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Humanistic Judaism, 1990-1994.

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RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

December 13, 1990
26 Kislev 5751

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5P 3K9 CANADA

Dear Gunther:

I have your letter of December 5th and I thank you for enlightening me on the manner in which she'elahs are handled. It was thoughtful of you to clarify this matter further.

With warmest regards and every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, J.D., D.D.

SENIOR SCHOLAR

December 5, 1990

Dear Alex,

Thank you for your letter of November 27th, which calls for an enlargement of my previous answer to you.

Generally, when a she'elah arrives, I send it to all committee members asking for their opinion. No one in particular is assigned the task of writing a teshuvah, but everyone is free to do so.

Most of the time I receive an expression of gut opinions. My vice-chair, Mark Washofsky, at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, is one of those who delves into rabbinic literature and provides me with the sources.

Once I receive the replies, I then create the teshuvah.

If the subject is controversial and the letters I have received clearly indicate a division of opinion, I send out a draft, which is then commented upon by the members.

You are quite wrong when you assume that the members of the committee will automatically go along with what I write. Not so. On one occasion, the objections were strong enough to persuade me that I had erred, and I reversed myself when I wrote the second draft, in order to conform with what had become the clear majority and also, at this stage, my revised opinion.

The members received a draft of the teshuvah on the Humanistic congregation and they responded freely.

If there is any further clarification that I can provide, please do not hesitate to let me know. With cordial regards from house to house.

Faithfully,

Gunther

P.S. You may be interested in a recent she'elah which dealt with the permissibility of holding annual meetings on Friday night. I will send it to you in the near future.

UAHC New Congregations Committee
c/o Stanley R. Loeb
520 SW Yamhill, Suite 800
Portland, OR 97204
Telephone: 503/778-2129
Facsimile: 503/224-0388

July 20, 1992

Mr. Melvin Merians
UAHC, Chairperson
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Re: New Congregations Committee/Application of Temple Beth Adam,
Cincinnati

Dear Mel:

Thank you for your July 15 telephone call - sorry we couldn't talk.
I hope you have had a wonderful time in Israel.

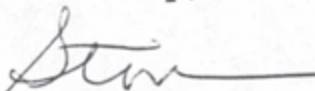
I spoke to Bob Chaiken on July 17. Here is the schedule he sees:

July 26 Regional Committee will consider Beth Adam's application
in Cincinnati. There will be presentations by the
applicant congregation and by an opposition group. Bob
is considering transcribing the presentations.
Thereafter, the regional committee will make some form of
recommendation and the regional director will compete the
administration aspects of the application.

Early Application will be presented to the Mid-West Regional
November Board at its convention in Cincinnati for its recommenda-
tion to the National New Congregations Committee. The
application with those prior recommendations will be
presented to the National New Congregations Committee in
time for its December 1992 meeting in Palm Beach, just
prior to the December Board meeting.

I look forward to talking to you when you get back to the States
and have a moment or two.

Sincerely,



Stanley R. Loeb

cc: Rabbi Alexander N. Schindler
Allan B. Goldman, Esq.
Rabbi Allen Kaplan
Bernard L. Isaacs
Horace A. Stern

We believe that:

1. Judaism is a way of life from which rich tradition has evolved. Interpreting and preserving the history and tradition for posterity is a responsibility of Jews in each generation.
2. Torah, including interpretations of its text based on modern knowledge, is fundamental to Reform.
3. Reform is flexible and adapts to new approaches within its overall philosophy and historical context. Humanistic Judaism is consistent with that flexibility.
4. We should not rely on benign providence for the betterment of humanity or the preservation of our planet.
5. Each person is free to hold his/her religious beliefs whether or not they agree with those of others.

Our goals as a congregation are:

1. To provide meaningful education and life cycle religious services.
2. To participate in community programs designed for the benefit of humankind.
3. To continuously examine our concepts by critical reason and to make changes to meet the test of reality.
4. To emphasize the relevant aspects of modern life and to de-emphasize those which have become irrelevant.
5. To participate in Reform Judaism and to explore membership in the U.A.H.C.
6. To advocate and facilitate a continuity of rabbinic clergy for Humanistic Judaism.

We affirm that:

1. HUC-JIR is the keystone of Reform Judaism in America.
2. The branch of HUC-JIR in Jerusalem is testimony to Reform's Zionist commitment. It merits support.
3. The academic excellence in all fields emanating from HUC-JIR are invaluable assets to all faiths throughout the world.

Beth Adam, now in its tenth year, is a pioneering effort to provide Jews with an alternative to meet religious desires. We believe that Beth Adam broadens and strengthens the scope of the Reform movement. We encourage HUC-JIR to familiarize rabbinic students with the concept of Humanistic Judaism.

Members of the congregation, encouraged and assisted by the Rabbi, have energetically and enthusiastically created religious services for all occasions. Liturgy and musical content of the services are updated to ensure relevancy. Torah, Talmud, and Midrash are appropriately incorporated into the fabric of the services.

*Adopted in principle on 12/12/89



CC: DR E. MIHALY

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RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

November 27, 1990
10 Kislev 5751

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto Ontario
M5P 3K9 CANADA

Dear Gunther:

You misunderstood my inquiry. I was neither happy nor unhappy with the response. I only wanted to learn.

My inquiry concerning the Responsa Committee procedures were motivated by concerns much wider than this particular issue. I have been troubled for some time now about the lack of ideological cohesion within our movement. This is why I recently devoted the Seattle Board meeting to the subject of Reform Judaism - its commitments as well as its limits. It was a very satisfactory meeting. As a matter of fact, a video tape of it was made and I can probably get you a copy if you are at all interested.

Be that as it may, the procedures of the Responsa Committee are a logical extension of my concerns along these lines.

I'll be frank to say that your description of these procedures does not allay my wider worries, alas, it only deepens them. When the head of a synod "suggests" to its members just what their response should be, dissent is discouraged and the encrusting of practice ensues.

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut

-2-

November 27, 1990

Again, this has nothing at all to do with the Cincinnati congregation issue. I shall leave that to the properly constituted regional and national new congregation committees on which the rabbinate will be widely represented.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,
AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

Alexander M. Schindler



Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, J.D., D.D.

SENIOR SCHOLAR

November 21, 1990

Dear Alex:

The procedure of the Responsa Committee is as follows:

Upon receipt of a question, I mail it out to all the members, although on occasion, I enclose my own preliminary suggestion for a response. This latter procedure was followed in the instant case.

The majority responded approvingly; there were several dissents. I asked the dissenters to write a formal teshuvah, but that invitation was not taken up.

As you will see, the procedure is very democratic but also time-consuming. Occasionally, when an immediate answer is necessary because circumstances so warrant it, I will respond personally, indicating that the committee at large has not participated in the formulation.

I gather from the tone of your letter and inquiry that you are not too happy with the response, but, that is the chance which anyone takes when he asks a question. Incidentally, I would like to repeat what I said in a previous letter, namely, that a discussion or presentation on the responsa process would, I think, make a valuable contribution to the forthcoming Biennial.

I have just come back from a stint as scholar-in-residence for the Foundation for Jewish Studies in Washington. Josh Haberman is really doing a marvellous job. I gave nine lectures to Reform and Conservative congregations, and found the experience most stimulating.

Elizabeth joins me in sending you and Rhea our cordial good wishes.

Sincerely,

Gunther

VIA FAX (5 pages including cover)

November 26, 1990

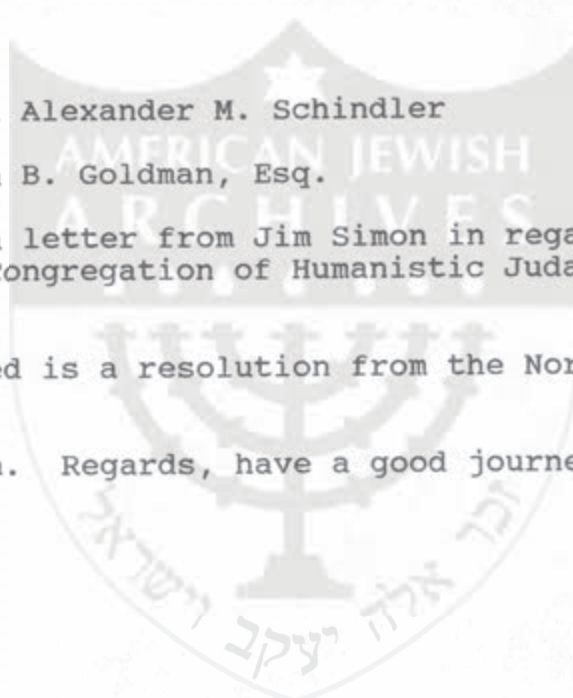
From: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

To: Allan B. Goldman, Esq.

Am sharing a letter from Jim Simon in regard to the Cincinnati Congregation of Humanistic Judaism for your perusal.

Also enclosed is a resolution from the Northeast Lakes Council.

See you soon. Regards, have a good journey,





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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
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MIDWEST COUNCIL
Rabbi James L. Simon
Regional Director

November 21, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021-7064

Dear Alex:

I am faxing this to you today not so much because of the urgency of the letter but I did want to make sure that I send this to you while my memory is still fresh from my recent trip in Cincinnati. It is my hope that we will have a few minutes in Rye to talk about this so you can give me your advice and counsel as to how we should continue to proceed.

I wanted to give you a brief update on the situation with Beth Adam in Cincinnati and indicate to you that while the process is moving along you should know that the situation is beginning to heat up considerably and I anticipate that this application may engender much more controversy than previously imagined.

To briefly review, we have been in contact off and on with this congregation for close to two and one-half years. Following your advice, we had an informal discussion about the general issue of a Humanistic congregation at our Spring 1990 Board Meeting and I felt it was a very candid and fruitful preliminary discussion. Obviously, no decision was reached because we have not received any application. During the spring and the summer of 1990, Bob Chaiken and I have been in touch with Rabbi Bob Barr and other leaders of the congregation and have continued our discussions on an informal basis. At the same time as a matter of courtesy we have informed the Rabbis and the Presidents of the four Cincinnati Reform congregations that we are involved in this process of discussion.

Last Monday, November 19 Bob Chaiken and I met with the board of Beth Adam and had a most intense and lively discussion which lasted over two hours. It is clear that they are going to pursue this application and they feel very strongly about the fact that they wish to be a part of the UAHC. It is also clear that in the private discussions that Bob Chaiken and I have had with Rabbis in Cincinnati

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Attend the Midwest Council Regional Biennial
Indianapolis, Indiana • November 9-11, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

November 21, 1990

that there is strong sentiment against the idea that Beth Adam would become part of the UAHC. I am sure that once we receive the formal application and invite the four congregations of Cincinnati to comment on the application that we will most likely receive from at least three of the boards very strong letters which indicate the fact that they do not believe that Beth Adam should be part of the UAHC. There are many, many reasons as to this opposition and I do not want to try to guess at what they are now but rather would want the congregations to speak for themselves in the future. There might be a few things I could share with you privately when I see you.

I also wanted you to know that they were very much concerned with respect to the Responsum authored by Rabbi Plaut and the committee and they will probably want to write some type of a formal response that would then be sent along to all members of our board along with the Responsum and other materials. I have indicated to them that I will make sure that all relevant materials are made available to the entire Midwest Council Regional Board and in all likelihood we will invite representatives of Beth Adam to come and speak to the board at the next meeting to be held in Colorado in April. We will also set aside sufficient time so as to have a full and meaningful discussion on this very sensitive and important issue.

One final note. Unlike other congregations that wish to join the UAHC, there are a few interesting wrinkles in this situation that go beyond the very fascinating ideological issues. First, you should know that even though Beth Adam has been in existence for well over a decade, they see that membership in the UAHC will help to validate their identity and their credibility within the context of the Cincinnati Reform community. They were very candid in indicating that it is their hope to secure the services of a Rabbinic intern from Hebrew Union College, and it is also their hope that once they are a member of the UAHC that they will be permitted to be part of the successful and growing Reform Jewish Community High School which is currently a joint effort of the four Reform synagogues. While it is true that they are desirous of utilizing some of the services and benefits of the UAHC, it is equally clear that they have very little interest in most of what we produce and they clearly have no interest whatsoever in any of our materials which pertain to Jewish education and the like. Finally, you should know that a few of their members sit on the Board of Overseers of Hebrew Union College and that Dr. Gottschalk has indicated to the leaders of the congregation that it might be nice if the congregation is part of the UAHC so that those overseers and Beth Adam itself could continue to make contributions to institutions of the Reform movement. (Obviously the majority of those contributions would not come to us!)

At any rate this is where we are right now. It is my feeling that an application will arrive in our office within the next month or so and then we will begin to compile a packet of materials which will be mailed out to all of the board members of our Region. It is our hope to include not only materials pertaining to Beth Adam but copies of

Page 3

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
November 21, 1990

the CCAR Responsum as well as some of the other letters that have been accumulated from other Rabbis throughout the country. I will probably put together some type of cover memo as well.

I am very much interested in some of your thoughts and ideas as to how we should proceed during the next few months . . .

B'shalom,

Rabbi James L. Simon

JLS:bjg





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PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

November 14, 1990
26 Heshvan 5751

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5P 3K9 Canada

Dear Gunther:

Thank you for your print out of the teshuvah concerning the Humanistic congregation.

Can you enlighten me on the procedures which the Responsa Committee of the Central Conference uses in order to reach its decisions?

Do you meet in concert to discuss the various issues, or are individual queries assigned to a specific person whose answer is then normative. I would really like to know.

In any event, I thank you for your prompt consideration of my query which has been relayed to the leadership of our Midwest Council, which, in the first instance, is going to review this application.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

BCC: EUGENE MIHALY

from the study of

RABBI W. GUNTHER PLAUT, O.C., J.D.S., D.D., LL.D., H.LITT.D.

SENIOR SCHOLAR, HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

#2 To Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Herewith a somewhat
better print out of the
Lesheva

Regards,

24/10
'90

Humanistic Congregation.

She'elah

A Humanistic congregation is interested in joining the UAHC whose constitution provides in Article III (1) that "any Jewish congregation" may become a member; and in Article II (d) that it is among the objects of the Union "to foster the development of Liberal Judaism." Does this Humanistic congregation comply with these objectives? Its rabbi is a graduate of HUC-JIR and a member of the CCAR. (The inquiry comes from Rabbis Alexander Schindler, James Simon and Allen Kaplan of the Union.)

Teshuvah

The question before us is twofold:

1. Can the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (hereafter referred to as CHJ) be considered a "Jewish congregation"?
2. Can it be said to "foster the development of Liberal Judaism"?

ad 1. The CHJ sees itself as a legitimate member of the Jewish community; it is not syncretistic like the Hebrew-Christians; it is, quite simply, a Jewish group that has banded together for the celebration of festivals, life cycle events, etc., but without the traditional theistic framework.

In its statement of belief (adopted December 1989) CHJ avows:

Judaism is a way of life from which a rich tradition has evolved. Interpreting and preserving the history and tradition for posterity is the responsibility of Jews in every generation.

The publications of CHJ leave no doubt about its being a Jewish congregation.

ad 2. The CHJ proclaims itself as a Reform congregation. Seeing that it acclaims the human being and not a supernatural power as the ultimate reference point, may it indeed be said to "foster Liberal Judaism"?

Reform Judaism has been an open-ended and variegated movement. It is historically flexible, but how far does its flexibility go? Can it accommodate the philosophy and liturgy of CHJ?

CHJ's liturgy deletes any and all mention of God, either in Hebrew (of which there is almost none) or in English. One of its publications, entitled *A Concept of God, and a Statement on Liturgy*, explains the congregation's position in this regard as follows.

The concept of God has undergone constant modification in Judaism...There has always been and continues to be great diversity in the Jewish understanding of God.

There can certainly be no disagreement with the statement that Reform Jews (like other Jews) have different conceptions of God. Our *Gates of Prayer*, in the sixth Shabbat eve service, while leaving the traditional Hebrew God-language undisturbed, does not use the word "God" in the English text. Instead it speaks of "The Power that makes for freedom" and says: "We worship the power that unites all the universe into one great harmony" (p.210). It is clear that *the sixth service remains a prayer service*, which leaves it to the worshippers to fill the word "Power" with their interpretation of the supernatural. The language is purposefully ambiguous only within these limits.

That kind of ambiguity does not, however, exist in the HCJ liturgy. To be sure, the above-mentioned statement says:

Many falsely assume that humanism is atheistic...The definition of Humanistic Judaism does not preclude one's having a concept of God.

This affirmation of people's right to interpret the God-concept in their own way is, however, not borne out by the liturgy which *precludes the exercise of this right by omitting any and all references to a supernatural power in whatever language*. In fact, the statement goes on to say unequivocally:

The use of prayer in services would be incompatible with such a theological system.

The CHJ's liturgy therefore, and quite logically in its view, does not include either *Kiddush* or *Kaddish*. The rabbi of the CHJ states expressly (in his publication *Resources and Reflections*) that on principle he will not say *Kaddish*, though he would allow someone else to say it if so desired by a congregant.

Needless to add that such key liturgical portions as *Barekhu*, *Shema*, *Ve'ahavta*, *Amidah* or *Aleinu* are also absent, as are selections from Psalms, or the familiar songs *Higdal*, *Adon Olam*, and *Ein keloheinu*.

The congregation's *Haggadah* is equally instructive. In the song "Who knows one? (*Echad mi yode'a?*)" the traditional response, "One is our God who is present everywhere," is replaced by "One is all the universe." And in the second verse (where the number two stands traditionally for the two tables of the Covenant) the two we are to remember are the "two people in the Garden of Eden."

The latter change is especially noteworthy: Because of its elision of God, CHJ's philosophy does not admit of Covenant or commandments. Hence, the *Shenes' Iukhot ha-brit* have been replaced by two human beings.

While CHJ's liturgy contains a number of sensitive and poetic meditations, may we consider the congregation's service agenda as a recognizable form or development of Reform Judaism? Can Reform Judaism accommodate this kind of philosophy? It is well, therefore, to turn to the three basic Reform statements, the Pittsburgh and Columbus platforms and the CCAR's Centenary Perspective which attempt to define the nature of Reform Judaism.

