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Series A: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961-1996.

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Outreach [Pacific Southwest], 1979-1993.

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Edith J. Miller

*Outreach
Coc SW*

June 29, 1983

Rabbi Lennard R. Thal

Rabbi Leonard A. Schoolman

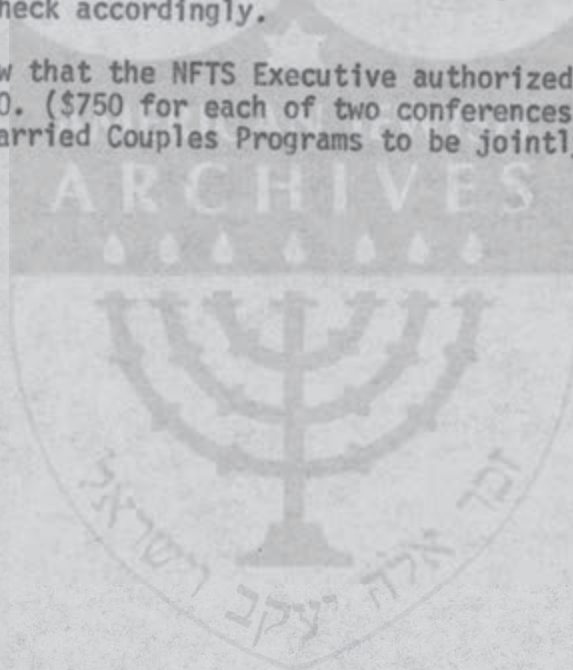
INTERFAITH COUPLES PROGRAM

Sorry, I didn't realize you are keeping the accounts on the recent program for interfaith couples held in Los Angeles.

On June 14 I sent Josh Dwork a check for \$650. from NFTS which they earmarked to cover the "shortfall" on the L.A. program. I trust he has credited this check accordingly.

You should also know that the NFTS Executive authorized an expenditure not to exceed \$1,500. (\$750 for each of two conferences) for two additional Interfaith Married Couples Programs to be jointly sponsored by the UAHC and NFTS.

Fond regards.



June 20, 1983

Dear David:

You will be pleased to know that NFTS has provided the UAHC with \$650. to cover the "shortfall" on the experimental program with Interfaith Married Couples in Los Angeles. This is a boon and I am also happy to advise that NFTS is so taken with the program they are underwriting two additional conferences for interfaith couples! They will provide us with \$750. per program for they feel this is a vital and very meaningful project.

They have also offered to assist with direct financial aid for programmatic materials available for these interfaith programs. I have shared this offer with Lydia and she will be in touch with NFTS to look into the matter in greater detail.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Mr. David W. Belin
2000 Financial Center
Des Moines, IOWA 50309

June 20, 1983

Mrs. Constance Kreshtool
President, NFTS
711 Coverly Road
Wilmington, DE 19802

Dear Connie:

I'm truly sorry you couldn't remain with us for the entire UAHC Board meeting. Lil reported for NFTS and needless to note all of us were delighted with the continued support and sustenance pledged by NFTS! You truly strengthen us in all of our endeavors.

Your letter of June 13 with its wonderful enclosures have been received and I hasten to express my appreciation. The \$21,000. allocation of the YES Fund has been forwarded for crediting to the Youth Department, with instructions in regard to college activities as per your letter.

The check to cover the "shortfall" of \$650. on the recent Interfaith Married Couples Program in Los Angeles is deeply appreciated. This is a very worthy undertaking and all of us involved in Outreach are very grateful to NFTS for the pledge to underwrite two more such weekends, at \$750. each. Many, many thanks.

We want to help NFTS by making Outreach materials available and I have asked Lydia Kukoff to make special note of your request. I am certain she will be in touch with you and/or Ellie.

In regard to REFORM Judaism, there, too, I have contacted the staff involved and I hope we have a response to your query without undue delay.

With fond regards and all good wishes for a restful and rewarding summer, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

AMS

nfts

**NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF TEMPLE SISTERHOODS**
838 FIFTH AVENUE • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

CONSTANCE S. KRESHTOOL

June 13, 1983

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
President
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Mr. Donald S. Day
Chairman of the Board
UAHC
56 Devonshire Road
Kenmore, N.Y. 14223

Dear Alex and Don:

I am very pleased to formally tell you of some actions by the NFTS Executive Committee, which met on June 8 & 9, that have relationship to programs and projects of the UAHC.

First, I am pleased to enclose a check in the amount of \$21,000 which represents an additional allocation of the Youth, Education and Sisterhood (YES) Fund to further the work of the UAHC Youth Department. \$10,000 of this sum is earmarked for college activities, the Ma aser project which is of special concern to NFTS.

With this contribution, in addition to the already transmitted budgeted commitment, NFTS has provided \$71,000 (a slight increase over last year) for the UAHC fiscal year which concludes June 30, 1983.

The second matter relates to Outreach and it is a pleasure to enclose a check for \$650. It represents an NFTS gift to cover the "shortfall" incurred by the Union for its recent Interfaith Married Couples Program in Los Angeles. Since local Sisterhoods were the traditional passageway to intergrate Jews by Choice into the religious community, and local Sisterhoods still are the major activists in this area, you can well understand our interest and concern with the Outreach Program.

The NFTS Executive Committee also authorized an expenditure not to exceed \$1,500 (\$750 for each of two conferences) that would be available to the UAHC for two additional Interfaith Married Couples Programs, to be jointly sponsored by the UAHC and NFTS. When these events are planned you can count on us for assistance. We would also like to implement this direct financial assistance with making some programmatic materials available for these conferences, which we believe would be most helpful. One idea would be an NFTS Jewish Art Calendar (if we have available stock) and perhaps some of our self-study materials.

The third area relates to Reform Judaism, our institutional publication. Our leadership was eager to re-establish what had been the organizational partnership between the UAHC and NFTS relating to the major publication of the UAHC.

NFTS is the women's agency for Reform Judaism, an affiliate of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, works on behalf of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and is the founder of the Jewish Braille Institute of America, Inc.

15 Countries • 600 Sisterhoods • 13 District Federations • 100,000 + Members

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Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Mr. Donald S. Day
June 13, 1983
Page -2-

Although there has been a lapse of several years, NFTS previously had made budget commitments for this type of publication and served on the editorial board. If we can reinstate the relationship, NFTS is prepared to budget \$5,000 a year towards the publication of Reform Judaism.

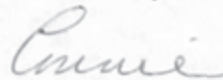
Since these last two items do imply formalized relationships I would be most appreciative of your reactions and response.

The Executive Committee Meeting was a very productive one with many decisions that invoke long-term program and project possibilities for Sisterhood. But one of the special results of our annual Executive Committee Meeting is reflected in particular programs and projects for the larger family of Reform Judaism which NFTS is able to provide from special funds. I think you will be interested that included in these actions were:

1. Rabbinic education -- continued support of the rabbinic scholarship program for the HUC-JIR; expanded scholarship assistance for rabbinic students on behalf of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, with a possible additional student from Holland and a new Israeli student.
2. Jewish educational opportunities for pre-schoolers including authorization to co-publish with the UAHC the Jewish Baby Book; the support of the co-operative nursery school on the Cincinnati Campus (HUC-JIR) a role model projects for Sisterhood sponsored day care centers; seed money for a similar project for Or Hadash Congregation in Haifa.
3. Support for the Women's Rabbinic Network to provide representation from womens students at their annual conference.
4. Subsidized representation from our overseas constituents at our coming Biennial Convention in Houston.

In a sense the actions of the NFTS Executive Committee, although frequently expressed in terms of financial support, are a reflection of the women of Reform Judaism meeting their responsibilities to strengthen the educational and spiritual life of our movement.

Sincerely,



President

CK:bn

Encs. \$21,000 check
\$650 check

Edith J. Miller

June 14, 1983

Joshua M. Dwork

NFTS GIFTS TO UAHC

Enclosed herewith are two checks from NFTS, special contributions to the work of the UAHC:

1/ \$650. to be used to cover the "shortfall" on the recent Los Angeles Outreach program for interfaith couples.

2/ \$21,000. from the YES Fund of NFTS FOR Youth work - NFTS notes \$10,000. of this sum is earmarked for College activities, the Ma'aser program which is of special concern to them



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

June 16, 1983

Albert Vorspan and Aron Hirt-Manheimer

Please let me have your reaction to the following comments received from Connie Kreshtool in behalf of NFTS:

"The third area relates to Reform Judaism, our institutional publication. Our leadership was eager to re-establish what had been the organizational partnership between the UAHC and NFTS relating to the major publication of the UAHC. Although there has been a lapse of several years, NFTS previously had made budget commitments for this type of publication and served on the editorial board. If we can reinstate the relationship, NFTS is prepared to budget \$5,000 a year towards the publication of Reform Judaism."



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

June 16, 1983

Lydia Kukoff

Rabbi Daniel B. Syme

Please note the enclosed quote from a recent letter I received from Connie Kreshtool in behalf of NFTS:

"The NFTS Executive Committee also authorized an expenditure not to exceed \$1,500 (\$750 for each of two conferences) that would be available to the UAHC for two additional Interfaith Married Couples Programs, to be jointly sponsored by the UAHC and NFTS. When these events are planned you can count on us for assistance. We would also like to implement this direct financial assistance with making some programmatic materials available for these conferences, which we believe would be most helpful. One idea would be an NFTS Jewish Art Calendar (if we have available stock) and perhaps some of our self-study materials."

