

MS-630: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler Digital Collection, 1961-1996. Series A: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961-1996.

> Box 11

Folder 3a

Outreach [Missionizing], 1993-1994.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the American Jewish Archives website.

3101 Clifton Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220 513.487.3000 AmericanJewishArchives.org 94-04-01 11:51:49 EDT

Subj: Schindler... From: TribbleHed

...scares me.

The same UAHC that sends out "The Target is You" (a wonderful video about how to fight back to Jews for Jesus, IBJM, and other "Hebrew-Christian" groups) is now looking to do a little missionary work of his own.

Jews has NEVER said that our path is the only path--that Judaism is the only way to lead a righteous life. That is SOLELY a Christian message (well, solely a Gentile message). We MUST NOT allow him to continue.

ADCHIVE

Subj: Re:Schindler... From: Mishpat 94-04-01 16:31:42 EDT

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This is news to me. Wow. Can you provide please the source attributing this to Schindler?

Thanks, MiSHPAT

Subj: Re:Schindler... From: Karen8207 94-04-01 23:34:03 EDT

The current issue of Reform Judaism, the monthly publication of the reform Jewish movement, has an extensive discussion of this topic, including comments from leaders of other religions. I suspect that if there is a reform congregation in or near your community you could get this copy by calling the office.

Subj: Re:Schindler... From: Mishpat 94-04-02 10:15:09 EDT

Actually, I get Reform Judaism.... I don't know why I haven't gotten that issue (yet?) -- My mail is typically very slow.... Was it just sent out?

Subj: Re:Schindler...(a) From: Morah8956

94-04-02 18:06:39 EDT

You asked a question with regard to Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, who has renewed his call for the propogation of Judaism as a "light unto the nations." In the Spring 1994 Issue of <<Reform Judaism>>, the publication of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, there is a lengthy article on Rabbi Schindler's thoughts. Herewith a summary of the article:

In December, 1978, Rabbi Schindler made a proposal that the Reform movement <<launch a carefully conceived Outreach program aimed at all Americans who are unchurched and who are seeking religious meaning.>> He urged that <<Jews resume our vocations as champions of Judaism, and move from passive acceptance of converts to affirmative action.>>

<<Rejecting aggressive proselytizing,>> he DID NOT <<have in mind some kind of traveling religious circus . . . but instead the development of a dignified and responsible approach. Let us establish well-publicized courses in our synagogues and develop suitable publications to serve these facilities and purposes.>> He wanted, in short, <<that we respond openly and positively to those God-seekers whose search leads them to our door, who voluntarily ask for our knowledge.>> He wanted to <<reach the unchurched, those reared in non-religious homes or those who have become disillusioned with their taught beliefs.>> He wanted <<especially to reach the rootless and the alienated who need the warmth and comfort of a people known for its close family ties, a people of ancient and noble lineage.>>

The article goes on to provide historical support for his call.

In direct response to the 1978 message, the Board of Trustees resolved, among other things, to develop an effective Outreach program by which <<the Reform synagogue can seek out mixed married couples in order to respond to the particular emotional and social stresses . . . and to plan a special program to bring the message of Judaism to any and all who wish to examine or embrace it.>>

Rabbi Schindler is << proud of having projected this idea, as well as the resolution on patrilineal descent, which the Outreach program spawned.>>

13-April-94 America Online: JeanA20205 Page 1

<<Indeed, if there is one undertaking for which I would like to be remembered, it is this.>>

(continued in another posting)

Subj: Re:Schindler...(b) From: Morah8956

94-04-02 18:09:03 EDT

<<Schindler then pointed out the wide range of programs developed by the UAHC for Jews by Choice, interfaith couples with unconverted spouses, and especially born Jews. He called for nothing less than <a change of the Jewish psyche,> seeing that the greatest benefit of Outreach comes to those already Jewish who are obliged to explore their own relationship to Judaism in order to pass it on.>>

He states that <<Outreach has compelled us to ask ourselves as born Jews some fundamental questions: Who are We? What do we really believe? What must we know and feel and do when we claim the name Jews? And once we grapple with such questions, an inner transformation takes place? Invariably, when we succeed in touching the non-Jewish partner of an intermarriage, we bring the Jewish partner of that marriage closer to the core. By engaging in the process, we transform ourselves. We, in consequence, become better Jews.>>

Rabbi Schindler is of the opinion that every Jew must choose to be a Jew, not just those who become Jews by Choice. It is interesting to note that, among Reform Jews, a convert is called a Jew by Choice, not a convert.

I believe that this is the information which you were seeking.

Make yourself a good week.

Subj: To Mishpat From: Karen8207

94-04-02 22:12:46 EDT

The issue of Reform Judaism referred to came at least a month ago. Yours may have been lost in the mail. Morah, however, did a nice job of summarizing.

Subj: Re:Schindler...to tribblehead 94-04-03 00:46:18 EDT From: Spinoza1

Morah writes a fine summary. Hopefully, you will find a copy of the RJ article. Schindler never suggests that Judaism is the only true path. In fact, Rabbi Schindler is extremely respectful of other faiths. His point is to reach out to those who have no faith at all and to suggest that Judaism provides a path for some.

Subj: Re:Schindler...to tribblehead From: Morah8956

94-04-03 11:21:47 EDT

And it is to be pointed out again that he wants the reaching out done respectfully, in the form of education, acceptance of those seeking or involved in intermarriage, and with knowledge on the part of everyone concerned as to sensitivities.

Subj: Salvation starts at home! From: RafoelG

94-04-04 01:22:00 EDT

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With the dreadfully high inter-marriage rate (52%),(that is where the non-Jewish partner does not convert), should we not be trying to hold on to our own people first. We need a policy of education for Jewish continuity, before recruitment. Comments??

Subj: Re:Salvation starts at home! From: Morah8956

94-04-04 17:20:29 EDT

One goes with the other; Outreach is all part of the concept of JEWISH EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION, AND MORE JEWISH EDUCATION FOR ALL; at least that is the way it is in the Reform movement. One does not negate or cancel out the other.

America Online: JeanA20205 13-April-94 Page 1

94-04-06 21:36:41 EDT

Subj: Re:Schindler... From: Eckstei882

We (the UAHC) have such limited resources and so much to do. I think we have to direct our efforts at the unsynagogued, not the unchurched. There are too many Jews who feel unwelcome or not rich enough to belong to temple. Maybe we should reach out to them. On the other hand, I think we must keep up with outreach and provide a welcoming hand to Christians who marry Jews and want to convert.

Subj: Judaism should evangelize From: FredCHAIM

94-04-07 17:50:23 EDT

There is what is truly true. There are moral and theological absolutes. The vision of Moses and the Torah (read it) is that the Goyim should know, the God of Israel and turn from idolatry. Without this universal vision and desire for the gentiles to come into the light, Judaism just becomes another tribal religion. Judaism was to be God centered, not man centered. How interesting that Reconstructionist Judaism, coming after a long ferment and evolution within Judaism, holds that the central concern of Judaisn is not God but the Jewish people. This is the culmination of the inward turning of Judaism since the fifth century C.E. when Judaism ceased to seek to convert the gentiles.

New Covenant Judaism (see the prophecy of the coming of the New covenant in Jeremiah chapter 31) has a vision to take the moral and spiritual truth of torah to all nations, as did the prophets. (Remember Jonah going to Assyria and Obadiah going to Edom, etc.?) By turning from Messiah and from the New Covenant Judaism lost its mission to the world. Do Teshuvah my people!

13-April-94

Subj: Re:Judaism should evangelize 94-04-07 21:48:56 EDT From: HarveyG794

After reading all the messages on this message board I believe that Schindler is on to something. I think the approach of outeach is correct. I know many gentiles who in their guts want to join us and would do so if only the proper setting was provided.

As far as unsynogoged or unchurched how about the millions out their who discover Jewish roots but who have been raised as members of other religions: In the right setting, and I believe that Schindlers setting is the right setting, they are invarible drawn to Judaism. Make no mistake about it these kinds of discoveries have a powerful influence.

I myself have witnessed several Irish Catholics who discovered Jewish roots in adulthood truly underwent an unexplainabe transformation. I can't put my finger on it but it is subtle, in the way they carried themselves, how they viewed themselves, how they saw themselves being perceived by other people. And most remarkable how strongly defensive of the Jewish people they become.

We have a sacred oibligation to welcome these peopl;e into our midst. We have a big tent and they really want to enter and be part of us. Why shouldn't we wecome. And that is the ony the beginning .

I t has nothing to do with being missionaries or telling people to abandon their beliefs, it is rather opening the door to those who are engaged in holy self expploration.

These are the thoughts of the son of an Italian Cahtolic grandfather who converted to Judaism who is married to the daughter of a dutch grandmother who also converted to Judaism. Who Konws maybe Mario (my grandfather) was really a Morane Jew as was perhaps my wife's grandmother had been.

13-April-94

America Online: JeanA20205

Page 1

Subj: Re:Judaism should evangelize 94-04-13 00:53:15 EDT From: DHKeene

I think it is a bit insulting just to want to convert someone because they happenned to marry someone of our faith. Why are such non-Jews different from all other non-Jews? To seek to convert only those particular ones suggests either that they have some special (higher) status, because they happened to fall in love with "one of us," or that they have some special (lower) status because they are more amenable to conversion, weaker somehow than the average Christian (or unchurched) because they are "in our clutches." Either way it is insulting either to them or to the rest of non-Jewry. If we believe we have a message to offer mankind, a beautiful and important way of living that, universally practiced, would radically alter the world -- and in the meantime, the souls of all new adherents -- then we must offer it to whoever will find themselves fortunate enough to come into contact with it.

Is there anyone out there who believes that Judaism -- real Judaism -should be reserved for a special genetic club? I understand there are many who believe that Judaism is all or nothing -- either Orthodox or non-existent, that is. But that is a separate question from the one that Schindler raises. He asks not, "Who is a Jew?" but rather. "From whom should we hide Judaism?" or "Who deserves to be offered Judaism?" His answer is, simply, anyone who is seeking.

It is true obviously that Jewish institutions have limited resources. We are all of us on borrowed time! But just as some are involved within their own synagogues while others devote time to the Federation, or ADL, or the local day school, or Israel, within the scope of Jewish education must fall both inreach and outreach.

13-April-94

JEAN ABARBANEL 2552 AIKEN AVE. LOS ANGELES, CA 90064

April 13, 1994

Dear Joy and Aaron,

Here is a printout of the bulletin board discussion on America Online that I mentioned to you. The heading was : "Alexander Schindler, President of the UAHC, has called for Judaism to become a prosletyzing faith. What do you think?" It was very exciting to read about RJ Magazine on my home computer and see it being used as a source for this dialogue. There may still be even more additions. I will look for them and keep you informed. I mentioned to Joy that the service also has a bulletin board on which various magazines have excerpts from their monthly issues. This may be a long shot, but who knows? I can't find a phone number for America Online in any of my materials. Perhaps you can try getting an 800 phone number from the operator and go from there.

I look forward to seeing you in June at the Board meeting.

Sincerely,



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> December 27, 1993 13 Tevet 5754

Rabbi David Polish Beth Emet the Free Synagogue 1224 Dempster Evanston, IL 60202

Dear David:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful letter. I take your admonishments seriously and especially in this case.

Please forgive me if I don't respond at great length. Unfortunately, my schedule is hectic and I have one foot out of the door even now. I am very much like that evil angel of the Biblical book of Job, who traveled to and fro across the land.

All this is to say that I really don't have the time to engage in a lengthy correspondence, but I am hopeful that we will be able to get together one of these days so that we can have the kind of personal exchange of views that this matter merits. I will get in touch with you, God willing, the next time I am in Chicago, and if your duties should ever bring you to New York, by all means let me know.

In the meantime, I send you my warm good wishes and all my respect.

Cordially,

Alexander M. Schindler

RABBI DAVID POLISH BETH EMET THE FREE SYNAGOGUE

2025 SHERMAN AVENUE APT. #303 EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

December 20, 1993 27 Kislev 5754

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

Shalom, Alex,

Despite my longstanding esteem for you and your leadership, I must dissent from your recent address to the Bienniel Convention of the Union concerning Christian participation in synagogue governance.

Whether or not there may be misunderstandings of subtle aspects of your address, many have the impression that you favor involvement-limited or extensive--in the governance of Reform Congregations by professing Christians. My view of the consequences of your remarks appears to be different from yours. I foresee the danger of schism in Jewish life, here and in Israel. Our own people in Israel (among our greatest spiritual assets) are going to be pained. They will find it difficult to vigorously defend us, and their allegiance to us will be affected. Secular Jews in our midst will find your statement cause for not taking us seriously. Those who will seek Hekhsher in your statement as a replay of the Pauline controversy will either rejoice or despair.

I am concerned about your advocacy of the extension of the religious borders of our congregations in order to accommodate the Christians in our midst. If, as you state, "90% of our congregations allow non-Jews to belong, with 62% granting them full voting rights" (in other words, governance), how can the growing expansion of the borders be prevented or controlled? By whom? If so many non-Jews and professing Christians have full voting rights, how can anyone expect that the pressures for liturgical and other concessions will not expand further still?

What sense does it make that "most of our congregations permit non-Jews to participate but most often with restrictions as to leadership roles?" Under such ground Rabbi Alex Schindler December 20, 1993 page 2.

rules, aren't such restrictions discriminatory? Who, and by what right, would regulate such a double-standard policy? Even a generation ago, no one could have predicted, much less endorsed, this present state of affairs. How certain can one be today that the limitation of synagogue leadership to Jews will not be breached a generation from now?

It is predictable that as a consequence of this issue, our schools will become the next battlefield where we will yield to pressures for religious equal time. So, we are incrementally yielding synagogue governance because we don't wish to offend our non-Jewish fellow members. And who is concerned about offending Jews?

But most critical of all is your appeal to the history of proselytising in Judaism. It may be that some rabbis once espoused the missionizing of non-Jews. First, if such an active role was played in Judaism, it was secondary to the process of accepting, not recruiting, converts. Opinions by rabbis on the ethics of mission were divided and, in the context of Halachah, the stress was on non-Jews who sought us out and were accepted on Judaism's terms.

Second, from a pragmatic position your statement now makes it possible for Christians who have abrogated their mission to the Jews to reconsider their attitude. Stated crudely, they can now say, "If you want to compete, we accept your challenge." The first statement I know of that rejected the Christian mission to the Jews was made many years ago by Reinhold Niebuhr, who, in the pages of the Journal of Reform Rabbis, called upon the Protestant churches to reject their mission to the Jews. This was an historic statement in which we should take grateful pride. Who can fail to believe that there is not a strong probability that this "truce" will now be undergoing reconsideration within church groups in America?