Pittsburgh (1885).

We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite One, and in every mode source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man.. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our holy Scriptures... *We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended...this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.*

Columbus (1935).

The heart of Judaism and its chief contribution to religion is the doctrine of the One, living God, who rules the world through law and love. In Him all existence has its creative source, and mankind its ideal of conduct...

Judaism affirms that man is created in the Divine image...He is an active co-worker with God...

The Torah, both written and oral, enshrines Israel's ever-growing consciousness of God and the moral law.

Centenary Perspective (1976)

The affirmation of God has always been essential to our people's will to survive. In our struggle to preserve our faith we have experienced and conceived of God in many ways. The trials of our own time and the challenges of modern culture have made steady belief and clear understanding difficult for some. Nevertheless, *we ground our lives, personally and communally, on God's reality* and remain open to new experiences and conceptions of the Divine. Amid the mystery we call life, we affirm that human beings, created in God's image, share in God's eternity despite the mystery we call death....

Torah results from the relationship between God and the Jewish people...

CHJ declares itself to be a group that makes the human being the measure of all things. This concept, with its roots in Greek philosophy, has been opposed by Judaism, which has always staunchly affirmed its belief in a supernatural God and Creator who sustains the world. Reform has never wavered in its adherence to this faith and has never abandoned the central role of prayer from its belief structure. Persons of various shadings of belief or unbelief, practice or non-practice, may belong to UAHC congregations as individuals, and we respect their rights. *But it is different when they come as a congregation whose declared principles are at fundamental variance with the historic God-orientation of Reform Judaism.*

In view of these statements we find CHJ's system of beliefs to be outside the realm of historical Reform Judaism.

But should we not open the gates wide enough to admit even such concepts into our fold? Are not diversity and inclusiveness a hallmark of Reform? To this we would reply: *yesh gevul*, there are limits. *Reform Judaism cannot be everything, or it will be nothing.* The argument that we ourselves are excluded by the Orthodox and therefore should not keep others out who wish to join us, has an attractive sound to it. Taken to its inevitable conclusion, however, we would end up with a Reform Judaism in which "Reform" determines what "Judaism" is and not the other way around.

The argument has been made that our doors should always be open to *ba'alei teshuvah*. Our reading of the texts the congregation has published does not bear out such an intent. Rather we find in them a declared purpose to redefine the essence of Reform Judaism. The CHJ is of course free to

pursue this goal and may wish to attract other groups to its philosophy. It must do this, however, outside and not inside the UAHC.

In sum, we hold that the CHJ, as presently constituted, breaks the mold of Reform Judaism and does not have a place among the Union's congregations.

Toronto, 30 Tishrei 5751 / October 19 1990

W. GUNTHER PLAUT,
Chair, CCAR Responsa Committee





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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND PACIFIC NORTHWEST COUNCILS

Rabbi Morris M. Hershman
Regional Director

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Rabbi James L. Simon

FROM: Rabbi Morris M. Hershman

DATE: March 20, 1990

RE: The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

The Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism poses a number of interesting challenges, and either we should be grateful to you for raising these issues for serious consideration, or we should hold you fully responsible! Probably the latter.

At the outset, I consider "humanistic Judaism" to be something of an oxymoron. The policy statement which you sent appears to go beyond the bounds of normative Reform Judaism. While interpretations of God may vary greatly, the Beth Adam policy seems to remove God from the equation. The Covenant is central to Judaism, as I understand it, yet this congregation honors and recognizes all religious beliefs, "whether or not they agree with those of others." Apparently the test of reality and "relevance" are more important to Beth Adam than Covenant, tradition, and other rubrics of Jewish life.

The range of issues and diversity of opinion in Reform Judaism is broad enough without going beyond those limits to the sphere of the humanists. Even the name of the congregation is revealing, representing universalism rather than an attachment to Jewish life. This congregation appears to be more interested in promoting its own interpretations (see point number six) than it is in joining the congregational community for the sake of common goals and purposes. In my view, a congregation which is atypical such as this may have every right to exist, but until we see evidence of programs and commitments which are consonant with those of Reform Judaism, I do not believe that the UAHC should embrace and/or endorse the principles of this congregation by according it membership in the movement.

MMH:lf

Chairman
Allan B. Goldman
President
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President
Northern California Council
Jack J. Kadesh
President
Pacific Northwest Council
Sanford M. Gibbs

Draft

386 free

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

March 26, 1990
29 Adar 5750

Mr. Robert Chaiken
P.O. Box 5367
Cincinnati, OH 45201

and

Rabbi James L. Simon
UAHC Midwest Council
10425 Old Olive Street
St. Louis, MO 63141

Dear Bob and Jim:

As you know, I have asked a few particular colleagues to share their thoughts on the matter of Congregations for Humanistic Judaism as we might possibly receive requests for affiliation with the UAHC. Responses have been received by all of the rabbis I contacted. I enclose them all herewith for your perusal.

This sampling of opinions gives sufficient expression to varying views as far as I am concerned. While I ask you to keep these responses confidential for the time being, I do ask that you convene a meeting of the regional New Member Congregations Committee. You may want to expand the committee for this meeting and I hope you will be sure to have a good rabbinical representation present for a discussion of this matter. It will be interesting to get the views of the Midwest Council.

You should know that while I believe we may well have to discuss each humanistic congregation as we receive requests, having read all of the responses I tend to agree with Gene Mihaly. His was a very thoughtful and informed opinion.

Chaiken & Simon
March 26, 1990
Page-2-

Don't hesitate to call upon me if you need any further information. And, of course, I trust you will keep me informed as matters develop. This is a subject which should receive the widest possible discussion within our movement. The Midwest may well be the first of many regions to receive an official application for affiliation from a humanistic congregation.

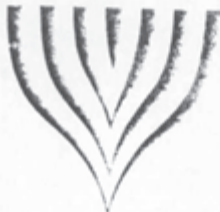
With fondest regards to you both and to Roz and Rebecca, from Rhea too, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.





איחוד
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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
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NEW YORK FEDERATION OF REFORM SYNAGOGUES

Rabbi Bernard M. Zlotowitz
Director

Rabbi Allen S. Kaplan
Associate Director

February 23, 1990

Rabbi James L. Simon
Midwest Council, UAHC
10425 Old Olive Street Road, Suite 205
St. Louis, MO 63141

Dear Rabbi Simon:

In response to your memorandum of January 25, 1990, please note that I am not in favor of the admission of Beth Adam to the UAHC. We are a religious institution that believes in the existence of God as the basic and foremost tenet in Judaism. To accept a congregation that does not believe in God flies in the face of our faith. I am fully aware that the Gates of Prayer -- the GOP latest Republican prayer book, has a service that is Humanistic. It should never have been included. To use the argument that it represents the spectrum of Reform is fallacious and misleading.

Do we ^{just} give in to every single little group? In a word, I guess you realize I am opposed to Beth Adam becoming a member of our movement.

Warmly,


Rabbi Bernard M. Zlotowitz

BMZ:mb

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MID-ATLANTIC COUNCIL
Rabbi Richard S. Sternberger

Director

John F. Lippmann
Regional President

Humanist file

March 15, 1990

To: Rabbi James Simon
From: Rabbi Richard S. Sternberger
✓ cc: Rabbi Alexander Schindler

AMERICAN JEWISH
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Even though I spoke to you at length over the phone, I have had a great deal of difficulty answering your memo. As I grow older, I have less and less patience with rules and restrictions. I believe that Reform Judaism should be as inclusive as possible, and am not enthusiastic about barriers which will exclude people or groups. And yet if our Movement is to have any dynamism and send forth a compelling message, we cannot be all things to all people. True there are areas where we must still do battle with orthodoxy; however, the significant area of controversy is that of secularism and the secular Jew. I believe that we must underscore the importance of theology-belief-faith. Even our Reconstructionist brothers and sisters are using terms that would have been anathema even a decade ago. The theology of Mordecai Kaplan - which had its roots in the time of Russell and Dewey - is meaningless today. The work of our Committee on Religious Living is absolutely critical, and we have found great response to the programs of our Regional committee.

About a dozen years ago, a rabbi was in town to establish a Humanist congregation. He called and asked me whether I would be helpful. I gave him a negative answer, and have had my moments of guilt concerning that answer over the years. And yet I believe that we must take our stand with such contemporary Jewish thinkers as Steinheim, Rosenweig, Buber, Heschel, etc., who really have a message concerning God which our people must hear. A circuitous road to answer that we should not admit a congregation that defines itself as Humanist.

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UAHC President
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler



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SOUTHEAST COUNCIL

Rabbi Frank N. Sundheim

Regional Director

February 14, 1990

FROM : Frank Sundheim
TO : Jim Simon
CC : Rabbi Alexander Schindler
RE : HUMANIST CONGREGATION

Dear Jim:

I am writing you this letter in follow-up to our conversation a few days ago and your February 12th memo. I am enclosing a copy of my first letter in case you do not find it. I shall, however, summarize some of the material that was in that letter in this memo.

This will be a lengthy memo, and I will do my best to make it Mishnah rather than Gemara. However, there are some items which I feel will need further explanation. Others if I just mention them, you certainly can fill in the commentary, as can Alex.

It is a great temptation to make this response a multi-volume tome, because the more I thought about it, the more offended I became at the thought that so many of our colleagues might feel that a Humanist congregation does not have a place underneath the Reform umbrella. If some of my points seem repetitive, it is because when I started to think in detail about our conversation, the deeper my convictions became in supporting what I wrote you in the last letter, and my pen did not stop making notes at that time. Nonetheless, let me try these arguments out for size in no particular order of importance.

My final introductory thought is that most of the time I am a theist. However, at other times, I become a Buberian, Kaplanian, a Humanist, an Agnostic, and a Polydoxist. It sometimes takes me as long as 24 hours to run the entire gamut of these approaches.

Here is my list of thoughts:

- 1) The CCAR does not excludes humanists from membership.

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- 2) Our congregations do not ask for a loyalty oath to God when people become members. For whatever reasons people join congregations, very few of them do so for the theological reasons.
- 3) Would we keep a holocaust survivor out of one of our congregations because that person is a humanist? Or even an atheist?
- 4) By the nature of its faculty, HUC is committed to a multiplicity of ideas. An institution that can tenure Alvin Rienes, Abraham Chronbach, Samuel Cohon, Samuel Atlas, Gene Borowitz, plus a multitude of others could hardly be described as an institution that discourages a multiplicity of ideas. The UAHC must be the same.
- 5) As I understand it, humanists do not automatically deny God and in this point it differs from atheism. Some humanists may be theists and others may not. Many of them ignore God. Others define God in their own terms. I find none of these alternatives destructive of the Reform Jewish spirit.
- 6) Related to #5, modern humanism is far less destructive to the spirit of Judaism than was Koheleth.
- 7) I see these people as non-traditional Jews struggling to find an institutional home. If the UAHC keeps people like this away, they will find homes elsewhere and we will lose thousands of people who would in the long run be comfortable under our umbrella.
- 8) Humanists care enough about theology to think seriously about it. Many times, they are much more honest than many of us who play word games, but really don't mean what we say. Sometimes the language we use cleverly and conveniently covers our own misgivings, but because we are good at language, we can give ourselves a "kosher cop-out." I personally find humanists most refreshing in holding us to the meaning of the words we use.
- 9)* As regional directors, we must deal with political situations relating to new congregations. I am not aware of the realities in Cincinnati, but I would hate to think of the repercussions from many of our colleagues including those at HUC if a congregation were excluded because it was Humanist. Nonetheless, sometimes decisions must be made that reflect the political realities of the moment. If this should happen, we will have to live with it however distasteful it might be. But, the UAHC certainly should not be part of rejection of such a congregation L'hatchilah.

- 10) The UAHC has demonstrated its openness in the types of congregations it has taken in. We have openly embraced gay and lesbian congregations, and we even have a prison congregation within the UAHC. Given this track record, how can we keep out a congregation because it "thinks" differently than most of our congregations (at least officially)?
- 11)* This reflects part of the conversation I had with you. I understand that the UAHC Constitution and Charter does speak of the importance of God, as do the preambles to most congregational constitutions. In no way does that bind the congregation legally to these doctrines anymore than congregations are bound to agree with resolutions of a UAHC biennial. Such statements are Haggadah not Halacha. It seems that those who would oppose this humanist congregation are coming dangerously close to demanding conformity of ideology to within the Reform movement. We must give a loud and resounding NO to such thinking. Any congregation entering the UAHC is aware of the statements concerning God that are part of our Charter. If they have a problem with those words, then let them wrestle with it, and make a decision on their joining the UAHC on the basis of their deliberations. But let them state the problem, not us. If they have a problem with the UAHC Charter, then they must deal with it. It is not to us to have litmus tests or loyalty oaths to statements that were meant and should still be meant to be descriptive rather than perscriptive.
- 12)* I also discussed with you an analogy with ARZA that you asked me to enunciate in writing. When ARZA came into being many of us struggled with the question of whether we could accept the Jerusalem Platform that makes aliyah the central mitzvah of the Jewish people. We struggled with it because we took the idea seriously and we did not want to be hypocritical in our responses. I am sure that a tiny number of the people who eventually joined ARZA did so because they accepted that part of the Jerusalem Platform. I certainly was among that majority who joined for other reasons. My commitment to what ARZA was trying to do as a Reform Jewish presence within the Zionist movement simply over-rode the misgivings I had concerning the Jerusalem Platform. I would imagine that most people joining ARZA did not take this matter nearly so seriously as did I. In fact, I gave an entire Holy Day sermon on the subject, including my own questions. The result is that we have a major Jewish organization, ARZA, the vast majority of whose members do not subscribe to one of the things that was supposed to be a very basis of joining the Zionist Movement. If there is a contradiction, we live with that contradiction, most of us happily.

I think there is an analogy here to a Humanist congregation. They may have misgivings, or even deny an aspect of the UAHC Charter. But they are so close to us in 98% of everything else for which we stand, it would seem to me hypocritical on our part to exclude them.

- 13) I conclude where I started. I am very disturbed and concerned about the future of Reform Judaism if such matters as loyalty oaths to God are necessary for congregations to join the Union when we certainly do not make that request or demand of people joining our congregations. Reform Judaism has always been open to the present and the future, and I think to exclude these people on the basis of their deeply thought-through theological position would be on our parts hypocritical, destructive of the UAHC in the long run, and unconscionable.

STRONG MESSAGE TO FOLLOW!



DR. WALTER JACOB
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1 March 1990

Dr. Alexander M. Schindler President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Thank you for your letter and the difficult question which you sent. If I understood it correctly, a "congregation" whose charter states that they are humanists, may apply for membership in the UAHC. How should the UAHC respond.

It is hard for me to understand their reasoning behind their application. Why should they wish to join a religious organization which regularly deals with God, prayer, mitzvot, religious education, and much more along the same lines. They would not fit into structure or programming.

Let me, however, look at the question through the eyes of tradition which would consider all Jews who reject God as sinners. Sinners, however, remain Jews (San 44a) and possess the right to attend the synagogue for prayer and study. We know, as Judaism has refrained from making dogmatic requirements, a Jew could adopt virtually any system of thought and even be an agnostic without being considered outside the fold. Spinoza was expelled from the Jewish community because it feared the retribution of the Gentile surrounding world; under other circumstances he would have remained a member of the synagogue community. Even with an apostate there is always the hope that the individual will return to Judaism, so unless the community feels endangered, he/she remains undisturbed in the synagogue and is readmitted with no formality (Jeremiah 3.22; Moses Isserles to Shulhan Arukh Yoreh Deah 268.12; Abraham Gombiner, Magen Avraham to Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayim 326; Solomon ben Simon Duran Responsa #89). There is no question therefore that individuals who absolutely reject God may be members of our congregations and are welcome. We hope that they will change their views and many have done so.

In this instance we are dealing with an entire group which has banded together as a "congregation". We normally associate that term with a religious group, but, of course, it can be secular as well. By joining together, they have made the statement that they do not wish to establish their philosophy and firmly impart it to their children. The group sounds very much like the Ethical Culture Society which seeks to teach ethics without theology. Its founder felt it necessary to leave Temple Emanuel and he was right.

Would the Ethical Culture Society have asked to be a founding member of the UAHC? They would have considered such a thought absurd and properly so.

The UAHC is a group of congregations which affirms Reform Judaism and seeks to strengthen it. Reform Judaism has been defined through the Pittsburgh Platform, the Columbus Platform, the Centenary Statement as well as numerous resolutions of the UAHC. God, however, conceived, is basic to each of those statements. A "congregation" which rejects the centrality of God in Judaism cannot be considered for membership.

We would I am certain, reject the application of a Conservative or an Orthodox congregation as it would be inappropriate ideologically. Yet our differences on ideological matters are less basic than on the centrality of God.

Any thought of moving in this direction would weaken us, lead to conflict every time we gather for prayer, to edit a textbook, or to debate a resolution.

We should not consider the application of such a congregation.

All the best to you for a continued pleasant winter. With kindest regards to Rhea.

Sincerely,

Walter Jacob

/bb

Rabbi Jack Bemporad

Temple Israel

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(516) 371-2809 Home

March 6, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex,

I am in favor of accepting Congregation Beth Adam as an affiliate of the union.

I know something about the Rabbi of this congregation and its programming and I am convinced that it is not an antitheistic congregation, rather it emphasizes the humanistic elements within Judaism.

It stresses traditional beliefs which emphasize the primacy of the ethical and the interpretation of Judaism as a way of life and not solely as a Theocentric Faith.

If we make a distinction between a nominal definition as to what it means to be a Reform Jew, and a maximal definition; then minimally a reform Jew is one who has one parent that is Jewish, is brought up Jewish and has not converted to another religion; or who has converted into Judaism according to the standards of the converting Rabbi.

It seems to me that the members of Congregation Beth Adam qualify under this definition.