We have already received a check to cover the "short-fall" incurred in the Interfaith Married Couples Program in Los Angeles.

MEMORANDUM

Date March 14, 1983

*cc to Don S.
LAF
Joh. B.*

From Eleanor Schwartz *me*

To Rabbi Alexander Schindler

Copy for information of Constance Kreshtool

Subject _____

Thank you for your memo of March 7 giving NFTS further information about the Interfaith Married Couples program in Los Angeles. A copy of your memo is enroute to Connie (who is presently out of town). Connie did express interest in this program when I mentioned it to her, and I believe we will want to discuss this with our leadership.

As you know, the NFTS Executive Committee will be meeting in early June and they would normally consider this request at that time. However, Connie may feel that we could consider at least some aspect of assistance at an earlier date. We will let you know.

ERS:bn



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

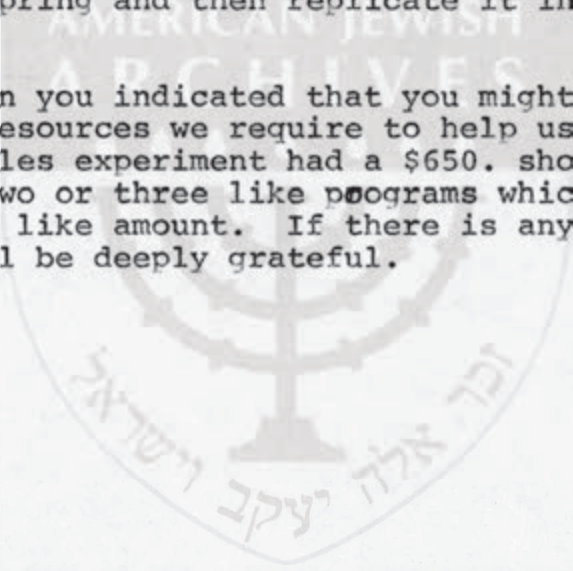
March 7, 1983

Miss Eleanor R. Schwartz

I am exceedingly grateful for your interest in our Interfaith Married Couples program in Los Angeles. As I indicated, I had the privilege of being able to participate in a session a few weeks ago when I was in Los Angeles. My impression there and from reports prior and since my visit have indicated that this is indeed a breakthrough.

The teachers report a good response and the likelihood that a majority of the participants will ultimately affiliate with Judaism and with a synagogue and will rear their children as Jews. Lenny Thal and Lydia Kukoff intend to refine this program, repeat it in the Spring and then replicate it in several other communities.

In our conversation you indicated that you might be able to help provide the resources we require to help us in this venture. The first Los Angeles experiment had a \$650. shortfall and I imagine that the two or three like programs which we are projecting will cost us a like amount. If there is anything at all that NFTS can do we will be deeply grateful.





איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE—JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
6300 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD, SUITE 1475, LOS ANGELES, CA. 90048 (213) 653-9962

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST COUNCIL

Rabbi Lennard R. Thal
Director

July 15, 1983

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
UAHC
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Alex:

I am writing to you from our lovely new office high (nearly) atop the Ticor Building. We are really enjoying the change. I hope you and Rhea had a wonderful trip and are duly pastured out.

I wanted to give you a brief update on the Mixed-Married pilot. Participants from both groups met at a "reunion" bar-b- que this past Sunday night. Attendance was excellent and there was a lovely warm feeling in the group. In addition to the two who have decided to convert, we have one more who has decided and who, with his wife, has enrolled in the Introduction to Judaism class. In addition, the one unmarried couple in the group has announced their engagement and wedding date (October 2). They will be married by Joel Oseran. The bride-to-be, Lisa Mitchell will convert on August 26 along with Stacy Baron. They have decided on a shared conversion ceremony, a decision which grew out of the friendship they forged during the group meetings. Two group members are pregnant. One of them has already enrolled in the Jewish Lamze program and the other has decided she wants her baby converted at birth.

After dinner, we shmoozed a bit. Group members were all anxious to receive the year's free temple membership we offered and were looking forward to the high Holy Days and to increased involvement in the Jewish community. They were eager to know what else was going on Jewishly. They especially wanted to set another meeting and not to lose contact with each other and with us. We made a date to have a special tour of the Skirball Museum early in September and I will have them over to my Sukkah.

I only wish you could have been there to see their enthusiasm and especially to hear them speak of how much this program has

more.....

Chairman
Donald S. Day
President
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
OFFICERS 1983-85
Council President
Allan B. Goldman
Vice Presidents
Joseph Baron
Aaron Katz
Edward London
Myron Rosenthal
Esther Saritzky
Evelyn Laser Shlensky

cc: [signature]
Outreach
Don: This is follow up on mixed married project.
Alex

Thurs Alex
[signature]

[signature]

has meant to them and how much they appreciate our efforts on their behalf. It was a very rewarding evening and you would have kvelled had you been there.

By the way, our new group began Tuesday night. We have six couples registered.

I'll keep you informed as we progress. Ben joins me in sending love to Rhea and to you.

See you soon,

Lydia

LK/mf



*Outreach
Ma*

May 3, 1983

Rabbi Joel D. Oseran
University Synagogue
11960 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90049

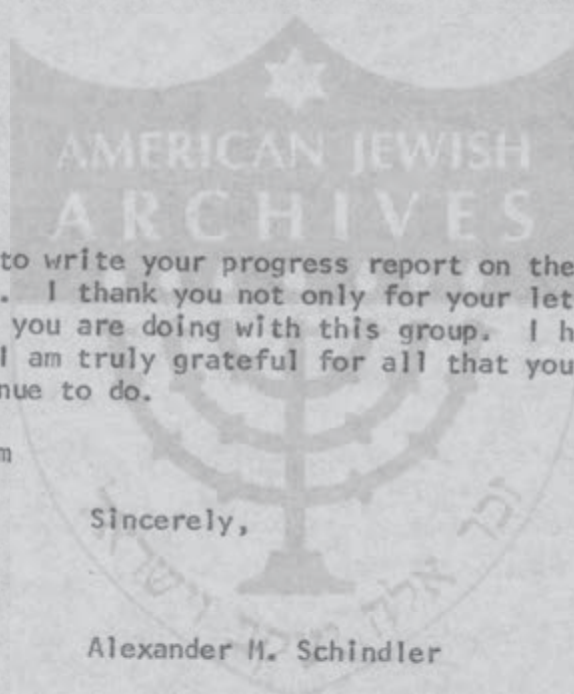
Dear Joel:

It was thoughtful of you to write your progress report on the outreach for mixed-married couples. I thank you not only for your letter but for the extraordinary job you are doing with this group. I have had reports of your role and I am truly grateful for all that you have been doing and will continue to do.

With warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander H. Schindler



University Synagogue

A Reform Congregation

11960 Sunset Boulevard • Los Angeles, California 90049 • 472-1255 • 272-3650

Joel D. Oseran, Rabbi/Educator

April 26, 1983

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
President, UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

We last met at the progress report meeting at Stephen S. Wise congregation for the UAHC's outreach class for mixed-married couples. You will remember that I served as one of the instructors for the class. Now that the first eight week course has concluded, I wanted to share with you a few personal feelings about the project and about Lydia and Len.

I feel most strongly that the movement is providing an invaluable service to mixed-married couples by sponsoring this type of project. During my class I came to appreciate the inner turmoil and searching on the part of those participating. These lovely young couples are adrift out there; not only not connected to the Jewish community but often feeling rejected by us as well.

The aspect of the class most satisfying to my couples was the opportunity to explore their feelings about the differences within their marriage while in a supportive Jewish environment. We showed the couple that the Jewish community cared about them and their future as a family without the prerequisite of converting to Judaism. The door was held open to these couples to discuss their future as a Jewish family, yet no pressure of any kind was directed at the non Jewish partner to convert.

And now, two of my students have chosen to become Jewish. I cannot claim this as a direct result of the class, but I do know that the class facilitated both these people in making a decision with which they are ultimately at peace.

I must share with you my esteem for Lydia and Len and the commitment they have shown for this project. You know very well I'm sure their talents and professionalism. As someone joining this project from the outside, I can tell you that their devotion to making it work has inspired everyone coming into contact with them. The Union and our movement are fortunate to have them.

*Thank you
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(2)

I am pleased to have had a share in the program up til now and look forward to its development and enrichment for many couples in the future.

Shalom,

Joel

JD0/b

Rabbi Joel D. Oseran



*Outback Motel
Merced*

February 28, 1983

Mrs. Daniel Jaffe
17409 Superior Street
Northridge, CA 91325

Dear Carol:

Thank you for writing me, although there is no need to thank me for attending the meeting. As a matter of fact, I must thank you for your efforts in this realm.

From the sound of it, the experiment was successful. I hope that it is, for the work is very important.

I also share your views concerning the need for a central registry and I am presently asking some knowledgeable people to give me an estimate of what it would take to establish and to maintain such a program. Hopefully I'll be able to find the money for its implementation.

