILL MAKE A PERSONAL CONFESSION TO YOU, I FOLLOW A RATHER ANCIENT RABBINIC PRACTICE. I NEVER APPEAR TOO EAGER. I DON'T IMMEDIATELY RETURN THE PHONE CALLS OF THOSE WHO SEEK CONVERSION. THEY USUALLY HAVE TO PHONE SEVERAL TIMES. WHEN WE MEET, I EXPLORE THEIR MOTIVATION. I STRESS THAT WE ARE NOT A MISSIONARY FAITH. I EMPHASIZE THE NATURE OF MONOTHEISM WITHIN JUDAISM. I STRESS THAT THEY MUST BE COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA THAT JESUS WAS SIMPLY A GREAT MAN, A GREAT TEACHER, NOT THE SON OF GOD. I RECOUNT SOME OF THE CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES WHICH THEY WILL CONFRONT. FINALLY, AFTER ALL OF THAT, IF THEY STILL WISH TO CONTINUE, WE BEGIN A COURSE OF STUDY. *(which concludes with two question tests)*

THERE IS AN OLD RABBINIC ADAGE WHICH CAPTURES THIS SPIRIT BEST. I SUPPOSE IT IS AN ELEMENT OF TESTING THE SINCERITY OF THE POTENTIAL CONVERT. THE RABBIS SAID THAT ONE SHOULD PUSH THE INDIVIDUAL AWAY WITH ONE'S LEFT HAND, AND DRAW HIM/HER NEAR WITH THE RIGHT HAND. OF COURSE, RABBIS ASK, "WHY THE CHOICE OF HANDS? WHY PUSH AWAY WITH THE LEFT, AND DRAW NEAR WITH THE RIGHT?" THE RABBIS RESPOND THAT THE ULTIMATE TENDENCY IS TO ACCEPT THE CONVERT. WE ARE COMMANDED TO DRAW NEAR WITH THE RIGHT SINCE THAT IS USUALLY THE STRONGER OF THE TWO ARMS.

I ALWAYS REMIND MY CONVERTS -- I'M LEFT HANDED.

NEVERTHELESS, I WOULD REPORT SOME PERSONAL INSIGHTS ABOUT MY RABBINATE WHICH MIGHT SURPRISE YOU.

I STRONGLY OPPOSE JEWISH MISSIONARY ACTIVITY, NO MATTER HOW



WE TRY TO DISGUISE THE PROGRAM WITH WORDS LIKE "RELIGIOUSLY NON-PREFERENCED." I CLEARLY DISAGREE WITH RABBI SCHINDLER AND THE TASK FORCE ON THIS MATTER.

DESPITE MY STRONG OPPOSITION, YOU MAY BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT WE HAVE A VERY ACTIVE PROGRAM OF CONVERSION OR AFFIRMATION AT MY SYNAGOGUE. IN THE TEN YEARS SINCE I CAME TO SHERITH ISRAEL WE HAVE WELCOMED NEARLY TWO HUNDRED INDIVIDUALS INTO JUDAISM. THE PROGRAM IS EXACTLY AS I HAVE OUTLINED IT. WE NEVER INITIATE THE PROCESS. WE ACTUALLY DELAY AND EVEN DISCOURAGE THOSE WHO SEEK US OUT. IN THE END WE WARMLY WELCOME THOSE WHO WISH TO BECOME PART OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

ALL THIS WILL SOUND STRANGE TO OUR BAPTIST COLLEAGUES. YET IT IS THE PATH OF CONSCIENCE REGARDING CONVERSION WHICH MOST RABBIS CHOOSE TO FOLLOW. IF I MAY PLAY A LITTLE ON GOD'S COMMENT TO MOSES IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS (32:9), WE ARE A STRANGE AND "STIFF-ARMED PEOPLE".

"MISSION/WITNESS - CONVERSION/TESHUVAH"

First, I presume that we represent two communities of faith. As such we declare faith in God, the Lord. Jew and Christian alike profess to believe in One God, the Lord, who is none other than the Holy One of Israel who "made known his ways unto Moses and his acts unto the children of Israel," and who is "the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ."

The confession of the One God, who is Lord of all, despite various perceptions of His being and nature, should be a unifying fact between our two faith communities. Distrust and suspicion, conflict and animosity, and all unkind and uncharitable attitudes ought to be removed. Martin Buber, in the early post-World War II years, called both Jew and Christian to "hold inviolably fast to our own true faith, that is, to our own deepest relationship to truth." It would then be possible to have mutual respect which is more than mere "tolerance." Buber said that "our task is not to tolerate each other's waywardness, but to acknowledge the real relationship in which both stand to the truth. Whenever we both, Christian and Jew, care more for God Himself than for our images of God, we are united in the feeling that our Father's house is differently constructed than our human models take it to be." <sup>1</sup> While distinguishing the individual <sup>people's</sup> ~~visions~~ of Christianity from the national Emunah of Israel, Buber could nevertheless conclude his Two Types of Faith by writing:

"...they will indeed remain different, until mankind is gathered in from the exiles of the 'religions' into the Kingship of God. But an Israel striving after the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of the person and a Christianity striving for the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of nations would have something as yet unsaid to say to each other and a help to give to one another - hardly to be conceived at the present time."<sup>2</sup>



Is it possible to view the Christian understanding of Mission and Witness within this context? It is to be fondly hoped that Buber's "hardly to be conceived" communication and help between Christian and Jew might be possible in our time. However, the subjects herein addressed account, in part, for the continued existence of barriers between our two peoples. Rabbi Max D. Ticktin, of George Washington University, Washington, D. C., has spoken of a "trend within the wider American Jewish community of setting up, or making peace with, barriers between Jews and Christians, barriers that are more sociological than theological."<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, one suspects that these barriers, Christian as well as Jewish, have profound theological or ideological roots, and that some Christian concepts of mission as expressed in various methods of proselytizing account for some of these barriers. Robert Rankin, a confessed "liberal Protestant," and long-time Danforth Foundation executive, has said of Jewish and Christian campus ministries, "I found that, while I longed for catholicity in our relationships, the realities, the needs, the hopes...lie in the mystery and power of the differences among the faiths." Any attempts to obliterate these differences would "lead toward a tepid pantheism,...settlement on the lowest common denominators and tempt us into dreary error."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, these differences, he contends, bring about a "creative tension," even citing as an example one university rabbi who said that "the evangelicals are just what the doctor ordered." Their disturbing questions, he said, rout apathetic Jews out of their lethargy and "send them running to Hillel for answers."<sup>5</sup> One can only wonder how general this optimism is regarding the effect of so-called "evangelicals" on young Jews, on or off college campuses. I am inclined to suspect that the whole spectrum of thought involved in "Mission/Witness - Conversion/Teshuvah," as generally perceived by the Jewish community

and practiced by "evangelicals," has occasioned more barriers than bridges between us. In a dialogue of the nature we are attempting, it is, I assume, desirable that we face frankly what divides us as well as what unites us. A recent article<sup>6</sup> observes that in the current "sudden surge of enthusiasm about Christian-Jewish dialogue," the participants are "increasingly willing to speak honestly of their deep differences, to be more blunt with one another." The difficulty may be to deal with what has divided us in a spirit of candor and charity!

#### I. Mission as Christian Self-Consciousness.

The Christian Church is a missionary reality. It is not a society of believers which has missions or missionary activity as merely one among many activities, as if it's mission were an addendum with which it could dispense with little or no loss. Christian missiologists have been saying for the past quarter century, at least, that the Church is Mission, it does not have a mission. Many distinctive New Testament teachings describing the Church declare this: The Church is the Body of Christ "to make all men see...that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known..."<sup>7</sup>; it is through the Church that God has chosen the Gentiles and "made known... the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him";<sup>8</sup> the "Gentiles in the flesh" were before separated from Christ, "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world," but now in Christ both Jew and Gentile are united in one new humanity, "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,



Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also (meaning the Gentiles!) are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."<sup>9</sup> It can hardly be denied that the Apostle who wrote these words saw the Christian Church as the mission agent of God to realize a whole new humanity, united in God, and, he says, "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."<sup>10</sup> His prayer for the believers, Eph. 3: 14-19, is that the Spirit might give inward strength, the love of Christ in all of its dimensions might "dwell in your hearts through faith," and thus that "you might be filled with all the fullness of God." This last phrase was used of Christ himself, Eph. 1:19; 2:9, and should not be understood as a pagan idea of human deification.<sup>11</sup>

These few references show the Church as the agent of God's mission to the nations of the world, the extension of Israel's mission, not another but the same mission: to make the true and living God known, to realize the true humanity in covenant relation with this One Lord God, to establish His righteousness in the earth, and justice among all peoples. The social dimensions of the Church's mission are derived from the Hebrew prophets. The early Church did not see itself as a departure from the covenant people of Israel but as a legitimate extension of this one people to include the nations of the earth.

What is described in the above, in the writings of Paul and other New Testament epistles, is a Church whose constituency is both Jewish and Gentile. The ideal, as Paul expressed it, was a Church in which all ethnic, social, cultural, religious, and even sexual differences are subsumed and transcended. ~~not obliterated nor destroyed.~~ "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is

neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."<sup>12</sup> The mission of the Church is to be one new humanity in love and justice. Such a mission, of course, has not been fully realized. But the first step was taken when the primitive Jewish Church successfully included the Gentiles in its membership, though with considerable internal stress and conflict. There is no doubting that the first disciples, that Jesus himself, and that the first constituent members of "the Way" were all Jewish. (This fact is one which should make Jewish-Christian relations today more felicitous and Jewish scholars can certainly enable us to understand the humanity of Jesus on a more profound level.)