The recourse to Halachah in Reform is turning us into a schizoid Movement. On the one hand, many strongly support a return to tradition based on the writings of Halachah. On the other hand, these are now undertaking to nullify Halachah by seeking to include Christians on their own terms. Search the tradition and the laws as vigorously as one may, and one will not find a bit of evidence supporting the position that professing Christians, or devout non-Jews, for that matter, may have any kind of voice in synagogue life and governance. We cannot take both positions simultaneously. Under such circumstances, Rabbi Alex Schindler December 20, 1993 page 3

we are at once both loyal and disloyal to the tradition, and also to blame for a possible rift not only within our Movement but also within Jewish life. The position of our legal tradition in this matter is so self-evident that specific prohibition against Christian governance of synagogues did not require explication. In American churches, it is equally self-evident that only a profession of Christian faith qualifies for church membership. Would a Jewish applicant for church membership be offended if the application were to be denied?

I have recently returned from a month spent serving the Reform Congregation of Honolulu. I was dismayed to find what could very well be a prefiguration of what is in store for Jewish life in the rest of America, not terribly long from now. In a community riddled with intermarriage, no more than 5-10% of the local Jewry is in any way Jewishly affiliated. Children of unconverted intermarriages are overwhelmingly non-Jewish, and even under those circumstances there is apostacy.

There is a transparently political aspect to this issue. It is based on a search for a compromise by which Christians have seats but not votes on some or on all committees. This would be but a delaying action. It will not work because, in time, the "beneficiaries" of such compromise will charge discrimination and will demand voting rights. Thus, the issue will heighten tension and further attenuate the Jewishness of our Congregations, i.e. compromise will escalate to surrender.

I urge you, Alex, to heed the many voices in the Conference who are very unhappy with your statement. The influence of the Reform Rabbinate is not what it should be, and if it continues to lose its moral authority, some laypeople may breathe more easily, but Judaism as we know it in America will breathe more laboriously. In America, eclecticism and syncretism can lead to nihilism for Judaism. Is it for this that we were called into being? The question, as you raise it, is not whether a Christian can hold the Torah. It is whether the Jewish People can hold on to its Torah and to its Judaism.

Shalom,

lavie

RABBI DAVID POLISH

kmt



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> December 29, 1993 15 Tevet 5754

Rabbi Thomas A. Louchheim Temple Emanu-El 225 North Country Club Road Tucson, AZ 85716

Dear Tom;

Thank you so much for your letter of December 17th as well as a copy of your superb sermon. You understood me well and I am glad of that.

It's good that you are re-constituting an Outreach Committee at Temple Emanu-El. It is important for any congregation to have such a group. Still, you would be better advised not to limit its membership to interfaith couples or even Jews by choice. It is important that the established leadership of the congregation be involved in such a committee lest it become "a thing apart" from the rest of the congregation.

I am sending a copy of your letter to Dru Greenwood, the National Director of our Outreach effort in the hope that she can be helpful to you in your work.

I, too, regret that I didn't have a chance to say hello to you and Marcia in San Francisco, but I am glad that you met up with my better half.

I hope your parents are well. Please give them my warm good wishes.

All the very best to you both, and to your brood.

Fondly,

Alexander M. Schindler



Thomas A. Louchheim Rabbi

December 17, 1993

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler President Union of American Hebrew Congregations 838 5th Ave. New York NY 10021

Dear Alex,

Marcia and I are sorry that we did not have an opportunity to see you in San Francisco. We did bump into Rea. She looks wonderful. Besides the difficulity in finding the workshop rooms, I think overall the biennial was a great success.

I received your letter December 7th. I'm sure some of your colleagues will rib you about choosing that date for that particular letter. Nevertheless, I am enclosing the sermon which I delivered to my congregation on this very topic. I know that you may not have a chance to read it. I wanted to let you know that your remarks at the biennial sparked a great deal of interest in me.

Initially, I was disheartened about the notion of giving up some of Judaism's particularistic rituals and prayers to the unconverted. I am still having difficulity with the notion, but as you can tell from my remarks, I am open to discussion regarding this.

On the Sunday following my sermon, approximately 15 people came together to discuss reforming our interfaith support group as well as beginning for the first time an outreach committee here at Temple Emanu-El. I made it clear to those at that discussion meeting that it is important that these groups not be alienated or alienating groups from the rest of the congregation. This has, regretfully, happened in the past here at Temple Emanu-El. The committee will participate in creating programs and providing insights to and for the entire congregation, as well as meeting their own particular needs.

What I have heard from non-Jewish spouses in this congregation is their need and desire to feel that they are part of the congregation. None of them so far have indicated the necessity to participate publicly in the rituals of the congregation.



Thomas A. Louchheim Rabbi

Nevertheless, they do desire a warm welcome to them as non-Jewish "members" of the congregation. By the way, non-Jews who are married to a Jewish spouse are members with voting rights in this congregation and many do serve on committees here as well.

Thank you again for your words. We are starting on a long road, and hopefully a successful one. All my best to Rea and the family.

l'Shalom,

Thomas A. Louchheim Rabbi

TAL/jeb enc cc: Vicki Lunday-Tor

Outreach in the Synagogue: A Plan for the Future December 3, 1993

In the Talmud there's a story of a manager of domesticated horses. He takes care of them on a daily basis. All of a sudden, one afternoon, a wild horse from the forest jumps the fence and joins them from the forest. And when the owner discovers that this wild horse has joined the rest of his domesticated horses, he tells his manager to feed that horse the finest oats, oats that are not even fed to the rest of the horses, to groom that horse in a very special and loving way, and make it feel at home. This goes on for week after week. The manager, getting a little frustrated because he can't understand why the rest of the horses who are really a part of this horse family are not treated as well as this wild horse, complains to the owner. The owner tells his manager that all those horses had no choice to be in that corral. They were broken and domesticated and they're a part of the owner's livestock. The wild horse, on the other hand, made a conscious choice to be a part of the stock without being domesticated (based on Numbers Rabbah, Naso, 8, 2-4).

The story is a metaphor that the rabbis tell about how we ought to accept with open arms those who want to be part of our congregation, those who want Judaism to be part of their lives and aren't born Jewish themselves. It was along these lines that Rabbi Alex Schindler, the President of the Union of American Hebrew

Congregations, spoke at the Union biennial in San Francisco a few weeks ago. He spoke about the role of the non-Jew in the synagogue. And in telling about what he feels is important in that regard, he told a story of a Holocaust survivor who applauded our Movement's advocacy for patrilineal decent. Our advocacy that demonstrated that someone could be Jewish, not just if he/she is born from a Jewish mother, but also if his/her father is Jewish. This was a daughter of a Jewish father who had died in a concentration camp during the war. Her mother was not Jewish. She survived the war by hiding and being very hungry throughout the war. Finally, she found a place in Switzerland where the only thing she could do to survive was to clean toilets in a local hospice. No one in the local Jewish community in Switzerland, none of the functionaries would help her. They all refused to give her aid because they said that she wasn't Jewish because her mother was not Jewish. She wanted to learn more about Judaism, but all the doors were closed to her. What is the irony of this, she told Rabbi Schindler, is that Hitler persecuted her because she had Jewish blood. But Jews discriminated against her for having non-Jewish blood! How ironic that the Germans recognized her Judaism while the Jewish community did not.

Through Outreach programs across the country our Movement, almost single-handedly, has enabled such people to move from the perimeter of Judaism to the center. For the last fifteen years or so we have, as a Movement, welcomed those who see themselves as

half-Jews, those who see themselves as Jews-By-Choice, and intermarried families. We have provided a way for these individuals and families to return and connect, or maybe to find for the first time a spiritual home. And tonight, in light of Rabbi Schindler's charge, we renew our concern and our sensitivity to the issues of raising children, to the issues of conversion, to the issues of intermarriage and the non-Jewish spouse, because we are confronted with a reality which we as a community cannot ignore.

Of the first generation of native-born Jews in this country, there was only one intermarriage out of twenty. The second generation of native-born Jews, the intermarriage rate was one in ten. Between 1966 and 1972, approximately 31½% of Jews were intermarrying. And according to the last opinion poll of 1990, that number has doubled. And what is even more frightening than that, if that is frightening at all, is that 42% of those intermarried couples are raising their children as Christian, 27% are raising their children as Jewish, and 31% are raising their children with no religion. Now, some may deplore these statistics, some may lament these statistics, and some may struggle against them. But these are the facts, and these are the issues we ourselves have to confront.

"There are no such things as problems," my father taught me. He said, "there are only opportunities." If we see this as a problem, then maybe there is no chance for Jewish survival. But if

we see intermarriage as a possible opportunity, then maybe there are great strides we can take to bring those on the fringes into the center of our community.

Nevertheless, let us not be so headstrong that we completely avoid and ignore the hurt, the pain, and the suffering that our people have endured throughout the centuries. History is a backdrop in order for us to make every lifetime decision. In order to confront important issues of the role of interfaith families or non-Jewish spouse in our synagogue, we must at first come to grips with the understanding of how this history of pain and suffering affects us. In order for us, as a religious community, to say that the answer is simply the response of Isaiah who said, "Let our house of prayer be a house of prayer for all people," is ignoring that legacy of pain that Jews have suffered for 2,000 years and we continue to feel today. We must be cognizant, also, as to how those oppressive times continue to effect us, even in a generation of Jews who have not directly been confronted by bigotry, racism, or anti-Semitism. Any decision made to include a non-Jew or a non-Jewish spouse in our synagogue must therefore involve a comprehensive educational effort to all the elements of this congregation, expressing not only the need to be inclusive, but the sensitivity to help members of this congregation overcome the barriers created by history - the history of the Crusades, the history of the Inquisition, the Pogroms, and the Holocaust.

There's a Yiddish proverb, "Tziz schver tsu zein a Yid"- "It's hard to be a Jew." It's a phrase that is valid in a society where some Jews regard their Judaism as an important insight to their self-identity, and where the general society, on the other hand, see being Jewish as an inconsequential cultural distinction. We must, however, consider what attracts all people, Jewish and non-Jewish, to this synagogue. A synagogue can reach out to people and have them feel a sense of belonging. This is a place where people want to feel wanted, want to feel warmth and belonging. The synagogue can also be a place that provides a spiritual component to our lives. Finally, it can provide a supportive educational environment, not only for our children, but for ourselves, to learn important values and morals to carry us through days of joy and days of sorrow.

As we recognize that a greater number of intermarried couples in our community are joining our own congregation, as this fact coupled with the overall affiliation rate of intermarrieds is much lower than a couple who are both Jewish or are converted to Judaism, we must realize that turning a cold shoulder will not stem the tide of mixed marriage. In the words of Rabbi Paul Citrin, a rabbi in Albuquerque, "Since we have chosen to swim in the American ocean, the ocean of social openness and ethnic pluralism, its tides and currents should not take us by surprise." Our task, therefore, is to channel the current in such a way that we may swim in the direction of the shores of creative Jewish survival.

Our survival in the next century does not rest on the particularism espoused by the prophets of Ezra and Nehemiah who called on the Jewish people to put away their foreign wives. Our hope for the future rests on the universal vision of Isaiah who saw God's house as being a house of prayer for all people. We must rid ourselves of the language of separation — the language which includes words like goy, schikza, schagus, schwartza. All of these maintain an attitude of superiority. Our synagogues will not be a welcoming place if this is our attitude: that we are superior to others.

The spiritual place we intend to be has got to be a spiritual home that is welcoming to all. In the Bible, God explains to Moses, "I am the God who brings near, not pushes away. "It is within our own history that two of the twelve tribes of Israel are descended from a wife of Joseph, who is a daughter of a high priest of Egypt. It was Moses, the great lawgiver of our people, who was married to a non-Israelite. And, of course, it was Ruth who led to the dynasty of King David, who was not part of our faith until she accepted a formal conversion. Furthermore, on Yom Kippur we remember God's admonition of Jonah, who refused to try and convince the people of Ninaveh to follow God's way, and God punished Jonah for that act of defiance.

We return this evening to Rabbi Schlindler's charge: to create a warm, hospitable environment for Jews, for the non-Jewish spouse, and at the same time accept boundaries that need to be drawn

because we are a Jewish institution with its own kind of integrity. The challenge is to set up appropriate boundaries and to communicate them effectively, emphasizing not exclusiveness, but inclusiveness. If there are no boundaries, then there are no incentives to completely embrace Judaism. With distinctions blurred, then our faith and our practice may become blurred as well.

Temple Emanu-El joins 90% of all the Reform congregations in the country which allow non-Jews as members in its congregation. We join 62% of those congregations which allow full voting rights to members who are Jewish and not Jewish. And though many in our congregation do not know who is Jewish and who is not, rest assured that these families, these many families that comprise members in our congregation are an <u>active</u> force in the <u>leadership</u>, the <u>education</u>, and the <u>vitality</u> of this sacred institution. We applaud this as an accomplishment of our congregation, and at the same time consider how our non-Jewish members may more fully participate in congregational life.

We have to in the next year, in the next two years, consider participation within life-cycle events, committee roles, prayer services, the ritual of this congregation, and also the education of our members — children and adults alike. The rise in intermarriage in our world forces our Board and our committees to consider these aspects of Temple life now more than ever. In all areas of Jewish responsibility, within these walls we must adopt a

clear decision-making process. A process enabling the congregation to define its goals, to express its heart, to give tradition a vote, and build for ourselves our own special community. It is important in this process to defend the integrity of Judaism from the demands of fashion. We can't allow just the whim or a will of an individual or a group to decide what we are going to do as a congregation. We must decide, based on our knowledge of Jewish law, Jewish tradition, those aspects of Jewish life that enhance our experience, in order to inform these kinds of very important decisions in our congregational life.

Our synagogue demands the reformation of our outreach group that which was announced for this Sunday. We will not create an entity which is alienated from our general community, but rather will provide programming insights, education for itself <u>and also</u> for the entire congregation. This group will continue the task of reaching out to the unaffiliated in Tucson — to the families who don't belong to any congregation — and show them that this is a place of meaning, a place of spiritual expression, a place where they can learn important values that they can give to themselves as adults and to their children as well. Also that kind of group will enhance our ability to welcome newcomers and utilize their special skills to further our role in providing a Jewish home, spirituality, a foundation in morality and values, and, further, to provide a place where non-Jews and Jews will feel the power and

comfort of the words of Ruth expressed thousands of years ago so that they might say, "your people shall be my people."

This is the charge in the months, the year, and the years to come for our congregation. For us to not only provide a house of prayer and comfort for ourselves as Jews, but to make sure that all families, intermarried or not, feel that they can provide a place where no one is alienated within these walls, and all have a sense of belonging, and all can feel that they are one people in this congregation. May this be God's will, and may we have the strength to fulfill this deed. Amen.