Again, my heartfelt thanks.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

X/1

2-23-83
17409 Superior Street
Northridge, Calif 91325

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I must tell you that I was deeply impressed that you took the time to meet with the "mentor" families for Jewish outreach last night. I thank you - I feel that what Lydia is doing is certainly necessary and very important.

I have been in Jewish Education in one form or another for the past 27 years. (I started when I was in college) I have taught little ones and adults. I have a great concern over the disappearance of the newly married - the young folks married to another Jew or non-Jew - Many of them (two Jewish parents) are so uninformed that

CAROL JAFFE

they are not able to teach their children or create a Jewish home.

I taught a class at the Jewish center this year. Six Jewish mothers - Five of them had never heard of the "Scheme". None of them were aware that they could attend Shabbat services at any Temple in the community. I am terribly distressed over this.

I would suggest that when a Rabbi performs a marriage, names and addresses be placed in a central file and that somehow we connect with these people. If postage is a problem, perhaps Rabbi's could include a \$25⁰⁰ additional fee to cover future meetings. Perhaps Synagogues ^{could} add these names to their mailing lists for a period of time. There is so much to do and so much that we can do -

CAROL JAFFE

- 3 -

I remain yours -

Sincerely -

Carol Jaffe

CAROL JAFFE



Outman

June 14, 1982

Rabbi Philip M. Posner
Temple Beth El
2675 Central Avenue
Riverside, CA 92506

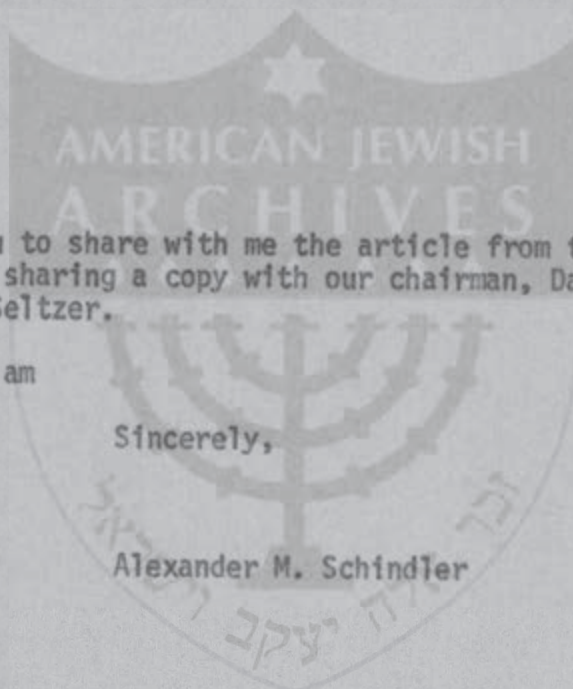
Dear Phil:

It was thoughtful of you to share with me the article from the Press-Enterprise. I am sharing a copy with our chairman, David Belin as well as Sandy Seltzer.

With warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



TEMPLE BETH EL

2675 CENTRAL AVENUE RIVERSIDE CALIFORNIA 92506 PHONE 684-4511

PHILIP M. POSNER, Rabbi

June 8, 1982

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Alex:

I thought you might like to see this article. Except for the last two lines, we were pleased with it. Interestingly, though really not surprisingly, it did prompt calls from a few wanting to know more about Judaism, or encouraged some to call.

Have a lovely summer.

Sincerely,

Philip M. Posner
Philip M. Posner

PMP:hn

Enc.

*cc. Belin
Seltzer*



"The Spirit of Man is the Lamp of The Lord"

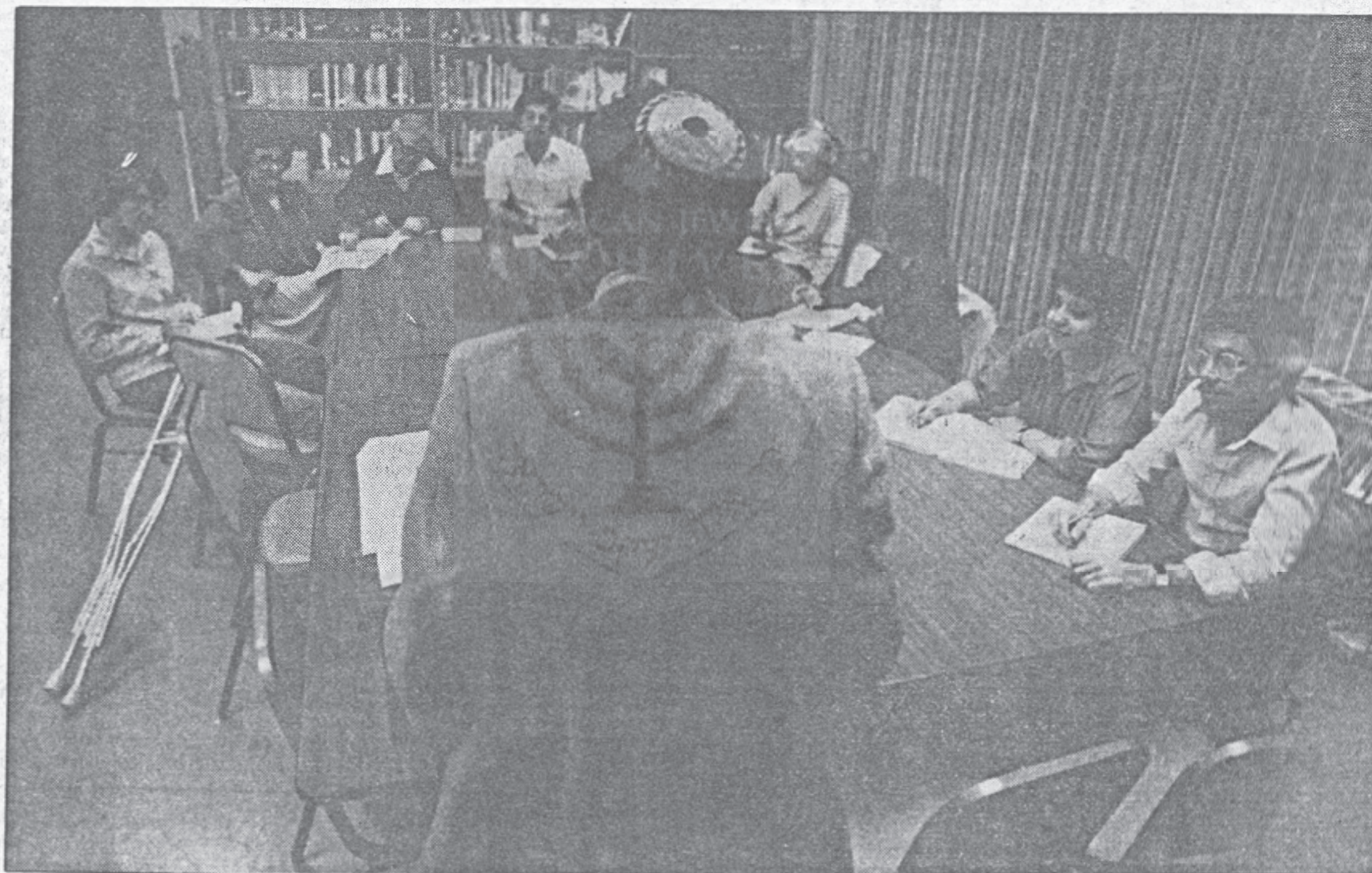
Sidelight

Press-Enterprise

SECTION

G

Friday, May 21, 1982



Rabbi Phillip Posner speaking to a conversion class
at Temple Beth El in Riverside.

Staff photo by Marilyn Odello

Judaism opening its doors to converts

By DAVID HALDANE
Press-Enterprise Staff Writer

It's 8 p.m. on a Wednesday and at Riverside's Temple Beth El, 11 people are seated around a large table.

Rabbi Philip Posner is telling them about the 18th century, a period, he says, which saw the "breaking down of ghetto walls" for European Jews.

"Jews who previously spoke only Yiddish," says Posner, began to learn other languages and for the first time identified with the national aspirations of their non-Jewish countrymen. "It was the beginning of Jewish emancipation," says the rabbi.

If that was the beginning, some Jews believe, then future historians may well regard gatherings such as this as the next major step. For the people around the table are potential converts. And as recently as five years ago, many of them wouldn't have been here.

According to Posner, Judaism's new emphasis on conversion began in 1978 with a speech by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president

of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Although Jews had always accepted a trickle of converts to their ranks, conversion had long been discouraged and certainly not sought in at least 2,000 years. But in 1978, Schindler — head of Judaism's liberal Reform movement to which an estimated 34 percent of American Jews belong — urged that a Jewish "outreach program" be launched, aimed at "all Americans who are unchurched and who are seeking roots in religion."

It was the first time in modern history that an established Jewish organization had on its agenda active promotion of the faith to those not born into it. Alarmed by the loss of six million Jews during the Holocaust of World War II combined with declining birthrates and a high rate of intermarriage, Reform Judaism had decided to open its doors to outsiders.

One who responded was Velva Hakim, 33, a Riverside mother who was raised a Catholic but married a Jew.

"I felt I had finally come home," she says of her introduction

to Judaism two years ago. "I found the people I belonged with."

But like many converts to Judaism, Hakim had to contend with opposition from her still-Christian family. Shortly after the conversion, in fact, her mother — a devout Catholic — showed up at her doorstep one yuletide with a fully decorated Christmas tree because "she felt the kids should have Christmas."