Judaism is not a creedal religion and questions of faith have always been open to wide variations. If our Jewish faith is the ultimate context of what gives us meaning in life, and if Judaism is the symbol through which we express that faith, then Schulweiss' Predicate Theology and Kaplan's reconstructionism, though rejecting any kind of supernaturalism and any form of a personal god still would qualify under my nominal definition as would the members of congregation Beth Adam.

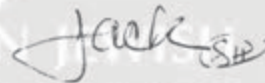
Perhaps we can find a parallel in Zionism. Zionism was a solution thrust upon us by historical events. It is nevertheless an anti-theistic expression of Judaism. It may be that a non-supernatural Judaism is again a solution for some of us as a response to the events of our time.

I believe our responsibility is to embrace this community and bring them closer to other Jews and a God Faith which they leave open to each individual member.

As an affiliate of the Union, we would open up the full range of UAHC programming to include them into a broader sense of Jewish Identity.

With warm regards I am,

Sincerely,



Jack Bemporad



WESTCHESTER REFORM TEMPLE

255 MAMARONECK ROAD • SCARSDALE, N. Y. 10583

Jack Stern, Jr.
Rabbi

March 5, 1990

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

I am responding to your letter of February 9 regarding "The Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism."

My own feeling is that the term "Humanistic Judaism" should not in itself be grounds for rejecting the congregation as a Union affiliate. After all, many of us in "normal" congregations will make use of that same word to describe aspects of our tradition and our own Jewish philosophical approach.

However, if the congregation describes or defines itself in specifically atheistic terminology, then I would have strong reservations about accepting them into the Union. It is one thing to say we are searching but quite another to say that we define ourselves without God. If the congregation adopts the latter course, I personally would not welcome them into our family of congregations.

I also make a distinction between a congregation many of whose members may reject any concept of a divine being and a congregation which by its own congregational self-definition, as a matter of policy and principle, rejects such a belief.

I await the outcome with interest.

Priscilla joins in warm regards to Rhea and yourself.

Sincerely,

JS:tm

Rabbi

Founded in 1889

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Rabbi Samuel E. Karff
Temple Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Blvd.
Houston, TX 77096

February 20, 1990
25 Shevat 5750

*acknowledge
free w/ them*

Dear Alex:

Concerning your inquiry on the "Society for Humanistic Judaism" let me respond as follows:

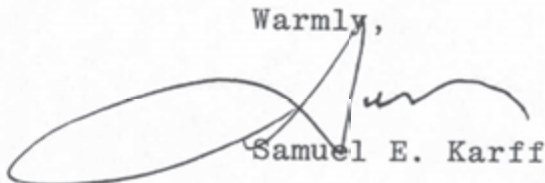
If the prospectus or statement of principles explicitly rules out the worship of God, then I would not favor the congregation's membership in the UAHC.

All Jews are, of course, welcome to join synagogues regardless of the state of their God-faith. Judaism is congenial to those who struggle with God and, of course, there is considerable theological leverage in God concepts. But to organize a synagogue on the premise that the three-dimensional covenant (God, Torah and Israel) is no longer our norm is to go beyond the boundaries of institutional legitimacy.

That at least is my initial response to your question.

With every good wish, I am

Warmly,



Samuel E. Karff

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

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RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE

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PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15213

February 21, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Colleague:

You have asked me a difficult and a troublesome question. Of course, if it were not difficult, you would not need to ask it. The question deals with the relationship of the UAHC to the numerous organizations of "Humanistic Judaism." Some of these groups already are members of the Union and others want or may want to be accepted as members. What should be the attitude of the Union to these societies? Should they be accepted as congregational members of the Union, or not?

The essential question involved is the fact of the basic belief of these societies. By the term "humanistic," they mean only "human" and nothing beyond. They do not believe in God. They believe only in the people of Israel. Can the UAHC accept members who declare openly and as a principle that they do not believe in God? It seems that a number of those god-less groups are already congregational members of the Union and others want to join. What shall be the attitude of the Union to those who are already members? Should they be expelled and if not, should those that are not members be accepted?

If we were living in Israel the problem would be in a way simpler. The Jewish community or the Jewish state welcomes all Jews. Their belief as to religious questions is irrelevant to their rights of citizenship. But our problem is different. We are not a secular state but a religious organization and certainly the word "religious" cannot be stretched to include atheism. But we do not exclude them from the Jewish community. They are expected to participate in Jewish charities, etc. But our UAHC group is specifically a religious group. We also have secular Jewish contacts in which we maintain a brotherly relationship to all Jews including them. But

Alexander M. Schindler
Page 2

February 21, 1990

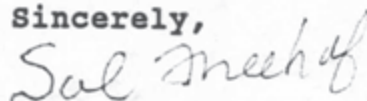
now they ask membership in our religious organization. We cannot give it to them.

As for those who are already members of the Union, what shall be our relationship to them? There comes to mind a recent Orthodox responsa-book in which the question was asked whether a Yeshiva scholar may accept being a teacher in a Conservative religious school. The answer is, yes, if he is able to win them over to Orthodoxy. We might say that this should be our attitude to those humanistic societies that are already members of the Union. We do not expel them and we do not shun them. We hope that we, by our relationship can win them over to the true worship of God.

As for non-membership of humanist groups that want to join the Union, I would have a simple test. If they will accept the Union Prayerbook as the text used in their assemblies, we are willing to extend our Jewish brotherhood tentatively and hopefully to accept them too.

Perhaps the fairest solution of the problem would be as follows: You, as the head of the Union ask the department of theology of the Hebrew Union College to decide whether the doctrine of Humanism is to be accepted as legitimate branch of our Jewish religion. The Union will then abide by this authoritative decision.

Sincerely,



Solomon B. Freehof

SBF:mgf

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut

O.C., Senior Scholar
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5P 3K9
(416) 789-3291 / Fax (416) 789 9697

February 12, 1990
17 Shevat 5750

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President, UAHC.
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

I hasten to answer your personal inquiry of February 9.

My suggestion is that you submit this to the Responsa Committee of the CCAR. This would have the advantage that, by making this referral, the Union would then have a well researched and considered Reform opinion which would help it to arrive at a judgment.

Of course, I respect the personal nature of your letter and at this point will go no further. Incidentally, your she'elah, if you wish to submit it, need not come from you but might be submitted, for instance, by the chairperson of the Admissions Committee. Nor would the name of the congregation have to be mentioned in the she'elah.

With cordial regards,

Gunther

RABBI W. GUNTHER PLAUT
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file

11 Adar 5750/ March 8, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President, UAHC
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

Thank you for sending me further information on the question of admitting humanistic congregations (your letter of March 2).

In order to focus more clearly on the issues involved I would isolate four sub-questions:

- a. Does the congregation that seeks admission to the UAHC have a constitution that declares it to be "humanistic" and does it define that term?
- b. Does the congregation declare itself to be a "secular" institution?
- c. Does the congregation, in its gatherings and its rites, expressly deny or eschew a supernatural power?
- d. Does it matter whether the congregation engages or keeps a rabbi who is a declared humanist and teaches his/her belief regularly to the congregation?

You might wish to ask the Responsa Committee questions along these lines, but they would have to be buttressed by fairly specific information. It would of course be easier if you would ask only with regard to a single congregation, which would give you a better opportunity to provide details in the above-mentioned categories. The advice which our Committee would proffer might then become the basis for your admission policy in other, similar instances.

In case New York is a walled city and this letter arrives in time for Shushan Purim, please accept a cordial wish for a *hag Purim same'ah*.



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February 15, 1990

Personal and Confidential

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Re your inquiry about The Congregation of Humanistic Judaism, Beth Adam

There are three humanistic congregations which have as their spiritual leader rabbis ordained by the Hebrew Union College: the one in Detroit led by Sherwin Wine, the "pope of the movement;" Dan Friedman's group in Chicago; and the one in Cincinnati led by Robert Barr. The Society for Humanistic Judaism claims to have about twelve other tiny groups who are nominally affiliated and have no spiritual leadership. They are insignificant both in size and in quality. Sherwin Wine is by far the most radical. He has recently changed the name of the association to "The Society for Secular Humanistic Judaism." He has also managed to interest a few intellectuals in Israel, primarily Judah Bauer and Ze'ev Katz of the Hebrew University, Simon Susskin of Paris, and, even though he is now very frail and old, Hayyim Cohen, the former chief justice of the Israeli Supreme Court. I understand that Judah Bauer will be in the United States this coming summer to help Sherwin develop and train leaders for the group, a project which Sherwin has been strongly advocating. He would like to see an independent institution to train leaders for his "movement."

Rabbi Dan Friedman has for some time been disenchanted, and he has gradually distanced himself from the Society. He will not participate in their forthcoming annual conference in San Francisco. He seriously differs from Sherwin Wine on a number of issues and is pursuing his own independent course, to the point of disaffiliation.

February 15, 1990

Robert Barr is very much at odds with Sherwin Wine, who sees Bob as "selling out." He has not been in touch with Wine for a long time. He and his group have nothing to do with the Society for Secular Humanistic Judaism. They do not belong to the Society, even though they call themselves "The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism." Barr himself is a very decent, honorable, and sincere person. He was a fine student while at the Hebrew Union College. He has been searching for a number of years and would very much like to get closer to the mainstream. He needs help in this endeavor. The application of his group to the Union is very much part of this process.

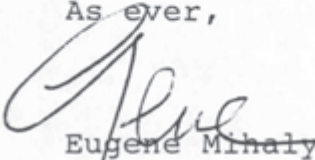
Rabbi Barr has counseled with me on numerous occasions. I am sympathetic to him. I am persuaded that we should help him in his search and buttress his resolve to find himself within the broad consensus of Reform. The three groups which have rabbinic leadership should not be viewed as a uniform entity. Each one is to be treated differently, since each one is unique and has its own character. Robert Barr's group does have within its membership a number of substantial, responsible and thinking members in prominent positions in the professions and in the academic and business worlds. Bob himself is a dedicated spiritual leader who, in my view, may well be included within the broad umbrella of Reform.

My conclusion, therefore, is that the UAHF should definitely accept his group within the Union. Such action would not only be wise, but a genuine constructive act in terms of Bob's personal struggle and in terms of the group's search for its own identity. The rabbinic dictum "let the left hand push away, but let the right hand bring near" is certainly applicable in this instance.

I hope that the above information, which I am sending you in confidence, will be helpful in your decision.

With warmest greetings and best wishes, I am

As ever,



Eugene Mihal

P. S. I am enclosing a brief brochure put out by Beth Adam entitled "A Concept of God," which I urge you to read. I also have in my files a number of other of their publications, including services for various occasions, etc. I should be happy to send additional material if you would like to see them.

*See -
got from
Jerr Simon
are in this
folder*



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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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MID-ATLANTIC COUNCIL
Rabbi Richard S. Sternberger

Director

John F. Lippmann
Regional President

March 15, 1990

To: Rabbi James Simon

From: Rabbi Richard S. Sternberger

✓ cc: Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Even though I spoke to you at length over the phone, I have had a great deal of difficulty answering your memo. As I grow older, I have less and less patience with rules and restrictions. I believe that Reform Judaism should be as inclusive as possible, and am not enthusiastic about barriers which will exclude people or groups. And yet if our Movement is to have any dynamism and send forth a compelling message, we cannot be all things to all people. True there are areas where we must still do battle with orthodoxy; however, the significant area of controversy is that of secularism and the secular Jew. I believe that we must underscore the importance of theology-belief-faith. Even our Reconstructionist brothers and sisters are using terms that would have been anathema even a decade ago. The theology of Mordecai Kaplan - which had its roots in the time of Russell and Dewey - is meaningless today. The work of our Committee on Religious Living is absolutely critical, and we have found great response to the programs of our Regional committee.

About a dozen years ago, a rabbi was in town to establish a Humanist congregation. He called and asked me whether I would be helpful. I gave him a negative answer, and have had my moments of guilt concerning that answer over the years. And yet I believe that we must take our stand with such contemporary Jewish thinkers as Steinheim, Rosenweig, Buber, Heschel, etc., who really have a message concerning God which our people must hear. A circuitous road to answer that we should not admit a congregation that defines itself as Humanist.

Youth Director
Harriet Sturm

Administrative Assistant
Deirdre D. Henry

Outreach Coordinator
Elizabeth H. Farquhar

UAHC Chairman
Allan Goldman

UAHC President
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Rabbi Jack Bemporad

Temple Israel

140 Central Avenue, Lawrence, New York 11559

(516) 239-1140 Study

(516) 371-2809 Home

March 6, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex,

I am in favor of accepting Congregation Beth Adam as an affiliate of the union.

I know something about the Rabbi of this congregation and its programming and I am convinced that it is not an antitheistic congregation, rather it emphasizes the humanistic elements within Judaism.

It stresses traditional beliefs which emphasize the primacy of the ethical and the interpretation of Judaism as a way of life and not solely as a Theocentric Faith.

If we make a distinction between a nominal definition as to what it means to be a Reform Jew, and a maximal definition; then minimally a reform Jew is one who has one parent that is Jewish, is brought up Jewish and has not converted to another religion; or who has converted into Judaism according to the standards of the converting Rabbi.

It seems to me that the members of Congregation Beth Adam qualify under this definition.

Judaism is not a creedal religion and questions of faith have always been open to wide variations. If our Jewish faith is the ultimate context of what gives us meaning in life, and if Judaism is the symbol through which we express that faith, then Schulweis' Predicate Theology and Kaplan's reconstructionism, though rejecting any kind of supernaturalism and any form of a personal god still would qualify under my nominal definition as would the members of congregation Beth Adam.

Perhaps we can find a parallel in Zionism. Zionism was a solution thrust upon us by historical events. It is nevertheless an anti-theistic expression of Judaism. It may be that a non-supernatural Judaism is again a solution for some of us as a response to the events of our time.

I believe our responsibility is to embrace this community and bring them closer to other Jews and a God Faith which they leave open to each individual member.

As an affiliate of the Union, we would open up the full range of UAHC programming to include them into a broader sense of Jewish Identity.

With warm regards I am,

Sincerely,



Jack Bemporad



WESTCHESTER REFORM TEMPLE

255 MAMARONECK ROAD • SCARSDALE, N. Y. 10583

Jack Stern, Jr.
Rabbi

March 5, 1990

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

I am responding to your letter of February 9 regarding "The Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism."

My own feeling is that the term "Humanistic Judaism" should not in itself be grounds for rejecting the congregation as a Union affiliate. After all, many of us in "normal" congregations will make use of that same word to describe aspects of our tradition and our own Jewish philosophical approach.

However, if the congregation describes or defines itself in specifically atheistic terminology, then I would have strong reservations about accepting them into the Union. It is one thing to say we are searching but quite another to say that we define ourselves without God. If the congregation adopts the latter course, I personally would not welcome them into our family of congregations.

I also make a distinction between a congregation many of whose members may reject any concept of a divine being and a congregation which by its own congregational self-definition, as a matter of policy and principle, rejects such a belief.

I await the outcome with interest.

Priscilla joins in warm regards to Rhea and yourself.

Sincerely,



Rabbi

JS:tm

DR. WALTER JACOB
RABBI
RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES
PITTSBURGH, PA. 15213
412-621-6566 FAX: 412-621-5475

1 March 1990

Dr. Alexander M. Schindler President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Thank you for your letter and the difficult question which you sent. If I understood it correctly, a "congregation" whose charter states that they are humanists, may apply for membership in the UAHC. How should the UAHC respond.

It is hard for me to understand their reasoning behind their application. Why should they wish to join a religious organization which regularly deals with God, prayer, mitzvot, religious education, and much more along the same lines. They would not fit into structure or programming.

Let me, however, look at the question through the eyes of tradition which would consider all Jews who reject God as sinners. Sinners, however, remain Jews (San 44a) and possess the right to attend the synagogue for prayer and study. We know, as Judaism has refrained from making dogmatic requirements, a Jew could adopt virtually any system of thought and even be an agnostic without being considered outside the fold. Spinoza was expelled from the Jewish community because it feared the retribution of the Gentile surrounding world; under other circumstances he would have remained a member of the synagogue community. Even with an apostate there is always the hope that the individual will return to Judaism, so unless the community feels endangered, he/she remains undisturbed in the synagogue and is readmitted with no formality (Jeremiah 3.22; Moses Isserles to Shulhan Arukh Yoreh Deah 268.12; Abraham Gombiner, Magen Avraham to Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayim 326; Solomon ben Simon Duran Responsa #89). There is no question therefore that individuals who absolutely reject God may be members of our congregations and are welcome. We hope that they will change their views and many have done so.

In this instance we are dealing with an entire group which has banded together as a "congregation". We normally associate that term with a religious group, but, of course, it can be secular as well. By joining together, they have made the statement that they do not wish to establish their philosophy and firmly impart it to their children. The group sounds very much like the Ethical Culture Society which seeks to teach ethics without theology. Its founder felt it necessary to leave Temple Emanuel and he was right.

Would the Ethical Culture Society have asked to be a founding member of the UAHC? They would have considered such a thought absurd and properly so.

The UAHC is a group of congregations which affirms Reform Judaism and seeks to strengthen it. Reform Judaism has been defined through the Pittsburgh Platform, the Columbus Platform, the Centenary Statement as well as numerous resolutions of the UAHC. God, however, conceived, is basic to each of those statements. A "congregation" which rejects the centrality of God in Judaism cannot be considered for membership.

We would I am certain, reject the application of a Conservative or an Orthodox congregation as it would be inappropriate ideologically. Yet our differences on ideological matters are less basic than on the centrality of God.

Any thought of moving in this direction would weaken us, lead to conflict every time we gather for prayer, to edit a textbook, or to debate a resolution.

We should not consider the application of such a congregation.

All the best to you for a continued pleasant winter. With kindest regards to Rhea.

Sincerely,


Walter Jacob

/bb

RABBI SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, D. D.

RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE

FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15213

February 21, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Colleague:

You have asked me a difficult and a troublesome question. Of course, if it were not difficult, you would not need to ask it. The question deals with the relationship of the UAHC to the numerous organizations of "Humanistic Judaism." Some of these groups already are members of the Union and others want or may want to be accepted as members. What should be the attitude of the Union to these societies? Should they be accepted as congregational members of the Union, or not?