How did a Jewish Church become a Church of all nations? T. W. Manson has shown that the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels did not engage in mission to the Gentiles. He says that "the attitude of Jesus towards the Gentiles is not that of wishing to propagate some wholesome theological truths among them, much less to convert them to orthodox Judaism. ...Even more remote from his purpose was any activity of a Messianic-Nationalist character... it is clear, I think, that Jesus desired to win men for the kingdom of God."<sup>13</sup> This kingdom is manifested "first of all in works of mercy, forgiveness, and help to those in distress;" and, "second is that men and women who receive the kingdom...are at once under obligation to be at the disposal of its King for the furtherance of his good purposes." "The point is that nobody who has once seen the kingdom of God from within can ever rest content while other people remain outside."<sup>14</sup> But in order to do this, Jesus saw "the real constructive work of the ministry" as "building up within Israel a body of men and women...who had learned in apprenticeship to Jesus how to accept the rule of God for themselves, and how to extend it to their neighbors at home



and abroad by serving them in love. I think that Jesus saw the immediate task as that of creating such a community within Israel, in the faith that it would transform the life of his own people, and that a transformed Israel would transform the world."<sup>15</sup> On the same question Joachim Jeremias has expounded in Jesus' Promise to the Nations, London: SCR, 1958. William Manson finds the transitional event in the Church's "Gentile Mission" to be the Stephen cycle of events as recorded in the Book of Acts.<sup>16</sup>

Whatever the scholars decide about the New Testament data, the fact is that the Church which began as a Jewish reality, a fellowship of faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord, became the Church of the Gentiles who believed in the Lord God of Israel through the Christ who is one and the same Jesus of Nazareth. The Church's mission is thus to make the "manifold wisdom of God known" among "all nations" through preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ." This preaching was not a mere pointing to one who lived in the recent (or remote) past, but under the power of the Spirit the proclamation of One who was raised from the dead and lives eternally. The "scandal" of the resurrection of Christ may or may not be believed, but no one can doubt that the early Church proclaimed it and that it made a dramatic difference in their lives. The "nature" of the resurrection may be debated, even, or especially, among Christians, but there is no doubting that the resurrection was the sine qua non of the Church's existence. It was this faith, that the true and living God had raised this crucified Jesus, that was the compelling motivation of the Church's mission in the first century.

These brief words do not suffice to define the Church's mission, but our principle point is: the mission is inseparable from the Church's being or essence. Samuel Sandmel, whose knowledge of the New Testament Scriptures can hardly be challenged, has acknowledged this fact. He has said: "The

fact is the missionary impulse is central in Christianity," and to ask Christians to forego it "is to ask them to cease to be authentically Christian. The next fact is that Christians can legitimately disavow only clumsy, dishonest, distasteful missionizing of Jews, but not the mission itself; or else they can set the mission into temporary abeyance with full and earnest motives, but there will be the need to revert to it."<sup>17</sup>

There is debate as to whether Sandmel's inclusion of "the Jews" as proper "targets" of the Church's mission is legitimate. Reinhold Niebuhr, for example, said, "The Christian majority can achieve a more genuine tolerance only if it assumes the continued refusal of the Jew to be assimilated, either ethnically or religiously. That recognition involves an appreciation of the resources of Jewish life, morally and religiously, which make Judaism something other than an inferior form of religion which must ultimately recognize the superiority of the Christian faith, and end its long resistance by capitulation and conversion."<sup>18</sup> (Alice and) Roy Eckardt similarly conclude that God's original covenant with Israel is not superseded by the Christian faith but is an extension of that covenant to peoples not already embraced by it. He contends that because "the great majority of original Israel did not acclaim Jesus as the Christ, it was not God's revealed will or purpose" for them to do so.<sup>19</sup> There cannot really be a reconciliation between Eckardt's view and the Epistle to the Ephesians in the New Testament. The latter definitely contends that both Jews and Gentiles in the one Church was the "eternal purpose" of God, the "mystery long hidden but now revealed," of which the writer speaks, and Romans 9-11 deals with the same thought. Of course, the problem which the first century Church confronted was the inclusion of Gentiles in the Covenant of Israel, an exactly opposite concern of the contemporary Church. Would Paul, who



argues that Gentiles could be included in the covenant without becoming Jews, argue today that Jews can be included in the Church without becoming Gentiles? The question involves, among other things the definition of "Jew" and "Jewishness." It also involves definition of "the Church."

At least, as I see the mission of the Church, it involves the creation of one human family under the Lordship of the One Living God. As such, the "Church" is not identical with any denomination or ecclesiastical structure. Yet Baptists traditionallly have held that every <sup>(local)</sup> congregation contains the essence of the Church. This is another major subject which can only be intimated in this paper.

## II. Mission as Witness.

Germane to the Christian understanding of mission is the New Testament term "witness." The writer of the third Gospel reports that Jesus' last word to his disciples was "you are witnesses of these things."<sup>20</sup> The book of Acts begins with a similar word, "you whall be my witnesses."<sup>21</sup> Throughout the accounts of the growth and expansion of the primitive Church, reference to "witness" is made.

Probably no single word has been so seriously considered, and so often abused among conservative evangelicals as this one. Many in Baptist life recall the "religious conditioning" they received in former years, and which prevails today among fundamentalist sectarians, which laid a heavy load of guilt on them if they did not engage in what is termed "soul winning." The very term smacks of religious pressure - mongering, triumphal verbal attacks on those who have not professed the faith in Christ, even damaging psychological manipulation of the "unchurched." The term "soul-winner" is based on a serious mis-translation of the Hebrew text of Proverbs 11:30 in the King James Version. Suffice it to say that such a notion has

nothing to do with the New Testament meaning of "witness."

In the New Testament, witness carries at least four basic ideas.

(1) Witness refers to what the disciples had "seen." The principle emphasis is on the resurrection of Jesus. Acts 1:21-22 records the requirements of a successor for Judas Iscariot among the Twelve Apostles and states that "he must be with us a witness of the resurrection." Included with this is that he must have been a companion with Jesus from baptism until the "ascension." The total ministry of Jesus, ratified and confirmed by God in the resurrection, was contained in the idea of witness. This total ministry of Jesus is viewed as the fulfillment of the prophetic words in "Moses, the prophets, and the psalms," in Luke 24:44-46, and the ground of the preaching of "repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations." A witness then, is one who has "seen Jesus."<sup>22</sup>

(2) Witness refers to what the disciples had become. The Acts of the Apostles records the amazing transformation of these first disciples, all of whom were "unlearned" men, and the emphasis is on the continuing work of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:1-5, the prologue, refers to the "former treatise" or "first book" addressed to Theophilus in which the writer records "all that Jesus began to do and teach." The second book is viewed as Jesus' continuing ministry in the Spirit through the apostles.

The company of believers is viewed as a "carrier" of the resurrection life which first came to them in Jesus. In a sense, the believers demonstrated in their life the triumph of God over sin and death, not unlike that which the restored and purified Israel, returning to their land from captivity, constituted a living witness to the Lord, Isaiah 43:10; 44:8. Thus the resurrection was conceived not merely as a past event, in Jesus, nor a future event in eternity for believers, but a present reality in the life



of the disciples, corporately and individually. It accounts for the "boldness" of the apostles, Acts 4:13,31, their "signs and wonders," Acts 5:12, their "common life," Acts 4:32 ff., and indeed their whole life under the immediacy of the Holy Spirit.

(3) Witness, of course, refers to the verbal testimony the disciples gave to Jesus. This, too, was in the power of the Holy Spirit, not merely human communication! The "charismatic" quality of the primitive Church cannot be doubted. Sometimes the "utterances" were "ecstatic," but more often intelligible. Always, the speech of these witnesses was viewed as carrying a persuasion which was not merely human, but divine. The compulsion to speak was laid upon the disciples as a divine mandate, Acts 4:19-20, and no threats of man could restrain them.

(4) Finally, the word "witness" takes on a special meaning toward the close of the first Christian century, as recorded in the book of Revelation. There one witnesses by giving his life, by being martyred for his faith. The witness of Stephen, one of the seven "deacons" chosen to handle the distribution of charity, which is recorded in Acts 6: 8ff, resulted in his being stoned to death. Stephen became a model of all Christian martyrs, conceived not as a defeat but as a victory, according to which the natural fears of persecution and death are allayed by the sense of ultimate victory in and from God. So the Revelation pictures the Roman imperial cult, which inspired the slaying of Christians, as demonic, and the saints hear the divine voice, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."<sup>23</sup>

It must be remembered that in the first century, Christians were a disenfranchised people, void of political, cultural, economic, and religious power. Whereas, Judaism was a religio legita<sup>110.74</sup> in the Roman Empire, and in the diaspora, at least, for several centuries had attained cultural "status," so to speak (notwithstanding periodic outbreaks of anti-semitism), the believers in Jesus generally had none of this. Until the time of Constantine, the situation of Christians was quite precarious and, certainly, in the last part of the first century they were generally the Roman scapegoats.

Now, Jews of all people today, with their long history of suffering at the hands of others, some of them professing Christians (though not until the time of Theodosius, according to Jean Danielou,<sup>24</sup>) or informed by a mistaken Christian theology, should be able to identify with the early Christian problem. Baptists, too, with our history of being the "step-child" of the Church, and being largely, in the past at least, of the "lower levels" of society, can identify readily with the primitive Church. Perhaps, the more compulsive expressions of "witness," with a sublimated "martyr complex," can be understood as a result of a "minority psychosis."

Ultimately, however, neither social nor psychological factors determined the mission of the primitive Church. It was the persuasion that the true and living God whose saving work in Christ had come to them, through His Holy Spirit, was impelling them to be witnesses. It was - and is - the conviction that the Christian faith offers something inestimably precious to all men, and this must be shared. Witness, properly understood, is the sharing of "Good News." It is the "Gospel of God," as Paul calls it. It says that the beleaguered "City of Man" has been granted deliverance, that the feet of the messengers of good tidings are on the mountains, that the Redeemer God has come and will come again. Witness, properly understood, is



not a claim to one's own religious or moral superiority. It is merely, as one has said, "one starving man telling another starving man where there is bread."

Paul's word was: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."<sup>25</sup>

In all probability, the witness of "servants" is most what is needed. The "Servant Church" is but poorly reflected in today's ecclesiology and Christians who "lord it over others" deny the very faith we profess. If witness means martyrdom, then those who willingly risk their lives for the benefit of others more truly testify to their faith than all the "sermons" one might preach.