"I stood up to her," Hakim remembers of the incident. "We ended up taking the tree together to another family."

And today, she says, her relatives are more tolerant of her new religious beliefs.

Barbara Sultan of Riverside, who converted 10 years ago before the new openness began, solved the Christmas tree problem by celebrating both Christmas and Hanukkah. "My 22-year-old daughter who was in college said, 'You quit having Christmas and I'll quit coming home,'" reports Sultan, who was brought up in the Church of Christ. "I guess I wouldn't want the rabbi to drive

down my street and see my Christmas tree."

But despite that lingering green symbol of her Christian background (two of her seven children, she says, are "little Jews" and five still "have their own decisions to make"), there is no doubt about her own present religious affiliation. "Judaism is a lovely religion," says Sultan, who has served as president of Temple Beth El's sisterhood and teaches third grade in the temple's religious school. "I must have been Jewish in a previous life."

For centuries, of course, Judaism has been considered a racial identity as well as a religion, a fact that greatly complicates the efforts of Reform Jews to attract converts. Of the five to 10 Riverside gentiles who join his flock each year, says Posner, about three-fourths are people who have married, or are planning to marry, Jews. The rest come for a variety of reasons, he says, often encouraged by the new openness of the Reform movement.

Nance E. Gruttman's attraction

(See JUDAISM, Page 2)

Judaism opening its doors to converts . . .

(From Page 1)

was based on the fact that Judaism seemed "like an intellectual religion."

"I have always had a great admiration for Jewish philosophy and ideology and it was sad to think that it might be closed to outsiders," says Gruttman, 36, of Lake Elsinore. A former Lutheran and later a born-again Baptist, Gruttman says she toyed with the idea of converting to Judaism several years ago but was discouraged by Jewish friends whose attitude was that "it was sort of a closed group."

Recently, however, struck by the fact that "all the writers I like seem to be Jewish," she attended a Jewish worship service for the first time and found the attitude much changed.

"People were very open and friendly," says Gruttman, a graduate student in comparative literature at the University of California, Riverside. "I loved the singing. It wasn't so much singing in praise, as just being joyful together."

After assuring himself of a potential convert's sincerity, Posner requires the person to attend a four-month course on the history, beliefs, practices and culture

of Judaism. Although the course is open to virtually anyone interested in learning more about the faith regardless of the level of their personal involvement in it, all eight non-Jewish students attending a recent class meeting said they intended to convert. At Temple Beth El, the actual conversion ritual consists of a simple candle-lighting ceremony performed at the temple after the convert has signed a pledge renouncing his former faith, vowing loyalty to Judaism and promising to bring up his or her children as Jews.

"In light of the Holocaust, we especially emphasize the loyalty pledge," says Posner. "We want them to understand the seriousness of the step they are taking. A person who converts to Judaism is a Jew in every respect."

But despite the obvious dedication of people like Hakim and Sultan to their new religion, there are Jews who would not consider them true members of the flock.

Rabbi Yonason Denebeim, 25, is an Orthodox Hassidic rabbi and spiritual leader of a small congregation in Palm Springs. Denebeim wears a yarmulka, or skull cap, at all times, speaks only Yid-

dish to his children and keeps a kosher home. And as far as he is concerned, there are only two ways to become a Jew: be born of a Jewish mother, or be converted by an Orthodox rabbi according to Orthodox Jewish law.

What that law says is that a man desirous of becoming a Jew must be circumcised — or if he is already circumcised, undergo a special ceremony in which a drop of blood is drawn from the circumcised area — and that both men and women must undergo a separate ritual immersion ceremony called a mikvah. Neither of these ceremonies, says the rabbi, should be performed before the would-be convert has undergone a minimum of one year of diligent study.

"I discourage conversion," says Denebeim, who has never performed a conversion ceremony. "It's not an easy business, being a Jew. I personally would not take the responsibility of converting anyone."

Rabbi Joseph M. Hurwitz, trained in the Conservative tradition that is philosophically somewhere midway between the Orthodox and the Reform, doesn't discourage conversion but requires the

same rituals for its completion Denebeim.

"We used to discourage it, I've adopted an entirely different attitude," says Hurwitz, leader of Isaiah in Palm Springs. "You you get a little wiser . . ."

Hurwitz says he performs mikvahs each year, double the number a decade ago.

"For me, it's worked out really," says Carol Frankel, 35, Springs resident who married a man and converted three years ago. "I raise her children in the faith. I'm happy with it, it's a very logical thing."

Inevitably, though, the debate over what constitutes a "real" Jew coupled with the racial/ethnic still clung to by many older members of the group, sometimes translates into subtle snubs to converts.

"I still hear *shiksa* a lot," says Frankel, referring to a Yiddish term sometimes used to describe a non-Jewish woman in a disparaging tone. "Among the younger people there's no prob-

Outreach
PAC SW

February 26, 1982

Mr. Norman Schlosberg
22246 Victory Blvd.
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Dear Mr. Schlosberg:

It was good hearing from you and I thank you for your comments in regard to our Outreach program.

Thank you also for sharing with me the pamphlet published by the Unitarian Universalists. I appreciate your suggestion and your kindness in bringing this brochure to our attention.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

...by virtue of his
baptism, ... a member of
the household of faith, a servant of
the servants of god.

And a courageous Christian at
that.

Jewish Policy on Converts Assailed

NEW YORK (AP)—The head of the National Council of Young Israel, an Orthodox Jewish organization, has assailed a decision by Reform Judaism to seek converts, but not among those already religiously affiliated.

Harold N. Jacobs says Jews who have embraced other faiths are "our brethren in bondage" who have "strayed out of ignorance" and "we must attempt to win them back for their own sakes as well as ours."

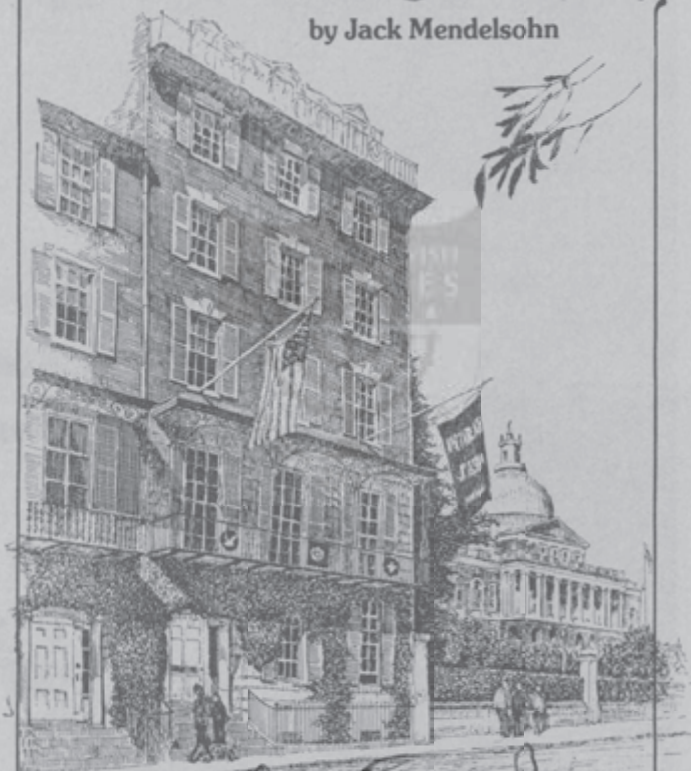
EARL DR. ROY B. McKEOWN

Chaplain, President of World Opportunities Int'l

WORLD OPPORTUNITIES INT'L

Meet the Unitarian Universalists

by Jack Mendelsohn



How about us Jews
educate?
We too have our
story to tell.

Meet the Unitarian Universalists

The Unitarian Universalist movement has been called
A refuge for rebels
A haven for heretics
A shelter for skeptics

AND IT'S ALL OF THAT!

But here is much more than a refuge, or a haven, or a shelter.

Above all, it is a positive, reasonable, enthusiastic, religious *way of life*.

It has a long and exciting history with a thrilling tradition of heroes and achievements.

It has strong churches, church schools, and youth groups.

By means of this pamphlet we hope to acquaint you with . . .

The beliefs and affirmations of Unitarian Universalists

The purposes and methods of our religious education for children

Our world-wide outreach

The saga of Unitarian and Universalist history

Our churches and fellowships

The reasons why there may well be a place for you in a Unitarian Universalist congregation.

PART ONE

Meet the Unitarian Universalists

There's an old anecdote about some of us of liberal persuasion coming to a fork in the road. On one sign are the words: "To Heaven." On the other: "To a Discussion about Heaven." Without hesitation the Unitarian Universalists choose their course. They wouldn't think of missing a discussion!

Like most stories, this one has its element of truth. We are full of ideas and characteristically anxious to express them. Whether the subject is immortality, prayer, God or science, there may be as many ideas as there are people present; yet there will be one unifying principle: namely, the right of every person to make up his own mind about what he believes.

Seeing this process in action, people frequently say: "I have been a Unitarian Universalist for years without knowing it!" It may be true for you, but how can you tell?

As a beginning you can see if any of these questions have a familiar, personal ring:

— I cannot accept religious beliefs just on faith. Is there a church for me?