Thomas A. Louchheim Rabbi Tucson, Arizona

I wish to express appreciation for unattributed remarks included in this sermon from Rabbi Steven Foster of Denver, Colorado and Rabbi Alexander Schlindler.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> April 6, 1994 25 Nisan 5754

Mr. Jim Terr 1037 7th Street Las Vegas, NM 87701

Dear Mr. Terr:

Mender

I have your letter addressed to <u>Reform Judaism</u> in which you support the idea that we ought to be welcoming of converts but that we ought not to seek them.

I don't think that there is a great divergence of view between us, but my point is the following:

There is a wide perception in the world that Judaism is an exclusive club for born Jews and that one has either to be born a Jew or to be married to a Jew in order to be welcomed into the Jewish fold. I sense that there are a lot of people, in America especially, who are seeking a life of meaning, who are thirsting for spirituality and I would like these people to know that Judaism is not this exclusive club for born Jews that they assume it is, that there are no "not welcome" signs in front of our hearts or communal homes. Let all who are hungry come and eat, let all who are thirsty come and drink.

I appreciate the thoughtfulness of your response.

Cordially,

Alexander M. Schindler

1037 7th St. Las Vegas, NM 87701 April 1, 1994

Re: "Why Jews Should Seek Converts" REFORM JUDAISM Spring, 1994

Rabbi Schindler makes some valid points about Jews welcoming converts--but this is aready the status quo, and is not an issue.

As for <u>seeking</u> converts, I feel the same about this as I feel about encouraging people to vote: let only those who are interested enough to do it, do it, without encouragement; the quality of the result will be better.

Jim Terr (Tel. 505-425-6134)

c: Rabbi Schindler Rabbi Nacham Ward (Santa Fe) Leah Kellogg (Santa Fe)





January 11, 1994 28 Tevet 5754

Brenda R. Tanger 35 Fox Lane Newton Centre, MA 02159

Dear Brenda:

How nice of you to write. Your letter is all the more welcome because of the many brick bats flying my way as well.

I really don't understand what you have in mind when you say that "collective congregations have no meaningful role in the resolution process." Can you expand on that? I would love to hear what you have in mind.

I enclose a copy of the letter I recently transmitted together with my Biennial speech to Presidents of our congregations on the chance that you did not see them.

Again, my thanks for your thoughtfulness and warm good wishes to your husband.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

BRENDA R. TANGER 35 FOX LANE NEWTON CENTRE, MASSACHUSETTS 02159

Rabbi Alexander Schindler President Union of American Hebrew Congregations 838 Fifth Avenue New York, N.Y. 10021-7064

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I want to commend your "missionizing", "proselytizing" or any other term of like meaning. While we have not supported the UAHC for some time now (because collective congregations have no <u>meaningful</u> role in the resolution process), I do want to express my compliments on your realistic outlook on this matter and that of patrilineal descent.

Sincerely,

Brenda Tanger

January 3, 1994

P.S. I would note here that between my mother and her brother we are five daughters, all married to Jews. In the next generation of 12 children, only four are married to Jews, one a convert.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> December 27, 1994 13 Tevet 5754

Rabbi Jeffrey B. Stiffman Congregation Shaare Emeth 11645 Ladue Road St. Louis, MO 63141

Dear Jeff:

Thank you for your supportive letter. It isn't the only one I received. Still, I have quite a few brick bats heaved my way, so that makes your letter doubly welcome.

Josh did tell me that he was at the Temple and heard your comments. As a matter of fact, he assured me that he is going to join your congregation which I, of course, hope he will.

Again my thanks and all the very best.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

de: JOSH SCHINDLER



Founded 1867

Office of the Rabbi Jeffrey B. Stiffman, Ph. D., D.D.

December 21, 1993

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

Dear Alex:

It was good seeing you at the Biennial and receiving your recent mailings to the rabbis.

I know that you are under some fire for your statements on both outreach and the position of non-Jews in the synagogue.

I want you to know that there is one colleague who supports you on both. If it is necessary that the Union be the last outpost of real liberalism in Reform Judaism, so be it. Your pioneering efforts have kept our movement alive and vital. I recently preached on the subject of outreach--I believe I saw Josh in the back of the Temple. I received many positive comments when I endorsed your latest outreach suggestions. Perhaps the laity is more with us than we think.

Arlene joins me in sending you and Rhea best wishes for a happy secular New Year.

Fondly,

JEFFREY DB. STIFFMAN

JBS/gs





December 27, 1993 13 Tevet 5754

Rabbi Gerald Raiskin Peninsula Temple Sholom 1655 Sebastian Drive Burlingame, CA 94010

Dear Jerry:

Thank you so much for your thoughtful note which is all the more welcome because so many brick bats are coming my way too.

I hope that all is well with you and Helen.

I, too, missed you at the Biennial, although I must confess that with nearly 5000 people in attendance, I didn't really know who was and was not there.

Of course I gave your regards to Edie. She reciprocates your good wishes.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

PENINSULA TEMPLE SHOLOM

Gerald Raiskin, Rabbi Andrew Straus, Rabbi Barry Reich, Cantor

December 17, 1993

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

Dear Alex,

About twenty years ago I spoke about missionizing and received gentle negativisms. I decided to speak on the subject again on Rosh Hashanah, a year ago. If I ever questioned whether people listened to my sermons or not, I learned that they sure do, because after the one on missionizing I received more hassle than in all my years in the rabbinate. My message was a very simple one. The approach and the tone of it was nearly a duplicate of yours. It was misunderstood by so many. For some, it was difficult for them to understand my approach when, at the same time, I do not officiate at mixed marriages. The separation between the two issues was not able to be made by those who were disturbed by the sermon. A couple came to see me, very indignant about the sermon, and said, "We do not want them!" When I asked, "Why not?" The response was, "They will change us." My answer was they might very well do so, and for the better. The newcomers might speak about God and not about lox and bagels.

Shortly before I gave the sermon, I made an appeal for funds from the congregation. It seemed that many thought I was going to use the money for this new campaign. The Personnel Committee of the congregation met with me and told me of all the calls they had about the sermon, many of the calls discussed the money issue. On Yom Kippur, I said to the congregation that the contributions made to my appeal for funds would go for those projects for which I mentioned when I made the appeal.

The above is to let you know I agree with your stance and would be most willing to assist in anyway that I can. I am enclosing a copy of my sermon that caused the great stir.

Last week, at Shabbat Evening Services, I did throw open for discussion your Presidential Message. There were those who disagreed and there were those who agreed, but everything was discussed calmly.

I have a feeling the responses you have been receiving are similar to my "missionary sermon". I am sorry! Nevertheless, it will come about.

I was not present at the Biennial. Helen and I were leading a Jewish Heritage Tour to South America. I wish I could have been present to hear your oral delivery.

Please give my best to Edie.

In friendship,







RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS PRESIDENT B38 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> December 27, 1993 13 Tevet 5754

Rabbi Joel E. Soffin Temple Shalom 215 S. Hillside Avenue Succasunna, NJ 07876

Dear Joel:

Thank you for your encouraging note. I am deeply grateful to you. All the more so since, as you can imagine, brick bats are flying my way as well.

I was very much interested in how you dealt with some of these issues in your congregation. That really was my purpose; to evoke a debate on this issue. Such a debate can only serve to deepen the commitments of Jews.

With warm good wishes and again my thanks.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

18 Abou

Temple Shalom

215 S. Hillside Avenue, Succasunna, New Jersey 07876 (201) 584-5666

Joel E. Soffin Rabbi Josée Wolff Cantor Shirley Bauer Educational Director

December 17, 1993

UAHC 838 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex,

I just received your latest mailing. As always, you are challenging us to look more deeply at the nature of the Jewish community and how we deal with outreach to the "unchurched."

I'd like to share with you what we've done to respond:

- I discussed the enclosed newspaper article and your actual remarks in San Francisco with:
 - a) Teenage Post-Confirmation "Dinner With the Rabbi" Group.

The kids were very upset at the fact that we sounded desperate. They feared the entry of insincere converts just to build up our members. Interestingly, they stressed over and over again the special bond they feel to other born Jews.

Adult Post-Confirmation "Dinner With the Rabbi" Group.

They were more than willing to respond to the questions non-Jews might ask. They were not comfortable, however, raising the subject themselves.

 I read your 1979 original statement to the congregation at a Shabbat service and had an open discussion. It was very lively and many congregants began to wonder why they were so hesitant to share Judaism with others. You set such a high standard of thoughtfulness and courage. It makes us all especially proud to be part of the Reform Movement. I thought you'd like to know that we are working hard to meet the challenges you place before us.

All the best,

Joel E. Soffin Rabbi

MEMORANDUM December 23, 1993

FROM: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO: Dru Greenwood

COPY: Melvin Merians

Dru, I had a chance conversation with Jeffrey Stiffman on another matter entirely involving rabbinic ethics, and he told me that the rabbis of the St. Louis area met and are very much in favor of the proposal to move the Outreach to the religiously non-preferenced from the back burner to the front burner and that they determined to place some advertisements in the public press announcing that their Introduction to Judaism classes are open even to those who are not engaged to Jews or intend to marry Jews.

I thought you might be interested to know this.

Thanks for everything you do and are.



Union of American Hebrew Congregations SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA 838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212) 249-0100

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Rabbi David S. Wolfman וולפמן

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TEMPLE SINAI

To:	Rabbi Alexander Schindler
	Rabbi Daniel Syme
Fan #:	1-212-570-0895
From:	Rabbi David S. Wolfman
Date:	December 6, 1993
Re:	Article in the Connecticut Jewish Ledger, 12/3/93

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Rabbi David S. Wolfman Cantor Marina Belenky Marcia Bick, Educator Dororthy S. Fields, Administrator

December 6, 1993 22 Kislev 5754

Rabbi Daniel B. Syme Union of American Hebrew Congregations 838 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10021-7064

Dear Dan:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me over the phone this morning. I know your time is precious.

I have, as per your suggestion, sent a FAX of the article with a letter to Rabbi Schindler. I have also called Eli Rosensveig asking him to delay a response until we learn if the quote is accurate.

Eli Rosensveig, Josh Hammerman and I are working very hard to build strong bonds and strengthen the sense of KLAL within the Stamford Jewish community. Again, I do not know if this is an accurate quote or not. I do know that it has already caused much consternation within the community.

Following is a copy of the article which appeared in the Decmeber 3, 1993 issue of The Ledger.

I hope this finds you well. Thank you again for the time you gave me on the phone. My best wishes for a Happy Chanukah.

With warm regards, Rabbi David S. Wolfman Enclosure DSW:akt

Temple Sinai

Rabbi David S. Wolfman Cantor Marina Belenky Marcia Bick, Educator Dororthy S. Fields, Administrator

Si Pur euxoualle

December 6, 1993 22 Kislev 5754

Rabbi Alexander Schindler Union of American Hebrew Congregations 838 Fifth Avenue New York, NY 10021-7064

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I have taken the liberty of enclosing the attached article which appeared in this week's state-wide Jewish newspaper, The Jewish Ledger. As you can see, the feature article took an entire page and was placed on the last page, a place of much prominence.

You are quoted as saying, "Orthodoxy is inauthentic because it is not dynamic." I do not know whether this is a platform of our movement, your opinion, or even a misquote. I do know that it has caused much consternation within the Stamford Jewish Community and must be addressed.

Before I respond to what I already know will be a strong reaction to the article (I have already received numerous phone calls from those in the Reform and Orthodox communities, and have spoken with the Orthodox rabbi who tells me he will be responding to your quote in the next edition but has agreed to FAX me the article before he sends it to the newspaper), I would like to hear your response. Is this your opinion or have you been misquoted? The three Stamford rabbis have been working very hard on strengthening bonds and building a sense of KLAL within the Jewish community. I would never presume to tell you what to think, but I do need to know if this quote is accurate before I respond to the community.

I look forward to your speedy reply. I hope this finds you well. My best wishes for a Happy Chanukah.

Respectfully yours, David Q

Rabbi David S. Wolfman Enclosure DSW:akt

458 LAKESIDE DRIVE \ STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT 06903-5098 \ (203) 322-1649 \ FAX (203) 329-7741

FOCUS

Reform's Rabbi Alexander Schindler leads his movement into the future amid controversy

By Jonathan S. Tobin

If there is anyone in the Jewish world who loves a controversy more than Alex Schindler, it is not readily apparent.

Schindler, the president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, is a strong believer that controversy and ideological strife is a good thing. "Controversy is great. It compels people to think about their beliefs," said Schindler when the Connecticut Jewish Ledger caught up with him before a recent speech.

A major figure in American Jewish life for more than a generation, he has filled posts such as Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations and has dedicated his life to building the Reform movement. It has grown in his time to the largest of the strains of American Judaism. He has seen the movement grow to 860 congregations across the country, more than doubling its size in that time. A resident of Westport, CT. earlier in his career he helped form 12 congregations in the New England region.

Proud of the success of Reform, he sees a number of reasons as to why Reform has outpaced its rivals in the battle for numbers of Jews in this country. The first is Reform's dynamism. "We are not frozen in 17th century Poland," says Schindler. Second is the extension of full equality to women. Third is Reform's tradition of social activism. And fourth is its openness to converts, Gays and Jews who have intermarried.

A month ago he ignited a new battle when at the UAHC's general assembly, Schindler called for the Reform movement to openly "missionize" and seek converts. This immediately drew fire from Conservative and Orthodox sources who blasted him for seeking to divert scarce Jewish resources into missionary work — a practice with which modern Judaism has not been comfortable.

As the prime mover behind the Reform movement's embrace of patrilineal descent — the acceptance of children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as Jews, Schindler has long been the object of the scorn of those who claim he is undermining units at just as much the impassioned orator in private as he is in public on the platform or pulpit. Quickly taking up the cudgels of his latest ideological battles, Schindler displays the pugnacious demeanor of an experienced polemicist in tackling his critics.

Defense of patrilineal

Schindler's answer to the question of whether he is dividing the Jews is "a resounding no." He defines Judsism as "a dynamic religion, not one encrusted by dogma." Moreover he believes that this makes Reform "more authentically Jewish" than other groups. "I am convinced that Reform as well as Conservative Judaism are more authentic than literalism. This is exactly what Judaism was before it became encrusted in the Middle Ages. Orthodoxy is inauthentic because it is not dynamic," says Schindler. He is convinced that "Reform innovations have no deleterious effect on Jewish unity. The contrary is true. They have retained people for Judaism who might otherwise have been lost."

Trying to put the fight among Jewish leaders on the questions of patrilineal and proselytizing in context, Rabbi Schindler points out that "feuding is hardly new to Jewish life, it went on in every era of the past. Some were more fierce than these. Despite everything, the center held and the Jewish people survived."