The essential question involved is the fact of the basic belief of these societies. By the term "humanistic," they mean only "human" and nothing beyond. They do not believe in God. They believe only in the people of Israel. Can the UAHC accept members who declare openly and as a principle that they do not believe in God? It seems that a number of those god-less groups are already congregational members of the Union and others want to join. What shall be the attitude of the Union to those who are already members? Should they be expelled and if not, should those that are not members be accepted?

If we were living in Israel the problem would be in a way simpler. The Jewish community or the Jewish state welcomes all Jews. Their belief as to religious questions is irrelevant to their rights of citizenship. But our problem is different. We are not a secular state but a religious organization and certainly the word "religious" cannot be stretched to include atheism. But we do not exclude them from the Jewish community. They are expected to participate in Jewish charities, etc. But our UAHC group is specifically a religious group. We also have secular Jewish contacts in which we maintain a brotherly relationship to all Jews including them. But

Alexander M. Schindler
Page 2

February 21, 1990

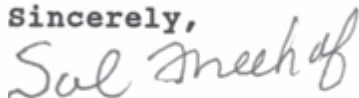
now they ask membership in our religious organization. We cannot give it to them.

As for those who are already members of the Union, what shall be our relationship to them? There comes to mind a recent Orthodox responsa-book in which the question was asked whether a Yeshiva scholar may accept being a teacher in a Conservative religious school. The answer is, yes, if he is able to win them over to Orthodoxy. We might say that this should be our attitude to those humanistic societies that are already members of the Union. We do not expel them and we do not shun them. We hope that we, by our relationship can win them over to the true worship of God.

As for non-membership of humanist groups that want to join the Union, I would have a simple test. If they will accept the Union Prayerbook as the text used in their assemblies, we are willing to extend our Jewish brotherhood tentatively and hopefully to accept them too.

Perhaps the fairest solution of the problem would be as follows: You, as the head of the Union ask the department of theology of the Hebrew Union College to decide whether the doctrine of Humanism is to be accepted as legitimate branch of our Jewish religion. The Union will then abide by this authoritative decision.

Sincerely,



Solomon B. Freehof

SBF:mgf

Founded in 1889

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Office of the President:
Rabbi Samuel E. Karff
Temple Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Blvd.
Houston, TX 77096

February 20, 1990
25 Shevat 5750

*acknowledged
free w/ others*

Dear Alex:

Concerning your inquiry on the "Society for Humanistic Judaism" let me respond as follows:

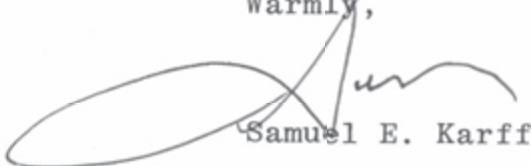
If the prospectus or statement of principles explicitly rules out the worship of God, then I would not favor the congregation's membership in the UAHC.

All Jews are, of course, welcome to join synagogues regardless of the state of their God-faith. Judaism is congenial to those who struggle with God and, of course, there is considerable theological leverage in God concepts. But to organize a synagogue on the premise that the three-dimensional covenant (God, Torah and Israel) is no longer our norm is to go beyond the boundaries of institutional legitimacy.

That at least is my initial response to your question.

With every good wish, I am

Warmly,



Samuel E. Karff

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100 CABLES UNIONUAHC

NEW YORK FEDERATION OF REFORM SYNAGOGUES

Rabbi Bernard M. Zlotowitz
Director

Rabbi Allen S. Kaplan
Associate Director

February 23, 1990

Rabbi James L. Simon
Midwest Council, UAHC
10425 Old Olive Street Road, Suite 205
St. Louis, MO 63141

Dear Rabbi Simon:

In response to your memorandum of January 25, 1990, please note that I am not in favor of the admission of Beth Adam to the UAHC. We are a religious institution that believes in the existence of God as the basic and foremost tenet in Judaism. To accept a congregation that does not believe in God flies in the face of our faith. I am fully aware that the Gates of Prayer -- the GOP latest Republican prayer book, has a service that is Humanistic. It should never have been included. To use the argument that it represents the spectrum of Reform is fallacious and misleading.

Do we ^{have to} give in to every single little group? In a word, I guess you realize I am opposed to Beth Adam becoming a member of our movement.

Warmly,


Rabbi Bernard M. Zlotowitz

BMZ:mb

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RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

March 2, 1990
5 Adar 5750

Mr. Robert Chaiken
Aronowitz, Chaiken & Hardesty
PO. Box 5367
Cincinnati, OH 45201

Dear Bob:

As you know, Jim Simon has been in touch with me concerning the Congregation of Humanistic Judaism, Beth Adam, of Cincinnati. I have been contacting various colleagues to determine their views on the admission of Humanistic Congregations. I received the enclosed response from Gene Mihaly. I believe it will be of help to you in your deliberations. I may share some quotes from this letter with others, but without identifying the author. Thus, should you discuss this matter and use quotes from the letter, perhaps you, also, might withhold naming the source.

It was good seeing you. I appreciate your helpfulness with regard to the budget process. I am also delighted that you will confirm the degrees at Founders' Day in Cincinnati.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi James Simon



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

March 2, 1990
5 Adar 5750

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5P 3K9

Dear Gunther:

I have been in contact with a few other colleagues with regard to the Congregations of Humanistic Judaism. I am enclosing one response which may be of interest to you. Indeed, on the basis of the information included in this opinion, perhaps you will want to give the matter further thought and share your judgment with me.

Obviously, I intend to continue to study this matter. It will also be discussed on a number of levels once we have a sampling of opinions.

I hope all is well with you and Elizabeth. Rhea joins me in sending our fondest regards to you both.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

*M. Schindler
Rhea*

February 26, 1990
1 Adar 5750

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5P 3K9

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

Dear Gunther:

Thank you for your prompt response to my inquiry concerning the "humanistic" congregation. I have since discovered that this is not a monistic movement, that there are actually radical divergences between the rabbis leading these congregations, as well as between the congregations themselves, so that we may well have to deal with them on an ad hoc basis.

Let me, then, gather all pertinent information and then get back to you. At the moment, there is not enough at hand to allow for a meaningful responsum.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



file of others

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3101 CLIFTON AVE. • CINCINNATI, OHIO 45220-2488
(513) 221-1875

February 22, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Welcome home! I hope you had a pleasant and fruitful trip.

Attached is a policy statement of the Beth Adam Congregation which was adopted in principle by the group on 12/12/89. It may be of help in your decision regarding their application for membership in the UAHC. I call your special attention to item 5 under "Our goals as a congregation."

With warmest greetings and best wishes, I am

As ever,


Eugene Mihalý

EM:pg
Attachment

We believe that:

1. Judaism is a way of life from which rich tradition has evolved. Interpreting and preserving the history and tradition for posterity is a responsibility of Jews in each generation.
2. Torah, including interpretations of its text based on modern knowledge, is fundamental to Reform.
3. Reform is flexible and adapts to new approaches within its overall philosophy and historical context. Humanistic Judaism is consistent with that flexibility.
4. We should not rely on benign providence for the betterment of humanity or the preservation of our planet.
5. Each person is free to hold his/her religious beliefs whether or not they agree with those of others.

Our goals as a congregation are:

1. To provide meaningful education and life cycle religious services.
2. To participate in community programs designed for the benefit of humankind.
3. To continuously examine our concepts by critical reason and to make changes to meet the test of reality.
4. To emphasize the relevant aspects of modern life and to de-emphasize those which have become irrelevant.
5. To participate in Reform Judaism and to explore membership in the U.A.H.C.
6. To advocate and facilitate a continuity of rabbinic clergy for Humanistic Judaism.

We affirm that:

1. HUC-JIR is the keystone of Reform Judaism in America.
2. The branch of HUC-JIR in Jerusalem is testimony to Reform's Zionist commitment. It merits support.
3. The academic excellence in all fields emanating from HUC-JIR are invaluable assets to all faiths throughout the world.

Beth Adam, now in its tenth year, is a pioneering effort to provide Jews with an alternative to meet religious desires. We believe that Beth Adam broadens and strengthens the scope of the Reform movement. We encourage HUC-JIR to familiarize rabbinic students with the concept of Humanistic Judaism.

Members of the congregation, encouraged and assisted by the Rabbi, have energetically and enthusiastically created religious services for all occasions. Liturgy and musical content of the services are updated to ensure relevancy. Torah, Talmud, and Midrash are appropriately incorporated into the fabric of the services.

*Adopted in principle on 12/12/89

Humanistic Judaism

*Please file
w/ others*

March 4, 1990
4 Adar 5750

Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof, D.D.
Rodef Shalom Temple
Fifth And Morewood Avenues
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dear Dr. Freehof:

Your thoughtful response to my query concerning "Humanistic Judaism" is much appreciated. As always, you are sage in your advice and in your approach to the situation.

I am grateful to you and as my study of the matter and discussions proceed, I will, of course, keep you informed.

Rhea joins me in sending warm regards from house to house.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

February 26, 1990
1 Adar 5750

Rabbi Samuel E. Karff
Temple Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Boulevard
Houston, TX 77096

Dear Sam:

I have just received your response to my inquiry concerning the Society for Humanistic Judaism. Many thanks for your prompt response.

I am gathering responses from various sources so that this matter can receive proper study. I do appreciate your having shared your thoughts with me.

With fond regards from house to house, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

*Free
W. others*

March 9, 1990
12 Adar 5750

Rabbi Jack Stern, Jr.
Westchester Reform Temple
255 Mamaroneck Road
Scarsdale, NY 10583

Dear Jack:

Many thanks for your thoughtful response to my query concerning congregations whose members consider themselves to be Humanistic Jews. I am grateful for your thoughtful comments.

There will be further study of this matter and your judgment will be very helpful in our consideration of possible application for affiliation from Humanistic Judaism congregations.

With fondest regards from house to house, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

file
67 others

March 8, 1990
11 Adar 5750

Rabbi Jack Bemporad
Temple Israel
140 Central Avenue
Lawrence, NY 11559

Dear Jack:

I appreciate your thoughtful response to my query regarding Congregation Beth Adam. Your comments will be very helpful in discussing this congregation should they apply for membership in the UAHC.

I do have one further question. You direct your comments to this one particular congregation since you know something of the congregation and the rabbi. What is your view concerning the question of Humanistic Congregations on a more general level, rather than the specifics of this one congregation. Would you be in favor of open acceptance?

Of course there will be further discussion of this matter and, as always, having the benefit of your judgment is helpful.

With fondest regards from house to house, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

*file w/
offer*

March 5, 1990
8 Adar 5750

Rabbi Walter Jacob
Rodef Shalom Temple
Fifth and Morewood Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dear Walter:

Many thanks for your prompt and thoughtful response to my inquiry concerning the Society for Humanistic Judaism. I am grateful to you.

I am gathering responses from various sources so that this matter may receive proper study. Your comments will be helpful for our discussions.

With fondest regards from house to house, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



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SOUTHEAST COUNCIL

Rabbi Frank N. Sundheim

Regional Director

February 14, 1990

FROM : Frank Sundheim
TO : Jim Simon
CC : Rabbi Alexander Schindler
RE : HUMANIST CONGREGATION

Dear Jim:

I am writing you this letter in follow-up to our conversation a few days ago and your February 12th memo. I am enclosing a copy of my first letter in case you do not find it. I shall, however, summarize some of the material that was in that letter in this memo.

This will be a lengthy memo, and I will do my best to make it Mishnah rather than Gemara. However, there are some items which I feel will need further explanation. Others if I just mention them, you certainly can fill in the commentary, as can Alex.

It is a great temptation to make this response a multi-volume tome, because the more I thought about it, the more offended I became at the thought that so many of our colleagues might feel that a Humanist congregation does not have a place underneath the Reform umbrella. If some of my points seem repetitive, it is because when I started to think in detail about our conversation, the deeper my convictions became in supporting what I wrote you in the last letter, and my pen did not stop making notes at that time. Nonetheless, let me try these arguments out for size in no particular order of importance.

My final introductory thought is that most of the time I am a theist. However, at other times, I become a Buberian, Kaplanian, a Humanist, an Agnostic, and a Polydoxist. It sometimes takes me as long as 24 hours to run the entire gamut of these approaches.

Here is my list of thoughts:

- 1) The CCAR does not excludes humanists from membership.

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UAHC Chairman of the Board

Allan B. Goldman

- 2) Our congregations do not ask for a loyalty oath to God when people become members. For whatever reasons people join congregations, very few of them do so for the theological reasons.
- 3) Would we keep a holocaust survivor out of one of our congregations because that person is a humanist? Or even an atheist?
- 4) By the nature of its faculty, HUC is committed to a multiplicity of ideas. An institution that can tenure Alvin Rienes, Abraham Chronbach, Samuel Cohon, Samuel Atlas, Gene Borowitz, plus a multitude of others could hardly be described as an institution that discourages a multiplicity of ideas. The UAHC must be the same.
- 5) As I understand it, humanists do not automatically deny God and in this point it differs from atheism. Some humanists may be theists and others may not. Many of them ignore God. Others define God in their own terms. I find none of these alternatives destructive of the Reform Jewish spirit.
- 6) Related to #5, modern humanism is far less destructive to the spirit of Judaism than was Koheleth.
- 7) I see these people as non-traditional Jews struggling to find an institutional home. If the UAHC keeps people like this away, they will find homes elsewhere and we will lose thousands of people who would in the long run be comfortable under our umbrella.
- 8) Humanists care enough about theology to think seriously about it. Many times, they are much more honest than many of us who play word games, but really don't mean what we say. Sometimes the language we use cleverly and conveniently covers our own misgivings, but because we are good at language, we can give ourselves a "kosher cop-out." I personally find humanists most refreshing in holding us to the meaning of the words we use.
- 9)* As regional directors, we must deal with political situations relating to new congregations. I am not aware of the realities in Cincinnati, but I would hate to think of the repercussions from many of our colleagues including those at HUC if a congregation were excluded because it was Humanist. Nonetheless, sometimes decisions must be made that reflect the political realities of the moment. If this should happen, we will have to live with it however distasteful it might be. But, the UAHC certainly should not be part of rejection of such a congregation L'hatchilah.

- 10) The UAHC has demonstrated its openness in the types of congregations it has taken in. We have openly embraced gay and lesbian congregations, and we even have a prison congregation within the UAHC. Given this track record, how can we keep out a congregation because it "thinks" differently than most of our congregations (at least officially)?
- 11)* This reflects part of the conversation I had with you. I understand that the UAHC Constitution and Charter does speak of the importance of God, as do the preambles to most congregational constitutions. In no way does that bind the congregation legally to these doctrines anymore than congregations are bound to agree with resolutions of a UAHC biennial. Such statements are Haggadah not Halacha. It seems that those who would oppose this humanist congregation are coming dangerously close to demanding conformity of ideology to within the Reform movement. We must give a loud and resounding NO to such thinking. Any congregation entering the UAHC is aware of the statements concerning God that are part of our Charter. If they have a problem with those words, then let them wrestle with it, and make a decision on their joining the UAHC on the basis of their deliberations. But let them state the problem, not us. If they have a problem with the UAHC Charter, then they must deal with it. It is not to us to have litmus tests or loyalty oaths to statements that were meant and should still be meant to be descriptive rather than perscriptive.
- 12)* I also discussed with you an analogy with ARZA that you asked me to enunciate in writing. When ARZA came into being many of us struggled with the question of whether we could accept the Jerusalem Platform that makes aliyah the central mitzvah of the Jewish people. We struggled with it because we took the idea seriously and we did not want to be hypocritical in our responses. I am sure that a tiny number of the people who eventually joined ARZA did so because they accepted that part of the Jerusalem Platform. I certainly was among that majority who joined for other reasons. My commitment to what ARZA was trying to do as a Reform Jewish presence within the Zionist movement simply over-rode the misgivings I had concerning the Jerusalem Platform. I would imagine that most people joining ARZA did not take this matter nearly so seriously as did I. In fact, I gave an entire Holy Day sermon on the subject, including my own questions. The result is that we have a major Jewish organization, ARZA, the vast majority of whose members do not subscribe to one of the things that was supposed to be a very basis of joining the Zionist Movement. If there is a contradiction, we live with that contradiction, most of us happily.

I think there is an analogy here to a Humanist congregation. They may have misgivings, or even deny an aspect of the UAHC Charter. But they are so close to us in 98% of everything else for which we stand, it would seem to me hypocritical on our part to exclude them.

- 13) I conclude where I started. I am very disturbed and concerned about the future of Reform Judaism if such matters as loyalty oaths to God are necessary for congregations to join the Union when we certainly do not make that request or demand of people joining our congregations. Reform Judaism has always been open to the present and the future, and I think to exclude these people on the basis of their deeply thought-through theological position would be on our parts hypocritical, destructive of the UAHC in the long run, and unconscionable.

STRONG MESSAGE TO FOLLOW!





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מתקדמת
באמריקה

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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MID-ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Rabbi Richard S. Sternberger

Director

John F. Lippmann

Regional President

March 15, 1990

To: Rabbi James Simon

From: Rabbi Richard S. Sternberger

cc: Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Even though I spoke to you at length over the phone, I have had a great deal of difficulty answering your memo. As I grow older, I have less and less patience with rules and restrictions. I believe that Reform Judaism should be as inclusive as possible, and am not enthusiastic about barriers which will exclude people or groups. And yet if our Movement is to have any dynamism and send forth a compelling message, we cannot be all things to all people. True there are areas where we must still do battle with orthodoxy; however, the significant area of controversy is that of secularism and the secular Jew. I believe that we must underscore the importance of theology-belief-faith. Even our Reconstructionist brothers and sisters are using terms that would have been anathema even a decade ago. The theology of Mordecai Kaplan - which had its roots in the time of Russell and Dewey - is meaningless today. The work of our Committee on Religious Living is absolutely critical, and we have found great response to the programs of our Regional committee.