— I believe in many things: human dignity, human effort, the constant search for truth, the need for more human community; but I cannot bind my beliefs to a creedal test. What church would want me?

— Churches seem to insist that religious truth is revealed and complete. Does any church welcome the idea that truth is a growing, not a finished, thing?

— A child should be allowed to discover religion in his own unfolding life, not through a process of indoctrination. What church practices this?

— Can a church be effective, and still encourage each member to be his free, individual self?

— There is beauty and truth in many of the world's religious faiths. Is there a church anywhere that does not claim to have all the answers?

— Where is there a religion that honestly encourages the fullest possible use of reason?

— Can persons from any religious background—Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, etc.—find one church where all are welcome without "conversion" or "renunciation"?

— I want to be free to wonder about—even

doubt—the existence of God, the nature of God, the effectiveness of prayer, the value of the Bible, the possibility of immortality, and still be religious. Where can I find a church that calls no honest doubt “heresy” and where heretics are welcome?

If you find something of your own thought, experience and searching in these questions, there is probably an exciting place for you in Unitarian Universalism.

We cherish wide differences of religious opinion and belief within our ranks, yet there is a sustaining bond of union on such matters as:

Serious concern with religious living

Belief in the importance of individual thinking

Respect for the personalities and convictions of others

Faith in human dignity and potentiality

Aversion to sanctimony and all forms of bigotry

Hearty enjoyment of life and people

Confidence in the true harmony of science and religion

Faith in the principle of love

Quest for a broad and encompassing religion: spiritual yet practical, personal yet universal

PART TWO

What Do Unitarian Universalists Believe?

The heart of Unitarian Universalist religion is a positive faith in working *principles* rather than doctrines. The distinguished international scholar and Unitarian historian, Earl Morse Wilbur, wrote: “When the Unitarian movement began, the marks of true religion were commonly thought to be belief in the creeds, membership in the church and participation in its rites and sacraments. To the Unitarian of today the marks of true religion are spiritual freedom, enlightened reason, broad and tolerant sympathy, upright character and unselfish service. These things, which go to the very heart of life, best express the meaning of Unitarian history.”

Because we find the essence of religion in character and conduct rather than in doctrines, creeds, dogmas, and catechisms, those who customarily think of

religion as a series of theological definitions sometimes have difficulty understanding the liberal religious position.

We are believers, but our beliefs are centered in a *method*, a process of the religious life, rather than in closed articles of faith.

“But what do Unitarian Universalists believe?” we are asked. “What is your creed?”

We have no creed. On matters normally frozen into creedal statements, we are expected to follow the dictates of reason, conscience and experience. Our churches make no official pronouncements on God, the Bible, Jesus, immortality, or any of the other theological questions generally answered with unabashed finality by the more traditional religious groups.

To us, creating a religious way of life is far too important to be left to the propounders of creeds and dogmas.

We become Unitarian Universalists not by substituting one confession of faith for another, but by opening our minds to receive truth and inspiration from every possible source.

The most fundamental of all our principles, then, is *individual freedom of religious belief*—the principle of the free mind.

Most religious beliefs are based on some outside authority. The prophet or priest dictates, the Bible dictates, or the creed dictates what must be believed. For those who have no special urge to do their own thinking, this is an effective and logical approach. But what of those who have an intense need to think independently?

For us the most vital fact is this: in order to advance, humans must be free. There is no area of life in which it is more important to be free than in religion.

Those who differ with us argue that we must be directed by infallible religious guides, or else our frailties will corrupt and destroy us. But when we begin to examine closely the “infallible” religious guides, what do we discover? The church which claims authority to dictate beliefs is a human institution, and its “final truths” are no more than the conclusions arrived at by earlier human leaders.

The same statement is true of the Bible. It was written by mortals.

No creed exists that was not originally composed by human beings like ourselves.

Churches, Bibles and creeds are the creations of those who once exercised their freedom to create. Is there any reason why we should expect to do less?

Thus the distinctive characteristic of the Unitarian Universalist is our insistence that we will not bind our present and future in religion to the tutelage of the past. We will attempt to learn all that the past can teach us, *but we will do our own thinking about current matters of faith and belief.*

In the words of John P. Marquand, Pulitzer Prize author, "As Democracy is man's freest form of social life so is Unitarianism the freest religious life, and like Democracy, the Unitarian religion depends upon the separate thinking of every Unitarian to give it significance and vitality."

In one of our congregations an agnostic may sit beside one who believes in a personal God; at the after-service coffee hour a believer in personal immortality may stand chatting with one who accepts "utter extinction." Such are our wide diversities of individual belief.

We are *together* in our devotion to freedom; each living by a thought-out covenant with himself and with life as a whole; each understanding that his beliefs may change as insights deepen and experiences broaden.

You can see how boundless the opportunities are for an earnest, thoughtful person in this "open" approach to religion and the spiritual life.

Second only to the free mind is our belief in *reason and responsibility*. Freedom requires responsibility. We must accept responsibility for our acts. We believe that this sense of responsibility reflects the teaching of the great Biblical prophets, from Amos to Jesus. We believe also that it is the essence of one of our noblest achievements, the scientific method. In brief, we believe that our religious concept of ethical responsibility is much more in tune with reality, much more productive of good, than the traditional doctrine of man's inherent depravity through "original sin."

How do we cultivate responsible behavior? For us a chief resource is *human reason*. Reason holds the place that is ordinarily accorded to revelation in orthodox religions. That person is likely to behave best who exercises reason most.

This does not mean that we are unmindful of the limitations of human reason, nor that we look upon it

as an infallible guide. In our way of life there are *no* infallible guides. Dr. E. Burdette Backus described our faith in reason as follows: "... the intelligence of man is an instrument which has developed in the process of his evolution to enable him to satisfy his needs more adequately. It had originally a very earthy and practical purpose, namely that of solving the problems that pressed in upon him in daily life. Although it continues this immediately pressing function it has far outsoared it and seeks to penetrate beyond the stars to find an answer to the riddle of the universe. Our reason makes many mistakes; it is frequently taken captive by our desires, so that we believe things not because they are true but because we want to believe them. It cannot give us absolute and final certainty, but it has established a substantial body of verified truth; it is steadily increasing the amount of that truth. For all its limitations it serves us very well, and those who advocate its abandonment are simply telling a man who is groping his way through the dark by the light of a candle to blow out the light."

Unitarian Universalism, then, is an ethical rather than a doctrinal religion, with individual freedom as its method and reason as its guide.

The path of logic leads from freedom, through reason, to a third fundamental principle: *a generous and tolerant understanding of differing views and practices.*

UNITY WITH DIVERSITY

Unitarian Universalists believe that people can work together for the betterment of character and the advancement of humanity without conforming to a set pattern of theological doctrines. In fact we go well beyond this to express our conviction that differing theological views are natural and healthy, and that attempts to enforce religious conformity are deadening and potentially destructive. History is witness to the horrors of religious intolerance.

The atmosphere of one of our churches encourages all persons to make their best contribution to the group's enrichment. The emphasis is on sharing the results of personal thought and evaluation. Truth is vast and many sided. Why should we all have the same theology? It is a vital part of our faith that people of widely differing religious backgrounds and views can work cheerfully and productively together under

the same church roof, strengthening each other in the great tasks of making human life more splendid, more precious and more secure upon this earth.

When conscientious seekers ask what we believe, they must make an effort to lay aside the theological definitions employed to describe most churches. Ours is very definitely a *different kind of church*, and it requires a different kind of definition. Yet let there be no mistake about the fact that we enjoy a purposeful, positive religious movement, dedicated to the moral progress of human life. It welcomes all who catch the vision of placing principles of freedom, responsibility, reason and tolerance above uniform theological doctrines.

PART THREE

Our Work with Children

Nothing in the Unitarian Universalist religion is more exciting than its methods and principles of religious education. A new kind of church school has come into being in our movement in which the *individual child*, rather than the Bible or catechism, is the center of the program.

We teach Bible courses as part of our program, but only as they contribute to our comprehensive aim of introducing children to the moral, social and religious ideas they must have in order to live in a democratic and diverse society.

The traditional approach to religious education rests on the notion that human nature is alienated from God and can only be re-united by learning and accepting a doctrinal plan of salvation. Children, according to this older method, must be taught about a savior who alone can rescue them from their "evil" selves, since they are incapable of accomplishing this themselves.

Our religious education is founded on the conviction that human nature, rather than alienating us from God, actually binds us to the universe and all that sustains it. The natural curiosities and urges of children, rather than being "wicked" are the very resources on which a program of religious education should be built.

We believe that a child's religion grows out of normal experience. Religion is not something to be "given" to a child, but something to be nurtured and encouraged in a child's unfolding life.

No one has yet done a better job of describing the general aims of our religious education than William Ellery Channing, internationally revered Unitarian preacher and scholar of the last century:

"The great end in religious instruction . . . is not to stamp our minds irresistibly on the young, but to stir up their own;

"not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;

"not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, which rest on no foundation but our own word and will, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment, so that they may discern and approve for themselves what is everlastingly right and good . . ."

In week-by-week practice, our church schools are guided by concrete objectives:

We encourage in children a *natural* development of religious faith based primarily on direct experience.