### III. Conversion as Teshuvah.

"Conversion," like witness is a word much freighted by diverse ideas. Harvard professor A. D. Nock has defined two specific meanings of "conversion" in the history of Christianity: (1) "The turning back to a tradition generally held and characteristic of society as a whole, a tradition in which the convert was himself reared but which he has left in scepticism or indifference or violent self-assertion;" and (2) "the turning away to an unfamiliar form of piety either from a familiar form or from indifference."<sup>26</sup> Nock observes that the two types of conversion may have much in common psychologically. William James, of course, analyzed the psychological factors in his classic, Varieties of Religious Experience, but there is need for a contemporary study of this.

As I understand the basic Hebrew prophetic idea of Teshuvah, it would fall in the category of the first type above. Essentially, the New Testament ideas associated with ~~μετάνοια~~ are related to Teshuvah. The Greek term is not as rich as the Hebrew, since it emphasizes "change of mind," in typical

Greek fashion, rather than the "turning of the whole person" as in Hebrew thought. However, the New Testament meaning is not limited to the mere etymology of the word, but implies much more, as W. D. Chamberlain has shown in The Meaning of Repentance.<sup>27</sup> On the basis of his extensive analysis of the New Testament data, Chamberlain concludes that "repentance is a re-vamping of the outlook and outreach of all life, the metamorphosis of the whole man. Repentance in the New Testament sense covers conversion, regeneration, sanctification, and ultimate perfection."<sup>28</sup> Of course, the New Testament does not fail to say that such conversion involves both "repentance toward God" and "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>29</sup>

At this point, it is well to note that the "conversion" of which the New Testament speaks is a turning to the God of Israel, not to some exotic deity. Those Christians who were of the Jewish tradition, and they were the majority at least until the second century, conceived of their "conversion" as being a return to and experience of the God of their fathers. Sandmel says of Paul: "...from Paul's own standpoint, he has remained completely within Judaism. From his own vantage point, his 'conversion' was not a change of affiliation but a personal experience of God. It was kindred to the sense of personal communion with God which marked the ancient prophets of Israel."<sup>30</sup> I take that to be true also of all first century Jewish Christians, whether they were of Hellenistic Judaism in its many faceted character or of Rabbinic Judaism. With regard to Gentile converts to the Christian faith, the situation was different, of course. Their conversions were of two kinds, corresponding to the two which Nock defines. First, the so-called "God fearers"<sup>31</sup> or "proselytes of the gate" were already sufficiently "Judaized" so that their conversion was seen as being within their adopted tradition. The thoroughly pagan converts, on the other hand, did change from



one religious tradition (or from no religious tradition?) to another.

Finally, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that conversion, in the Christian sense, is not a human achievement. Repentance is the "gift of God," the "new birth" or "regeneration" is the work of God's Spirit, even the confession of Jesus as Lord can be made only "by the Holy Spirit."<sup>32</sup>

From "top to bottom" and from "beginning to end" conversion is seen as the work of God. It is "grace upon grace" and "through faith for faith."<sup>33</sup>

The classic statement for Baptists and most evangelicals is Ephesians 2:8ff:

"For by grace have you been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." The first part of this statement is too often emphasized to the neglect of the last part. It states that the character of the human life which is the work of God is the truest witness to the reality and authenticity of the conversion.

The Christian is also under the Torah of God, the MitzVoth — commands, albeit with a different cultus or structure of religious practices. The fact that primitive Christian worship was associated with the synagogue and Sabbath observance, and that only reluctantly did the Jewish Christian admit that Gentile Christians could avoid such cultic practices and still be accepted by God, show how seriously the Torah was taken by the primitive Church. The entire Gospel of Matthew has lately been seen as a product of a Christian school of discipline with special emphasis on the Law.<sup>34</sup> Not until the Council of Jamnia, in 90 a.d., when the rabbinical leadership excluded believers in Jesus as Messiah, did the breach with the Jewish cultus become absolute.

#### IV. Contemporary Considerations

In the preceding I have sought to define a Biblical base from which to speak of the meaning of Mission/Witness - Conversion/Teshuvah. Baptists have generally assumed that the whole Bible, both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, as primary witness, must be the ultimate authority in faith and practice. Of course, as witness, there is variety, historical contingency and semantic relativism in the Scriptures. Nonetheless, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whose Lordship we confess, can only be acquired by the diligent study of the Scriptures afforded by dedicated scholarship. With that, the promised "Spirit of truth" must lead us "into all the truth."<sup>35</sup> Mere accumulation of factual or literary data is insufficient to account for the religious character of the writings or the reality of God beyond them.<sup>36</sup>

We may perhaps now address the contemporary practical concerns of our subject.

##### A. Mission and "Establishments of Religion."

In the classical sense there is no "establishment of religion" in the United States. There is, however, a multivarious structuring, a plurality of religious institutions and organizations which compete with each other for "members." In every age all religious faiths have issued in discernible, more or less definitely formed organizations.<sup>37</sup>

This has tended to cast the whole question of "mission/witness - conversion/teshuvah" into concern for "membership solicitation." Recently, an American Episcopal Bishop indicated that his national church body had such a view of "evangelism." He said that the General Convention's declaration was informed primarily by the "many people concerned with declining church



membership and attendance " who "saw evangelism primarily in terms of church growth: anything that added sheep to the flock had to be good." <sup>38</sup> The Baptist and general evangelical practice of "revivalism," as the primary understanding of "evangelism," is principally a form of membership solicitation for the organized religious life. Among us it is generally thought that a "good revival" is one that results in many "joiners," a poor one is that which results in few or none. Likewise, an "effective witness/soul-winner" is one who brings new "converts" into the visible church, an ineffective one the opposite.

On the Jewish side, a similar understanding is found. The standard guide for "interreligious dialogue" published by the American Jewish committee defined "conversion" as seeking "new members", "proselytizing." <sup>39</sup> In other words, "conversion" is understood exclusively in the sense of the second definition of A. D. Nock. <sup>40</sup> Although related to another concern of Jews, the problem of interfaith marriage, and Christians also have this concern, the reported <sup>41</sup> program of the Union of American Hebrew congregations to seek the "conversion" of the non-Jewish partners in mixed marriages is basically the same. <sup>42</sup> That such "conversions", sought or not, are no novelty is seen by the estimate of Rabbi Alexander Schindler that they now number 12,000 per year and the number is rising. <sup>43</sup>

"Religion" by definition is traditional, conservative, structured by the binding of commandments and cultic practices which sometimes lose their meaning as the years pass. <sup>44</sup> But whatever holy sanction may be given to these traditions, it seems to me that the heart of the Jewish faith and the heart of the Christian faith is a spiritual reality which cannot be identified with such traditionalisms. So long as "conversion" is viewed as "changing

one's religious tradition or organizational affiliation," the inner content of the faith in God may be obscured, or only a secondary consideration at best.

So far as I am personally concerned - and I can speak only as one Baptist - I would like to say to my Jewish friends. "I am not interested in getting you to join my church. That may only be an external change of affiliation and loyalties. I am interested in your looking deep within your own faith, being open to the reality of God therein encountered and see if God does not reveal his nature in a manner consistent with the reality of Jesus Christ." In the same breath I would say to Christians, "look deep within your own faith and be open to the reality of God therein encountered and see if this Christian God is not the same Lord of Israel, of the Jewish faith."

B. Witness in an Age of "Unbelief."

The problem of religious affiliation is complicated by a secularism<sup>45</sup> which threatens the existence of faith as never before in the history of man. This is the great problem, in my opinion.<sup>46</sup> When former assistant Mayor of Jerusalem, Andre' Chouraqui, in dialogue with French Catholic theologian, Jean Danielou, defines his "Jewishness" positively in terms of the pious memory of his father praying, devoutly reading the Hebrew books and the bible, the doorposts ornamented with mezuzahs, Hebrew prayers being said at his birth and the blessings at his circumcision, that is a world of faith with which I can identify. But when he immediately begins to reduce this Jewishness to the merest vestige, an accident of biology, or only a historical sociological reality, and finally concludes, "There are almost as many ways of being a Jew as there are Jews," I want to ask, "where is the faith?"<sup>47</sup> When Rabbi Richard N. Levy describes the Los Angeles chavurah in which



Jewish students gather for prayers - in a manner strangely similar to so-called charismatics - and even "the metal chairs of the minyan" and "the very air" the group have shared are "charged with holiness...so the room in which we have met will never be the same again," that is a spiritual reality which I can partially understand.<sup>48</sup> But when he speaks of "cardiac Judaism"<sup>49</sup> and when Rabbi Arnold J. Wolf describes the "Third Generation" as Jews to whom "careerism is the name of game; we learn not what God wants but Caesar and in learning well, we become Caesar's successor...Redemption, of course, no longer means oneness with God and with a messianic world, but oneness with those who rule on earth already,"<sup>50</sup> I see only a secular humanity without any real faith in the Holy One of Israel.

The Christian community, too, has its nominal affiliates who have really embraced only a secular view of life. It is the legitimate concern of every Christian pastor that an increasing number of his parish members, even his regular "communicants," are really little more than troubled believers, if not out-and-out unbelievers. The outcome will surely be, if it is not already a fact, that we have not only Harvey Cox's "secular city," but the "secular church," as well. Scratch the majority of our nominal church members deeply enough and you may find a troubled secularist. Is it true, as Feuerbach contended, that the "secret of religion is atheism?"

Should not every believing Christian be concerned to share his faith in God with every secularist, be he Jew or Gentile? Should the Jewish community of faith, which has its own devout concern for the "secular Jew," be so preoccupied with keeping its constituents from becoming "Christian believers" when there is such an obvious absence of any faith?