About a dozen years ago, a rabbi was in town to establish a Humanist congregation. He called and asked me whether I would be helpful. I gave him a negative answer, and have had my moments of guilt concerning that answer over the years. And yet I believe that we must take our stand with such contemporary Jewish thinkers as Steinheim, Rosenweig, Buber, Heschel, etc., who really have a message concerning God which our people must hear. A circuitous road to answer that we should not admit a congregation that defines itself as Humanist.

Youth Director
Harriet Sturm

Administrative Assistant
Deirdre D. Henry

Outreach Coordinator
Elizabeth H. Farquhar

UAHC Chairman
Allan Goldman

UAHC President
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

✓



file
H.J.

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VICE-PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
PROFESSOR OF RABBINIC LITERATURE AND HOMILETICS

3101 CLIFTON AVE. • CINCINNATI, OHIO 45220-2488
(513) 221-1875

February 28, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Welcome back! I knew of your safe return when I read your recent very important plea not to make a political football out of the immigration of Russian Jews. As usual, your candid statement is courageous. We sorely need your voice on this as well as many other issues. May you go from strength to strength.

✓ By all means, share the information I sent you concerning Beth Adam. I repeat that I am fully persuaded that this congregation should be admitted to the Union.

✓ If you have continued going through the pile of your accumulated mail, you have undoubtedly seen my other letters regarding the Midrash on the seven stages of man and my proposal relating to the program you are planning for the UAHC board meeting.

With warmest greetings and best wishes, I am

As ever,


Eugene Mihaly

EM:pf

February 26, 1990
1 Adar 5750

Dr. Eugene Mihaly
Vice President Academic Affairs
Professor of Rabbinic Literature
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45220

Dear Gene:

I just returned from Israel and am going through the mail, one by one. I suspect that there may be other letters from you in the pile. If there are, you will hear from me later.

At the moment, I want to acknowledge your lengthy note concerning Beth Adam. Your letter is very important, since it provides information about the movement as a whole and delineates the divergence that exists between the various congregations and especially their rabbis. I would like to share this information with those who will ultimately be called upon to make the decision. May I do so without identifying your authorship?

Please let me know - - - and again, my thanks.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Rabbi Daniel Freeland, Regional Director

DATE: 13 February 1990
18 Shevat 5750

TO: Rabbi James Simon

Dear Jim,

I'm finally responding to your January 25 memo about the Humanistic congregation.

I've had a number of contacts with congregations of questionable ideology or no ideology at all. Usually they come to us because we have a reputation of delivering at least some of the services they need.

I would urge you to continue talking with them, but throw the ball into their court. If they wish to affiliate they must be willing to amend their constitution to say they are a Reform congregation affiliated with the National bodies of American Reform Judaism. Constitutional amendments usually require a congregational vote which would require republic ideological debate as to whether they want to call themselves Reform. If they do, I think we have to take them. Our own Movement is a full ideological spectrum and I don't want to be in the position of judging another's theology.

I hope this is helpful.



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

New Jersey-West Hudson Valley Council
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(201) 599-0080 FAX (201) 599-1085

MEMORANDUM

From Rabbi Lennard R. Thal
To Rabbi James L. Simon
Copies
Subject

Date 1/31/90

There is a congregation for Humanistic Judaism in the Los Angeles area but I have had no contact with them at all and would not have any idea how to reach them. To the best of my knowledge, they do not have the services of a rabbi.

Once upon a time either they or some other incarnation of the group had the late Rabbi Leslie Freund. After Les' untimely death some years ago, I have not had any contact of any sort.

If they were to contact me, I guess I would have mixed feelings. On the one hand, I firmly believe in the diversity of the Reform movement. On the other hand, there is part of me that is not even sure that such groups are really Jewish, at least in a religious sense in any conventional interpretation of that term. It might be helpful to probe, not just with the rabbi, but a number of the key lay leaders as to exactly why they would seek affiliation.

Regarding the other matter you mentioned, I would be truly offended if you named your child Lennard especially if it turns out to be a daughter. Have you thought about names such as Simple, Hyman or Lyman?

Would you truly consider naming your kid Morris?

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut

O.C., Senior Scholar
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5P 3K9
(416) 789-3291 / Fax (416) 789 9697

February 12, 1990
17 Shevat 5750

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President, UAHC.
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

I hasten to answer your personal inquiry of February 9.

My suggestion is that you submit this to the Responsa Committee of the CCAR. This would have the advantage that, by making this referral, the Union would then have a well researched and considered Reform opinion which would help it to arrive at a judgment.

Of course, I respect the personal nature of your letter and at this point will go no further. Incidentally, your she'elah, if you wish to submit it, need not come from you but might be submitted, for instance, by the chairperson of the Admissions Committee. Nor would the name of the congregation have to be mentioned in the she'elah.

With cordial regards,

Gunther

RABBI W. GUNTHER PLAUT
O.C., J.D.S., D.D., LL.D., LIT.HUM.D.
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ont. M5P 3K9
Tel. (416) 789 3291 Fax (416) 789 9697

file

11 Adar 5750/ March 8, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President, UAHC
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

Thank you for sending me further information on the question of admitting humanistic congregations (your letter of March 2).

In order to focus more clearly on the issues involved I would isolate four sub-questions:

- a. Does the congregation that seeks admission to the UAHC have a constitution that declares it to be "humanistic" and does it define that term?
- b. Does the congregation declare itself to be a "secular" institution?
- c. Does the congregation, in its gatherings and its rites, expressly deny or eschew a supernatural power?
- d. Does it matter whether the congregation engages or keeps a rabbi who is a declared humanist and teaches his/her belief regularly to the congregation?

You might wish to ask the Responsa Committee questions along these lines, but they would have to be buttressed by fairly specific information. It would of course be easier if you would ask only with regard to a single congregation, which would give you a better opportunity to provide details in the above-mentioned categories. The advice which our Committee would proffer might then become the basis for your admission policy in other, similar instances.

In case New York is a walled city and this letter arrives in time for Shushan Purim, please accept a cordial wish for a *hag Purim same'ah*.

J.



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February 15, 1990

Personal and Confidential

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Re your inquiry about The Congregation of Humanistic Judaism, Beth Adam

There are three humanistic congregations which have as their spiritual leader rabbis ordained by the Hebrew Union College: the one in Detroit led by Sherwin Wine, the "pope of the movement;" Dan Friedman's group in Chicago; and the one in Cincinnati led by Robert Barr. The Society for Humanistic Judaism claims to have about twelve other tiny groups who are nominally affiliated and have no spiritual leadership. They are insignificant both in size and in quality. Sherwin Wine is by far the most radical. He has recently changed the name of the association to "The Society for Secular Humanistic Judaism." He has also managed to interest a few intellectuals in Israel, primarily Judah Bauer and Ze'ev Katz of the Hebrew University, Simon Susskin of Paris, and, even though he is now very frail and old, Hayyim Cohen, the former chief justice of the Israeli Supreme Court. I understand that Judah Bauer will be in the United States this coming summer to help Sherwin develop and train leaders for the group, a project which Sherwin has been strongly advocating. He would like to see an independent institution to train leaders for his "movement."

Rabbi Dan Friedman has for some time been disenchanted, and he has gradually distanced himself from the Society. He will not participate in their forthcoming annual conference in San Francisco. He seriously differs from Sherwin Wine on a number of issues and is pursuing his own independent course, to the point of disaffiliation.

February 15, 1990

Robert Barr is very much at odds with Sherwin Wine, who sees Bob as "selling out." He has not been in touch with Wine for a long time. He and his group have nothing to do with the Society for Secular Humanistic Judaism. They do not belong to the Society, even though they call themselves "The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism." Barr himself is a very decent, honorable, and sincere person. He was a fine student while at the Hebrew Union College. He has been searching for a number of years and would very much like to get closer to the mainstream. He needs help in this endeavor. The application of his group to the Union is very much part of this process.

Rabbi Barr has counseled with me on numerous occasions. I am sympathetic to him. I am persuaded that we should help him in his search and buttress his resolve to find himself within the broad consensus of Reform. The three groups which have rabbinic leadership should not be viewed as a uniform entity. Each one is to be treated differently, since each one is unique and has its own character. Robert Barr's group does have within its membership a number of substantial, responsible and thinking members in prominent positions in the professions and in the academic and business worlds. Bob himself is a dedicated spiritual leader who, in my view, may well be included within the broad umbrella of Reform.

My conclusion, therefore, is that the UAHC should definitely accept his group within the Union. Such action would not only be wise, but a genuine constructive act in terms of Bob's personal struggle and in terms of the group's search for its own identity. The rabbinic dictum "let the left hand push away, but let the right hand bring near" is certainly applicable in this instance.

I hope that the above information, which I am sending you in confidence, will be helpful in your decision.

With warmest greetings and best wishes, I am

As ever,



Eugene Mihaly

P. S. I am enclosing a brief brochure put out by Beth Adam entitled "A Concept of God," which I urge you to read. I also have in my files a number of other of their publications, including services for various occasions, etc. I should be happy to send additional material if you would like to see them.

*See -
got from
Sam Simon
are in this
folder*



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ליהדות
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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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MIDWEST COUNCIL
Rabbi James L. Simon
Regional Director

February 8, 1990

Ms. Edith Miller
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

*Alex
Beth Adam
Cong.*

Dear Edie:

Since you indicate that Alex is very interested in this whole question of Beth Adam in Cincinnati, I felt it would be valuable to share with you the relevant portions of the file as it now exists. Of course I am interested in any comments, advice or guidance that I can receive from either of you on this matter.

I promise to keep you fully informed as to all developments.

B'shalom,

Rabbi James L. Simon

JLS:bjg

enclosure

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*He had called
before
what
Glor
& shared
w/ Cabinet
etc.
This will be for
file*

We believe that:

- ✓ 1. Judaism is a way of life from which rich tradition has evolved. Interpreting and preserving the history and tradition for posterity is a responsibility of Jews in each generation.
- ✓ 2. Torah, including interpretations of its text based on modern knowledge, is fundamental to Reform.
3. Reform is flexible and adapts to new approaches within its overall philosophy and historical context. Humanistic Judaism is consistent with that flexibility.
- ?? 4. We should not rely on benign providence for the betterment of humanity or the preservation of our planet.
- ✓ 5. Each person is free to hold his/her religious beliefs whether or not they agree with those of others.

Our goals as a congregation are:

- ✓ 1. To provide meaningful education and life cycle religious services.
- ✓ 2. To participate in community programs designed for the benefit of humankind.
- ✓ 3. To continuously examine our concepts by critical reason and to make changes to meet the test of reality.
- ✓ 4. To emphasize the relevant aspects of modern life and to de-emphasize those which have become irrelevant.
- ✓ 5. To participate in Reform Judaism and to explore membership in the U.A.H.C.
- ?? ✓ 6. To advocate and facilitate a continuity of rabbinic clergy for Humanistic Judaism.

We affirm that:

- ✓ 1. HUC-JIR is the keystone of Reform Judaism in America.
- ✓ 2. The branch of HUC-JIR in Jerusalem is testimony to Reform's Zionist commitment. It merits support.
- ✓ 3. The academic excellence in all fields emanating from HUC-JIR are invaluable assets to all faiths throughout the world.

Beth Adam, now in its tenth year, is a pioneering effort to provide Jews with an alternative to meet religious desires. We believe that Beth Adam broadens and strenghtens the scope of the Reform movement. We encourage HUC-JIR to familiarize rabbinic students with the concept of Humanistic Judaism.

Members of the congregation, encouraged and assisted by the Rabbi, have energetically and enthusiastically created religious services for all occasions. Liturgy and musical content of the services are updated to ensure relevancy. Torah, Talmud, and Midrash are appropriately incorporated into the fabric of the services.

Tradition
Rule of
God

Youth
Camps
College
Books
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RAC
NIOs
Syn Admin

MEMORANDUM

From Rabbi James L. Simon

Date 1/25/90

To Regional Directors

Copies

Subject Beth Adam - The Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

During the last year, I have had conversations off and on with Rabbi Bob Barr, the Rabbi of Beth Adam, the Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism. Last weekend, on a trip to Cincinnati, I met with the board to have tentative and exploratory discussions concerning the possibility of an application for membership in the UAHC. Obviously, this is a most interesting and sensitive matter, and there are many issues yet to be explored as discussed but I felt that early on in the process it might be advisable to drop each of you a note to find out if you have any strong thoughts, ideas or suggestions with respect to this proposed application.

Even though in the last four years we have talked with and worked with many prospective congregations in the region, there are some very interesting ideological questions that must be explored by both sides in the near future. I am writing to inquire if you have had any specific contact or experience with a similar congregation or if you yourself have any ideas or guidance for me with respect to the way in which this process can and should be handled.

I am not exactly sure how everything is going to turn out and it may indeed be that in the months to come that it appears that this is not something that is going to come to fruition, but I would like to make sure that I am very much on top of the situation. If you would be so kind as to give me a call or drop me a note and share with me some of your thoughts, ideas and experiences I would be most grateful.

Thanks for your assistance in this matter. As you know, Rebecca is standing ready to deliver our child at the end of March or early April, and accordingly the first person who sends back a written response will have the joy of knowing that we will name our child after him or her. I think it would be a shame to have to name a son of my Lennard, so I hope that the rest of you will GOYA and make contact with me quickly!

Richard - ok

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MIDWEST COUNCIL
Rabbi James L. Simon
Regional Director

January 26, 1990

Rabbi Bob Barr
Beth Adam
1720 Section Road, Suite 107
Cincinnati, Ohio 45237



Dear Bob:

It was good to see you last week and I am sorry we did not have more time to be together. However I am happy that I had sufficient amount of time to talk with you and your board and I very much enjoyed and appreciated that opportunity. I hope that we will have the opportunity to continue the dialogue in the months to come.

To follow up on one of the suggestions that I made, it might be worthwhile for you to identify one or two people on the board who would take the time to go over the UAHC materials that have been sent to you (especially The Guide) and to do some type of analysis of the types of services and benefits of the UAHC that would be of value to your congregation.

At the same time, and equally important, I believe that all of us should spend sufficient time talking about the very serious ideological questions that must be thoroughly confronted and discussed in the time to come. I think that one of the things that I was worried about after I left the meeting (although it did not occur to me at the time!) was the question as to whether or not the congregation and its leaders would feel that by joining the Reform movement and becoming part of the UAHC that over a long period of time the congregation would either make a number of changes or feel frustrated because the movement might not be moving in the same direction that Beth Adam is moving. I think this is a very important question to think about, and I certainly do not want to board to feel that if they do become a part of the movement that they are going to make any significant headway with respect to some of the ideas espoused by the congregation.

Let me try to be a bit more specific on this particular point because I believe it is an important point. As you know and as I mentioned, the movement clearly does not, cannot and should not go around monitoring the religious

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Page 2

Rabbi Bob Barr
January 26, 1990

practices of its Rabbis and congregations. On the other hand, it should be made clear to the leaders of your congregation that it is my sense that if there is going to be any movement at all within Reform Judaism it is clearly going to be the type of ideological change that is completely opposite of the direction in which I sense that Beth Adam is going. Ironically, you would not only then be confronting a movement which is generally loathe to return to classical Reform, but you would also be encountering a movement that is in the process of debating the question as to how much more traditional we should become. At any rate this is just one of my thoughts and I am sure that we will have other opportunities to discuss this matter. I only wanted to mention this because I believe it is an important point and one that merits further discussion by your board.

By the way, I am still checking into the whole by-law thing and when I have a definitive answer on that I will get back to you.

In the interim I hope you will keep in touch and if you have any questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to contact me. The only other piece of advice that I would offer at this point is that now that I have met with the board you might want to begin to consider spending some time with some of your Reform colleagues to get a definitive sense of their assessment of this situation. My gut feeling is that while I am sure that all of them are unanimous in their personal regard and affection for you as a friend and colleague, I would be equally interested to know if that affection and respect extends to the question of whether or not the congregation should become part of the UAHC.

I am hopeful that the next time that I come that you and I and Terri will have the chance to have dinner together. I would like that very much.

B'shalom,

Rabbi James L. Simon

JLS:bjg

MEMORANDUM

From Rabbi James L. Simon Date 1/26/90
To All Rabbis and Presidents of Cincinnati Reform Congregations
Copies Robert Chaiken, Dr. Harry Morrison, MWC Small and New
Congregations Committee
Subject Beth Adam - Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

As many of you know, a small (but significant) part of my work for the UAHC includes developing and working with new congregations as well as those congregations which show an interest in the possibility of joining the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. At this date, we are working directly and indirectly with seven to ten congregations all over the region. In April, our board will take under consideration applications from Agudas Achim (Iowa City, Iowa), Har Shalom (Fort Collins, Colorado) and Congregation Beth Torah (Overland Park, Kansas).

I am writing to you now to tell you that on January 20 I was in Cincinnati on UAHC business and at that time accepted an invitation to meet with the leaders of Beth Adam at the request and invitation of Rabbi Bob Barr. It was a very interesting exploratory meeting. The primary purpose of the meeting was for me to outline to the leaders of the congregation a number of ideas and questions that they might consider with respect to the possibility of applying for membership in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Because this is a somewhat unusual situation, I felt it would be good for me to identify some important parts of the UAHC application process so that there is no misunderstanding whatsoever. Of course, after you read this letter if you need more explanations or information feel free to call or drop me a note and I will be happy to help in any way that I can.

1. It is important to understand at the outset that the UAHC tries to walk a very delicate line with respect to new applications. On one hand, the UAHC feels (and I agree with no hesitation) that our (and my) initial obligation is to maintain and strengthen existing member congregations. It is not in anyone's interests for the UAHC to ever hurt or diminish a member congregation in any way, manner, shape or form. On the other hand, the Reform movement feels that it has a right and (at times) an obligation to help develop and encourage those new (or not so new) congregations which do have a legitimate interest in being part of the Reform movement. The problem occurs when the new congregation which seeks to become a member of the UAHC does so in such a way that it clearly threatens the existence and survival of a current UAHC congregation. The most obvious example that many of you are aware of is a "split-off" congregation which

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314-997-7566

form and whose presence seeks only to hurt and diminish the other congregation in the community. Accordingly, while we certainly are willing to talk with everyone and to try to clearly identify if there is a real potential for UAHC membership, the UAHC and my office are always mindful of the fact that our initial obligation must be to protect and enhance current UAHC congregations. It is for this reason that I do not go out of my way to recruit prospective congregations nor do I spend an inordinate amount of time working with them.