We avoid *imposing* religious beliefs of any kind.

We never suggest that an ideal is to be cherished simply because it is honored in our church or our religion.

We encourage a *continuous* search to improve faith and life.

We do not teach a *finished* gospel.

We *expose* children to the thoughts and beliefs of many religions.

We do not teach that religious truth is to be found only in the Judeo-Christian Bible.

We heartily urge children to ask questions, express their doubts, and seek answers that are *personally* satisfying to them.

We do everything possible to avoid an atmosphere in which children might feel that their natural *curiosity* is being repressed.

As our philosophy of religious education matured, it became necessary to create new kinds of religious materials for classroom use. Year by year, non-sectarian, educationally-sound religious curricula have grown.

We realize that the process of developing a religion of one's own is a slow, gradual and seven-day-a-week

affair. Especially during children's pre-school years, a large part of this development goes on in the home. The direction it takes, its depth or lack of depth, depends very largely on how seriously parents assume their role as religious educators. It is impossible to live with small children and not answer numerous religious questions each day. Because of this, we place great stress on parent participation in the church's program of religious education.

Parents who think that they can put their children in Sunday school for an hour or two a week to "get" religious education will not be comfortable in one of our churches. Our program is designed to appeal only to those who wish to enter *with* their children upon an adventure in religious growth.

PART FOUR

Deeds—Not Creeds WORLD-WIDE SERVICE

For most Unitarian Universalists religion would mean little if it did not include enlightened conscience in action. Yet we are not missionary-minded. By deliberate choice we send no missionaries over the face of the earth to convert the "heathen." In fact we generally feel that people of other religions have as much to teach us as we have to teach them.

We have a moral equivalent for religious missions. Kindled by compassionate imagination and fanned by a desire to share skills and resources with people the world around, our impulse to serve is mobilized in the **Unitarian Universalist Service Committee**.

Established in 1940 to aid refugees from Nazi Europe, the UUSC has kept pace with the changing needs of our changing times. Stretching across the continent and globe, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee projects in medicine, social work, criminal justice, family planning, education, community development and leadership training testify to the effectiveness of "helping people to help themselves," to address problems of institutional oppression.

In all its efforts the UUSC remains scrupulously non-sectarian. Proselytizing on behalf of our religion is never a component of our humanitarian work.

THE POWER OF THE WRITTEN WORD

Through the Unitarian Universalist Association, we support an extremely broad publications program. It encompasses a newspaper, magazines, pamphlets, books and newsletters.

Divisions of the program are:

Beacon Press: a major publishing house which operates under the auspices of the UUA. Its function is to produce books of a serious, general, and sometimes controversial nature. Beacon hard-cover and paper-back editions are prominently displayed in bookstores throughout our continent and in many countries overseas. It is the purpose of Beacon Press to make a continuing contribution to cultural and spiritual life by a forthright and vigorous program of publishing that emphasizes the preeminence of the human spirit.

In 1947, Beacon Press had 17 titles on its backlist and a handful of outlets. Now it has hundreds of titles and booksellers in every major city of the world.

Pamphlet Commission: A large selection of attractively styled and crisply written pamphlets is available on a variety of subjects of interest to potential members, new members and established members. These pamphlets are distributed in Unitarian Universalist churches and gathering places, and are used by organized groups throughout the denomination.

Unitarian Universalist World: A newspaper which is mailed directly to more than 102,000 families 16 times a year. The official journal of the UUA, it is the successor to the *Universalist Leader* (1819) and the *Christian Register (Unitarian)* of 1821. It carries news and articles about individuals, local congregations, UUA programs, materials and services, as well as inspirational material and opinion pieces. Its letters page and editorial page reflect the wide diversity of views within liberal religion.

Besides the regular publications program, many of the affiliated groups also publish literature.

ON THE LOCAL FRONT

Most Unitarian Universalists are noted for their social concerns. Racial justice, liberation movements, international peace, community health and welfare, separation of church and state, civil liberties—these are but a few of the earthy problems that arouse lively interest and participation in our circles. Where-

ever a committee gathers to tackle a project for the improvement of human living, Unitarian Universalists are present. It is a hallmark of our religion that service to the community, the nation and the world is one of the surpassing privileges of life. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the activities of members of any typical Unitarian Universalist church or fellowship. Dr. Ellsworth Huntington of Yale, who made a study of the names in *Who's Who in America*, wrote: "The productivity of the Unitarians in supplying leaders of the first rank has been 150 times as great as that of the remainder of the population."

Our aim, obviously, is not to compile comparative statistics of leadership, but to reflect our religious convictions in dynamic contributions to a better life and a better world. We note with humility and gratitude that we have no exclusive claim to social concern and service. We try increasingly to face our weaknesses and shortcomings with candor. For example, our churches—whether North or South—are open without prejudice to people of all races. Yet, we are still overwhelmingly a "white" denomination. We make progress toward racially-integrated congregations, but that progress is not as rapid as we wish. The important fact is that people of all racial, national and religious backgrounds are cordially welcome in our churches, and we hope that the day is dawning when our congregations will be truly representative of our population as a whole.

PART FIVE

Some of the Hows and Whens of Unitarian Universalist History

To find the roots of our religion it is necessary to go all the way back to the prophets of ancient Israel and the Socratic tradition of Athens. Modern liberal religion heartily acknowledges its debt to these founts of reverence for the dignity of man and the primacy of ethics in religion.

The Christian origins of our movement are anchored in the moral teachings of Jesus, as exemplified in the Beatitudes and the Sermon On The Mount. Early Christianity was neither Trinitarian nor Unitarian. For nearly three centuries after Jesus' death, no

specific doctrine of this type was enforced as part of an official Christian creed. When doctrinal controversies became too stormy and violent, the Roman Emperor, Constantine, summoned church leaders to a council where, in 325 A.D.—almost 300 years after the death of Jesus—the Nicene Creed was voted into existence. The divinity of Jesus thus became the official orthodoxy of the Christian religion. The Nicene formula declared by a divided vote that Jesus was of the same essential substance as God.

A half-century later, at another gathering of church leaders—the General Council of Constantinople—the assembled dignitaries added the Holy Spirit to their formula, thus completing the Trinity. This was the very human manner in which the Trinitarian dogma of "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" came into existence. From the beginning there were sincere and thoughtful Christians who felt that the essential message of Jesus was being drowned in a sea of metaphysics, but it became quickly apparent that those who could not conscientiously accept the Trinitarian position were to be expelled, condemned and perhaps martyred, as heretics. Nevertheless, a spirit of independent thought and belief continued to flicker through the centuries.

The ferment of the Protestant Reformation furnished adventurous opportunities for leaders of a more liberal mind. Some began to question the Trinity, and to call for less rigid religious conceptions and practices. Their cause was immortalized by the shameful burning of Michael Servetus in Switzerland on the order of John Calvin. Servetus' crime was the writing of a book entitled *On the Errors of the Trinity*, in which he argued that the Trinity was a grotesque and distracting addition to the true Christian life. Servetus was burned and many others were tortured and slain for expressing personal convictions in opposition to the official orthodoxies, but ideas that could not be suppressed were in the air. In Italy, Switzerland, Hungary, Poland, Holland and England, spokesmen for a liberalized Christianity appeared in ever-increasing numbers. Ministers and entire congregations began to secede from orthodox ranks in rebellion against theological dogmatism.

In 1568, the only Unitarian king in history, John Sigismund of Transylvania, issued the Western

World's first edict of religious freedom. In Koloszvar, a small Transylvania town, is to be found the world's oldest Unitarian congregation. It left the ranks of orthodoxy in 1568 to follow the leadership of the brilliant reformer, Francis David. By 1600 there were more than 400 such Unitarian congregations in the surrounding area.

Later, in England, the cause of liberal religion was advanced by the powerful advocacy of such men as John Milton, Isaac Newton and John Locke. With footings established in spite of constant persecution, the Unitarian religion began to assume organizational form. Journals, schools and new churches appeared wherever the fierce objections of orthodox authorities could be overcome. In Poland, orthodox reaction was violent enough to exterminate the strong liberal movement and its members.

Early in the 18th century, liberal thought began to find expression in American pulpits.

During the last half of the 18th century, a few isolated religious spokesmen in England and America began to preach the doctrine that it was unthinkable for God, as a loving Father, to damn any of his children everlastingly to hell. The Nicene Creed must then be in error. In the 1740's these heretical notions were preached in Pennsylvania by Dr. George de Benneville. In the 60's similar ideas brought about excommunication from Methodism of John Murray. These men were Universalists, and proclaimed the final harmony of the human soul with God. Murray in 1770 helped to found the Universalist Church of America.

The Calvinist majority in the colonies was disturbed by this wandering from sound doctrine. There was immediate denunciation of the Universalists as an irresponsible lot bent on encouraging a life of reckless wickedness, counting on escaping the tortures of hell. Standing against the orthodox majority, Universalists stressed the ethical nature of God.

In 1800 a man of outstanding preaching ability appeared on the New England scene, a courageous, persuasive and scholarly Universalist preacher named Hosea Ballou. In 1803 the Universalists adopted the *Winchester Profession*, which became the standard expression of Universalist views, emphasizing the Universal Fatherhood of God and the example and leadership of Jesus, and coined the phrase "salvation

by character."