Professor Jacob Neusner's words come to mind. He claimed no "theological sophistication or profundity" but spoke merely as a historian and "a believing

Jew."<sup>51</sup> Professor Neusner comments on the so-called "death of God" theologians:

"It seems to me they may be saying two things. First, the experience of the sacred, or God, is no longer widely available; second, that experience is no longer available in the classical ways. Both of these statements describe Jewish existence, and have for some time...God is surely 'dead' for many Jews. ...In the synagogue, however, Jewry still keeps up the graveyard. I do not despair. We Jews have passed this way before...If we believe, as our tradition teaches us to, in the resurrection of the dead, then we need not doubt with whom the miracle must begin."<sup>52</sup>

In similar fashion, other Jewish spokesmen acknowledge the same. Richard J. Israel said: "In recent years, the awareness of a living God has simply slipped away from most Jewish circles without a fuss. ...What goes on in the Jewish community might have been God's business once, but it isn't any more."<sup>53</sup>

Now, today it is fashionable in Baptist circles to treat this cultural-secular phenomenon as if it were merely a past crisis, one which our scholastic theologians handily dispensed with in the decade of the '60s. But in his heart of hearts, every Christian pastor knows that is not so. Every day he encounters those, in and out of his congregation, who exhibit the results of this "non-faith." They are the worldly-wise, sophisticated, pragmatic, people whose sense of God, if they ever had any, has receded into the dark, subconscious recesses of their psyche. They may retain social and cultural connections with the religious "establishment" but for all practical purposes their "god is dead." I would venture an "unscientific judgment" that the problem is least among Catholics, greater among Protestants, and greatest among Jews. Only in the culturally most retarded churches, the fundamentalist, is it of negligible



proportions.<sup>54</sup>

Is not this our common concern? What, indeed do the vigorous arguments between Jew and Christian over our differences mean when, on the part of so many, there is neither faith in the Lord God of Israel nor faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

What witness do we have, as communities of faith, to share with those who have at best experienced only "the absence of God?" The Jewish spokesmen may help us Christians to understand "the eclipse of God," as Buber describes it, the prophet's hester panim, and thus comprehend better our Lord's "cry of dereliction" on the Cross. Indeed the "Holocaust" must become a major event in Christian consciousness, an unimaginable magnification of the crucifixion. Hans Küng, in dialogue with Rabbi Pichas Lapide, calls attention to the Jewish painter, Marc Chagall, who regularly depicted the suffering of his people in "the image of the Crucified."<sup>55</sup> To this, Lapide responds: "Auschwitz really means what Good Friday must be for devout Christians: Golgotha on a national scale. ...For this Jewish people what better embodiment could you find than this poor rabbi of Nazareth? Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani is not merely a psalm of David and a word of Jesus from the cross but - I would almost say - the leitmotif of those who had to go to Auschwitz and Majdanek."<sup>56</sup>

But shall not the Christian believer also have substantial witness to bear? For the crucified One is remembered precisely because his faith was in the ultimate triumph of God and his last word was "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." This also is Jewish attitude of waiting in faith. To me, this means that this world has not been redeemed. So far as I know, no responsible Christian theology has ever proposed that "this world" is redeemed in the sense of Jewish expectation, and that's one

reason why Christians believe in a "second coming." The resurrection of Jesus is a reality of promise, a proleptic fulfillment, an "other worldly" triumph which cannot occur before the cross.<sup>58</sup> In this connection, too, Rabbi Lapid's comment is helpful to a Christian. "The foundation of the state of Israel...is Easter Sunday: the resurrection from the ruins of the whole people" according to Hebrew prophecy.<sup>59</sup> This devout Jew can see in Jesus the "authentic incarnation of his suffering people." Why not the sign of his people's, and all people's, ultimate hope? Shall it forever be that what unites us, Jesus of Nazareth, shall continue to divide us?<sup>60</sup>

Christian Mission/Witness may not be understood, in my opinion, as the persistent attempts to "proselytize" individual Jews for our religious institutions. It must be, nonetheless, our witness in the best sense, by life and word, as one community of faith to another, to the reality of God who has come to us in Jesus Christ. If the Jews have a mission/witness to us, we welcome it without alarm, so long as it, too, is not mere "sheep-stealing."

### C. Conversion/Teshuvah as God's Act in a "Godless" World.

Human agency is vital, but not ultimately so. Human witness remains human and witness points beyond itself. Christian manipulations, coercions, exploitations of others may more truly testify to unfaith than to faith in God. The same is true of all unworthy missionizing, whether Jewish, Christian, or "pagan."

Our view of conversion is that it is God's doing, not man's. It is a spiritual awakening of faith, a turning of the whole person to God and His commandments, a "new birth" which is "from above."

By way of conclusion and as a suggestion for further study in Jewish-Christian relations, two examples of "conversion" may be cited here and a



very brief account given of their nature.

1. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.

Born in Berlin in 1888 to a respected German Jewish banker's family he was apparently drawn quite "naturally" into the Christian ethos of his time. Apparently his parents' home had little or no Jewish religious character.<sup>61</sup> They were well-to-do German Jewish secularists reflecting the culture about them. One biographer merely states of Eugen: "At sixteen, he became a practicing Christian."

When he was 24 years of age, Eugen received his doctorate in law from Heidelberg University and taught, as Privatdozent, at the University of Leipzig, the youngest one of the faculty. Already he was a persuasive advocate of "revelational theology" in contrast to the philosophical idealism of the time. It was essentially a view which broke with the Hegelian notion of history as a divine process. God was not to be seen in history as process but rather through the experience of divine in-break in individuals of ethical character but especially in religion. However, Eugen's approach to revelation is not that of an older orthodoxy. Rather, the old faith was cast in a new philosophical language. His later writings seem to reflect a more or less unbroken continuity in thought, although he called himself "an impure thinker."

What relates to our concern, however, is very seldom recounted in Rosenstock's writings. Only once, that I have discovered, does he refer to an "experience" comparable to a "conversion." In 1945, Rosenstock inserts a "personal confession" into his treatment of the Creed:

"Perhaps a personal confession is permissible here.  
I had always hoped to be a Christian. But twenty  
years ago I felt that I was undergoing a real crucifixion  
I was deprived of all my powers, virtually paralyzed,

yet I came to life again, a changed man. What saved me was that I could look back to the supreme event of Jesus' life and recognize my small eclipse in his great suffering. That enabled me to wait in complete faith for resurrection to follow crucifixion in my own experience. Ever since then it has seemed foolish to doubt the historical reality of the original Crucifixion and Resurrection."<sup>65</sup>

It is clear from numerous citations that could be given, that Rosenstock saw his Christian faith as the direct heir and offspring of the faith of Israel. He was aware of no discontinuity either between the Israel of the Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus, or between his own "Jewish" identity and his Christian life. He accorded full and meaningful validity to contemporary Jewish faith and the Christian faith. And these "two" faiths were radically distinct, in his mind, from both philosophical theism and pagan mythological idolatry.<sup>66</sup>

Whether it seems valid to us, from these few citations, Rosenstock-Huessy's thought deserves careful consideration by Jew and Christian alike. His work has been largely neglected by the academic community.<sup>67</sup> as well as the religious community. For Christians of traditional bent, his views will probably be as shocking as they are likely to be to Jews. So far as the future is concerned, he offers no particular comfort to "institutional" Christianity, and, in fact, seems to be very little concerned with its future. In Germany he was affiliated with Protestant Christianity, and retained this in America. He taught two years at Harvard and then at Dartmouth until his retirement in 1957. He died in 1973, at the age of 84. His works have been better known and received in Germany than in America.

## 2. Franz Rosenzweig

Fifteen years ago, a representative symposium of rabbis and scholars indicated that "the single greatest influence on the religious thought of



North American Jewry<sup>67</sup> was Franz Rosenzweig. Therefore, this brief sketch may be unnecessary to Jews.

Rosenzweig was, like Rosenstock, born into a cultured but non-religious German Jewish family, on December 25, 1886, in Cassel, Germany. After several years of the study of medicine, history, and philosophy, he completed a doctoral dissertation on Hegel's political doctrine, 1912, which he later enlarged to a two-volume work, Hegel und der Staat, completed in 1914. Before the completion of this, however, Rosenzweig experienced a revolutionary religious conversion which came about in two precise events: the first occurred on July 7, 1913, at Leipzig; the second, on October 11 of the same year.

Rosenzweig had gone to Leipzig in 1913 to study at the University. There he became a student of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, although the latter was two years younger than he. Under the tutelage of Rosenstock, Rosenzweig was driven to pursue further what he had already begun: to abandon the current scholastic philosophy of idealism and to search for an answer to the personal meaning of man, an "existential" answer, an answer which related to personal decision and response. This was to be found in revelation, in the religious encounter with God. The discussions with Rosenstock came to a climax on the night of July 7. The crucial conversation included three persons: Rosenzweig, Rosenstock, and Rudolph Ehrenberg, a cousin of Rosenzweig who had, like Rosenstock, become Christian. The discussion, however, did not array Judaism against Christianity but "rather faith based on revelation was contrasted with faith in philosophy."<sup>68</sup>

Rosenzweig's own description of that night, written some three months

later follows:

"In that night's conversation, Rosenstock pushed me step by step out of the last relativist positions that I still occupied, and forced me to take an absolute stand-point. I was inferior to him from the outset, since I had to recognize for my part, too, the justice of his attack. If I could then have buttressed my dualism between revelation and the world with a metaphysical dualism between God and the Devil, I should have been unassailable. But I was prevented from doing so by the first sentence of the Bible. This piece of common ground forced me to face him. This has remained even afterwards, in the weeks that followed, the fixed point of departure. Any form of philosophical relativism is now impossible to me."<sup>69</sup>

Shall we say that this even constituted for Rosenzweig a "philosophical conversion?" That is how Dr. Alexander Altmann, Brandeis University analyses it.<sup>70</sup> Although Rosenzweig purposed to become a Christian and be baptized, it was not because the Church was the dominant religion in his culture but, as Altmann shows, the Church was in the task of addressing the message to the Gentiles<sup>71</sup> of absorbing the pagan philosophy which reached its end in Hegel. Henceforth, there would be no pagan, ie. Greek, philosophy, only Christian philosophy. The synagogue seemed to him to represent a separation from the world and therefore "there did not seem to be any place for Judaism" in this world.<sup>72</sup>

Rosenzweig, however, decided not to enter the Church through the "door" of paganism but as a Jew. He determined to face Judaism, to live as a Jew, during the preparation period and until his baptism. This decision<sup>73</sup> for whatever reason, led to the second "conversion" event.