The problem with patrilineal is that it may make intermarriage between Jews of different movements ultimately impossible since it will no longer be possible for Orthodox as well as Conservative rabbis to accept Reform Jews as automatically halachicly Jewish. But Schindler observes that the Reform movement's 19th century decision to distard the system of Jewish divorce was at least as great a departure from Jewish tradition than patrilineal. "Eliminating the get was something that could not be dealt with from a halachic viewpoint. Children of those who have divorced without a get are considered mamzerim under traditional halacha and cannot marry other Jews. By comparison patrilineal is minor" he argues.

Schindler dismisses as "nonsense" the "false prophecy" that it



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler with First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton after her address to the UAHC 93rd general assembly in San Francisco.

"I am conviced that Reform as well as Conservative Judaism are more authentic than literalism. This is exactly what Judaism was before it became encrusted in the Middle Ages. Orthodoxy is inauthentic because it is not dynamic."

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

within Judaism which led to the Karaites becoming a separate "non-Jewish sect," a charge he disdains. "We are still a movement of Judaism, not a sect. I don't fear a schism for one minute," Schindler says forcefully. He asserts that the divide is not so great, claiming that "85%" of American Jews support patrilineal. "Today all we have is just rabbis barking at each other," and he admits he is as guilty as anyone else of stirring up the controversy. Despite all the barking, he is sure "that which unites us as Jews is infinitely greater than that which sets us apart.

Explaining the reasoning behind patrilineal, Schindler cites Biblical precedents in which the father's religion was the determining factor in the identity of the child. But he acknowledges that it is most of all a response to the overwhelming number of intermarriages between Jews and non-Jews in America. "We live in an open society," he says, "and intermarriage is the sting that comes with the honey of freedom. hearts. Reform's response to this problem is a positive one. Without encouraging or condoning it, we have started to grapple with it. We will not banish them."

Missionizing

In discussing his latest proposal on encouraging Jews to seek converts, Schindler sees his advocacy as strictly within Jewish tradition. "Abraham was a convert" he says, though it is difficult to speak of the actions of the first Jew in the same breath with current day problems. He is on much firmer ground in pointing out that Judaism was largely a proselytizing religion 20 centuries ago and that the Jewish missionary zeal was changed only by Christian and Muslim oppression.

Some claim that such a program of proselytizing as Schindler envisions would not only fail but also harm Judaism by diluting its content to woo converts. Schindler spoke angrily of some of his critics such as Prof. Jack Wertheimer of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary, whom he thinks strongly felt and reasoned.

But he confided that the main reason behind his decision to stress this issue is not for the sake of converts but for the sake of the Jews. Schindler believes that "in lacking a mission, we are suspected of lacking a message." He thinks Jews should have the self confidence that impels other religions to bring their faiths to nonbelievers. "Are we ashamed, is it madness to choose Judaism? Let us recapture our confidence." In his view, seeking out converts can act positively upon the psyche of the Jew as much as it can strengthen the numbers of the Jewish people.

In his battles over Judaism. Schindler argues, "Jewish histo-ry, like the Torah belongs to no one group, but to all Jews." But interestingly he believes the controversies, as much as he loves to ignite them and keep them going intersect a line that cannot be crossed. The concept of Jewish unity, one which his opponents use against his ideas, is still sacred to him. No matter how a Jew defines himself, Schindler believes "labels are adjectives, not nouns and the noun for all of us is Jew." He continued, "The memory of the Shoah constitutes an impelling mandate for unity. Those who sought to destroy us did not distinguish among us. Even as we were brothers and sisters in death, we must remain brothers and sisters in life."

According to Schindler, the challenge for Reform is to continue its dynamism while giving its adherents more ritual. The problems of American Jewry is that despite some growth the numbers of unaffiliated Jews grow at an even greater pace. "The future of Reform is not guaranteed. We must continue to add substance to form while being true to our ideals," says Schindler.

Alexander Schindler's place in Jewish history as a major leader of American Jewry is not in doubt. Whether his innovations will prove to be the saving of American Judaism or lead to its destruction is something that only history will decide. The answer may well lie in the ability of his movement to keep Jewish unity in the forefront even as they explore new paths.

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CC: MMERIANS RABBE R. ADDRESS



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December 8, 1993 24 Kislev 5754

PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER . UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

Rabbi Daniel L. Schiff 338 Denniston Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Dear Colleague:

Shortly, you will receive a copy of my letter to the rabbis as well as to the temple presidents which delineates my reasons for speaking as I did at the Biennial, both in the realm of the role of the non-Jew in the synagogue as well as my call that the program of Outreach to the religiously non preferenced, which was adopted in Boston over 10 years ago, but put on the back burner by the Outreach Commission, should now be moved forward and institutionalized.

There is no reason, therefore, for me to multiply words by engaging in a lengthy correspondence. If you ever are in New York, or if my duties will ever bring me to Pittsburgh, I will be glad to make the time to discuss these issues with you.

I never ask any of my colleagues to defend my position. If your views diverge from mine, by all means assert them. Indeed, I want to evoke debate because when you feed people pablum, they yawn and go to sleep. In this instance, I wanted our leadership to think about what Judaism really means to them, how much they value it, and whether they deem it of sufficient worth to offer it in the marketplace of ideas.

Your contrary views, therefore, delight me and serve my ends. Just the same, I must tell you that I am offended by your unfounded charge that we are exercising "leadership by sensational headlines rather than through the creation of a truly thoughtful democratic solution for the Jewish future." I think it would have been well had you informed yourself

Rabbi Daniel Schiff -2- December 8, 1993

before you wrote as you did. None of the issues to which you referred were "announced to the media by UAHC leaders, then sold to the lay leadership and finally discussed and debated and hastily approved by the rabbinate."

Your words insult the Central Conference of American Rabbis and its membership. Our colleagues are not as meek as all that. True, I made proposals in a great many areas, but these proposals were always carefully evaluated by rabbis and lay leadership alike and properly resolved before they were submitted for final approval by our constituency.

Thus, I proposed the idea of an outreach to non-Jewish spouses at a Board meeting in early 1978. A Task Force was established in response to this proposal. The rabbinate was fully represented on this Task Force. Indeed, there were as many rabbis as there were lay people. They digested my views for well over three years and it was not until 1981 that the recommendation of this Task Force were submitted to the Boston Biennial where they were vigorously discussed and then finally adopted.

Much the same was the process when it came to the patrilineal issue. I proposed this idea to the Central Conference of American Rabbis. It responded by establishing a blue ribbon jury which discussed this issue for close to three years before it finally was resolved at a rabbinic convention in Los Angeles. Nearly a thousand people were in attendance at the time the vote affirming it was overwhelming - - as I recall it, 80% to 20% in favor. That is hardly fiat by "headline;" nor is it but a "hasty approval by the rabbinate."

As for the issue of "homosexual rabbis" to which you refer, that proposal never originated with me. I spoke about the need to integrate homosexuals in the life of our congregations or to enable them to establish communities of their own. The issue of rabbinic Rabbi Daniel Schiff -3-

December 8, 1993

leadership was initiated by the Central Conference and carried forward by them, again, not in a sty debate, but in a rather lengthy and intensive deliberation which spanned at least four years. Indeed, when someone at a Union Biennial, in New Orleans I believe, tried to introduce a resolution calling for the ordination of homosexual rabbis, I asked the maker of the motion to withdraw it in deference to the work already being done by the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Your letter reveals that you really know precious little about the relationship between the Conference and the Union; nor do you know very much about the program of the Union. I would welcome the opportunity to enlighten you, so please, the next time you are in New York, make it a point to see me. I would like nothing better than to be able to tell you what reasons motivated me to speak as I did. It may well be that I can persuade of the rightness of my views, but if I don't, at least we can agree to disagree agreeably and not with that angry tone which your letter struck, let us rather reason together.

Cordially,

Alexander M. Schindler

November 29, 1993

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

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I write to express my deep concern over your proposed five million dollar program "to reach out to those of our neighbors who belong to no church" or other religion. I was not in San Francisco when you issued the call, but I am aware that your plea to seek converts was just one element of a long sermon that also placed a heavy emphasis on in-reach and Reform Jewish education.

Nevertheless, in interviews after your speech, the seeking of converts became the central focus of media attention. I am sure that you were aware that this matter would become the major talking-point of your D'var Torah, and it must therefore be regarded as an agenda item which you see as a critical programmatic direction for Reform Judaism.

I must say that - from a procedural point-of-view - this mechanism for policy development within our movement appears to me to be oriented far more towards leadership by sensational headlines than towards the creation of truly thoughtful, democratic solutions for the Jewish future. Time and again during the last decade, issues (such as patrilineal descent, homosexual rabbis, outreach to non-Jewish spouses) have been announced to the media by U.A.H.C. leaders, then "sold" to the lay-leadership, and finally discussed, debated and hastily approved by the rabbinate. Rabbis have been regularly called upon - as I have during the past two weeks - to explain new programmatic initiatives which they have not been informed about, consulted on, or yet asked to approve. When the C.C.A.R. has come to debate these issues it has done so not in an atmosphere of open inquiry cr with an unconstrained ability to determine

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what is best for the Jewish future, but rather with the choice of either approving the U.A.H.C. initiative or producing an embarrassing split. The C.C.A.R. has always opted for the former. On occasion this has produced well thought-out policies; often it has not. What is certain is that the glare of publicity has usually produced intense emotional polarizations which have worked to hamper rather than help any sensitive, cool-headed resolution of very complex matters.

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Of course the spending of five million dollars of specially raised funds will probably not require C.C.A.R. endorsement. So I, as one will have to explain a program that in all likelihood I will not have an opportunity to approve or disapprove, wanted to let you know of my views while the initiative is still being formulated.

I believe that this outreach to unchurched neighbors is a most ill-advised expenditure. I fully concur with your statement that "Judaism has an enormous amount of wisdom and experience to offer to our troubled world, and we Jews ought to be proud to proclaim it with fervor and with pride." But why should this lead us to "invite them in"? After all, Judaism is hardly a secret society; our existence is excessively well-known. Those who express a desire to join our ranks are almost never turned away by Reform colleagues. What could possibly be our motivation for trying to lure non-Jews into the fold? Why would we be so inspired to plant the seed of Judaism in those who had never considered it before, especially given that we do not see non-Jews as idolaters, and we constantly express the view that Judaism is not the only effective path to the one God?

It seems to me that the only cogent answer to these questions is that we want to boost Jewish numbers. If this is so, then surely we should establish some criteria for this program's success? Will the five million dollars be deemed to have been well spent if we take in one thousand converts who had never thought of Judaism before? Ten thousand? Fifty thousand? How would we know if it would be worthwhile to spend a similar amount again, or indeed if we should begin to use movement funds for this purpose?

When evaluating success, we should also establish expected standards for the long-term quality of these converts. The converts with whom I have worked have been fine people, and most of them have had pressing personal reasons for desiring conversion. Nevertheless, the majority of them have not become pillars of the synagogue. While a minority do remain intensely involved, most rapidly become anonymous Jews once their conversion has been accepted. Many of them feel hard-pressed to insist that their children date or marry Jews. As a result, even today, many converts represent a mixed blessing. What standards would we expect of the "converts by advertisement" in order to

Page 3

establish that the money had been well spent? I would contend that no matter how much we spend on non-Jewish outreach, even the most optimistic scenario could hardly envisage that we will attract such numbers of "high quality" converts that they will have any appreciable statistical impact on the Jewish future.

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Your historical parallels - far from providing encouragement serve to highlight the problematic issues for the proposed program within the American context. Abraham had an open tent because he was inviting idolaters to take the more sophisticated, advanced path of worshipping the one God. Since America is the most God-fearing country in the West, Abraham's task is not our task. Why is it necessarily better for unchurched non-Jews who believe in God to be invited into Judaism, rather than allowing them to be unaffiliated theists who obey the seven Noahide laws?

The Maccabean period was, of course, the last point in Jewish history when Jews had sovereignty over a Jewish state. Perhaps in that context it made some sense to invite others to join the Jewish ruling majority at a time when religion and nationality were not separated, and when the choice was still likely to be between God and idolatry. In contemporary America, we Jews are a small religious minority - there is no compelling reason for us to invite the unchurched to join us, particularly in a predominantly Christian country.

For surely it follows that if proselytizing to the unchurched is appropriate for us, then it is appropriate for other religions as Quite apart from the fact that we will never be able to well. match them dollar for dollar, the far more serious problem lies in the prospect that though proselytizing is to be aimed at those currently have no religion, any potential who Christian advertisements may well have a strong appeal for young Jews. We know from the numbers of Jews who turn up in all types of cults that many Jews with weak backgrounds are particularly attracted to religious experimentation. We know too that the enchantment of Christianity is the same powerful pull that the Maccabees used during the Hasmonean dynasty: the attraction of joining the numerical and cultural majority. With over 200,000 born Jews already converts to Christianity in the U.S., do we really want advertising campaigns to potentially scoop up more, even if those campaigns are not specifically directed at our People?

Every day Jewish numbers are being eroded in this country through assimilation. The level of Jewish knowledge and practice in our congregations is at a disturbingly low ebb. Every Jew we lose is a person who had a hazy primary commitment to the Jewish people, but who for lack of inspirational content felt he/she was missing nothing by leaving. We can bolster Jewish numbers far more solidly, and strengthen Jewish commitments and families far more profoundly by using every penny at our disposal to save these Jews for Judaism. If I had five million dollars at my disposal I would use it for people, not advertisements. I would employ a small army of adult educators to blitz the members of our congregations across the country who are in danger of leaving tomorrow or the next day. I would do everything possible to inspire them to love their Judaism enough to want to hold on to it, and enough to fight for the Jewishness of the next generation. This is the only true source for future Jewish numbers. This is the only true source for real future Jewish commitment. We do not need new Jews - if the Jewish future is to be assured we urgently need renewed Jews.

We should use the five million dollars to attempt to save those who even now are packing their bags to leave us. We should not allow the mirage of some deeply problematic influx to Judaism to distract us from this pressing task.

With Shalom,

Yours Sincerely, Daniel Schiff, Rabbi.

cc. Mr. M. Merians, Chairman, U.A.H.C.

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RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> December 6, 1993 22 Kislev 5754

Carol Hoffman 14822 Northeast 64th Street Redmond, WA 98052

Thank you so much sending me a copy of your letter to the <u>Jewish Transcripts</u>. As a matter of fact, someone had sent me a copy of it before, but I knew no way of thanking you for your expressions of support. I am deeply grateful and needful of them all the more so because the brick bats are also flying. But this is really what I wanted - a healthy debate.

God willing, we will see each other at the next Biennial, but come forward so that I can say hello to you.

With all best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Carol Hoffman 14822 Northeast 64th Street Redmond, Washington 98052

November 29, 1993

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler President, UAHC 838 5th Avenue New York, NY 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

Enclosed is a photocopy of the letters to the editor of the <u>Jewish Transcripts</u>, Seattle, of November 19, which address the articles on proselytizing published in the issue of November 5th. I promised a friend that if my letter was published, I would send you a copy.