The first churches in America to assume the Unitarian name were founded by Dr. Joseph Priestley in Northumberland, Pennsylvania (1794), and in Philadelphia (1796). Though known to history as the discoverer of oxygen and as one of the most celebrated of English scientists, Dr. Priestley was by profession a Unitarian clergyman. The orthodox fanatics who burned his famous laboratory in Birmingham, England, not only deprived their country of a brilliant scientific pioneer, but also deprived Birmingham Unitarians of a beloved minister.

Priestley came to the New World to seek a religious atmosphere less contaminated by orthodox bigotry. His arrival in America was a catalyst. Intellectual and moral revolt against orthodox doctrines was sweeping across the eastern seaboard. Churches of many denominations were caught up in the desire to re-examine their theological beliefs and backgrounds. Boston's historic King's Chapel, which had been the first Episcopal church in New England, led the way. The congregation called a minister of Unitarian persuasion and revised its book of Common Prayer to eliminate all objectionable Trinitarian references.

In 1802, the oldest Pilgrim church, founded at Plymouth in 1620, became Unitarian by congregational vote. This pattern was repeated in over 100 cities and towns.

Meanwhile there had arisen in Boston a Unitarian leader of eloquence and force of personality: Dr. William Ellery Channing, under whose inspiration the American Unitarian Association was founded on May 25, 1825. By coincidence, the British Unitarian Association was officially organized on the same day. In each country the scattered, independent liberal congregations thus pooled their strengths in a formal, cooperative way, and their futures were assured.

In the early days there was little enthusiasm for close ties between the two groups. This pained Ballou, who wrote eloquently of the affinity of the two groups, recalling their common aspirations and frustrations, and calling for intellectual and spiritual unity. During the next century the two groups grew increasingly aware of one another, and on more than a dozen occasions resolutions were passed calling for union. Finally in 1947 a joint commission was established to lay the groundwork for Federal Union, and

by 1951 it was ready to present a recommendation for immediate union in the fields of religious education, publications and public relations, with a gradual trend toward complete merger, which was effected in Boston in May, 1960; total consolidation was completed in May, 1961.

CHRISTIAN OR MORE THAN CHRISTIAN?

Frequently discussed in our circles is the question of whether the free faith has grown beyond Judeo-Christianity and become something more universal.

The basic philosophy of Unitarian Universalist churches and fellowships is reflected in the following corporate purposes:

- (a) Support the free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of religious fellowship;
- (b) Cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in the Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to humankind.
- (c) Affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships.
- (d) Implement the vision of one world by striving for a world community founded on ideals of brotherhood, justice, and peace;
- (e) Serve the needs of member societies;
- (f) Organize new churches and fellowships and otherwise extend and strengthen liberal religion;
- (g) Encourage cooperation among people of good will in every land.

PART SIX

Facing a New Age

Though it takes a special kind of courage and concern to depart from the accepted ways of orthodoxy, our growth has been encouraging.

Organized groups are now to be found in over 1000 cities and towns from ocean to ocean, from Alaska to Panama.

One of the most significant of our extension programs has been the development of Fellowships—lay-led groups organized in communities where no previous liberal religious group existed. Each year some of these Fellowships achieve full church status.

For the more isolated there is the Church of the Larger Fellowship with a headquarters and minister in Boston. Its membership extends through 40 countries.

We have been notably unenthusiastic about proselytizing, but a new zeal for "telling our story" has blossomed among us. Radio and television are increasingly used for presenting the liberal point of view on religious and public issues.

Any form of pressure to join a church is repugnant to us, but response to our informational efforts indicates that there are hundreds of thousands of potential Unitarian Universalists who are not in our churches because they do not yet know that such a church exists.

Our new members repeatedly tell us of their intense regret at having gone so many years without discovering our church. "We simply did not know that such a church existed, and no one bothered to tell us," they say. We now sense our obligation to spread as widely as possible a knowledge of our history, our aims, our principles and the basis of our church life. More than ever before, the time is ripe for bringing together all who desire to advance the cause of freedom and human community through liberal religion.

Exciting new ideas, the experimental spirit, and wise planning and action have combined in recent years to give the profound traditions fresh relevance to the religious needs of our time.

Our present strength and future promise promote confidence that our era of greatest usefulness and effectiveness is dawning. Dr. Frederick May Eliot wrote: "The only really serious possibility of failure to meet the apparent opportunity now facing Unitarianism lies in the very center of its own spiritual life; and, if the history of the movement may be taken as indicating the probabilities for the future, there is not likely to be failure here. What I have in mind is that recurring infusion of new spiritual sensitiveness and insight which has characterized the movement from the beginning. . . ."

PART SEVEN

The You in Unitarian Universalist Religion

This pamphlet ends with the spotlight on you, the reader. What you have read is an elementary introduction to our religion, but it is enough to express the following: "This is our church; open to all, seeking to unite people of goodwill and free mind in a larger, spiritual fellowship." The ultimate test of a religious movement is association with the people who give it form, warmth and vitality.

Through nearly two centuries in America Unitarian and Universalist churches have commanded the loyalty of conscientious, progressive, enlightened men and women. No church can claim a more substantial relationship to the great human heritage of freedom.

Our traditions are inspiring. Our influence is large. Our spirit is dynamic. But best of all our religion has something vital and unique to say to the needs of modern life. Our debt to those who have loved and served freedom in the past is very great, but our obligation to speak to the present and future is even greater.

For unnumbered people in our complex society, the Unitarian Universalist church can be the very center of spiritual warmth and ethical inspiration that they have long been seeking. You may be such a person. Now that we have been introduced, we hope that you will accept our invitation to know us better.

Visit a Sunday service and coffee hour. Bring your children to one of our church schools. Make an appointment to talk over your questions with one of our ministers. You will find them eager to see you, but you need never fear that they will attempt to put pressure on you.

Try us at your own pace and in your own way. We have no shackles to press upon you; nothing but a desire to share the freedom, satisfaction and stimulation we find in our religion.

For those who, like us, cannot accept dogmatism and creedalism as the basis of their religious life, and who yearn for a religious expression stressing reason, character and service, Unitarian Universalism is an open door to fellowship—a welcome release from spiritual isolation.

We invite you to discover the place for you in the Unitarian Universalist church.

(Jack Mendelsohn is the author of *Why I Am A Unitarian Universalist*, *God, Allah and Ju-Ju*, *The Forest Calls Back* (Dr. Binder in Peru), *The Martyrs* (16 who gave their lives for racial justice), and *Channing, The Reluctant Radical*.

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Outreach

June 2, 1980

Mr. Norman Schlosberg
22246 Victory Boulevard
Woodland Hills, CA. 91367

Dear Mr. Schlosberg:

Thank you for your letter of May 25. It was good of you to share your thoughts with me.

You will be interested in knowing that in December, 1978, I made a proposal on Outreach to the Board of Trustees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. My proposal, which was adopted, suggested a number of outreach programs, including outreach to the unchurched who express an interest in knowing more about Judaism and the Jewish people as well as outreach to the non-Jewish partners in mixed-marriages and to intermarried couples. Since the time of the proposal, we have organized a Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach and its activities grow with each passing day.

For your interest, I enclose herewith a copy of the March, 1979 edition of MOMENT which includes my own paper on this subject as well as comments from others.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.

May 25, 1980

Union of American Hebrew Congregations,
838 - 5th Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

I respectfully suggest that we Jews are missing an opportunity to increase our numbers by failing to exert maximum effort by educating - or, if you prefer - proselytizing the great numbers of the unchurched.

There is currently a thirst for spiritual values in the land as well as the world. I personally know of many, both young and old, that no longer believe in the fundamentals of the Christian traditions.

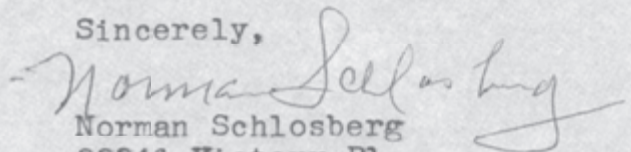
I am aware, of course, the argument that we should retain our own who are leaving the fold. However, as a matter of psychology, the non-Jew may have more respect when they see their Jewish neighbor respect our beliefs while conversely the Jew's apathy would be aroused by the non-Jews' interests in Judiasm.

Considering our articulateness, we are failing to deliver our message. My reading of history reveals that conversion was part of way of life until about the fourth century when Christianity passed repressive measures against Jewish conversion movements. There is no prohibition in Judiasm against proselytizing.

In a recent survey, it seems that the Orientals (71%) are not members of any established religion; the blacks, for other reasons, are also potential people who may be reached with the proper approach.

Your organization may avail itself of the electric media of the day and even if we do not make converts, we may develop understanding of Judiasm and understanding creates friends - and we certainly need friends.

Sincerely,



Norman Schlosberg
22246 Victory Bl.
Woodland Hills
Ca. 91367

March 11, 1980

Mr. Richard B. Wiggins
877 Falmouth Street
Thousand Oaks, CA. 91360

Dear Mr. Wiggins:

You are right, the non-participation of the rabbi in a mixed marriage would certainly represent something of a dilemma and yet it need not of necessity be interpreted as a rejection of the couple. Much depends on the manner in which this non-participation is explained. Most thoughtful non-Jews understand that there are certain rites and rights of Judaism which can only be extended to those who are Jewish and they are willing to accept this provided the explanation is given to them with patience and with care.