On the Day of Atonement, October 11, 1913, Rosenzweig attends the service in a traditional synagogue in Berlin. In this day-long service he has "a religious experience" which "happened with the force of a conversion," as Altmann says.<sup>74</sup> Glatzer suggests that Rosenzweig's experience can be conjectured from his later writing in The Star of Redemption on the Day of



Atonement. Although Rosenzweig does not describe his own experience, he says of the Day of Atonement: "it is something more than a mere personal exaltation (although this may enter into it) or the symbolic recognition of a reality such as the Jewish people (although this also may be an element); it is a testimony to the reality of God which cannot be controverted."<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere he will say that on the Day of Atonement "the soul is alone with God" and "man is as near to God as he is ever permitted to be."

Now, Rosenzweig is a Jew converted in and to Judaism. He and Rosenstock will subsequently, in 1916, engage in written dialogue as devout Christian and devout Jew. These epistles are one of the truly remarkable documents in religious literature. Their thorough study by both Christians and Jews ought to be an absolute prerequisite for religious dialogue!

Rosenzweig later collaborated with Martin Buber in translating the Hebrew Scriptures into German then served as director of the Free Jewish House of Study in Frankfurt, Germany, until his death in 1929, being not quite 43 years of age. His "Magnum Opus" is The Star of Redemption which is a highly original approach to Judaism and, I believe, to Christianity.

### Footnotes

1. Cited in Stephen M. Panko, Martin Buber, Word, Inc. 1976-7, p1116
2. Harper Torchbook edition, 1961, p. 174. Originally written in 1951.
3. Recovery of Spirit in Higher Education, Ed. Robert Rankin, Seabury Press, N. Y., 1980, p. 52.
4. Op. cit. p. 307f
5. Ibid., p. 308
6. "The Christian Century," December 2, 1981, p. 1246f
7. Ephesians 3:9-10
8. Ephesians 1:9-10
9. Ephesians 2:11-22
10. Ephesians 3: 8-11
11. Although it is not our purpose here to discuss "Christology" as such, Samuel Sandmel's exposition on Paul's view of Christ is helpful: "There are laborious discussions...as to whether there is in Paul a 'Christ mysticism' or 'Gor mysticism.' These discussions are totally meaningless. For Paul there is no viable distinction." Such are "discussing a matter at which Paul would have snorted." "Christ to Paul is not interchangeable with God; Christ is subordinate to God. But he is not a 'mediator,' in the sense of one totally and essentially different from him on whose behalf he functions; he is, rather, the agent who is virtually the same." Sandmel finds the term "mediator," rare in the New Testament, to be non-Pauline. Again, "it may appear to us that in Paul's view Christ acts for God; but in Paul's thought God acts in Christ." "Or, let us say, it is not Paul's belief that Christ has saved him, but rather that God has saved him through Christ." The Genius of Paul, Fortress Press, Phila., 1979, pp.72-73.
12. Galatians 3:28, if also, Ephesians 1:23, Col. 3:10
13. T. W. Manson, Only to the House of Israel?, Fortress Press, Phila., Facet Book, 1955.
14. Ibid p. 17
15. Ibid pp. 23-24
16. Ep. to the Hebrews, Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1951
17. Review of Augustine Cardinal Bea's book, The Church and The Jewish People, in "The Saturday Review," December 3, 1966, p.43



18. Pious and Secular America, N. Y.: Chas. Scribner & Sons, 1958 P. 88
19. Reported in Associated Press column by Geroge Cornell, March 2, 1968; see Alice and Roy Eckardt's Encounter With Israel: A Challenge to Conscience, Associated Press, N. Y., 1970, for extensive treatment.
20. Luke 24:48
21. Acts 1:8
22. cf. Acts 2:22-32
23. Revelation 12:10-11
24. Jews: Views and Counterviews, Newman Press: N. Y., 1967, p. 52
25. II Corinthians 4:5
26. A. D. Nock, Conversion, Oxford University Press, London, 1933, p. 7
27. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1943. This is still the classic on the subject.
28. Op. cit., p. 223
29. Acts 20:21
30. Op. cit., p. 63
31. E.g. Lidia, Acts 16:14
32. I Corinthians 12:3
33. John 1:16; Romans 1:17
34. Krister Stendahl, The School of St. Matthew, Fortress: Phila., 1963
35. John 14:13
36. Again, Samuel Sandmel's observation helps me:

"Yet religious documents call for an assessment quite different from the merely literary,...To stop short at the literal is as grievous an offense to proper understanding as to ignore the literal...We Jews are outsiders to the New Testament, for it is not ours. Yet there is a sense in which this inevitable 'outsidedness' that makes us stumble over the literal can itself be the clue to recognition of kinship. The very differences point to the paradox of the inherent core of Jewishness in the Christian literature, and this core is discernible...however we are persuaded by the scholars that this or that item is Hellenistic or pagan in origin.

"The recognition of that core of Jewishness emerges when one proceeds to ask the searching questions which transcend the petty

details, when one begins to inquire into the broad, telling questions of what this Christian literature is all about."  
We Jews and Jesus, Oxford University Press: New York, 1965  
pp. 129-130.

37. Some Christian theologians have deplored this institution, E.g. Emil Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church, Westminster: Philadelphia, 1953. Some have recommended a "recovery of a so-called "religionless Christianity, but most tacitly accepted it as inevitable.
38. John Shelby Spong, "Evangelism When Certainty Is an Illusion," The Christian Century, Jan. 6-13, 1982, p. 11
39. "Conversion  
Do the participating groups seek new members? From the unchurched, from other faiths, or both? If not, why not? Are attitudes toward proselytizing changing? If so, how and why?"  
"A Guide to Interreligious Dialogue," A.J.C.: N. Y., 1966, p. 18
40. Above p.12
41. The New York Times," December 9, 1981, article by Kenneth A. Briggs, "Reform Jews to Seek Conversion of Non-Jews," p. A18.
42. The launching of this "massive effort" does not prevent a caution against direct missionary tactics toward those who are committed to another faith. Still the committee's statement understands "conversion" in the sense of changing organizational and cultic affiliation. The report is given in these words: "Where there is commitment to another religion, there should be no attempt to convert that person to Judaism."
43. Similar reports come from Christian publications, eg. "The Christian Century," Sept. 3, 1981, p. 955.
44. I have been greatly helped by re-reading Richard J. Israel's account of his ambivalences in dealing with Mitzvot, of Jewish tradition, The Condition of Jewish Belief, Mcmillan: New York, 1966, pp. 99ff. My own Baptist traditions, though less well defined than Jewish Mitzvot, nonetheless affect me as variously.
45. "Secularism" as distinguished from a legitimate "secularization."  
Hans Küng, The Christian Challenge, Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden City, New York, 1979, pp. 39-42.
46. The word of Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, 15 years ago, remains true: "To my mind, by far the most serious challenge to Jewish thought today lies in secularism, whether of the Communist brand in the East or the materialist type in the West." The Condition..., p. 115.



47. Jean Danielou and André Chouraqui, The Jews: Views and Counterviews Newman Press: New York, 1966, p. 10-12.
48. Robert Rankin, Op. cit., pp. 215-238
49. Above, p. 220
50. Ibid, p. 129
51. The Condition of Jewish Belief, pp. 154ff. He argued that Judaism needs to recognize that Christianity and Islam, and not Judaism, have been redemptive instruments for much of mankind," p. 155. This I believe, is generally recognized by the best Jewish thought and has been for centuries.
52. Ibid, pp. 156-157.
53. Ibid. p. 103 Richard L. Rubenstein, of course, gave the most precise expression. After Auschwitz, and in The Condition..., pp. 198ff
54. Of course, what we are describing is not the "death of God." Rubenstein said, "No man can really say that God is dead. How can we know that? ...This is more a statement about man and his culture than about God." The Condition...p. 199 Compare Gabriel Vahanian, The Death of God.
55. Signposts for the Future, Doubleday and Co. Inc., New York, 1978 p. 69
56. Ibid., p. 70
57. Arthur Hertzberg wrote: "To be a Jew means to believe, and to wait: The Condition, p. 97
58. cf. Jurgen Moltmann
59. Küng, Op. cit., p. 70
60. Lapidé sees a resurging interest in Jesus among scholars in Israel's (Ibid., p. 71) and says: "But if Israel's most famous son has been passed over in silence for so long in Judaism, it is the fault of the Church - with its coercive measures, seeking to impose its faith by the sword, which simply will not work. Now, in the free mental climate of Israel,...we suddenly find a lively interest in the person of the Mazarene; an interest which is positive and without precedent in the whole of Jewish history...If we in our generation can learn from one another, perhaps the next generation will do more." Idem.
61. See Eugen Rosenstock Huessey, ed., Judaism Despite Christianity, Univ. of Ala. Press, 1969, p. 58 and p. 99, where Franz Rosenzweig refers to the Rosenstock home "before" Eugen was a Christian as only Jewish "theoretically" and not in the "reality of your life."

62. Harold Stahmer, Introduction to the Torchbook Edition, The Christian Future, Harper and Row, N. Y., 1966, p. ix
63. See Judaism Despite..., pp. 28-29
64. Rosenstock's book of this title, published in 1969, by Argo Books Norwich, Vermont
65. The Christian Future, Harper Torchbook, 1966, p. 102
66. Ibid. pp. 62-67
67. The Condition of Jewish Belief, p. 2
68. Judaism Despite, p. 32. These are Rosenstock's words, recounting the night.
69. Ibid., pp 32-33
70. Ibid., pp 33-38.
71. Ibid., p. 35
72. Ibid., p. 36
73. See N. N. Glatzer, "Foreword" to Rosenzweig's Star of Redemption, Holt, Rinehart Winston: N. Y., 1970, p. xi
74. Judaism Despite..., p. 37, Note 23.
75. The Star... p. xii
76. Idem.