I also want to let you know that I enjoyed the biennial very much. I particularly enjoyed your address as I could relate personally to some of the issues you discussed. In addition to all the joint sessions, I found the sisterhood sessions stimulating. I came home on a הזי that still lingers!

God willing, I plan to attend the next biennial. I look forward to seeing you there.

שלום Carol Hoffman

Carol Hoffman

Enclosure

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that lasted for days, staging demonstrations and setting fire to Arab property. Is it so difficult to envision such feelings of betrayal among some settlers spilling over into violence against the army?

The real struggle today is not over land or security but over Israel's soul. The settlers, many of whom are religious, cling to a biblical hold on the land of Israel. They want Israel to be a truly Jewish state, committed to the land, the laws and, above all, the Torah.

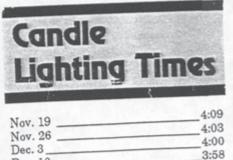
Many city folk in Tel Aviv, avowedly secularist, see the 135,000 settlers as relics of the past, hardly representative of their vision of a truly modern Israel committed to democracy, economic prosperity and, above all, peace.

Each side looks with disdain on the other; each side is embarrassed by the other's values.

The settlers see themselves as the embodiment of the original pioneers who settled Palestine and as the protective vanguard for the city dwellers who don't appreciate their sense of commitment and self-sacrifice. The city dwellers see the settlers as provocateurs, needlessly angering Arab villagers by disputing territory of little practical value. The majority of Israelis would just as soon see the settlements dismantled and the settlers forced to move within the Green Line.

What complicates matters is that the government of Israel has given little comfort to the settlers. Officials have not sought to assure the settlers that they will be protected under the new plan, which remains vague as to who will have jurisdiction over the roads between Jerusalem and the Palestinian-administered areas. This leads to the impression that while

the government, mindful of the trauma over dismantling the town of Yamit as part of the peace agreement with Egypt, may not actively shut down settlements,





News Copy	Publication Date
Deadline Nov. 23 (Hanukkah)	Dec. 3
Dec. 7	Dec. 17
Marrie Married	Jan. 14
Jan. 4 Jan. 18	Jan. 28



Applauds Rabbi Schindler

Editor:

In response to the Nov. 5 Transcript, I would like to express my dismay at the attitudes in opposition to Rabbi Schindler's appeal to the Reform Jewish community to "pave a missionary path to the heartland of this continent if not the world."

I especially took umbrage with Professor Jack Wertheimer's article against proselytizing, which expresses needless paranoia.

Missionaries have been extremely active ever since I can remember, and still are. I have been approached several times by many of my "born again Christian" friends in an attempt to convert me. Most of us have been approached by missionaries at our homes. Currently, fundamental Christian groups are infiltrating our communities at the grassroots by running for school boards and public offices. Indeed, it is doubtful a more intensive or "steppedup" missionary program could exist in our community than that which is already in place.

As a delegate present with the other 4,000 Jews who attended Rabbi Schindler's address, I applauded his proposal for many reasons. By sharing Judaism with our community, some stereotypical misconceptions about Jews are put to rest, and anti-Semitism, bred from ignorance and exclusion, is being resisted.

When we open our doors to our community, understanding and friendship are fostered. Last year my rabbi, fellow congregants, and I had the pleasure of explaining Jewish rituals and liturgy to a pair of students from a local Catholic high school. Both students wrote a paper about their impressions of Judaism. It was heartwarming to later read them both. "I have never, in my life, felt so accepted and cared for when I was in a minority position as I did when I was at Temple De Hirsch Sinai," wrote one student. To me, this is part of what Rabbi Schindler is talking about. He is challenging us to be "champions of Judaism," sharing with the unchurched, inviting them in just as Abraham did.

Whether we individually believe Jews should proselytize or not, we need to keep in mind that we are all part of this Jewish

community regardless of our affiliation. We need to work together and overcome our biases toward each other. In doing so, we can be a light unto our communities where our children, and our children's children, will be the benefactors.

Carol Hoffman Redmond

Unnecessary attacks on Reform leader

Editor:

Although I do not agree with Rabbi Schindler's proposal to proselytize (Transcript, Nov. 5), I was shocked at the viciousness of the response of Orthodox and Conservative leaders.

Sheldon Rudoff, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, calls it another of the Reform movement's "aberrational activities" that will "widen the gap between us." Rabbi Moshe Sherer accuses "this group" of playing a numbers game to "bolster its ranks." Worse than merely attacking Schindler's idea, they attack Reform Judaism as a whole. What do they expect to accomplish by this? Do they expect Reform Jews to listen sympathetically to such vituperative insults?

In a related article, Jack Wertheimer distorts facts and names isolated incidents (i.e. the Catholic woman said to be a sisterhood president), holding them up as if they were characteristic of the Reform movement as a whole. The so-called gap between Reform Judaism and other movements created by such people, who think—as all fundamentalists do—that anyone who does not follow their way is wrong or at least inferior.

When a cornered animal fights, the vehemence of its attack is proportionate to the degree of its fear. Could it be that people like Rudoff, Sherer, and Wertheimer speak as they do out of fear of Reform Judaism's willingness to embrace new ideas and try out new methods?

Yes, doing something new is a risk and might even be proved wrong in time; but if no one took risks, the world would never improve or change, and we would still be praying to idols.

Sherry Rind Redmond

LETTER POLICY The Jewish Transcript welcomes letters to the editor, preferably typewritten. Letters must not exceed 200 words in length and must be dated and signed with current address and daytime telephone number. The Transcript reserves the right to edit letters. November 2, 1993 18 Heshvan 5754

From: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO: UAHC Executive Staff

+ Cabenet

First of all, my deepest thanks for all your efforts attendant on our recent Assembly. It was a superb convention and it has received the warm response which it deserves. You have every reason to be pleased and proud and we have very reason to praise you.

My call for an outreach to non-Jews beyond those who are bound to us by marriage evoked wide public debate, not just here, but in Israel as well. I am glad that this is so. Indeed, this was my design and that is why we led with this item in our various releases.

Some of the critics are having their say now. That's all to the good. It gives us an opportunity to respond and to make the case for Outreach.

On the day following the Assembly, and purely on the basis of those snatches of reporting which appeared in newspapers, Prof. Jack Wertheimer of the Jewish Theological Seminary launched a multi-paragraph attack against Reform which he then distributed by E mail to Jewish newspapers throughout the land. Needless to say, I responded at once and my rejoinder was distributed in like fashion. I attach it herewith for your perusal.

The final version which went out differs slightly from the text which I am sending you. It adds a paragraph reacting to Wertheimer's absurd charge that missionary activity against Jews will increase because of this call -- as if the Jews for Jesus, and those many Christian groups backing them had ever stayed their hands. Outreach can gird the loins of our youth to resist their blandishments.

Be that as it may, I need the help of staff and particularly our Council/Federation directors. If Wertheimer's article does appear in any of our papers, let To: Executive Staff November 2, 1993 Page -2-

us know at once, so that we can ask for equal time. This applies to all critical comments, particularly to adverse editorials. Some of it you may be able to handle yourselves or through sympathetic lay and rabbinic leaders of your regions. But if you want help, just let me know. I am anxious to keep the debate going.

Thanks much. for this and all your other efforts -- which continue to give us reason for pride in our collective accomplishment.

Warm regards.

Encl.

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MEMORANDUM

From: Joy Weinberg To: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler Date: October 29, 1993

Thank you for sending Mari Campbell's letter to us. We plan to publish it in the Spring 1994 issue of <u>Reform Judaism</u>.

I spoke with Mari today to request her permission and she was happy to hear her letter would be printed. She wanted to let you know that she was grateful for your attention to her letter. She felt warmly welcomed by the rabbi who called her. I also sent her some recent issues of <u>Reform Judaism</u>.

212-755-8598 10/24/93 Surday Rabbi alexander Schindler, I read the article foday in the San Francisco Examine Jewish Leader rouses debate with new views Thank you for sharing your viewpoint that the Reform denomination of Judiasm should encourage non-practicing people of other religious backgrounds to be welcomed into the gynagogue as a single parent of 35 yr. old twin gils (non - practicing Catholic) bie spa great deal of time soul searching how to spiritually raise my guls. The religion that appeals to me the most is the Reform denomination of Judiasm. I have felt that to possibly inquire or convert to Judaism it would only It adoptable of I was involved with a mon of the Jewish faith. That is not my case, I'm just a single farent of a previous christian background who would feel like a "freak ou outside if I were to inquire into learning more about Judiasm. My quatest concern is for my children. I know they need spiritual guidance, a model for a way of living and tradition. Each day becomes more important. Right now I am sitting on the fence, as to how to spiritually guide them. Many unanswered questions

always come up send them to Catholic school even when I would set an example of hypoerise? Raise them without any religious belief? Feel like a freak for wonting to choose Judiasm, but having no links to that faith? Perkaps if your viewpoint is accepted people like myself would feel more willing to inquire into Judiasm, and possibly convert.... The again, thank you for speaking out.

Sincerely, Maie Campbell 1744 Sand Hill Rd. #102 Palo alto, CA 94304 (415) 322-8860

MEMORANDUM

November 30, 1993

COPY

FROM: Rabbi Alexander M. SchindlerTO: Melvin Merians, Dru Greenwood

The enclosed may interest you. Here is at least one rabbi who understood what I said and didn't say. Thank God for that.



Union of Am SERVING REFORM J 838 FIFTH AVENUE, I

Union of American Hebrew Congregations SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA 838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212) 249-0100



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT B38 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> November 30, 1993 16 Kislev 5754

Rabbi Hillel Cohn Congregation Emanu El 3512 North E Street San Bernardino, CA 92405

Dear Hillel:

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of your superb sermon. Thank God there is at least one colleague who knows precisely what I said and what I didn't say based on hearing and on reading the text and not on some extract in a newspaper article.

I am deeply beholden to you and I value your friendship of course as does Rhea.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

RABBI HILLEL COHN CONGREGATION EMANU EL 3512 NORTH "E" STREET SAN BERNARDINO, CALIFORNIA 92405 (909)886-4818 FAX (909)883-5892

November 21, 1993

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler UAHC 838 5th Avenue New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

I had intended to send you the enclosed sermon to let you know of my full and enthusiastic support of what you said at the Biennial. I hadn't gotten around to it but the last issue of the <u>National Jewish Post</u> listed the sermon topic as its "Sermon Of The Weet" so I thought I had better send it to you as quickly as possible since you may have stumbled across the title.

:

All the best to Rhea and you.

Shalom - שלום,

Hillel Cohn Rabbi

WHAT RABBI SCHINDLER SAID AND DIDN'T SAY

October 29, 1993 Congregation Emanu El - San Bernardino Rabbi Hillel Cohn

Two weeks ago the leadership of the temple and Sisterhood were in San Francisco to join over 4,000 other synagogue leaders for the Biennial Assembly of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. We went to engage in Jewish learning and were taught by some of the finest scholars of our time. We went to gain new insights and skills to aid us as we continue to try to lead this congregation and community. And we went to be with other very deeply committed Jews who are concerned about the world in which we live, the future of our country and the survival of the Jewish People. There were many very moving and memorable moments. An impassioned speech by Marian Wright Edelman, one of the leading advocates of the rights of children in our country and world, reminded us of our continuing obligation to make the world safer for the children of today and tomorrow. A most eloquent speech by Hillary Rodham Clinton not only called on us to be her allies in the effort to provide better health care for all Americans but was an expression of the commitment that she and we share for the rebuilding of America. There were Shabbat Services that were enhanced by the singing of some of the most gifted cantors and there was a Shabbat program of Jewish music that expressed the meaning of Torah. Each of us who attended came back energized, uplifted, rededicated to serving our synagogue and aware of many new challenges and the need to rethink the ways we have been doing things in our synagogues and Jewish communities.

Perhaps the most striking experience of attending such a gathering is to join in Shabbat worship with close to 5,000 other Jews and committed, knowledgeable Jews at that. The resonance of all of these Jews joining in singing the *Sh'ma* and other prayers of our People is incredible. It is the largest *Minyan* any of us will ever be a part of and the mass of people envelops one with a feeling of warmth and power. Even for those of us sitting three-fourths of the way back in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Hotel we had a feeling of being in a synagogue even though the leaders of the service were visible to us on huge screens. But the thing that is particularly significant about that Shabbat worship experience is that it is the time when the president of our movement, Rabbi Schindler, delivers his Presidential Sermon or Address and it was, as has always been the case, filled with much for us to think about. And when I say "much" I really mean "much" because it took Rabbi Schindler ninety minutes to say what he had to say. And when he finished I know that many of my rabbinic colleagues felt just like I did, extremely grateful to him for demonstrating to our own congregants that their complaints about a 25 minute or 30 minute sermon as being too long are totally unwarranted.

Rabbi Schindler, certainly acknowledged as one of the most significant Jewish leaders of our time, is also a person of vision and in his address he shared some of his perceptions on the way we should be going. And as is inevitably the case, some of what he said has been misunderstood and confused. As newspapers across the country picked up key elements of his address - I still can't understand why they didn't publish the full address since it was so short - we had a good example of the message not always being heard correctly or clearly. But it wasn't only the newspapers that twisted things. Two days after his talk Rabbi Schindler met with the rabbis who were in attendance at the convention and even at that gathering there was misunderstanding about what he had actually said and didn't actually say.

Now obviously I am not going to repeat everything he was saying because that would take 90 minutes or more. But there are a few points that have elicited a great deal of reaction around the country and I think they are worth considering.

The first thing that evoked response was his proposal that we Jews, especially liberal Jews, engage in a program of reaching out to those non-Jews who do not belong to any religious institution and who are seeking religious meaning in their lives and for whom Judaism might offer such meaning. Immediately the headlines began to report that Rabbi Schindler and the Reform movement were going to be evangelists with the image of Reform Jews walking down the streets with tracts in their hand and knocking on doors to bring the "good news about the Jews" to others. Rabbi Schindler's call for a more active outreach to the unaffiliated is an extension of the challenge he presented to the reform movement about fifteen years ago to develop an Outreach program. That program has embraced interfaith couples and has made Jews-By-Choice feel more comfortable and accepted in the synagogues and Jewish communities but at the time he also felt that the time had come for us to be somewhat more active or aggressive in reaching out to non-Jews who might find a religious and spiritual home within Judaism. That part of the Outreach program has generally been ignored but now Rabbi Schindler is calling for it to be brought to the fore.

Rabbi Schindler's call was expressed with his wonderful poetic penchant: "My dream is to see our Judaism unleashed as a resource for a world in need; not as the exclusive inheritance of the few, but as a renewable resource for the many; not as a religious stream too small to be seen on the map of the world, but as a deep flowing river, hidden by the overgrown confusion of modern times, that could nourish humanity's highest aspirations."