2. The meeting that was held at Beth Adam was similar to many of the meetings that I hold with prospective new congregations and it is similar to the meeting that I will be holding next month in Denver when I go to meet with the leaders of a new congregation (B'nai Torah) which has just formed in Arvada, Colorado. At this meeting I talked and gave an overview of the Reform movement, described some of the programs and services of the UAHC, and carefully urged the leaders of the congregation to think very seriously about the ramifications of an application to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In this particular situation, as you can well imagine, there certainly are some very important and interesting ideological questions that both Beth Adam and the UAHC must carefully consider. I tried to be very candid in making it clear that this is a somewhat long process, that it involves many questions, and that it is important at the outset that both sides understand that in the final analysis it may indeed not be in the best interests of both Beth Adam and the UAHC for Beth Adam to become a member of the Reform movement. Much of the meeting was spent on this particular subject, and the only promise that I made was that at some point in the late spring I would try to return to meet again with the board to see where things stand. That is exactly where we are right now in this process.

Let me apologize at this point for the prolixity of this letter, but I feel if I must err I must err on the side of telling you more than you may need or want to know!

3. A brief explanation of the UAHC application process is probably valuable at this point. It is really quite simple. After a congregation has had a number of contacts and conversations with the UAHC Regional Director they might want to file a formal application to become part of the UAHC. The application itself is six pages long and requires a number of different documents to show the vitality and the financial stability of the congregation. The application also includes an agreement by the congregation that they will agree to abide by the UAHC ethical guidelines which govern the relationships between member congregations and which primarily focus on soliciting for membership congregants from other UAHC congregations and refraining from disparaging the image personnel or the practices of another congregation. (If you would like to see a photocopy of this application please let me know.) After the application is received, two things happen. First, I carefully review the application and then pass it on to Dr. Harry Morrison, Chairman of the Midwest Council New and Small Congregations Committee. At that point, I encourage Dr. Morrison to be in

touch with leaders of the congregation to glean more information if needed, and if other questions need to be answered I work with Dr. Morrison to get the answers to those questions. At the next regularly scheduled Regional Board Meeting, Dr. Morrison will go over the application with members of his committee and they will offer a recommendation to the Regional Board as to whether or not this application should be approved.

Before the application comes to the Regional Board I write to any or all congregations in the immediate surrounding area and I ask that the board of directors of each of those congregations make some type of comment or suggestion as to whether or not they feel this application should be approved. I ask that the board communicate its feelings to me in writing, and then I pass these feelings and opinions on to the Regional New Congregations Committee. If a congregation objects strongly to a proposed application, I ask them to be very specific with respect to their objections because this is something that the New Congregations Committee and our Regional Board needs to hear and understand clearly. The key point in all of this is that existing and surrounding congregations have a voice but not a veto with respect to this application. When the Small and New Congregations Committee sits down to make its decision I will make sure that they have available all relevant materials and documents and then they will make a recommendation to the board of the Midwest Council.

If the application is not approved by the board it stops right there. If the board votes to approve the application, the application is sent on for the next meeting of the National New Congregations Committee, and at that meeting I appear to represent the Region. Quite candidly, it is very rare for an application to get that far in the process and then be turned down by the New Congregations Committee or by the National Board of Trustees of the UAHC. It is fair to say that when the National New Congregations Committee sends a favorable recommendation to the board of trustees that it is generally adopted and approved unanimously. That, in a nutshell, is the application process.

The purpose of this memo has been to try to clarify exactly what is going on and what may occur. Please know that you will be kept informed at every step of the process and that if indeed an application is received then you and your board of directors will clearly have sufficient time and opportunity to offer your own thoughts and opinions on the merit of this application. You certainly need not feel obligated to comment at this particular time. For many reasons, I believe that a comment at this time might be premature. However, if you do wish to discuss this or any of the ramifications of this with me please know that I am certainly happy to speak with you and to discuss this further.

I hope this memo clarifies the situation.



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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MIDWEST COUNCIL
Rabbi James L. Simon
Regional Director

January 30, 1990

Rabbi Robert Barr
Beth Adam
1720 Section Road, Suite 107
Cincinnati, Ohio 45237

Dear Bob:

As an addendum to my previous letter, I am enclosing for your perusal the most recent copy of the UAHC Constitution and By-Laws as well as another copy of the UAHC Membership application. I am sending you the latter for informational purposes, and not to put pressure on you to fill in the application!

A careful reading of the UAHC Constitution indicates that any Jewish congregation in the United States, upon approval by the Board of Trustees, may become a member of this Union by subscribing to its Constitution and By-Laws.

Similarly, the application for membership itself does not require that the congregation identify itself as a Reform congregation in its By-Laws, but if you look carefully at the middle page of the blue UAHC application form you will note that the secretary and the president of the congregation must attest to the fact that Beth Adam is familiar with and will abide by the Constitution and By-Laws of the UAHC and will incorporate this obligation into its By-Laws.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Just to make sure that we are on the safe side, I have sent a memo to all of my Regional colleagues to find out their experience in this particular area. If I hear anything from them I will let you know.

Very truly yours,

Rabbi James L. Simon

JLS:bjg

enclosure

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MEMORANDUM

NORTHEAST LAKES COUNCIL, UAHC
25550 Chagrin Blvd. - Suite #108
Cleveland, Ohio 44122
Phone: 216-831-6722

Regional Rabbi Dr. David S. Hachen

Date January 30, 1990

From Rabbi David S. Hachen, Regional Rabbi

To Rabbi James L. Simon

Copy for information of Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Subject Beth Adam

Dear Jim:

Please don't name the baby after me!

Twenty years ago, when I first came into the region, I visited with Sherwin Wine in Detroit. He did not say anything about his congregation joining the Union, and I did not bring up the subject. I think we both understood that the whole matter was problematic. Later, I learned that Rabbi Leon Fram had serious reservations about Sherwin's congregation, and was strongly opposed to their becoming a member of the Union. However, the subject was never brought to a head. The sample Constitution and By-Laws for congregations affiliated with the UAHC states in Article II that "The purpose of this congregation is to develop a relationship to God." The Constitution of the Union, in its Preamble, indicates that "Congregations in the UAHC affirm their faithful attachment to Judaism under the protection of benign Providence." It would be my view that these two statements indicate that a congregation which clearly asserts that it believes "in humans", and not in God, has no place in the Union. Alex might take a different view, but "thems" my thoughts.

Love from home to home.

As ever,

David

Beth Adam ain't Beth El!



Beth Adam
The Cincinnati Congregation
for Humanistic Judaism

Robert B. Barr, Rabbi

February 1, 1990

Rabbi James L. Simon
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
10425 Old Olive Street Road, Suite #205
St. Louis, Missouri 63141

Dear Jim,

I want to thank you for meeting with members of Beth Adam's Board of Trustees and past presidents. Since our meeting, I have received many positive comments from those in attendance. Though no formal discussion and vote has occurred, I am certain that there is a desire to carry on a dialogue with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations regarding membership. Jim Cummins is arranging a meeting with Bob Chaiken to discuss some of the matters raised at our initial meeting.

I just received your letter dated January 26. I agree that sufficient time needs to be spent addressing the "ideological questions that must be thoroughly confronted." Though, I am not certain of the outcome of our discussions, I believe that no matter the final disposition, this process will be beneficial for both the Union and Beth Adam. It is through exploring our commonality and differences that we will come to better understand ourselves.

As per your suggestion, I will begin discussing with local rabbis the possibility of Beth Adam joining the Union. I am looking forward to our continue contacts and having an opportunity to socialize when you are next in Cincinnati.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Robert B. Barr



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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MIDWEST COUNCIL
Rabbi James L. Simon
Regional Director

February 1, 1990

Rabbi Robert Barr
Beth Adam
1720 Section Road, Suite 107
Cincinnati, Ohio 45237

Dear Bob:

As an addendum to the addendum that I sent you on January 30 (!) my Regional colleague David Hachen has called to my attention that the preamble to the Constitution and By-Laws of the UAHC (as seen on the first page of the document) indicates clearly that congregations represented in the UAHC affirm their faithful attachment to Judaism and their adherence to its liberal interpretation, and unite to discharge their responsibilities under the protection of benign Providence.

I call this to your attention for two specific reasons. First, the Beth Adam policy statement of December 8, 1989 indicates that the congregation should not rely on benign Providence and it may be that we might have a conflict here with respect to the needs and desires of the members of your congregation who hold this belief in a strong and firm manner. Second, it's important for you to understand at the outset that this preamble, and the By-Laws of your own congregation, may come into conflict with members of the Regional Board of the UAHC or with members of the Small Congregations Committee of the National Board of Trustees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Accordingly, we may have a theological problem and a practical problem as well. With respect to the theological problem, I think you and I know and agree that we are never going to resolve that one, and I am not even sure that I want to try! However, the practical problem remains, and brings up (again) the question of how uncomfortable will it be for members of your congregation who are going to be part of an organization and part of the Reform movement that clearly seeks to be God-centered or God oriented in a number of different ways.

I am certainly not trying to cause problems, but I felt that as soon as I became aware of the language and the preamble (which I had inadvertently overlooked before) I thought I should call this to your attention.

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Page 2

Rabbi Robert Barr
February 1, 1990

Please feel free to combine this letter with my previous letter of January 30 when you discuss this matter with the leaders of your congregation.

B'shalom,

Rabbi James L. Simon

JLS:bjg



MEMORANDUM

From Rabbi Lennard R. Thal
To Rabbi James L. Simon
Copies
Subject

Date 1/31/90

There is a congregation for Humanistic Judaism in the Los Angeles area but I have had no contact with them at all and would not have any idea how to reach them. To the best of my knowledge, they do not have the services of a rabbi.

Once upon a time either they or some other incarnation of the group had the late Rabbi Leslie Freund. After Les' untimely death some years ago, I have not had any contact of any sort.

If they were to contact me, I guess I would have mixed feelings. On the one hand, I firmly believe in the diversity of the Reform movement. On the other hand, there is part of me that is not even sure that such groups are really Jewish, at least in a religious sense in any conventional interpretation of that term. It might be helpful to probe, not just with the rabbi, but a number of the key lay leaders as to exactly why they would seek affiliation.

Regarding the other matter you mentioned, I would be truly offended if you named your child Lennard especially if it turns out to be a daughter. Have you thought about names such as Simple, Hyman or Lyman?

Would you truly consider naming your kid Morris?



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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JAMES SALINGER & ASSOCIATES

Financial Service

REGISTERED INVESTMENT ADVISER

2601 SECTION ROAD
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45222
(513) 531-3106

February 5, 1990

Dear Rabbi Simon,

Thank you for your gracious letter of January 26. Our meeting, I thought, was a mutually useful effort.

The leaders of Beth Adam are for the most part relatively young and inexperienced in congregational operation. They had a chance to learn about the UAHC and its operation. Even if our membership in the UAHC never eventuates, the meeting was a valuable educational experience for them.

My education in congregational operation and knowledge of UAHC is broad and long-standing. One of my goals for Beth Adam is to achieve recognition by the UAHC and HUC-JIR that Humanistic Judaism, as practiced at Beth Adam, in all respects, is a qualitative practice of Reform Judaism, as I understand its tenets. I am at Beth Adam because I can no longer bring myself to attend services regularly in which the liturgy of the Union Prayer Book and its successor publications are used because it no longer stands the test of critical reason. Furthermore Beth Adam offers an alternative to people who for many reasons will not belong to our local Reform and Conservative congregations because they have become disenchanted with them for different reasons.

You, I hope, understand that Beth Adam enthusiastically and energetically programs Jewish education, life cycle and holiday celebration, and community participation---all in consonance with both Jewish tradition and Reform Judaism. You should also realize that the congregation spends more time studying and discussing theology than any other congregation with which I am familiar. Our members are not discouraged from possessing their personal God concepts and are encouraged to appropriately interpolate our liturgy and religious practices for their individual and private beliefs.

I appreciate your invitation to my expressing these thoughts. I do so with the fervent hope that Beth Adam's efforts to create a practicing spiritual Jewish community will gain respect from the whole Reform Jewish movement which we think is merited.

Go well!



cc: Rabbi Barr



איחוד
לרבנות
אמריקאית
המערבית

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MIDWEST COUNCIL
Rabbi James L. Simon
Regional Director

February 8, 1990

Mr. Jim Salinger
2601 Section Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45222

Dear Jim:

Thanks for your good letter of February 5. It was kind of you to write and I too look forward to future discussions on this very important issue.

Since you are obviously very knowledgeable and interested in this area, I am sure that you will find of value two recent letters that I sent to Rabbi Barr on January 30 and February 1 concerning some theological issues that should be discussed by the leaders of the congregation at a future meeting. I am sure that Rabbi Barr will share these with you and the others at an appropriate time.

I do want to respond to the middle two paragraphs of your letter of February 5 because I think they bring up another important issue that we unfortunately did not have time to discuss in a thorough manner at our meeting in January. You indicate that one of your goals for Beth Adam is "to achieve recognition by the UAHC and HUC that Humanistic Judaism, as practiced at Beth Adam, in all respects, is a qualitative practice of Reform Judaism . . ." I can certainly understand your spiritual discomfort with the liturgy of the UPB and its successor publications, but I think we might have a quarrel as to whether or not Humanistic Judaism (whether or not it is practiced at Beth Adam or anywhere else!) is indeed at all connected with Reform Judaism. This is not to imply that somehow or another Humanistic Judaism is not and cannot be a valid and authentic expression of Judaism, but rather to indicate to you that perhaps the history of the movement of Humanistic Judaism in this country was designed to be a clear and viable alternative to Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Judaism. I certainly respect the fact that Beth Adam offers an alternative to people who cannot or will not or should not belong to local Reform and Conservative congregations, but does this necessarily mean that because they do belong to Beth Adam that it indicates that they do identify as Reform or Conservative Jews? I think not.

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Page 2

Jim Salinger
February 8, 1990

This is a subject worthy of future discussion for sure.

In your penultimate paragraph, you make two points that are very important. With respect to your point about Beth Adam's enthusiastic and energetic programs, I certainly do not disagree with that. Whether or not those programs are completely in harmony with Jewish tradition and Reform Judaism is a most interesting question, because while I would agree that many of the materials that I have reviewed are clearly in keeping with the spirit of Jewish tradition in general, one could argue that the somewhat drastic and radical innovations that have been made in the context of liturgy thus render these programs and materials unique and accordingly fundamentally different from a Reform Jewish interpretation. As to the fact that the congregation spends more time studying and discussing theology than an other congregation with which you are familiar, I certainly would not disagree with you but I feel that this is somewhat of a moot point. The UAHC (and I think Judaism in general) has never been that keen on comparing congregations and Jews with each other.

I do appreciate your taking the time and effort to write. I find these questions to be extremely important and I look forward to continuing the dialogue in one form or another.

B'shalom,

Rabbi James L. Simon

JLS:bjg

cc: Rabbi Bob Barr

MEMORANDUM

From Rabbi Lennard R. Thal
To Rabbi James L. Simon
Copies
Subject

Date 1/31/90

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If they were to contact me, I guess I would have mixed feelings. On the one hand, I firmly believe in the diversity of the Reform movement. On the other hand, there is part of me that is not even sure that such groups are really Jewish, at least in a religious sense in any conventional interpretation of that term. It might be helpful to probe, not just with the rabbi, but a number of the key lay leaders as to exactly why they would seek affiliation.

Regarding the other matter you mentioned, I would be truly offended if you named your child Lennard especially if it turns out to be a daughter. Have you thought about names such as Simple, Hyman or Lyman?

Would you truly consider naming your kid Morris?



MEMORANDUM

FROM: Rabbi Daniel Freeland, Regional Director

DATE: 13 February 1990
18 Shevat 5750

TO: Rabbi James Simon

Dear Jim,

I'm finally responding to your January 25 memo about the Humanistic congregation.

I've had a number of contacts with congregations of questionable ideology or no ideology at all. Usually they come to us because we have a reputation of delivering at least some of the services they need.

I would urge you to continue talking with them, but throw the ball into their court. If they wish to affiliate they must be willing to amend their constitution to say they are a Reform congregation affiliated with the National bodies of American Reform Judaism. Constitutional amendments usually require a congregational vote which would require republic ideological debate as to whether they want to call themselves Reform. If they do, I think we have to take them. Our own Movement is a full ideological spectrum and I don't want to be in the position of judging another's theology.

I hope this is helpful.



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

New Jersey-West Hudson Valley Council
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(201) 599-0080 FAX (201) 599-1085



איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

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MIDWEST COUNCIL
Rabbi James L. Simon
Regional Director

March 20, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

I know that you are interested in hearing some of the reactions and opinions of my colleagues and thus I am taking the liberty of enclosing for your perusal the responses of Richard Sternberger, Lennard Thal, Frank Sundheim, Danny Freeland and Bernie Zlotowitz. These are the only Regional Directors that I have heard from. You may have already received a copy of Frank Sundheim's February 14 letter, but I am enclosing it just to make sure that you are able to read it.

If I receive any additional responses I will pass them on to you.

B'shalom,

Rabbi James L. Simon

JLS:bjg

cc: Robert Chaiken

P. S. Although I am very much a fan as well as a student of Dr. Mihaly, I was unimpressed with his recent letter to you. I feel that he has intentionally or inadvertently neglected discussion of the serious ideological questions which are posed by the existence of this congregation.

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MEMORANDUM

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To Rabbi James L. Simon
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Date 1/31/90

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Union of American Hebrew Congregations

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SOUTHEAST COUNCIL

Rabbi Frank N. Sundheim

Regional Director

February 14, 1990

FROM : Frank Sundheim
TO : Jim Simon
CC : Rabbi Alexander Schindler
RE : HUMANIST CONGREGATION

Dear Jim:

I am writing you this letter in follow-up to our conversation a few days ago and your February 12th memo. I am enclosing a copy of my first letter in case you do not find it. I shall, however, summarize some of the material that was in that letter in this memo.