# Communicating Our Religious Values to the World

## Introduction

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## Communicating Our Religious Values to the World

### Introduction

The topic is a gloriously ambiguous one. One is tempted to use a quick and ready caricature in answering the question, if the question is, "How do Southern Baptists communicate their religious values to the world?" the response is "Loudly and with a southern drawl." Such a response is not very nice, nor is it entirely true. Obviously our topic invites an exploration of means. It also involves a discussion of substance. What is meant by "religious values," an umbrella phrase indeed. Does "religious values" refer to theological distinctives, or ethical concerns, how are these formed, expressed or conveyed to others? My answer is yes. Yes! to all of these. And that understanding of the topic frames the outline for my discussion.

One needs to ask how a comparatively young religious community, very young in comparison with Judaism, has gone about determining its religious values. It would seem helpful, in the second place, to define or delineate some few of those distinctive values which Southern Baptists have determined. The third section, the pragmata, is the direct application of the topic, namely, how Southern Baptists communicate what they have perceived to be the essential elements of their belief system. If a Jewish audience opines as to why sermons and scholarly papers of Christian spokesmen come in threes, the Christian may respond with the Fiddler on the Roof's "Teyve." It is "tradition" or s/he may respond with Karl Barth that it is a vestigis trinitatem, an inveterate trinitarian overhang. In this instance the triadic division, much to the dismay of sensitive souls who seek deeper significance in every structure, and there are some in both Jewish and Baptist communities, just seemed to fit the



subject and is to be viewed as a simple device for communication.

One further word of the topic remains to be defined, namely, "world." Baptists in American are like Heinz pickles there are in fact and exactly fifty-two varieties. One incontestible feature of all those varieties among themselves and between one another is that there are no two of them who agree on anything. Nevertheless, and this is the Baptist miracle, there are areas of consensus, if one can define the target group. My target group, by virtue of experience, expertise and assignment is Southern Baptists, and it needs to be remembered that my sphere of reference is Southern Baptists except where otherwise noted. I suspect that this splendid autonomy of the individual or chaotic individualism, and it can be both, applies to the Jewish community also. The digression was to provide apologia for the various ways Baptists understand the term world. Some of those ways are:

1. In the Johannine sense, that is, a rebellious fallen personification of mankind, lying in darkness and needing light.
2. In the Pauline, existential sense, that is, in one's specific Sitz im Leben where the Gospel is preached, where the rule of faith applies and where the household of faith demonstrate its beliefs by ethical behavior.
3. In the synoptic sense, that is, the creation of God which despite its disaffections is to be valued as such in all its parts mankind, animals, plants and stuff.

It is my opinion that Baptists use the term "world" in the descending order listed above. If this is correct, then it helps to explain why Baptists have, first, despaired of society and been militant in evangelism and missions; secondly, have stressed proclamation, given attention to

building churches, and looked after their own with an eye to personal ethics; and, thirdly, and a poor thirdly at that, given attention to universal, cosmic concerns, ecology and social ethics.

When one talks about Baptists communicating their religious values to "the world" s/he is obliged to put a great deal of time and thought on how Baptists have understood the term "world." Some enterprising graduate student would do yeoman service to Baptists' self understanding if s/he wrote a dissertation on these diverse understandings. Some Baptist prophet might find a prophet's reward if s/he wrote a dissertation on these diverse understandings. Some Baptist prophet might find a prophet's reward if s/he put forth a plea for a shift in priorities in understanding the term "world," or even a balanced N.T. view of it.

To this lengthy, programatic introduction must now be appended, it is to be hoped, a succinct factual body of material.

#### Determining Religious Values

##### Confessions

"No Creed but Christ" was a radical reformation slogan. It was born in the anti-establishment milieu of free church beginnings and continues to be one of the persistent sentiments of Baptists. By creeds our forefathers understood those official and obligatory doctrinal statements adopted by the ancient churches and more recently by the followers of the magisterial reformation. Regardless of this antipathy toward official, binding creedal statements Baptists felt the necessity for some kind of expressions that would serve as doctrinal declaration around which those of like sentiment could gather and with which they could distinguish themselves from other Christian groups. The terms adopted for these



expressions of faith among the Baptists were "statements of faith" or "confessions of faith."<sup>1</sup> The confession of faith which is the "official" doctrinal statement of the Southern Baptist Convention is The Baptist Faith and Message in its 1962 form. Seminary professors of the denomination are asked to give assent to this confession, and doctrinal issues are decided in consonance with it. A copy of the document which includes a brief historical statement of its evaluation and an expression of its intended purpose is appended to this document.

#### Communities of Faith

A second factor determining Baptist religious values in America has been significant congregation who sent out mission groups and served as doctrinal advisors and shapers of tradition. In colonial days such congregations at the First Baptist Church of Providence, the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, the First Baptist Church of Charleston N.C. and especially the Kiltey church, some of whose members migrated south spreading the Baptist witness, are representative. In the period just preceeding the outbreak of the civil war the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in the First Baptist Church of Augusta, GA. As the colonizers of America came into the Southwest strong Baptist congregations were planted in these states many of which persist to the present as shaping forces in Baptist beliefs and practices. The final wave of So. Baptist immigration to the far West and the Northwest is transpiring since the days of the dust bowl and the war boom of World War II. In this relatively recent history So. Baptists in the third wave of immigration have until the present tended to look for stability and doctrinal purity to the founding churches, associations and State Conventions of the South East, deep South and Southwest. It is to be expected and desired that So.

Baptists in the West and Northwests will, within this generation, begin to nurture and acknowledge significant congregations in their geographical area which will place a north/western accent on the interpretation of historic Baptist beliefs and customs.<sup>2</sup>

### Charismatic figures

So. Baptist views of religious values have been formed by certain of their writers, teachers and outstanding ministers. There were four outstanding writing theologians during the first century of Southern Baptist life. There were A. J. Dagg, J. P. Boyce, E. Y. Mullins and W. T. Conner.<sup>3</sup> They were all educators and labored along with other significant leaders in education, such as Richard Furman and Andrew Fuller.

Biblical scholars such as A. T. Robertson gained international reputations for their work. Early pastors/evangelists/missionaries such as Jubal Starnes, Luther Rice were stabilizers of doctrine as well as propagators of Baptist expansion.

The significance of doctrinal shaping ministers in the present cannot be overlooked. The mantle has, by and large, shifted from teaching scholars to prominent ministers and stellar figures. Hershell Hobbs, W. A. Criswell and Billy Graham speak to and for many So. Baptists in matters of belief. The passing of doctrinal definition and formation from teachers to others reflects a complex situation which needs analysis. Two components of the situation would have to be a growing anti-educational sentiment among large segments of So. Baptists on the one hand and a highly trained more ecumenically oriented cadre of scholars and educators on the other. It is regrettable that certain popular charismatic figures are "baptizing" independent traditions on the one hand while Baptist scholars are writing and publishing less in the area of doctrine on the other.



## Classrooms

A fourth shopping factor in determining So. Baptist religious values are their classrooms. This factor is not left until last by modesty so much as it is out of a realistic recognition that our colleges and seminaries do not provide the primary leadership in determining religious values as they might in other religious traditions, especially Judaism. The primary reason this is so is because seventy percent of our ministers do not attend seminaries. This astonishing fact needs to be known and assessed by any one attempting to understand the rather amorphous ongoing growth and tradition of So. Baptists. Furthermore of those attending seminaries in the past two decades who have risen to positions of leadership and to places of prominence in large churches many have been influenced more by the practical methodological structures of successful group growth principles etc. than have taken seriously their theological instruction in biblical studies, biblical languages, social ethics, systematic theology, and philosophy of religion. Unfortunately, this is not a Baptist distinctive. Joseph Sittler speaks of it among Lutherans, and I am certain many denominations could add a paragraph about this phenomenon in American churchmanship.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this painful admission there is indisputably a large place to be given to the shaping factor of So. Baptist institutions of higher learning. The six seminaries of the denomination have a current (Fall, 1981) enrollment of over ten thousand students, 18.4% of all seminarians in America. Our students are exposed to quality graduate, professional education accredited by recognized accrediting agencies. And these students and those who have gone before them are neither dull nor lacking in appreciation. Many are creditable products of their education. Most

of them work in difficult, small or understaffed positions. Many are leaders of the denominational agencies. Others are missionaries serving in this country and abroad. Many of our students' education in theological heritage and ethics has taken well enough that they do not indulge in some forms of church growth that are theologically suspect. If one didn't feel the classroom were making some inroads, s/he ought not to invest in it. But those candid enough to recognize current shaping forces of doctrine in So. Baptist context must be realist enough to know that they are not getting all their insights from us.

These are the determinants of our religious values, the confessions, the communities of faith, charismatic figures and classrooms. What have these determined is the "essense" of our So. Baptist beliefs?

#### Delineating Distinctive Baptist Religious Beliefs

The term distinctive, like unique, perfect and other superlatives has suffered grammatical erosion. "Baptist distinctives" is a favored phrase among us, but it really does not mean what the grammar implies. Distinctive in the context does mean peculiar to Baptists and a mark of identity among us; but it does not mean that there are not other religious communities who share the some or similiar beliefs in part and, in some few instances, in totality. It would be true to say that all Baptists espouse these. It would not be correct to say that only Baptists share these views. In that sense we have Baptist identifying marks which, when taken as a composite, all Baptists would share. When these elements are taken separately one would find many Christian groups that would likewise affirm some of these religious values.<sup>5</sup>



Believers baptism and its correlate individual decision and responsibility

The very name Baptist or Anabaptist implies a special concern about the initiatory rite of the Christian community, Baptism. Baptists claim etymological, exegetical, historical and theological sanctions for their insistence that only those should be baptized, immersed, as a mark of their faith who, by grace, have exercised faith for themselves.<sup>6</sup> Such a claim implies maturity for understanding and consciousness for decision. The analog of believers baptism in the Jewish community is bath and bar mitzvah. The principle is that of responsible decision and individual involvement and integrity in belief.