And so he called on our movement to move forward with this wider mission, for there to be more than a passive acceptance of non-Jews but instead an active pursuit. As he put it, "It bids us to seek them out and invite them in -- like the prototype of the proselytizing Jew, Abraham, whose tent was continually open on all four sides for fear that he would miss a wandering nomad and fail to bid him to enter." And then he asked, "WHY do we continue to resist the notion of an assertive Judaism? Are we ashamed?Is it that our self-image still mirrors the contempt of our traducers? Or do we, perhaps, think that Judaism has little if anything to offer to our world?" HE then went on to say, "Judaism HAS an enormous amount of wisdom and experience to offer to our troubled world, and we Jews ought to be proud to proclaim it with fervor and pride."

The reactions have been that Reform Judaism is about to embark on an aggressive campaign to convert "unchurched" Americans. The leaders of the Conservative and Orthodox movements have said that Rabbi Schindler's call is incredulous and that the task for Jews is to make better Jews of the Jews we have. Of course that is a task but it is not the only task. I concur with my colleague Rabbi Schindler that the time has come for us to be more assertive. I think we have the sensitivity to be aggressive yet not obnoxious, active but not appalling. We DO have a message to share with others and the fact is that there ARE thousands who are not athome in any church, who ARE seeking a place where their souls can be nourished, where they can identify with a group, where they can be identified with a People with a rich history. Our Judaism is one such place and we should not keep it a secret. That is why I have devoted a great deal of my time over the years to speaking about Judaism in schools and to community groups and on the media and will continue to do that. As our prayer book says so well, "Ours is a message which the world needs to hear." I commend Rabbi Schindler for challenging us to make that message heard.

A second element of his address which evoked a great deal of response had to do with the place that we accord to non-jews in our synagogues and in our life-cycle ceremonies. Here, too Rabbi Schindler was misunderstood. He was not saying that any and all barriers to the participation of non-jews should be lifted. He was saying that some of the barriers really make little or no sense. I have come to feel that and have incorporated that feeling into the practice of our synagogue over the years and feel that it has been beneficial. I do not believe, for example, that it makes sense for a non-Jew to recite blessings which make an assumption that the person reciting them is Jewish. Thus the blessings one recites when being called to the Torah praises God for "giving us the Torah and choosing us from the peoples of the earth." If one is not a Jew such a declaration is inappropriate. Or for a non-Jew to recite the traditional blessing over the Shabbat candles which acknowledges that one is commanded by God to practice the Mitzvah or fulfill the command of kindling the lights is also inappropriate. But there can be a variation that expresses the very same spirit and that would be appropriate for a non-Jew without making that non-Jew, who in many cases is raising children Jewishly or is supportive of the Jewish partner in the marriage's Judaism, to say. This call of Rabbi Schindler has been opposed by a number of my colleagues. But I concur with his call that he expressed in these words when he called for us to "challenge our own orthodoxies for the sake of the future; most particularly for the sake of gaining and retaining the hearts of the children of interfaith marriages for Judaism." We cannot escape the fact that there are many intermarried couples in our midst. Many of our children come to Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah with one set of non-Jewish grandparents. There was a time when we virtually ignored those grandparents as only the Jews were involved in passing the Torah from generation to generation. But non-Jews also regard our Torah as part of their Scripture and we who are more committed to the spirit than the letter of the law find that many of the values which we find in Torah are the values which non-Jews accept as well. Why, then, should they be ignored? What Rabbi Schindler did not say is that there be absolutely no difference between Jews and non-jews in our synagogues and rituals. What he DID say is that we should work towards a maximum openness, not the total abandonment of boundaries, but rather their enforcement through creative ritual.

There is much more that Rabbi Schindler said and didn't say in his 90 minutes. And I do not propose to come near to that amount of time. I do want to simply touch on a couple of other areas which merit mention. He reminded us that there is still a great deal of unfinished business in liberal Judaism in according equality to the Gay and Lesbian Jews among us. He called for us to go on record as supporting the right of gay and lesbian couples to adopt children, to file joint income tax returns, top share in the benefits society normally assigns to married couples. He called for our synagogues to make benefits for staff, including health care, available to gay and lesbian partners and their children. I agree that we need to translate our commitments into action.

Rabbi Schindler also suggested that the time has come for us to reexamine the traditional requirement that for a child to attend a synagogue school, to receive a Jewish education, that his or her parents must be members of the synagogue. He called for an embracing of children of all who are unaffiliated for at least a year so that they could avail themselves of the benefits of Jewish education. It is a proposal which I feel has great merit and we ought to give it serious consideration here.

Finally, Rabbi Schindler was forceful, as he always is, in reminding us that for too many American Jews the Land of Israel has become the sole touchstone of their Jewish existence. Here is what he said: "We do ourselves irreparable harm when we allow this to be, when we permit our Jewishness to consist almost entirely of a vicarious participation in the life of Israel." He called, therefore, for a restoration of balance. "We will not survive", he said, " if all that we are about is Israel. And Israel will not survive if the Jews of the world become its pale extension, mere solitary asteroids circling in space about a distant sun. Both are needed: a strong Israel, and Jewishly strong communities throughout the world." In this vein he recalled what Golda Meir told a delegation of American Jewish leaders right after the Yom Kippur war. She said, "As you return to your communities I will not ask you to remember us and give us more material support. You do that in abundant measure. Nor will I ask you to rally more political support for us in those countries in which you live -- you have done that too in abundant measure. I will ask you, rather, to return to your communities and to buttress your synagogues and schools because the struggle for Jewish survival is fought not only along the frontiers of Israel, but in every synagogue and in every Jewish school of the world."

That is a message which we need to hear again as too many among us have made their Judaism almost solely linked to the support of Israel and have neglected the needs of Jewish institutions and programs right here. We need a balance, a restoration of balance.

There needs to be more said about that portion of Rabbi Schindler's address. While we must continue to support Jews and Israel we must also begin to think of the real needs of Judaism right here and the strengthening of our institutions right here. A balance IS needed and thus far there has been little balance as we here have been forced to operate on shoe-strings and the bulk of our resources have gone to Israel.

We are fortunate to have a voice reminding us of our challenges and our opportunities such as the voice of Rabbi Alexander Schindler. In other quarters of Jewish life today there is a feeling that a particular leader of a particular movement, the Rebbe of the Chabad Lubavitcher Hasidim, is the Messiah who has come to deliver the world. We do not accord that position to him nor to Rabbi Schindler. But to Rabbi Schindler we can accord the position of being a leader of vision, of courage, of good sense and it important that we be aware of what he has said and what he hasn't said and together with him strive for the enhancement of our Jewishness and our Judaism.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT B38 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> November 30, 1993 16 Kislev 5754

Edith M. Sachs 80 West 40th Street Bayonne, NJ 07002

Dear Ms Sachs:

hear

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Wertheimer article. I did prepare a response, a copy of which I am enclosing herewith. In most Jewish newspapers throughout the country, my response was published, often alongside Jack Wertheimer's contrary view.

I am confident that David Twersky will print mine as well. If not, please let me know.

Marginally noted, my response went out on the day after Wertheimer's article was sent to every Jewish newspaper across the land.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

RESPONSE ENCLOSEd SACHS LETTER SENTED RECHARD COHEN W/MEMO

80 West 40th St. Bayonne, NJ 07002 November 12, 1993

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

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

As a Reform Jew and a member of a Reform congregation, I have taken the liberty of sending you a copy of an Op-Ed article that appeared in the Thursday, November 4 <u>MetroWest Jewish News</u>, a suburban New Jersey weekly paper with which you may already be familiar.

I do not think it fair that this piece, penned by an individual whose stated affiliation is with the Conservative movement, should appear without a representative of the Reform movement having the opportunity to reply in kind and defend our policies. It would gratify me and, I am sure, other Reform Jews who happened across this article, if you or another high-ranking UAHC official could provide a response.

The <u>Jewish News</u>'s editor is Mr. David Twersky, and their mailing address is 901 Route 10, Whippany, NJ 07981-1157. Their editorial department's phone number is (201) 887-3900.

I will be watching the paper in anticipation of any reply/rebuttal that you may be able to arrange.

Sincerely,

Edith M. Lachs

Edith M. Sachs

UC: RICHARD COHEN

Op-Ed Proselytizing bad for the Jews; costs will be multiple

By Jack Wertheimer

Reform Judaism is about to Rembark on an aggressive campaign to convert "unchurched" Americans.

According to reports emanating from the biennial convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the synagogue organization of Reform Judaism, Rabbi Alexander Schindler has announced the creation of a \$5 million fund to advertise programs for the proselytization of non-Jews married to Jews, as well as "our neighbors who belong to no church."

Rabbi Schindler, UAHC's president, has expressed his desire to recapture the missionary zeal of the Maccabean era as a way to expose vast numbers of non-Jews to "the wisdom and experience [Judaism has] to offer to our troubled world."

This new missionary agenda comes at time when the Reform movement is internally agonizing over its policies regarding interfaith families - and the continuing unwillingness of non-Jewish spouses to undergo formal conversion.

The call is designed to remedy a series of problems created by Reform policies. Here is what is happening:

With the full support of Rabbi Schindler and other movement leaders, Reform congregations have been extending their warm hospitality to non-Jews in ways once thought unimaginable and with consequences that are bedeviling the Reform movement.

To avoid any suggestion of discrimination against mixed-

Jack Wertheimer is professor of history at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York City, and author of the recently published A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America (Basic Books, 1993).

married families, full membership rights are routinely extended to interfaith couples and their children. Moreover, many Reform congregations permit non-Jews to take an active part in the religious service. It is common, for example, for non-Jews to be called to the Torah; to smooth the way, Reform rabbis permit non-Jews to alter the traditional benediction to refer to God's "teachings" rather than His Torah.

In another example, non-Jews participate in a relatively new ceremony that has become part of the bar/bat mitzva ritual at Reform temples: As a symbolic representation of the transmission of Jewish identity, the Torah is passed on from grandparents to parents to the bar or bat mitzva. To avoid hurting the feelings of the child of an interfaith couple, the non-Jewish parent is invited to join in this ceremony of religious transmission. Thus, a news story reported not long ago on a Protestant minister who passed the Torah on at his son's bar mitzva ceremony. In some Reform tem-

ples, non-Jews are even permitted to participate in synagogue gover-

nance, voting on the rabbi's contract and serving on the board. In the wake of news reports about a sisterhood president at a Reform temple who was a church-going Catholic, some efforts have been made in recent years to excuse non-Jews from congregational leadership, although even in this area many temples refuse to discriminate against non-Jews.

Even when the line is drawn when it comes to synagogue gov-

ernance, however, Reform congregations that grant membership to interfaith families, thereby empower them to reshape temple policy through their right to vote.

Leaders of the Reform movement acknowledge ruefully that rabbis feel so intimidated by this "outreach" lobby they will not publicly affirm the desirability of Jews marrying Jews for fear of offending or alienating interfaith families.



Rabbi Schindler's call for missionizing, therefore, is contradicted by the implicit message conveyed in his movement's congregations: If it is possible for a non-Jew to be called to the Torah, enjoy full membership privileges and even help govern the congregation, what benefit does formal conversion convey? Undoubtedly, Reform leaders

will contend that warm hospitality will entice non-Jews to convert. meshumad - is regarded as a

Unfortunately, this argument is Jew who has strayed. unsupported by experience or reason.

In the meantime, the larger Jewish community will have to contend with the consequences of Reform Judaism's experimentation. By seeking to convert the non-Jewish spouses of Jews --many of whom, incidentally, are "churched" - the new Reform proselytism encourages what sociologists call "religious

switching." Fewer than half of adult Americans today have an unbroken record of involvement with their present denomination: Protestants switch from one denomination to the next or become Catholics, and some Catholics become Protestants. Recent surveys confirm, too, that there are more Jews who have become Christians than vice versa.

With its new outreach program, the Reform movement encourages the trend toward viewing religious identity as a matter subject to easy disposal. This is antithetical to Judaism which, more 50 than Christianity, is predicated on the transmis-

sion of identity from one generation to the next.

Religious switching is not an option according to Jewish teachings. Judaism is an identity as dependent on fate as much as faith. We do not ask our sons whether they wish to enter the Covenant of Abraham; we inscribe the covenant on their bodies when they are a mere eight days old. Even the apostate - the

As a people convinced of its mission, we should be the last to embrace the notion that individuals are free to assert and discard identities at will. We should not encourage individuals to treat religion as yet another replaceable shmatte, a cheap suit, try it on for size and then dispose of it when the fashion passes. On pragmatic grounds, if we do not wish Jews to view Judaism as a disposable commodity, we should not encourage Christians to regard their religion in that wav.

The Jewish community may also pay dearly in another way for Reform's bid at proselytization. Bold pronouncements about missionizing are like a red flag waved in front of a charging bull, A vast array of missionizing groups are already in place in this country - and they would be more than eager to proselytize openly among Jews. They have not unleashed their full arsenal of weapons thus far because, in America, it is not considered fair play for a majority religion to pick on minority religions.

Jews have been able to argue in the American public square against missionary activities on the grounds that the battle is unfair: We Jews believe in "live and let live." We do not missionize among you Christians; so don't seek our conversion. The new Reform outreach - however puny its \$5 million war chest disarms the effectiveness of that argument. At the least, it justifies Christian outreach to "unsynagogued Jews" - that is, almost two-thirds of American Jewry.

The Jewish community must now be vigilant against a steppedup missionary program directed at Jews, a campaign that can draw upon vast resources and personnel to repay us for Rabbi Schindler's missionary zeal.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> November 24, 1993 10 Kislev 5754

Rabbi Sylvin L. Wolf 10 Ninth Avenue, #304 San Mateo, CA 94401

Dear Sylvin:

Thank you so much for your encouraging note, all the more welcome because the brick bats have been flying too.

As the program unfolds, I will certainly keep in mind your offer to be of help. That will be most welcome.

Again, my thanks and warm good wishes.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Rabbi Sylvin L. Wolf 10 Ninth Avenue, #304 San Mateo, CA 94401

November 17, 1993

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

Dear Alex

I am writing to applaud your position regarding an active outreach to non-Jews. For sometime I have been thinking that we should have such a program. I thought that your positions on outreach and patrilineal descent were timely and that you addressed core issues with approaches which could have farreaching positive results. I think that such a wider outreach as you propose is a logical extension of the previous ideas. From my own experience supporting patrilineal descent and outreach programs and dealing with the role of the non-Jew in the temple, I believe that a wider outreach program should be undertaken.

For a variety of reasons, I think that resistance will come from both rabbis and laypeople. I'm not sure that, in the beginning, congregations will want to undertake such programs. The effort may have to come from a separate entity whose mission is a wider outreach to non-Jews and which will link people with congregations as part of the process. Frankly, I would walcome the opportunity to be able to participate in the planning and execution of such an effort.