This will be a lengthy memo, and I will do my best to make it Mishnah rather than Gemara. However, there are some items which I feel will need further explanation. Others if I just mention them, you certainly can fill in the commentary, as can Alex.

It is a great temptation to make this response a multi-volume tome, because the more I thought about it, the more offended I became at the thought that so many of our colleagues might feel that a Humanist congregation does not have a place underneath the Reform umbrella. If some of my points seem repetitive, it is because when I started to think in detail about our conversation, the deeper my convictions became in supporting what I wrote you in the last letter, and my pen did not stop making notes at that time. Nonetheless, let me try these arguments out for size in no particular order of importance.

My final introductory thought is that most of the time I am a theist. However, at other times, I become a Buberian, Kaplanian, a Humanist, an Agnostic, and a Polydoxist. It sometimes takes me as long as 24 hours to run the entire gamut of these approaches.

Here is my list of thoughts:

- 1) The CCAR does not excludes humanists from membership.

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Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

UAHC Chairman of the Board

Allan B. Goldman

- 2) Our congregations do not ask for a loyalty oath to God when people become members. For whatever reasons people join congregations, very few of them do so for the theological reasons.
- 3) Would we keep a holocaust survivor out of one of our congregations because that person is a humanist? Or even an atheist?
- 4) By the nature of its faculty, HUC is committed to a multiplicity of ideas. An institution that can tenure Alvin Rienes, Abraham Chronbach, Samuel Cohon, Samuel Atlas, Gene Borowitz, plus a multitude of others could hardly be described as an institution that discourages a multiplicity of ideas. The UAHC must be the same.
- 5) As I understand it, humanists do not automatically deny God and in this point it differs from atheism. Some humanists may be theists and others may not. Many of them ignore God. Others define God in their own terms. I find none of these alternatives destructive of the Reform Jewish spirit.
- 6) Related to #5, modern humanism is far less destructive to the spirit of Judaism than was Koheleth.
- 7) I see these people as non-traditional Jews struggling to find an institutional home. If the UAHC keeps people like this away, they will find homes elsewhere and we will lose thousands of people who would in the long run be comfortable under our umbrella.
- 8) Humanists care enough about theology to think seriously about it. Many times, they are much more honest than many of us who play word games, but really don't mean what we say. Sometimes the language we use cleverly and conveniently covers our own misgivings, but because we are good at language, we can give ourselves a "kosher cop-out." I personally find humanists most refreshing in holding us to the meaning of the words we use.
- 9)* As regional directors, we must deal with political situations relating to new congregations. I am not aware of the realities in Cincinnati, but I would hate to think of the repercussions from many of our colleagues including those at HUC if a congregation were excluded because it was Humanist. Nonetheless, sometimes decisions must be made that reflect the political realities of the moment. If this should happen, we will have to live with it however distasteful it might be. But, the UAHC certainly should not be part of rejection of such a congregation L'hatchilah.

- 10) The UAHC has demonstrated its openness in the types of congregations it has taken in. We have openly embraced gay and lesbian congregations, and we even have a prison congregation within the UAHC. Given this track record, how can we keep out a congregation because it "thinks" differently than most of our congregations (at least officially)?
- 11)* This reflects part of the conversation I had with you. I understand that the UAHC Constitution and Charter does speak of the importance of God, as do the preambles to most congregational constitutions. In no way does that bind the congregation legally to these doctrines anymore than congregations are bound to agree with resolutions of a UAHC biennial. Such statements are Haggadah not Halacha. It seems that those who would oppose this humanist congregation are coming dangerously close to demanding conformity of ideology to within the Reform movement. We must give a loud and resounding NO to such thinking. Any congregation entering the UAHC is aware of the statements concerning God that are part of our Charter. If they have a problem with those words, then let them wrestle with it, and make a decision on their joining the UAHC on the basis of their deliberations. But let them state the problem, not us. If they have a problem with the UAHC Charter, then they must deal with it. It is not to us to have litmus tests or loyalty oaths to statements that were meant and should still be meant to be descriptive rather than perscriptive.
- 12)* I also discussed with you an analogy with ARZA that you asked me to enunciate in writing. When ARZA came into being many of us struggled with the question of whether we could accept the Jerusalem Platform that makes aliyah the central mitzvah of the Jewish people. We struggled with it because we took the idea seriously and we did not want to be hypocritical in our responses. I am sure that a tiny number of the people who eventually joined ARZA did so because they accepted that part of the Jerusalem Platform. I certainly was among that majority who joined for other reasons. My commitment to what ARZA was trying to do as a Reform Jewish presence within the Zionist movement simply over-rode the misgivings I had concerning the Jerusalem Platform. I would imagine that most people joining ARZA did not take this matter nearly so seriously as did I. In fact, I gave an entire Holy Day sermon on the subject, including my own questions. The result is that we have a major Jewish organization, ARZA, the vast majority of whose members do not subscribe to one of the things that was supposed to be a very basis of joining the Zionist Movement. If there is a contradiction, we live with that contradiction, most of us happily.

I think there is an analogy here to a Humanist congregation. They may have misgivings, or even deny an aspect of the UAHC Charter. But they are so close to us in 98% of everything else for which we stand, it would seem to me hypocritical on our part to exclude them.

- 13) I conclude where I started. I am very disturbed and concerned about the future of Reform Judaism if such matters as loyalty oaths to God are necessary for congregations to join the Union when we certainly do not make that request or demand of people joining our congregations. Reform Judaism has always been open to the present and the future, and I think to exclude these people on the basis of their deeply thought-through theological position would be on our parts hypocritical, destructive of the UAHC in the long run, and unconscionable.

STRONG MESSAGE TO FOLLOW!



MEMORANDUM

FROM: Rabbi Daniel Freeland, Regional Director

DATE: 13 February 1990
18 Shevat 5750

TO: Rabbi James Simon

Dear Jim,

I'm finally responding to your January 25 memo about the Humanistic congregation.

I've had a number of contacts with congregations of questionable ideology or no ideology at all. Usually they come to us because we have a reputation of delivering at least some of the services they need.

I would urge you to continue talking with them, but throw the ball into their court. If they wish to affiliate they must be willing to amend their constitution to say they are a Reform congregation affiliated with the National bodies of American Reform Judaism. Constitutional amendments usually require a congregational vote which would require republic ideological debate as to whether they want to call themselves Reform. If they do, I think we have to take them. Our own Movement is a full ideological spectrum and I don't want to be in the position of judging another's theology.

I hope this is helpful.



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

New Jersey-West Hudson Valley Council
ONE KALISA WAY, SUITE 104, PARAMUS, NJ 07652
(201) 599-0080 FAX (201) 599-1085

MEMORANDUM

March 26, 1990
29 Adar 5750

FROM: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
TO: Allan B. Goldman, Esq. & Melvin Merians
RE: CONGREGATIONS FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

We will undoubtedly receive an official request for affiliation with the UAHC from a Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in the Midwest Council. There are a growing number of such congregations and thus I thought we should study the situation with care.

Enclosed are the responses which I received from respected colleagues I contacted to request their opinions. I share them for your perusal. These congregations may well turn to us in the future and we must be prepared to deal with them with knowledge and thoughtfulness.

Right now the matter is under consideration and study in the Midwest Council and I have asked them to enlarge their regular New Congregations Committee to assure a spectrum of lay and rabbinic as well as ideological representation, so that this matter will be properly pre-digested before it comes to national.

Warm regards.

Encl.

DR. WALTER JACOB
RABBI
RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES
PITTSBURGH, PA. 15213
412-621-6566 FAX: 412-621-5475

1 March 1990

Dr. Alexander M. Schindler President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Thank you for your letter and the difficult question which you sent. If I understood it correctly, a "congregation" whose charter states that they are humanists, may apply for membership in the UAHC. How should the UAHC respond.

It is hard for me to understand their reasoning behind their application. Why should they wish to join a religious organization which regularly deals with God, prayer, mitzvot, religious education, and much more along the same lines. They would not fit into structure or programming.

Let me, however, look at the question through the eyes of tradition which would consider all Jews who reject God as sinners. Sinners, however, remain Jews (San 44a) and possess the right to attend the synagogue for prayer and study. We know, as Judaism has refrained from making dogmatic requirements, a Jew could adopt virtually any system of thought and even be an agnostic without being considered outside the fold. Spinoza was expelled from the Jewish community because it feared the retribution of the Gentile surrounding world; under other circumstances he would have remained a member of the synagogue community. Even with an apostate there is always the hope that the individual will return to Judaism, so unless the community feels endangered, he/she remains undisturbed in the synagogue and is readmitted with no formality (Jeremiah 3.22; Moses Isserles to Shulhan Arukh Yoreh Deah 268.12; Abraham Gombiner, Magen Avraham to Shulhan Arukh Orach Hayim 326; Solomon ben Simon Duran Responsa #89). There is no question therefore that individuals who absolutely reject God may be members of our congregations and are welcome. We hope that they will change their views and many have done so.

In this instance we are dealing with an entire group which has banded together as a "congregation". We normally associate that term with a religious group, but, of course, it can be secular as well. By joining together, they have made the statement that they do not wish to establish their philosophy and firmly impart it to their children. The group sounds very much like the Ethical Culture Society which seeks to teach ethics without theology. Its founder felt it necessary to leave Temple Emanuel and he was right.

Would the Ethical Culture Society have asked to be a founding member of the UAHC? They would have considered such a thought absurd and properly so.

The UAHC is a group of congregations which affirms Reform Judaism and seeks to strengthen it. Reform Judaism has been defined through the Pittsburgh Platform, the Columbus Platform, the Centenary Statement as well as numerous resolutions of the UAHC. God, however, conceived, is basic to each of those statements. A "congregation" which rejects the centrality of God in Judaism cannot be considered for membership.

We would I am certain, reject the application of a Conservative or an Orthodox congregation as it would be inappropriate ideologically. Yet our differences on ideological matters are less basic than on the centrality of God.

Any thought of moving in this direction would weaken us, lead to conflict every time we gather for prayer, to edit a textbook, or to debate a resolution.

We should not consider the application of such a congregation.

All the best to you for a continued pleasant winter. With kindest regards to Rhea.

Sincerely,

Walter Jacob

/bb

**Aronowitz,
Chaiken &
Hardesty**

Certified Public Accountants

Put in
folder
Hershe
Judson

105 East Fourth Street, P.O. Box 5367, Cincinnati, Ohio 45201 • (513) 621-8300

March 8, 1990

COPY

Bernard Aronowitz, CPA
Robert Chaiken, CPA
Richard J. Hardesty, CPA
John T. McKinley, CPA
Richard R. Vestring, CPA
Jerome D. Kreger, CPA
William G. Wessendarp, CPA
Linda Tracy Gill, CPA

Rabbi James L. Simon
UAHC
10425 Old Olive Street Road
Suite 205
St. Louis, Missouri 63141

Dear Jimmy:

I wish to report to you on the meeting that I had yesterday with Rabbi Robert B. Barr of Beth Adam Congregation in Cincinnati, James Cummins, Treasurer of the Congregation, and Harriett Edwards, President of the Congregation.

We had a cordial meeting and the issues, in no particular order, raised and discussed were as follows:

1. They were concerned about the criteria for admission to the UAHC. They were afraid that there might be some people who had some philosophical objectives to their congregation and would "veto" their admission. I advised them that the only time in my experience that the admission of a new congregation had been questioned was where the congregation seeking admission was a split-off of another congregation and some ill feelings still remain between the former congregation and members of the new congregation. I assured them that this, in my opinion, was not the case as it relates to their congregation so that there should not be any "political" considerations for their admission to the UAHC.
2. We discussed the benefits of their belonging to the UAHC vis-a-vis the 100 things that the UAHC does for member congregations, as well as how their members could participate in activities of the UAHC (specifically, committee participation, Regional Board, National Board, etc., etc.).

We did discuss the issue of their membership being exposed to religious practices that they might not follow in the course of their activities at Beth Adam and that they have to prepare for that eventuality. They did ask whether or not in the course of their members' activities in the UAHC there would be the opportunity for them to show, tell, exhibit, or otherwise disseminate the practices and materials that they use in the course of their worship services. I told them that I wasn't sure, but it seemed to me that there is an interchange of ideas and practices that exist and they certainly would not be excluded from that.

March 8, 1990

Page 2

3. I asked whether they had a long-range plan as far as where they wanted their congregation to go. The practical considerations of their making a financial commitment to paying dues to the UAHC and the fact that, at the present time, do not have a building and would they need a building in the future, etc., etc. They did tell me that there was no long-range plan, but they will shortly form a committee to begin that exercise.
4. They asked me what the next step is. I told them that, in my opinion, the UAHC must determine whether or not any theological differences can be overcome. That must be decided before anything else happens. If, in fact, those differences are not an impediment to their becoming a member congregation of the UAHC, then they can begin the process of getting their Board and membership to agree to modify their bylaws and to formerly apply for membership in the UAHC.

I suggested that it might be appropriate (subject to Rabbi Schindler's approval) that Rabbi Barr and perhaps one of the officers of the congregation visit New York to meet with Rabbi Schindler and a group Lay and Rabbinic leaders of the UAHC to discuss the theologic issues. I indicated I was not qualified to do that, but I felt Rabbi Schindler might wish to do that.

I also indicated that we might extend an invitation to them to come to the Midwest Regional Board meeting in April in St. Louis as observers to see just exactly what goes on at the Board meetings and to get a flavor of how the Union membership functions. They thought they might do so.

The meeting concluded with their indicating to me that they have an annual meeting sometime in May and that would be an appropriate time to start the process of their making application, if, in fact, the UAHC has indicated no impediment to their membership in so far as the theological problems are concerned.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Rabbi Schindler to ask for his reactions to this meeting and to perhaps give me some insight as to his thinking on how to proceed.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kindest, personal regards.

Sincerely,

ARONOWITZ, CHAIKEN & HARDESTY


Robert Chaiken

RC/kk

cc: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President ✓

WESTCHESTER REFORM TEMPLE

255 MAMARONECK ROAD • SCARSDALE, N. Y. 10583

Jack Stern, Jr.
Rabbi

March 5, 1990

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

I am responding to your letter of February 9 regarding "The Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism."

My own feeling is that the term "Humanistic Judaism" should not in itself be grounds for rejecting the congregation as a Union affiliate. After all, many of us in "normal" congregations will make use of that same word to describe aspects of our tradition and our own Jewish philosophical approach.

However, if the congregation describes or defines itself in specifically atheistic terminology, then I would have strong reservations about accepting them into the Union. It is one thing to say we are searching but quite another to say that we define ourselves without God. If the congregation adopts the latter course, I personally would not welcome them into our family of congregations.

I also make a distinction between a congregation many of whose members may reject any concept of a divine being and a congregation which by its own congregational self-definition, as a matter of policy and principle, rejects such a belief.

I await the outcome with interest.

Priscilla joins in warm regards to Rhea and yourself.

Sincerely,

JS:tm

Rabbi

Rabbi Jack Bemporad

Temple Israel

140 Central Avenue, Lawrence, New York 11559

(516) 239-1140 Study

(516) 371-2809 Home

March 6, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex,

I am in favor of accepting Congregation Beth Adam as an affiliate of the union.

I know something about the Rabbi of this congregation and its programming and I am convinced that it is not an antitheistic congregation, rather it emphasizes the humanistic elements within Judaism.

It stresses traditional beliefs which emphasize the primacy of the ethical and the interpretation of Judaism as a way of life and not solely as a Theocentric Faith.

If we make a distinction between a nominal definition as to what it means to be a Reform Jew, and a maximal definition; then minimally a reform Jew is one who has one parent that is Jewish, is brought up Jewish and has not converted to another religion; or who has converted into Judaism according to the standards of the converting Rabbi.

It seems to me that the members of Congregation Beth Adam qualify under this definition.

Judaism is not a creedal religion and questions of faith have always been open to wide variations. If our Jewish faith is the ultimate context of what gives us meaning in life, and if Judaism is the symbol through which we express that faith, then Schulweiss' Predicate Theology and Kaplan's reconstructionism, though rejecting any kind of supernaturalism and any form of a personal god still would qualify under my nominal definition as would the members of congregation Beth Adam.

Perhaps we can find a parallel in Zionism. Zionism was a solution thrust upon us by historical events. It is nevertheless an anti-theistic expression of Judaism. It may be that a non-supernatural Judaism is again a solution for some of us as a response to the events of our time.

I believe our responsibility is to embrace this community and bring them closer to other Jews and a God Faith which they leave open to each individual member.

As an affiliate of the Union, we would open up the full range of UAHC programming to include them into a broader sense of Jewish Identity.

With warm regards I am,

Sincerely,

Jack

Jack Bemporad





איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
2027 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 232-4242 Fax: (202) 483-6550

MID-ATLANTIC COUNCIL
Rabbi Richard S. Sternberger

Director

John F. Lippmann
Regional President

March 15, 1990

To: Rabbi James Simon

From: Rabbi Richard S. Sternberger

✓ cc: Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Even though I spoke to you at length over the phone, I have had a great deal of difficulty answering your memo. As I grow older, I have less and less patience with rules and restrictions. I believe that Reform Judaism should be as inclusive as possible, and am not enthusiastic about barriers which will exclude people or groups. And yet if our Movement is to have any dynamism and send forth a compelling message, we cannot be all things to all people. True there are areas where we must still do battle with orthodoxy; however, the significant area of controversy is that of secularism and the secular Jew. I believe that we must underscore the importance of theology-belief-faith. Even our Reconstructionist brothers and sisters are using terms that would have been anathema even a decade ago. The theology of Mordecai Kaplan - which had its roots in the time of Russell and Dewey - is meaningless today. The work of our Committee on Religious Living is absolutely critical, and we have found great response to the programs of our Regional committee.