It might be noticed en passant that the recent practice among some Baptists of baptizing very young children strikes at the heart of the principle of believers baptism and is of considerable concern to some among us?

The Lordship of Jesus Christ and its practical concomitants, evangelism and missions

Just as the term Baptist speaks of special concerns about the initiatory rite of our faith, even so the term Christian implies a recognition of special status for Jesus the Christ. This is, obviously, the central issue at stake between Christians and Jews. The term generally applied by Christians to the special status of Jesus of Nazareth is Lord.<sup>8</sup> This designation, significant to Jews in other contexts, becomes a hallmark for Christians when applied to Jesus. By the Lordship of Christ we mean that in the Christ event there is the clearest picture of God available. Traditional terms for this special value judgment are the deity or divinity of Christ. Growing out of this special value judgment Christianity, following the words of Jesus and the impetus of the

early Christian community, is by definition evangelistic and missionary. That the proclamation of good news and the sharing of God's gracious acts is a Christian mandate few Christians and practically no Baptists would deny. How this is to be effected has become a central concern and a point of contention among many Baptists. For example, I have repeatedly suggested to various and sundry of our So. Baptist solemn assemblies that our current slogan "Bold Mission Thrust" needs definition and explanation. I have further insisted that bold does not mean brassy. Evangelism and missions are mandated ministries. Trying to effect them can be done in such a way that communication as well as community is cut off.

#### The authority of Scripture and its resultant biblicism.

Baptists enjoy referring to themselves as "people of the book." The Book is the sixty-six books of the classical protestant Bible, thirty-nine of which we adopted from Judaism and adapted those Jewish books of Torah, prophets and writings to our expanded number; twenty-seven are books received in common with all other segments of Christendom. Missing among us is the Apocrypha which, by appealing to certain criteria dependent upon Jewish usages, we excluded at the time of the Reformation.

So. Baptists share the anabaptist predelection for and in some instances almost exclusive use of the N.T. Our recent stress upon the O.T. by the frequent use in our confessions to the Scriptures rather than the N.T. seems to me a step in the right direction.

Our unashamed biblicism, called sola Scriptura in other traditions, is expressed in such statements as found in the Preamble of the Baptist Faith and Message "That the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments." And the lyrical phrases of Article One of the confession.



The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.

What is troublesome about all derivative authority is that it can quickly become the source of idolatry and so often become a pawn of ecclesiastical power plays. Biblicism can and does become bibliolatry. The word of God and from God becomes a god. Arguments over biblical authority can become un-baptistic tests of faith and contests of an imported Orthodoxy. Battles over infallibility and inerrancy can become diversionary skirmishes for seeking control of institutions and allocations from denominational budgets.<sup>9</sup>

#### The priesthood of the believer and its consequential individualism

Closely related to believers' baptism is the concept of the priesthood of all believers. Although stated in apologetic phrases designed to combat the sacerdotalism against which the radical reformation rebelled, nevertheless there is a constructive and positive value in the idea. As Baptists understand the priesthood of all believers it involves not only the responsibility of the self before God in matters of spiritual nurture, it implies also a willingness to be concerned before God on behalf of all others. This benevolent concern can become condescending arrogance. It can also be expressed in helpful actions, willingness to interpret and bear the wrong-doings of one's fellows for the sake of a better understanding among men and of men toward God.

The dark side of the priesthood of all believers is an egocentric individualism which translates into a "I'm-as-good-as-you-are" attitude

which issues into anti-clericalism, anti-educational bias and an anti-cooperative spirit in religious, social or political arenas. The responsible self can become a reprehensible self when responsibility does not extend beyond the self.

#### The separated life and its largely individual ethics

If one defines world in the predominately Johannine sense, separation from the world becomes highly desirable and ethically necessary. Baptists have been highly selective about what this means. In America it means not drinking beer. In Germany it means women don't use cosmetics. In non-tobacco growing territory it means not using tobacco while in tobacco land other peccadilloes are earmarks of worldliness. There can be little doubt that Baptists as much as, and in some instances more than, others have prescribed their ethics according to certain cultural contexts. What religious community has escaped? The ashkerazim, the seppardics, the upper Manhattan mystique?

Despite the charge of Kultur Protestantismus Baptists have developed strong ethical consciousness in matters of family life, sexual responsibility and integrity, the care of the body, the concern for wholesomeness in community. Personal devotional periods of Bible study sessions in the home as well as at church and the avoidance of "riotous living" are generally characteristic of the Baptist community.

Unfortunately there is a predisposition by some to want to enforce or legally enact these life styles upon all segments of the community, especially where Baptists constitute a majority of the electorate.

Likewise unfortunate is that Baptist individualism expressed in believers Baptism and the priesthood of all believers extends into the separated life of individuals resulting in a high standard of personal ethics but



not always extending to the social and political issues of the time. It is an area where we are on the road. Improvement is needed, and it is beginning to happen.<sup>10</sup>

The separation of church and state and its tendencies toward a-politicism

Baptists and Jews have both been champions of religious liberty. The colonial period in America is replete with the contributions of both Baptists and Jews in the arena of religious liberty. Roger Williams was not always a Baptist, but all the time he was Baptist he was a zealous pioneer for religious liberty. The struggles of Baptists and Jews were in some measure contributory to the disestablishment of religion in America and in its continuing proviso through the first amendment to the constitution. Hard won freedoms of one generation become take for granted items of subsequent ones. Baptists have in many instances been content with their liberty and have not been so zealously concerned for the civil and religious rights of others. This has been demonstrated in a somewhat a-political attitude we have displayed in areas where self interest were not involved.

Fortunately responsible political action is lobbied for and sponsored among us by the good offices of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, our friend at court--at court a great deal of the time. It is ironic that Baptists have been pitted against each other in the concerns to enforce our beliefs on others by law vs the sensitivity of our traditional stance on freedom of religion which guarantees to all the right of expression.<sup>11</sup>

These six are a catena of concerns which we have and hold as religious values. What remains is to spell out specifically how they are communicated.

## Communicating Our Religious Values

Communication requires people. Communication to large numbers requires programs. Communicating globally requires advanced technology. We have them, all of them in an intricate complicated web of theoretically unrelated yet practically interlocking organizations, a web so complex one scarcely knows where to start or how to describe. To use bare statistics is to come across as incredible and it is to miss some of the fine, personal elements of our fellowship. To stress the individual in a multitude of fourteen million is good journalism but inept stewardship. I shall attempt a via media that will doubtlessly make no one happy.

### Personnel

If one wanted to impress the takers of religious census s/he would point out that So. Baptists number 13,680,054 gathered into 35,831 churches. Theoretically, but only theoretically, each of these is communicating his/her religious values. If one wanted to catch a single communicator at work s/he would observe a recent seminarian who supervises the night shift of San Francisco Juvenile Hall who tries with kindness to communicate a role model of Christian commitment.

If one wanted to impress the economist s/he would point out that Southern Baptists gave to all causes through their churches last year 42,483,645,551.00. Less impressive is the figure that our direct gifts to alleviated world hunger were slightly less than 3 million dollars. A single focus would find a widow in Wichita, Kansas tithing her pension to help communicate our religious values.

How many ministers are there among Southern Baptists? que sabe?  
Licensing for ministry requires only a vote of confidence for a person



from one local congregation. Ordination usually involves the ordained ministers and deacons of a local congregation plus some representatives from sister churches in the local association. Once licensed, once ordained, home free. Denominational theologians inveigh in vain against "laying hands too quickly" and too indiscriminately on too many men.

There is indeed a cast of thousands of ordained denominational workers. It required precisely one hundred finely printed pages to list them in the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention Annual. We no longer attempt the herculean task of printing a protean list of all ordained SBC persons.

A solitary focus would find a retired military man who struggled heroically with some higher education, that is college classes, working with a small church (under 200) in the Missouri hill community of my in-laws.

There are 3,059 persons engaged in all types of overseas missions and 2,970 mission personnel working in special project related areas in the U.S. and her territories.<sup>12</sup> The single view would highlight a missionary couple working with the Massai people in East Africa in such caring ways that they were given the supreme compliment of tribal land on which to build their hut without benefit of whatever you can think of. Or, if one's life style prefers we could visit an urbane, cosmopolitan couple esconsed in the hills overlooking Florence doing music ministry among the Italians. At home there are isolated workers on Indian Pueblos or surrounded saints in Lefræck City. And lest one should despair of the future, one should remember the 10,058 currently enrolled seminarians waiting, and we hope studying, in the wings. There are the personnel who are communicating our religious values, or ought to be. The difference between the ought and the is, the potential and the production, is another

story and its telling requires another place another time.

Last, but certainly not least in this matter of communicating our religious value (and I suspect it would be first and foremost among Jews, and ought to be among us) is the family. Our community encourages, cajoles, makes special weeks of emphasis for and provides tons of literature about the Christian home and ways in which value formation may be transmitted in the home. Daily devotional times are encouraged, prayers at meals are offered, church attendance is often required until the age of rebellion or adulthood whichever comes first. The majority of our baptisms are among those of our own families. They are catching, these religious values, among our children. They are not always sticking, as evidenced by the numbers of Baptists joining other religious groups (until five years ago more going out from us than others coming to us from other denominations). It is an intriguing phenomenon that I have never been in a major city in the U.S., in a large group, for any length of time without finding an ex-Southern Baptist when one has scratched off the veneer. The reasons we are not more successful are complex but a probing of them would include such topics as: civil religion; peer pressure; radical pluralism in society; abdicating parental teaching privileges to others including and especially a professional ministerial class. I suspect that "reasons homes are failing to communicate our religious values adequately" could stand on its own as a topic at any ecumenical, inter-faith or world religious dialogue.