I recently wrote that I consider our movement to be a religious adventure. For me, you are one of the people wast responsible for that. May you go from strength to strength.

2 Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Last Shabbat I conducted services at the Jewish Home for the Aged in San Francisco. Eva and Arthur attended and we had a chance to visit. Oy, how frail we are! I was taken by Eva's attention to Arthur.

Warmest regards.

Sylvin L. Wolf



<u>O P I N I O N</u>

Should Judaism become a missionary religion?

Jack Wertheimer

Proselytizing is bad for the Jews

Reform Judaism is about to embark on an aggressive campaign to convert "unchurched" Americans.

According to reports emanating from the biennial convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the synagogue organization of Reform Judaism, Rabbi Alexander Schindler has announced the creation of a \$5 million fund to advertise programs for the proselytization of non-Jews married to Jews, as well as "our neighbors who belong to no church." Rabbi Schindler, UAHC's president, has expressed his desire to recapture the missionary zeal of the Maccabean era as a way to expose vast numbers of non-Jews to "the wisdom and experience [Judaism has] to offer to our troubled world." This new missionary agenda comes at a time when the Reform movement is internally agonizing over its policies regarding interfaith families — and the continuing unwillingness of non-Jewish spouses to undergo formal conversion.

With the full support of Rabbi Schindler and other movement leaders, Reform congregations have been extending their warm hospitality to non-Jews in ways once thought unimaginable and with consequences that are bedeviling the Reform movement.

To avoid any suggestion of discrimination against mixed-married families, full membership rights are routinely extended to interfaith couples and their children. Moreover, many Reform congregations permit non-Jews to take an active part in the religious service. It is common, for example, for non-Jews to be called to the Torah.

In some Reform temples, non-Jews are even permitted to participate in synagogue governance, voting on the rabbi's contract and serving on the board. Even when the line is drawn when it comes to synagogue governance, however, Reform congregations that grant membership to interfaith families, thereby empower them to reshape temple policy through their right to vote.

Leaders of the Reform movement acknowledge ruefully that rabbis feel so intimidated by this "outreach" lobby they will not publicly affirm the desirability of Jews marrying Jews for fear of offending or alienating interfaith families. Rabbi Schindler's call for missionizing, therefore, is contradicted by the implicit message conveyed in his movement's congregations: If it is possible for a non-Jew to be called to the Torah, enjoy full membership privileges and even help govern the congregation, what benefit does formal conversion convey?

Undoubtedly, Reform leaders will contend that warm hospitality will entice non-Jews to convert. Unfortunately, this argument is unsupported by experience or reason.

In the meantime, the larger Jewish community will have to contend with the consequences of Reform Judaism's experimentation. By seeking to convert the non-Jewish spouses of Jews — many of whom, incidentally, are "churched" — the new Reform proselytism encourages what sociologists call "religious switching."

With its new outreach program, the Reform movement encourages the trend toward viewing religious identity as a matter subject to easy disposal. This is antithetical to Judaism which, more so than Christianity, is predicated on the transmission of identity from one generation to the next. Religious switching is not an option according to Jewish teachings. Judaism is an identity as dependent on fate as much as faith. We do not ask our sons whether they wish to enter the Covenant of Abraham; we inscribe the covenant on their bodies when they are a mere eight days old. Even the apostate — the *meshumad* — is regarded as a Jew who has strayed.

As a people convinced of its mission, we should be the last to embrace the notion that individuals are free to assert and discard identities at will. We should not encourage individuals to treat religion as yet another replacable *shmatte*, a cheap suit, try it on for size and then dispose of it when the fashion passes. On pragmatic grounds, if we do not wish Jews to view Judaism as a disposable commodity, we should not encourage Christians to regard their religion in that way.

The Jewish community may also pay dearly in another way for Reform's bid at proselytization. Bold pronouncements about missionizing are like a red flag waved in front of a charging bull. A vast array of missionizing groups are already in place in this country — and they would be more than eager to proselvtize openly among Jews. They have not

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Don't be ashamed of assertive Judaism

It was with disappointment tinged with sadness that I read Prof. Jack Wertheimer's article, "Proselytizing is Bad for Jews."

Tope

Disappointed because he wrote an essay on the basis of a brief report in a newspaper without taking the trouble to read my speech — a most unprofessorial act.

And sadness for two reasons — first, because his words place him among those who are ashamed of the notion of an assertive Judaism, who believe that it has little if anything to offer to the world; and second, because he fails to grasp the historic nature of the opportunity that now avails itself to offer our faith and the spiritual strength it contains to many of our fellow-Americans who have no religious affiliation but who are searching for meaning in their lives. Indeed, Prof. Wertheimer bypasses my central theme in its entirety, and instead initiates a diatribe against Reform Judaism and its synagogues, distorting reality and denigrating the Reform rabbinate.

Prof. Wertheimer manifests such an unreasoned hatred of Reform. A case in point: he writes that Reform rabbis are "so intimidated by the Outreach 'lobby' that they will not publicly affirm the desirability of Jews marrying Jews for fear of offending or alienating interfaith families." Nonsense! He is not describing any Reform rabbi I know.

Indeed, at our previous convention, and before an equally massive audience, I made precisely the kind of plea that Prof. Wertheimer accuses us of stifling. I said then and I stand by these words today:

"We must lose no opportunity to persuade our children either to marry Jews or to urge their non-Jewish partners to opt for Judaism...We need to affirm our Judaism frankly, freely, proudly, and without fear that it will offend the non-Jewish spouses. Quite the contrary; it can only enhance their regard for Judaism, for if we lack in missionary zeal, they are bound to surmise that we have no message at all — or, at any rate, that we do not prize it."

This is my central thesis: that Judaism from its very beginnings was a missionary religion; that our Tanach and subsequent rabbinic literature underscored the compelling need for such conversionary activity — indeed, the prophets made Israel's mission a clarion call; and that it was only when our enemies instituted severe and often lethal restrictions against us that our conversionary zeal waned. But such restrictions no longer inhibit us. Why not resume our traditional vocation of being champions of Judaism?

I am puzzled by Prof. Wertheimer's resistance to the notion of an assertive Judaism. Does his self-image still mirror the contempt of our traducers? Or does he think Judaism has little if anything to offer to the world?

Prof. Wertheimer fears that mainstream Christian denominations will now feel free to reach out to "unsynagogued Jews." Such fears have no basis. The real threat comes from cult groups like Jews for Jesus, which do attract young Jews. Our proselytizing program will only strengthen our defenses against such groups, for as we reach out to others, we enhance our own knowledge and deepen our commitment to our faith.

Prof. Wertheimer charges that Reform encourages "religious switching," that we promote the trend toward religious identity as "as matter subject to easy disposal" — indeed, that we encourage incividuals." That is an affront not only to me personally but also to the many thoughtful, feeling men and women who have, within their own brief lives, recapitulated the Jewish experience — the exile, the longing, the returning in love. He owes these people an abject apology. His intemperate language ill befits an academician. And it desecrates the tradition that Judaism enjoins us to follow in our attitude and behavior toward those who have chosen to share our faith and fate.

Let Prof. Wertheimer's language be tempered further by the fact that fully 50 percent of those who are raised as Conservative Jews are currently marrying non-Jews — so the demographers tell us.

My dream is to see our Judaism unleashed as a resource for a world in need — not as the exclusive inheritance of the few, but as a renewable resource for the many; not as a religious stream too small to be seen on the map of the world, but as a deeply flowing river nourishing humanity's highest aspirations.

Let us therefore be champions of Judaism. Let us not be among those who, in their

unleashed their full arsenal of weapons thus far because, in America, it is not considered fair play for a majority religion to pick on minority religions.

Jews have been able to argue in the American public square against missionary activities on the grounds that the battle is unfair: We Jews believe in "live and let live." We do not missionize among you Christians; so don't seek our conversion. The new Reform outreach — however puny its \$5 million war chest — disarms the effectiveness of that argument. At the least, it justifies Christian outreach to "unsynagogued Jews" — that is, almost two-thirds of American Jewry. The Jewish community must now be vigilant against a stepped-up missionary program directed at Jews, a campaign that can draw upon vast resources and personnel to repay us for Rabbi Schindler's missionary zeal.

Jack Wertheimer is professor of history at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

pain and confusion, respond to the fear of self-extinction by declaring casualties before the fact; who respond to the suffering of the past by living in the past, who react to the long-drawn isolation of our people with an isolationism of their own.

Let us rather recall and act on those lofty passages from Bible and commentary that define Jewish "chosenness" not as exclusive but as exemplary, not as separatist but as representative, not as closed but as open, not as rejecting but as all-embracing and compassionate. In Isaiah's words:

"It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the offspring of Israel. I will also give the for a light unto the nations, that my salvation may be unto the ends of the earth."

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler is president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> November 23, 1993 9 Kislev 5754

Mr. Marvin Lender P.O. Box 3937 Woodbridge, CT 06525

Dear Marvin:

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of the Wertheimer interchange. It appeared in substantially the same form in many Jewish newspapers throughout the country, but I do appreciate your letting me know about New Haven.

I hope that we can have our dinner soon so that I can discuss this issue with you - - and perhaps even "convert" you to accepting my approach, or at least the reasons which motivated me to proffer it.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,



Murray Lender Chairman Marvin Lender Vice Chairman

November 15, 1993

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

Dear Alex:

I thought you might be interested in the reprint of your Op-ed \forall piece, as well as Jack Wertheimer's, which appeared in the New Haven Jewish Ledger, November 12th. You have called our attention to a very important matter, and I hope that it will continue to be debated within the Jewish community. As with all issues, there is no black or white, but the issue must be addressed and discussed.

Hope to see you as soon as our wives can get us together.

Sincerely,

Marvin Lender rpm

1764 Litchfield Tpke • P.O. Box 3937 • Woodbridge, CT 06525 • Tele: 203 397-3977 • Fax: 203 397-8506



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> November 23, 1993 9 Kislev 5754

Ms Doris Frank General Delivery Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

Dear Ms Frank:

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with me. Obviously, we disagree in part. When non-Jews accept Judaism, more often than not, they tend to be more intensively Jewish than born Jews, and certainly from even a traditional Hallachic point of view, such a conversion is Jewishly "valid." That, at least, has been my experience.

I do agree with you that the ingathering of unaffiliated Jews should be our primary goal and the bulk of the resources of the Union have been, and will continue to be, devoted to that end.

I hope that one of these days we will have an opportunity to meet and to converse. Perhaps then I will have a chance to persuade you of the rightness of my position. You seem to be the kind of person who would enjoy such an intercourse.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

navember 15/93

Robbi alexander Schendler President UAHC 838 Fifth Quenue new york ny 10021 Pear Kabbi no news desturbed me more than to read of your plans to spend \$5 million to messichage Christians, your reason to convert non-Jews so as to enlarge Jemple membership seems to me entirely futile Rabbi, for the spending of the millions will not produce one valid Dew. We have always prided ourselves as being a intal Jewish menority in Cemerica and we are comfortable in the belief that quality not quantity is an essential factor of a vigorous people you do not stress the ingathing I the many thousands of unaffiliated Jews into our fold. your efforts must be directed towards recruiting them, rather Than chasing after Christian windmills, The millions at your disposal

better could go towards higher solaries to attract better teachers for Jewish day schools, more Jewish education for adults and children in the Temple schools; free Jewisch summer camps and support for trips to Israel for youlks. This would be truly a rewarding effort - unquestionably indie rewarding than attempts to convert Cohristians ; Denerely to oris Drank Vineyard Haven, ma. We have about a series and a fourselves as miles and En all phonerity in the heling that guartity is fine do not stress the inguting Co-priotion windmillo 0 The million at your disposed

MEMORANDUM

Via Fax 2 pages

October 26, 1993

it.

FROM: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

TO: David Belin

The public debate is beginning. We will have to continue to stoke it. I am supposed to be on PBS - All Things Considered tonight.

Union of American Hebrew Congregations SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA 838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212) 249-0100 OCT 26 '93 Ø6:27 JTA NYC 212 6438498 🖃

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OCTOBER 26, 1993

REFORM MOVEMENT TARGETS NON-JEWS IN CONTROVERSIAL 'MISSIONARY PATH' By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- The president of the Reform movement, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, has proposed a controversial plan to spend \$5 million to attract non-Jews to the movement.

The proposal was made during Schindler's keynote address to more than 4,000 Jews gathered at the 62nd biennial of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations held here Oct. 21-25.

Schindler's call raised cycbrows among delegates at the convention and leaders of Judaism's other denominations, whose discomfort reflects Judaism's long-standing tradition of not evangelizing among other faiths.

We "should pave a missionary path to the heartland of this continent if not the world!" Schindler proclaimed in his sermon at Saturday morning's Sabbath services.

"Judaism has an enormous amount of wisdom and experience to offer to our troubled world, and we Jews ought to be proud to proclaim it with fervor and pride," Schindler said.

I "call to reach out to those of our neighbors who belong to no church or other religious institutions," he said.

Schindler urged the movement "unabashedly and urgently to resume our vocation as missionaries, as champions of Judaism."

The Reform rabbi's proposal to missionize was provocative.

"Wouldn't something like this dilute Jewish values?" asked convention delegate Maryann Fenster, a member of University Synagogue in Los Angeles and president of the western region of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. "This is not something we should be focusing on."

Sheldon Rudoff, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, said proselytizing has "historically never been something we've done."

"It is another aberrational activity (of the Reform movement) that we have difficulty understanding," said Rudoff.

"It is another step by Reform which widens the gap between us," he said. "The concentration should be on making Jews committed" to Judaism.

Another Public Relations Game?

Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president of Agudath Israel of America, said Schindler's proposal "is a further step to undermine the identity and continuity of the Jewish people."

"It would seem that this group has launched another public relations numbers game to increase its constituency. Chable to accomplish this goal within the Jewish community, the Reform leaders are once again reaching out to the non-Jewish world to bolster their ranks," he said.

Sherer was referring to the Reform movement's 1983 decision to adopt the principle of "patrilineal descent" and thereby accept the children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers as Jewa.

That decision broke with the tradition of defining Jewish lineage through the mother. No other Jewish movement defines Jews by the father's religion.

"Our job today is to reach out to Jews to be Jews, instead of to non-Jews to be pseudo Jews," said Sherer.

Schindler, in an interview after his speech, said that, in fact, Jews historically did missionize to others, but that their efforts ended when the societies in which they lived began prosecuting them for their efforts.

"Conversionary zeal has been praised throughout Judaism," he said.

The prophet "Isaiah said 'My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples,' " said Schindler. "That's Jewish tradition (which is) 2,500 years old. There were schools of missionaries in the Maccabean period," in the first and second centuries before the common era, he said.