About a dozen years ago, a rabbi was in town to establish a Humanist congregation. He called and asked me whether I would be helpful. I gave him a negative answer, and have had my moments of guilt concerning that answer over the years. And yet I believe that we must take our stand with such contemporary Jewish thinkers as Steinheim, Rosenweig, Buber, Heschel, etc., who really have a message concerning God which our people must hear. A circuitous road to answer that we should not admit a congregation that defines itself as Humanist.

Youth Director
Harriet Sturm

Administrative Assistant
Deirdre D. Henry

Outreach Coordinator
Elizabeth H. Farquhar

UAHC Chairman
Allan Goldman

UAHC President
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler



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(513) 221-1875

February 15, 1990

Personal and Confidential

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

Re your inquiry about The Congregation of Humanistic Judaism, Beth Adam

There are three humanistic congregations which have as their spiritual leader rabbis ordained by the Hebrew Union College: the one in Detroit led by Sherwin Wine, the "pope of the movement;" Dan Friedman's group in Chicago; and the one in Cincinnati led by Robert Barr. The Society for Humanistic Judaism claims to have about twelve other tiny groups who are nominally affiliated and have no spiritual leadership. They are insignificant both in size and in quality. Sherwin Wine is by far the most radical. He has recently changed the name of the association to "The Society for Secular Humanistic Judaism." He has also managed to interest a few intellectuals in Israel, primarily Judah Bauer and Ze'ev Katz of the Hebrew University, Simon Susskin of Paris, and, even though he is now very frail and old, Hayyim Cohen, the former chief justice of the Israeli Supreme Court. I understand that Judah Bauer will be in the United States this coming summer to help Sherwin develop and train leaders for the group, a project which Sherwin has been strongly advocating. He would like to see an independent institution to train leaders for his "movement."

Rabbi Dan Friedman has for some time been disenchanted, and he has gradually distanced himself from the Society. He will not participate in their forthcoming annual conference in San Francisco. He seriously differs from Sherwin Wine on a number of issues and is pursuing his own independent course, to the point of disaffiliation.

February 15, 1990

Robert Barr is very much at odds with Sherwin Wine, who sees Bob as "selling out." He has not been in touch with Wine for a long time. He and his group have nothing to do with the Society for Secular Humanistic Judaism. They do not belong to the Society, even though they call themselves "The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism." Barr himself is a very decent, honorable, and sincere person. He was a fine student while at the Hebrew Union College. He has been searching for a number of years and would very much like to get closer to the mainstream. He needs help in this endeavor. The application of his group to the Union is very much part of this process.

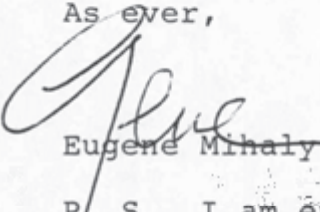
Rabbi Barr has counseled with me on numerous occasions. I am sympathetic to him. I am persuaded that we should help him in his search and buttress his resolve to find himself within the broad consensus of Reform. The three groups which have rabbinic leadership should not be viewed as a uniform entity. Each one is to be treated differently, since each one is unique and has its own character. Robert Barr's group does have within its membership a number of substantial, responsible and thinking members in prominent positions in the professions and in the academic and business worlds. Bob himself is a dedicated spiritual leader who, in my view, may well be included within the broad umbrella of Reform.

My conclusion, therefore, is that the UAHC should definitely accept his group within the Union. Such action would not only be wise, but a genuine constructive act in terms of Bob's personal struggle and in terms of the group's search for its own identity. The rabbinic dictum "let the left hand push away, but let the right hand bring near" is certainly applicable in this instance.

I hope that the above information, which I am sending you in confidence, will be helpful in your decision.

With warmest greetings and best wishes, I am

As ever,



Eugene Mihaly

P. S. I am enclosing a brief brochure put out by Beth Adam entitled "A Concept of God," which I urge you to read. I also have in my files a number of other of their publications, including services for various occasions, etc. I should be happy to send additional material if you would like to see them.

*See -
got from
Sam Simon
are in this
folder*

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut

O.C., Senior Scholar
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5P 3K9
(416) 789-3291 / Fax (416) 789 9697

February 12, 1990
17 Shevat 5750

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President, UAHF.
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

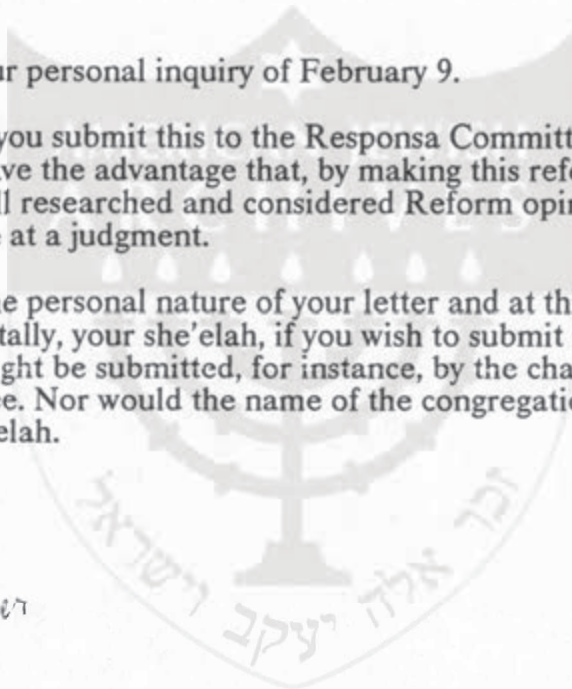
I hasten to answer your personal inquiry of February 9.

My suggestion is that you submit this to the Responsa Committee of the CCAR. This would have the advantage that, by making this referral, the Union would then have a well researched and considered Reform opinion which would help it to arrive at a judgment.

Of course, I respect the personal nature of your letter and at this point will go no further. Incidentally, your she'elah, if you wish to submit it, need not come from you but might be submitted, for instance, by the chairperson of the Admissions Committee. Nor would the name of the congregation have to be mentioned in the she'elah.

With cordial regards,

Gunther



RABBI W. GUNTHER PLAUT
O.C., J.D.S., D.D., LL.D., LIT.HUM.D.
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ont. M5P 3K9
Tel. (416) 789 3291 Fax (416) 789 9697

Free

11 Adar 5750/ March 8, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President, UAHC
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

Thank you for sending me further information on the question of admitting humanistic congregations (your letter of March 2).

In order to focus more clearly on the issues involved I would isolate four sub-questions:

- a. Does the congregation that seeks admission to the UAHC have a constitution that declares it to be "humanistic" and does it define that term?
- b. Does the congregation declare itself to be a "secular" institution?
- c. Does the congregation, in its gatherings and its rites, expressly deny or eschew a supernatural power?
- d. Does it matter whether the congregation engages or keeps a rabbi who is a declared humanist and teaches his/her belief regularly to the congregation?

You might wish to ask the Responsa Committee questions along these lines, but they would have to be buttressed by fairly specific information. It would of course be easier if you would ask only with regard to a single congregation, which would give you a better opportunity to provide details in the above-mentioned categories. The advice which our Committee would proffer might then become the basis for your admission policy in other, similar instances.

In case New York is a walled city and this letter arrives in time for Shushan Purim, please accept a cordial wish for a *hag Purim same'ah*.

RABBI SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, D. D.

RODEF SHALOM TEMPLE
FIFTH AND MOREWOOD AVENUES
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15213

February 21, 1990

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Colleague:

You have asked me a difficult and a troublesome question. Of course, if it were not difficult, you would not need to ask it. The question deals with the relationship of the UAHC to the numerous organizations of "Humanistic Judaism." Some of these groups already are members of the Union and others want or may want to be accepted as members. What should be the attitude of the Union to these societies? Should they be accepted as congregational members of the Union, or not?

The essential question involved is the fact of the basic belief of these societies. By the term "humanistic," they mean only "human" and nothing beyond. They do not believe in God. They believe only in the people of Israel. Can the UAHC accept members who declare openly and as a principle that they do not believe in God? It seems that a number of those god-less groups are already congregational members of the Union and others want to join. What shall be the attitude of the Union to those who are already members? Should they be expelled and if not, should those that are not members be accepted?

If we were living in Israel the problem would be in a way simpler. The Jewish community or the Jewish state welcomes all Jews. Their belief as to religious questions is irrelevant to their rights of citizenship. But our problem is different. We are not a secular state but a religious organization and certainly the word "religious" cannot be stretched to include atheism. But we do not exclude them from the Jewish community. They are expected to participate in Jewish charities, etc. But our UAHC group is specifically a religious group. We also have secular Jewish contacts in which we maintain a brotherly relationship to all Jews including them. But

Alexander M. Schindler
Page 2

February 21, 1990

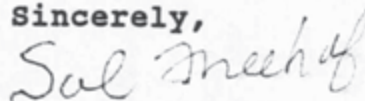
now they ask membership in our religious organization. We cannot give it to them.

As for those who are already members of the Union, what shall be our relationship to them? There comes to mind a recent Orthodox responsa-book in which the question was asked whether a Yeshiva scholar may accept being a teacher in a Conservative religious school. The answer is, yes, if he is able to win them over to Orthodoxy. We might say that this should be our attitude to those humanistic societies that are already members of the Union. We do not expel them and we do not shun them. We hope that we, by our relationship can win them over to the true worship of God.

As for non-membership of humanist groups that want to join the Union, I would have a simple test. If they will accept the Union Prayerbook as the text used in their assemblies, we are willing to extend our Jewish brotherhood tentatively and hopefully to accept them too.

Perhaps the fairest solution of the problem would be as follows: You, as the head of the Union ask the department of theology of the Hebrew Union College to decide whether the doctrine of Humanism is to be accepted as legitimate branch of our Jewish religion. The Union will then abide by this authoritative decision.

Sincerely,



Solomon B. Freehof

SBF:mgf

Founded in 1889

אגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

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Office of the President:
Rabbi Samuel E. Karff
Temple Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Blvd.
Houston, TX 77096

February 20, 1990
25 Shevat 5750

*acknowledged
file w/John*

Dear Alex:

Concerning your inquiry on the "Society for Humanistic Judaism" let me respond as follows:

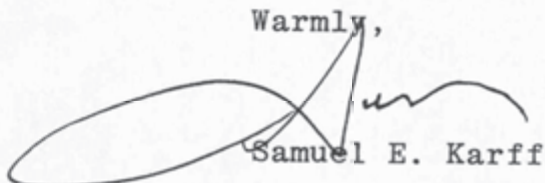
If the prospectus or statement of principles explicitly rules out the worship of God, then I would not favor the congregation's membership in the UAHC.

All Jews are, of course, welcome to join synagogues regardless of the state of their God-faith. Judaism is congenial to those who struggle with God and, of course, there is considerable theological leverage in God concepts. But to organize a synagogue on the premise that the three-dimensional covenant (God, Torah and Israel) is no longer our norm is to go beyond the boundaries of institutional legitimacy.

That at least is my initial response to your question.

With every good wish, I am

Warmly,



Samuel E. Karff

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

OFFICERS:

Rabbi Samuel E. Karff, President
Houston, TX

Rabbi Walter Jacob, Vice President
Pittsburgh, PA

Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser, Executive Vice President
New York, NY

Rabbi Frederick C. Schwartz, Treasurer
Chicago, IL

Rabbi Eugene H. Levy, Recording Secretary
Little Rock, AR

Rabbi Gerald I. Weider, Financial Secretary
Brooklyn, NY

Rabbi Elliot L. Stevens, Administrative Secretary
New York, NY

Rabbi Sidney L. Regner, Executive Vice President Emeritus
New York, NY

Rabbi Jacob R. Marcus, Honorary President
Cincinnati, OH

This letter was sent "personal and confidential" to the following:

✓ Dr. Eugene C. Mihaly
HUC-JIR
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45220

✓ Rabbi Jack Bemporad
Temple Israel
140 Central Avenue
Lawrence, LI, N.Y. 11559

✓ Dr. Solomon B. Freehof
Rodef Shalom Congregation
4905 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Canada

✓ Rabbi Gunther W. Plaut
Holy Blossom Temple
1950 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ont. M5P 3K9

✓ Rabbi Samuel E. Karff
Congregation Beth Israel
5600 N. Braeswood Blvd.
Houston, TX 77096

✓ Rabbi Walter C. Jacob
Rodef Shalom Congregation
4905 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pa 15213

✓ Rabbi Jack Stern
Westchester Reform Temple
255 Mamaroneck Road
Scarsdale, NY 10583



Rec'd

Hacha
Sundheim

February 9, 1990
14 Shevat 5750

Dr. Eugene C. Mihaly
HUC-JIR
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45220

Dear Gene:

I am making inquiry of a private nature and ask your counsel. It is a matter which relates to the "Society For Humanistic Judaism."

You know all about the Society and the agnosticism on which it is predicated. I really don't know how large that Society is, nor how many rabbis are committed to its precepts and the advancement of its work. Some individual rabbis leading Reform congregations may well be members of the Society, but no congregation defining itself in that Society's terms has sought affiliation with the UAHC.

I recently heard from our Regional Director that one of these congregations is presently exploring the possibility of affiliating with the Union. I refer to Congregation Beth Adam, "The Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism". This, then is the essence of my inquiry. What, in your judgment, should the Union's response be?

I eagerly await your evaluation and opinion in this connection.

With warm regards I am,

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

MEMORANDUM

From Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
To Rabbi James L. Simon
Copies bcc: Arthur Grant
Subject PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Date February 5, 1990

The first time I saw your memo of January 25 in regard to Beth Adam, the Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, was the copy attached to David Hachen's response to you. This is a fascinating subject and I hope you will share with my any and all responses you get from regional directors which do not indicate they have copies me. I will be very interested in the comments you receive.

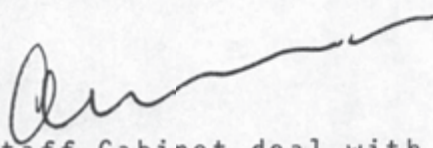
Beyond this in-house query, I believe we are dealing with a situation which may well arise often in the future. Thus, I agree that we should study it now. However, I want to go beyond the regional directors, or even our own staff, to seek comments from a wider group of colleagues, including those who are deeply involved in Responsa.

Thus, I am going to share the query with about eight or nine highly regarded Reform rabbis to ascertain their insight. I will provide the language of our Constitution and By-Laws but believe that in studying the query at this time we need not be overly concerned with that language.

Jim, when you receive such fascinating problems in the future, please share them with me. This subject is very interesting and merits our serious study.

On an entirely different subject...if you are forced to honor Thal, the name would have to be spelled correctly even for a girl and I don't opt for Lennarda....Leonerda smacks of nerd and we can't have that! So what's wrong with Alexander, Alex or Alix, Alexandra for even Alexsis!

Love to you from Rhea too.....and to Rebecca too.



P.S. Jim, I want to have the Staff Cabinet deal with this initial and then it will go to the Officers of the Union. If you have any responses which are not shared with me please be sure to copy me. Many thanks.



MEMORANDUM

From Rabbi James L. Simon

Date 1/25/90

To Regional Directors

Copies

Subject Beth Adam - The Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

During the last year, I have had conversations off and on with Rabbi Bob Barr, the Rabbi of Beth Adam, the Cincinnati Congregation for Humanistic Judaism. Last weekend, on a trip to Cincinnati, I met with the board to have tentative and exploratory discussions concerning the possibility of an application for membership in the UAHC. Obviously, this is a most interesting and sensitive matter, and there are many issues yet to be explored as discussed but I felt that early on in the process it might be advisable to drop each of you a note to find out if you have any strong thoughts, ideas or suggestions with respect to this proposed application.

Even though in the last four years we have talked with and worked with many prospective congregations in the region, there are some very interesting ideological questions that must be explored by both sides in the near future. I am writing to inquire if you have had any specific contact or experience with a similar congregation or if you yourself have any ideas or guidance for me with respect to the way in which this process can and should be handled.

I am not exactly sure how everything is going to turn out and it may indeed be that in the months to come that it appears that this is not something that is going to come to fruition, but I would like to make sure that I am very much on top of the situation. If you would be so kind as to give me a call or drop me a note and share with me some of your thoughts, ideas and experiences I would be most grateful.

Thanks for your assistance in this matter. As you know, Rebecca is standing ready to deliver our child at the end of March or early April, and accordingly the first person who sends back a written response will have the joy of knowing that we will name our child after him or her. I think it would be a shame to have to name a son of my Lennard, so I hope that the rest of you will GOYA and make contact with me quickly!

or
daughter
(Leonarda?)
Leonarda!

XXXOCO
JLS

MIDWEST COUNCIL, UAHC
10425 Old Olive Street Road
Suite 205
St. Louis, MO 63141
314-997-7566

MEMORANDUM

NORTHEAST LAKES COUNCIL, UAHC
25550 Chagrin Blvd. - Suite #108
Cleveland, Ohio 44122
Phone: 216-831-6722

Regional Rabbi Dr. David S. Hachen

Date January 30, 1990

From Rabbi David S. Hachen, Regional Rabbi

To Rabbi James L. Simon

Copy for information of Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Subject Beth Adam

Dear Jim:

Please don't name the baby after me!

Twenty years ago, when I first came into the region, I visited with Sherwin Wine in Detroit. He did not say anything about his congregation joining the Union, and I did not bring up the subject. I think we both understood that the whole matter was problematic. Later, I learned that Rabbi Leon Fram had serious reservations about Sherwin's congregation, and was strongly opposed to their becoming a member of the Union. However, the subject was never brought to a head. The sample Constitution and By-Laws for congregations affiliated with the UAHC states in Article II that "The purpose of this congregation is to develop a relationship to God." The Constitution of the Union, in its Preamble, indicates that "Congregations in the UAHC affirm their faithful attachment to Judaism under the protection of benign Providence." It would be my view that these two statements indicate that a congregation which clearly asserts that it believes "in humans", and not in God, has no place in the Union. Alex might take a different view, but "thems" my thoughts.

Love from home to home.

As ever,
David
Beth Adam ain't Beth El!

MEMORANDUM

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