#### Programs

Programs are not as exciting as people. They are, however, ways of utilizing people for efficient and effective endeavors. Trying to grasp the organizational program structure of the SBC is like a mouse trying to bite into a coconut, it's hard to catch hold.<sup>13</sup>



BSSB--

"Of the making of books there is no end," and of the printing of them as well, especially at Broadman Press, the publishing arm of the Baptist Sunday School Board. The BSSB, as it is abbreviatingly known has plans, pamphlets and printed materials for all people. There are resources that guide and nurture religious development from the cradle to the grave, from mom's arms to the mortuary. Through an amazing panoply of specialists one is able to receive inexpensive and excellent advice ranging from art to architecture from human sexuality to handbell ringing. The mere economics of the 41 million dollar sales of 1981 scarcely tell the story. There are products ranging from: crib mattress for tots to plastic baptisteries for the grown ups, we hope; robes for the choir, and even for our ministers, who cannot use them, cups for communion, but no wine for the celebration. The BSSB is a truly amazing phenomenon of our denomination or of any other. Sales of products and literature to non Baptists were up 16% last year. We've smuggled our hymnody into various and sundry spots by using a plain wrapper rather than the title The Baptist Hymnal, which we publish for in-house consumption. I speak jestingly but not facetiously, for if there is any organization which is responsible for the ability of Southern Baptists to communicate their religious values it is the Baptist Sunday School Board.

F.M.B.--

The programs of our mission boards, foreign and home, provide major ways in which we are able to communicate our values. The variety of programs is amazing and diverse. I have visited a Swiss Chalet, former mansion of a Zurich industrialist, now Seminary for select European Baptist religious leaders, and I have gone to the backwaters of the Amazon

on a riverboat. The genius of Southern Baptist missions overseas is their diversity. We have evangelists, agriculturalists, medical personnel and communication (Radio, TV) specialists. Southern Baptist "music" missionaries first translated and published Handel's "Messiah" in Portugese in Brazil, and a scholarly S.B.C. missionary has caused the world of Academe to reflect anew on the hypothesis that the Christian gospels were first written in Hebrew. One of our more exciting and innovative programs is to deploy retired, self-sustaining profesional people around the world as missionary associates. Related and relevant is our liason between medical specialists and others who go to areas of special need on their own vacation time. Every summer one is liable to bump into Southern Baptist dentists, surgeons, pharmacists or building contractors in any number of esoteric spots around the world. They are "spelling" our missionaries or doing special services which cannot otherwise be provided.

H.M.B.--

Inside the U.S. there are likewise innovative as well as traditional ways that we are communicating our religious values. Resort ministries are popular among our youth, hundreds of whom serve virtually gratis, as summer missionaries each summer, we too are planning ahead to the L.A. "84" Olympics and finalists among the several applicants for Baptist Chaplain are now being considered. The children of migrant worders are taught bible, entertained and provided with team sports opportunities, not necessarily in that order. Indigenous Americans and arriving immigrants are recipients of ministry, ministry of material needs and ministry to social and spiritual needs by Baptist mission personnel.



Christian Life Commission--

For 84 of our 136 year history we have had a Christian Life Commission. Its prominence and significance among us surfaced with its heroic, far sighted and courageous pronouncements on the racial issue in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Pioneer leaders in the commission such as A.C. Miller, J. B. Weatherspoon and especially the dean of Southern Baptist ethicists T. B. Maston became controversial figures. The hate mail of Dr. Maston reached epochal proportions in the late 50's. Issues with which the Christian Life Commission has dealt are: integration, juvenile delinquency, pornography, gambling, drugs, the use of alcoholic beverages, prayer in public schools, abortion, war, homosexuality, economic issues, the plight of the aging, the United Nations. In many of these issues involving personal, traditional Southern Baptist morality the Commission received wide, popular support. In a variety of issues, where the commission swam against the stream, it was bitterly opposed.

Of particular interest among those styled (self or otherwise) avant garde in the denomination have been the annual seminars of the Christian Life Commission. These seminars provided us program personnel, well-known specialists outside the denomination as well as notable scholars and ministers within Southern Baptist life. Non Southern Baptist participants have included such persons as Langdon Gilkey, Gibson Winter, Leon Jaworski, John Lindsey, George Romney, George Bush, Gordon Cosby, Ernest Campbell, Ralph Nader, George McGovern, Sam Erwin, Hubert Humphrey, Edward Kennedy, Harvey Cox, Mark Hatfield, Barbara Jordon, Rosalyn Carter, Howard Baker, and Julian Bond, to name a few. It is, perhaps, through these seminars that the political world of the United States has been made aware of Southern Baptist religious values.<sup>14</sup>

The radio and television commission--

As any schoolboy plainly knows if you want to communicate you mediate. Mass communication requires the media. Question. What should one do if one suffers a bad press? Answer. Build your own press. Fortunately our own press is committed to telling all the news good and bad with as few cover jobs and euphemisms as possible.

Southern Baptists participate in the national Religious News Service (RNS), but they also have a news agency of their own, Baptist Press (BP), which provide news releases from the denomination intra and extra mural. In addition there is a state newspaper in every state where So. Baptists have a convention (34 papers representing 42 states and Washington D. C.). Many of the numerous (1,201) associations have newsletters sent to the religious leaders of the associations and many churches have church papers which all members of the congregations and special friends, such as old seminary professors receive weekly. We are or should be an informed group. Alas, much of the information is not about religious values so much as about religious functions. But we believe in and inculcated the truth of the old adage "You can't tell them if they aren't there."

Yet there are whole groups of persons who are not there whom we do tell. I refer to the telling made possible by electronic means, especially radio and television. Practically every church in "old convention territory" (the South, Southeast and Southwestern parts of the U.S.) that has a budget in excess of \$300,000 per annum, and that is a great many, have some sort of local or regional arrangements for sustained or intermittent radio or television broadcasting. The co-ordinated efforts of the convention are channeled through the Radio and Television Commission of the S.B.C. Last year the commission was responsible for



5,186 radio programs on 3,502 stations. This agency coordinates the TV productions of all our S.B.C. agencies and in conjunction with these produces five basic program series of its own as well as five series for our other agencies all of which have aired on 800 local stations. Seven hours of national network time programs were prepared and aired during the past year.

### Conclusion

So these are the mechanics, the how we do it. And if at this point, you are not static from statistics, you will see the structure. But seeing the structure is like looking at an anatomy chart. It is an intellectual step toward understanding that you should see how our religious values are chosen, what they are and how we share them. More significant are the emotional and interpersonal factors that flesh out who we are and that make more palatable and believable who we are "when we speak loudly and with a southern accent."

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See for example William L. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1969) and Sidnor Stealey A Baptist Treasury. New York: Crowell, 1958) and "Baptist Confessions of Faith" Review and Expositor (Vol. LXXVI No. 1, Winter, 1979). Louisville, Ky.

<sup>2</sup>See W. W. Barnes, The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1953 (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1954); Robert A. Baker, The Baptist March In History (Nashville: Convention Press, 1958); H. Wheller Robinson, The Life and Faith of the Baptists (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1946); C. Brownlow Hastings, Introducing Southern Baptists Their Faith and Their Life (New York: Paulist Press, 1981).

<sup>3</sup>For biographies of the historical persons listed see Encyclopedia of Southern Baptist 2 vols (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958). A second edition and revision of which is not now being prepared.

<sup>4</sup>See Joseph Sittler, The Anguish of Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966); see also Dean Kelley's Why Conservative Churches are Growing (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); and for a testimony from another dimension see Sam Keen's To a Dancing God (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), which contains charges of irrelevance against doctoral programs in prestigious institutions.

<sup>5</sup>See such works as Henry Cook, What Baptists Stand for (London: The carry Kingsgate Press, 1947); Hershel Hobbs, What Baptists Believe (Nashville: Broadman Press); E. Y. Mullins and H. W. Tribble, The Baptist Faith (Nashville: Convention Press, 1935). It needs to be acknowledged that in this section practically all Baptists and not just Southern Baptists are the holders of these religious values.

<sup>6</sup>See J. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the N.T. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962).

<sup>7</sup>See my Theology for Children (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), especially the appendices.

<sup>8</sup>See Gerhard Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the N.T., trans. by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1964-76; G. E. Ladds, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1974); for Jewish perspectives see Samuel Sandmel's We Jews and Jesus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), and The Genius of Paul (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Cudahay, 1958). Also H. J. Schoep's Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History. Trans. by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961).

<sup>9</sup>See Harold Lindsell's The Battle for the Bible, and The Bible in the Balance and Russ Bush and Tom Nettles Baptists and the Bible, selective sources designed to demonstrate that Baptists have believed inerrancy and infallibility with the contemporary connotations of those words. For a different perspective see the sections on Scripture in the theologies of the four writing theologians and other standard works of



Baptist theology including Dale Moody's The Word of Truth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1981). See my Hobbès Lectures at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma, 1981.

<sup>10</sup>For a plethora of devotional books aids and guides see the current 1981-82 Baptist Book Store Catalogue where every age and interest group is represented and where materials in practically every medium (prose, poetry sermonics, music, drama, film etc.) is available. For the increasing social awareness of Baptists and their proclamations about issues of social and political dimensions see the annual report and recommendations of the Christian Life Commission in the Annual Book of Reports of the Southern Baptist Convention (Nashville, Tenn.: Published by the Executive Committee of the S.B.C.). See also the proceedings and papers of the yearly seminar of the Christian Life Commission as in note 14 below.

<sup>11</sup>See Report from the Capital, a newsletter of the Baptist Joint Committee and other publications and bulletins of that group. Write attn. Dr. James M. Dunn 200 Maryland Ave. N. E. Washington D. C. 20002.

<sup>12</sup>For statistical facts and figures see the 1981 Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention available from the office of the Executive Committee of the S.B.C. 460 James Robertson Parkway Nashville, Tenn. 37219.

<sup>13</sup>One way in which this might be attempted is to survey the table of contents of one of our recent national convention, and such is included as Appendix B to this paper.

<sup>14</sup>See the Annual Reports of the Christian Life Commission in the Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention. Publication of the Christian Life Commission including proceedings of the Christian Life Commission Seminars and books and pamphlets dealing with issues handled by the Christian Life Commission may be ordered from the Christian Life Commission 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tenn. 37219