"The prototype of the proselytizing Jew was Abraham, whose tent was continually open on all four sides for fear that he would miss a wandering nomad and fail to bid him enter," said Schindler. "We must reclaim that which we let go."

He first called for such efforts when he instituted outreach to the unaffiliated 15 years ago.

But the movement's Outreach Commission has focused instead on involving and integrating into Jewish life the non-Jewish partners in intermarried families that belong to the Reform denomination's 850 congregations.

The founding chairman of the Outreach Commission, David Belin, will lead the effort to raise \$5 million.

Schindler suggested that money he wants to raise to further the Reform movement's missionary program might be spent on advertising synagogue programs that teach non-Jewish spouses about Judaism.

Renni Altman, director of programs for the unaffiliated at the UAHC, said in an interview that the money would have to be spent through "the individual synagogues which could reach the unchurched population."

"It means creating more welcoming congregations which potential converts see as exciting and spiritual places, not that we're going to stand on street corners" preaching, she said.

REPRESENTATIVES OF BELARUS AND JEWS MARK DESTRUCTION OF MINSK GHETTO

NEW YORK, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Representatives of Jewish organizations and officials of the government of Belarus met last week to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Nazi liquidation of the Jewish ghetto of Minsk.

Pyotr Kravchanka, the foreign minister of Belarus, formerly known as Byelorussia, served as host for a series of government-sponsored ceremonies that included the unveiling of a memorial to the Jewish victims of the Nazis at the site of the Minsk ghetto.

Common settes events also included a Jewish book fair and film festival, as well as an exhibition dedicated to Jewish victims of the Nazis at the Minsk Museum of History.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier of Park East Synagogue in Manhattan, a Holocaust survivor who is president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, flew to Belarus last week at Kravchanka's invitation to speak at official ceremonies commemorating the mass killings at the Minsk ghetto.

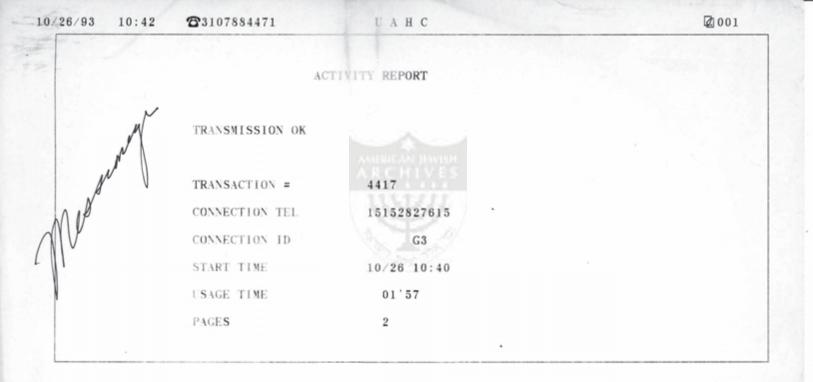
Government and Jewish officials attended.

All the participants wore the same yellow badges the Jews had to wear during the Nazi persecutions.

The ceremonies were led by former partisans who fought the Nazis.

DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

P.4/5



LOUIS R. KOZBERG

10/29/93

Dear alex, Unfortunately Say and Dure unable to altend the recent biennial in Som Francisco. Daness we were among those less shocked at your new proposal. It is had to believe at this point in the progress of the UARE movement use have to love anselves to missionaries. A always believed we abbered an alternatuly to the unablilitated and and those mithout a place to prester their Judorism. I have enclosed a clipping from our local Jenish Journal. Ib the report is factual your remarks not only raised eigelious but secondly saw a complete reversal in what you have had as a balmarh of the Conservative & hope you reconcide your stand provement. and give beether consideration to have missionarias on Park are hustly the passing citizens to Bestel boath and happeniss in the becone fews. Sincerely yours, new year. Sou Kospery



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> November 4, 1993 20 Heshvan 5754

Mr. Louis R. Kozberg 11347 Clover Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90066

Dear Lou:

I am sorry that you were unable to attend the biennial, but I do appreciate your sharing your thoughts with me.

Needless to say, we disagree dramatically. I do not consider it a "lowering of ourselves" when we offer Judaism to others. In fact, I believe quite the opposite: that when we fail to have a mission, people suspect that we have no message. And when we do so, we, in a sense, accept the image stamped upon us by Judaism's traducers.

While we disagree, I hope we can disagree agreeably.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT B38 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> November 16, 1993 2 Kislev 5754

Rabbi Barry Tabachnikoff Congregation Bet Breira 9400 S.W. 87th Avenue Miami, FL 33176

Dear Barry:

I am grateful to you for sharing with me the summary of Congregation Bet Breira's "A Taste of Judaism Program." It is apparent from your summary that you have had wonderful results from this outreach and I am absolutely delighted by your report. It certainly is worth emulating.

I am sharing a copy of your program with Rabbi Renni Altman, Director of the Task Force on the Unaffiliated. This is exactly the kind of program we want to bring to the attention of member congregations.

With thanks and all good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi Renni Altman Rabbi Frank Sundheim Arnold Bergman, RJE

CC: RABBI RENNI ALTMAN



Congregation Bet Breira House of Choice

9400 S.W. 87 Avenue Miami, Fl 33176-2444 (305) 595-1500 Fax (305) 279-4147

> RABBI Barry Tabachnikoff, DD

> > CANTOR Daniel Marmorstein

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Alice Miller, FTA

EDUCATION DIRECTOR Arnold Bergman, R.J.E.

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November 4, 1993

Rabbi Alex Schindler UAHC 838 Fifth Ave. New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

The enclosed memo describes a program which we innovated last Spring. I believe that it is similar in spirit to your recommendation that our congregations do more of an "outreach" in opening our religious schools to non-affiliated families on a trial basis. After hearing your recommendation at the Convention in San Francisco, I wrote up this brief description of our experience and have shared it with colleagues locally.

I believe that it is a program worth emulating and encouraging on a larger scale to enhance its significance. If you have further questions about our experience, I would be happy to respond to your inquiries.

Faithfully yours,

CC:

Rabbi Barry Tabachnikoff

Rabbi Frank Sundheim Arnold Bergman, Education Dir.

CONGREGATION BET BREIRA

9400 SW 87 Ave. Miami, FL 33176-2444 (305)595-1500 Fax (305)279-4147

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 11, 1993

TO: Colleagues

FROM: Rabbi Barry Tabachnikoff

SUBJECT: A TASTE OF JUDAISM PROGRAM

- In the Spring of 1993, Congregation Bet Breira devised a program to invite nonaffiliated families to enroll their school aged children (age 8-11) for the final six (6) weeks of our religious school year.
- 1.1 In doing this we had TWO goals in mind.

FIRST, we wished to offer young students an introduction to Jewish education on a cost free basis.

SECOND, we hoped to entice families to return and consider membership in our synagogue during the ensuing membership drive period.

- 1.2 Costs to the synagogue included the expense of publicity through direct mailing to our membership, and advertisements in the local press both secular and Jewish. We also paid for the cost of a teacher and incidental materials and refreshments for the six week period.
- 2.0 As a result of our announcements to the general public, we subsequently enrolled 23 young students who attended our pre-Purim program, our Passover preparation (spring break) and closing weeks of religious school.
- 2.1 Parents attended the first orientation session and were welcomed by the Education Director as well as the Rabbi. The instructor was introduced and after a school-wide worship assembly, the students were taken to their own classroom.

- 2.1 Parents attended the first orientation session and were welcomed by the Education Director as well as the Rabbi. The instructor was introduced and after a school-wide worship assembly, the students were taken to their own classroom.
- 2.2 In subsequent sessions, parents were invited to attend a model-Seder and a FAMILY NIGHT SHABBAT dinner and service, as well as the closing day ceremonies.
- 2.3 Students were integrated with the regular school worship service on a weekly basis. They were included in all regular mailings from the school and congregation during these months.
- 3.0 As of July, 1993 we found that 21 of the 23 families had chosen to join our congregation and had already made application, attended an orientation session and spoken to our Administrative staff about membership.
- 3.1 One family, when contacted by phone, indicated that they were joining another congregation (Reform), for reasons of convenience related to the number of days of religious school classes per week.
- 3.2 One family indicated that they were not interested in enrolling for additional Jewish education for their youngster "at this time."

4.0 SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAM

- 4.1 It generated tremendous good-will, not only among the families who enrolled but also among the general public who heard about it.
- 4.2 It generated a large number of new members for our congregation.
- 4.3 It resulted in an affiliation rate of nearly 95% in the subsequent fiscal year.
- 4.4 This program also generated widespread interest in our Jewish Community when it was announced at local meetings of Rabbis and Federation Leadership.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- 5.1 I recommend that this program be repeated annually during the final few weeks of the school year.
- 5.2 I urge other congregations to imitate the program as a good-will gesture and as

a generator of additional membership interest.

5.3 I urge the National leadership of the U.A.H.C. to endorse this program and recommend it as an inexpensive way of achieving a more flexible image and effective manner of being a "gateway" for attracting new membership to the synagogue.



OCTOBER 29-NOVEMBER 4, 1993

Letters

Join the Cardozo for a si

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Highlights

Reform Movement Targets Converts

The president of the Reform movement, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, has proposed a controversial plan to spend \$5 million to attract non Jewe to the movement.

The proposal was made during Schindler's keynote address to more than 4,000 Jews gathered at the 62nd biennial of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations held in San Francisco last weekend.

Schindler urged the movement "unabashedly and urgently to resume our vocation as missionaries, as champions of Judaism."

Schindler's call raised eyebrows among delegates at the convention and leaders of Judaism's other denominations.

Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the (Conservative) Jewish Theological Seminary of America, said "at a time when

"It borders on the incredulous to hear of a proposal to put serious money into bringing Judaism to the non-Jewish world"

Jewish leadership is dismayed at the increasing rate of intermarriage, and Jewish financial resources are stretched ever thinner, it borders on the incredulous to hear of a proposal to put serious money into bringing Judaism to the non-Jewish world."

Sheldon Rudoff, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, said "the concentration should be on making Jews committed" to Judaism. Rabbi Moshe Sherer, president

ident of Agudath Israel of America, said "[the Reform movement] has launched another public relations numbers game to increase its constituency. Unable to accomplish this goal within the Jewish community, the Reform leaders are once again reaching out to the non-Jewish world to bolster their ranks." (Sherer was referring to the Reform movement's 1984 decision to adopt the principle of 'patrilineal descent.") Renni Altman, director of programs for the unaffiliated at the UAHC, said in an interview that Schindler's proposal "means creating more welcoming congregations which potential converts see as exciting and spiritual places. We're not going to stand on street corners" preaching. - DEBRA NUSSBAUM COHEN, JTA

R C H I V E S



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER PRESIDENT B38 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

> November 15, 1993 1 Kislev 5754

Carol B. & Aaron H. Schectman 23 Elinore Avenue Elberon, NJ 07740

Dear Carol and Aaron:

Thank you so much for sharing with me your very fine letter to the MW <u>Jewish News</u> of Essex County, New Jersey. It is a thoughtful response and I am grateful to you for having written as you did. As a matter of fact, you posed the very question I did when I first saw the Wertheimer article. I believe his comments were based merely on a line in a press release, for he certainly was not at the Biennial nor did he have an opportunity to read my speech. Be that as it may, I thank you again for writing.

I am also grateful for your having taken the time to think about a name change for the UAHC and I appreciate your suggestion. To my knowledge, it is the first we have received. I am sharing it with our Communications Committee which will be handling the details of presenting a new name for consideration. It will probably be a long drawn-out process, but I am grateful for your reflection.

With appreciation for your many kind comments and with warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

23 Elinore Avenue Elberon, New Jersey 07740 November 6, 1993

Rabbi Alexander Schindler Union of American Hebrew Congregations 838 Fifth Avenue New York, New York 10021-7064

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Enclosed please find a copy of a letter sent to the MW Jewish News of Essex County, New Jersey. This is in response to an article as explained in our response.

However, you asked in San Francisco to suggest a name in place of the venerable, Union of American Hebrew Congregations. We thought about this a good deal and came QG_ up with the following:

ARJC = Association of Reform Jewish Congregations

We enjoyed the Biennial and in particular were impressed with the scope and importance of your address. The Union was in very good hands and it seems that what you have suggested will lay out an appropriate and interesting path into the future.

Very sincerely yours, aarm H. Schen Carol B Scher

Aaron H. Schectman Carol B. Schectman

23 Elinore Avenue Elberon, New Jersey 07740 November 6, 1993

To the Editor MW <u>Jewish News</u> 901 Route 10 Whippany, New Jersey 07981-1157

Dear Sir:

This is in reference to the Op-Ed article on p. 43 of the November 4, 1993 issue of the MW Jewish News entitled "Proselytizing bad for the Jews; costs will be multiple" by Jack Wertheimer.

Was Mr. Wertheimer in San Francisco to hear Rabbi Schindler's speech? We doubt that he was. We were there and cannot find in our memories or in the transcription of Rabbi Schindler's speech any reference to an "aggressive campaign to convert 'unchurched' Americans". Also quoted in Mr. Wertheimer's article is the sentence referring to proselytizing of non-Jews married to Jews, "as well as 'our neighbors who belong to no church". The quoted material was not included in Rabbi Schindler's address.

You have identified Mr. Wertheimer as a professor of history at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. No professional historian would insert words into text he or she is supposedly quoting. No professional historian would write an article, purporting to be a reaction paper to a conference held a continent away, and substitute a polemic instead.

It is unfortunate that immediate responses to the 62nd Biennial meeting of Reform Judaism were inflammatory interpretations of remarks which addressed a problem facing all Jews. Intermarriage is a fact of life. Cutting off offspring and relatives who wish to remain Jews and have their children be Jewish is a vexing problem. Rabbi Schindler did not propose the solution as going out to the non-Jewish population to "proselytize". He addressed the main difficulty of Reform congregations where the non-Jewish partner of a mixed marriage would like to participate in congregational life. Rabbi Schindler addressed a multitude of pressing problems. His remarks can be read as a Responsa rather than as a blue-print or artifact carved in stone.

The issue is how much and how far should a congregation go and how much and how far should Reform Judaism support the ongoing change of our religion as we near the millennium. We heard Rabbi Schindler say that we should find a role for the non-Jewish partner if we wish to keep the children Jewish. It is not only for religious reasons but just common sense. Most Reform congregations who have welcomed mixed families are wrestling with the problem of the role of the non-Jewish partner. The MW Jewish News has done a disservice by not providing a voice or (the readily available) copy of Rabbi Schindler's address as a counterpoint to Mr. Wertheimer's incorrect and biased commentary.

Sincerely yours,

Garm H. Chestman Carol B Schedman

Aaron H. Schectman Carol B. Schectman Delegates to the 62nd Biennial Convention from Temple Beth Miriam, Elberon, N.J. Former residents of Livingston, N.J.