In my experience as a rabbi I have never had difficulty in having others accept my position and I go out of my way -- by attending the wedding and speaking to the couple both before and after the wedding -- to demonstrate that I do not regard their wedding as illegal and do not reject them personally. Moreover, you must remember that the wedding is only a limited part in time which includes a long relationship with the Jewish community which begins before the wedding and continues long after the ceremony. What I am seeking to address is this long-term relationship.

With appreciation for your having shared your concerns with me and with kindest greetings, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

PATRICIA & RICHARD WIGGINS
877 Falmouth Street
Thousand Oaks, California 91360
(805) 495-5055

16 Adar, 5740

4 March, 1980

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

My wife and I attended the University of Judaism Forum at Mt. Sinai in Los Angeles where you were the principal speaker. It was in my opinion an informative and enjoyable evening up to disrespectful and disgusting commotion by the J.D.L. riff-raff.

I congratulate you on your composure, that was better than I did, but to the point of this letter.

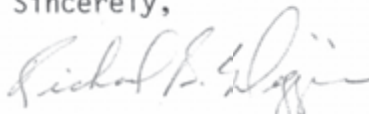
During your talk two points were raised, among others, that have provided considerable discussion. First, that the Jewish community should make positive and overt actions to welcome the non-Jewish partner of a mixed marriage into the community. Second, that neither you nor any official Rabbinic board condone the participation of a Rabbi in the ceremony of a mixed marriage. This seems to me to present a dilemma and I would appreciate your answer or thoughts on it.

It would seem that if a mixed couple approached a Rabbi to perform the marriage and are refused this will constitute a rebuff of the highest order from the Jewish community. Certainly this feeling will be intensified when a Protestant Minister leaps at the opportunity, and perhaps even a Priest - if a written agreement is given to raise the children Catholic.

However, I understand that Judaism as a religious tenet does not become a party to the officiating of such a union.

How do you convince a couple that, no, you won't and can't perform the blessing of the marriage, but that when they are married they are both welcome to join the Jewish community?

Sincerely,


Richard B. Wiggins

RBW/pjw
Rabbi Alexander Schlindler
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

February 12, 1980

Rabbi Allen I. Freehling
University Synagogue
11960 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA. 90049

Dear Allen:

It was thoughtful of you to share
with me a copy of your forthcoming temple bulletin column.
I read it with great interest and appreciate your having
called it to my attention.

With warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

University Synagogue

A Reform Congregation

11960 Sunset Boulevard • Los Angeles, California 90049 • 472-1255 • 272-3650

From the Rabbi's Study

February 1, 1980

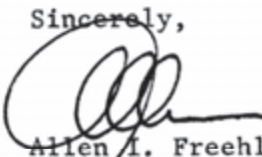
Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

In anticipation of our March bulletin that soon goes to the printer's for typesetting and duplication, I wrote a monthly column which might be of interest to you. I'm enclosing a copy of the text.

It comes to you with warmest best wishes.

Sincerely,



Allen I. Freehling, Ph.D.
Rabbi

c.c. with Encl.: Rabbi Erwin Herman

AIF:jh

From the Rabbi's Study

"Turning The Other Cheek? - That's Not Our Style!"

We Reform Jews are the target of some bitter attacks. Under the circumstances, I think that we have been more tolerant than is necessary.

While it may be part of the "Christian ethic" for a person to turn the other cheek when struck, I know few people who are inclined to be that passive. And, this certainly isn't what Judaism teaches us to do.

Sadly, the attacks that prompt this column have been launched not by some external forces; instead, they have come from within the Jewish community. Perhaps, we have absorbed the blows so as to maintain peace within the Household of Israel. But, as far as I'm concerned, "dayanu" (translation: "enough already").

Recently, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, made two proposals that are urged upon us by reality and good sense. In Houston, he suggested that we reach out to the "unchurched" letting non-Jews know that when they are seeking a satisfying religious identity Judaism is open to their scrutiny, that we welcome them with a warm embrace should they choose to become part of our peoplehood.

From the time of our Biblical prophets, we have been mandated to tell the world about God, to urge one and all to live their lives under His influence. While we may not be out on the streets in an attempt to proselyte, it's not for us to shut our doors in the face of those who elect to be with us.

Yet, the Orthodox community jumped all over Rabbi Schindler. It was as if he were attempting to radicalize Judaism, to do something altogether new and different. He was bitterly attacked in a way that his tormentors' disdain for non-Jews and Reform Jews coalesced in a most obscene manner.

By and large, Reform Jewry remains silent!

In Toronto, Dr. Schindler suggested that since we Liberal Jews do not abide by halacha ("Jewish law" is not considered by us to be binding but merely to be the subject of discussion as we make decisions that affect our life style) it is time for us to break with custom regarding the religious identity of a child. Traditionally, it is predicated on the religion of the mother (for practical reasons - we always know who she is). Since there are mixed marriages in which the husband is Jewish and his children are raised as Jews, that should be a sufficient justification for us to regard his sons and daughters as co-religionists if they ask that of us.

Again, the roof has fallen upon Rabbi Schindler in a broadside attack launched by our Orthodox brothers. Particularly offensive is the well publicized position enunciated by Rabbi Maurice Lamm. Similar to his counterparts in Israel, he now insists on officiating at a marriage only when the Jewish identity of both the bride and groom are "certified." This means that if a child from a Reform home calls upon him to be the officiant at his marriage, or a person who has converted to Judaism under the supervision of a Reform rabbi asks him to officiate at a wedding, those people are liable to be turned away because in someone's judgment their authenticity as Jews is in doubt.

By and large, Reform Jewry remains silent!

Inasmuch as we are attacked and since we do not turn our cheek only to be slapped again, I suggest that we end our silence. As one individual in the Jewish community, I shall no longer attempt to hide my concern in the name of unity. Rather, in public and in private, I shall tell those outspoken Orthodox attackers that they have no authority over me and my kind. They are in no position to question our validity as Jews; they are invading our privacy and attempting to take away our integrity. These things they may not do!

Also, they have no right to pose as being "more Jewish," "more observant,"

"more genuine" than are we. In fact, by their words and by their deeds they prove themselves to be less sensitive, less humane, less the true children of Israel than we are. Their lack of lovingkindness is ever-present!

Silent no longer, let us remain true to ourselves and true to our interpretation of Judaism by offering a rebuttal to anyone who attacks us and shows hostility to our approach to Jewish life.

As we learn in the Talmud: "It is a duty to speak out regardless whether the reproof is likely to be heeded or to be ignored."



Rabbi Allen I. Freehling

November 2, 1979

Mrs. Jennie Abrams
5319 24th N.E. #203
Seattle, WA. 98105

Dear Mrs. Abrams:

Many thanks for your letter of October 28. I appreciate your having shared your thoughts and concerns with me. I was deeply touched by your comments.

One of the agenda items of the Reform Movement is the matter of determination of Jewish lineage. There are many who agree that this should not be determined through the maternal line alone and a study is now being made as to the possibility of a change to include the paternal line.

Our Task Force on Reform Jewish Outreach is now functioning, they met here in New York just last week. They will be making an interim report to our Biennial in Toronto, December 7-11, 1979. One of the matters under consideration is the opening of information centers. I have shared your letter with Rabbi Sanford Seltzer, director of the Task Force, so he is apprised of your encouragement and interest.

With repeated thanks for your candid sharing of concerns and with every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

October 28, 1979

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
c/o UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York City, N. Y. 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

A year ago, approximately, Albert Vorspan sent me a copy of your address at a biennial conference concerning the issue of converts and the matter of mixed marriages. These comments and observations of yours have stimulated a great deal of discussion at Beth Am, where I am a member. It is about this matter that I am writing you.

First, let me say that I am a Jew by choice and by design. My father, as pro-Jewish as one could hope to find, raised in Brooklyn, indoctrinated me early with Jewishness; all his friends were Jewish. My father, Benard Lawson Paulsen, was not, or if he was, he never admitted it. Yet he raised me to be a Jew. Now I have found out, that my father, who claimed to be of Portugese, French and Danish descent, may have been part Jewish afterall. The name Benard, and my father was emphatic about its pronounciation and spelling, is a family name. My father, my father's father and my son bear this name unchanged. It appears to have been the name of my father's father's mother's maiden name. Yet because lineage is not traced through the father's side, I have not been able to claim myself Jewish by birth, although obviously I have enough in me to meet Nazi standards. Hence, I would like to encourage you to press for counting one'self as a Jew through both the mother and father.

Further, I would like to encourage you to open, or advocate the opening of, information centers, since synagogues, shuls and temples are places which are forbidding to non-Jews. I know I would have become an observant Jew much long ago, if I had known where to turn. As it was, I waited until the Yom Kippur War to declare my allegience, obviously much later than was healthy. I would have raised my children as Jews, a sorrow that remains with me, for though I opposed having the children raised as Christians for the very same reasons and in the very same way my father taught me, I still did not have the necessary Jewish connection. Now I have a grandson, with an ominous name, of a daughter who has married a Catholic, and who threatnes to raise this child, this grandson of mine to be a Catholic priest, and who sneers at Jews, adding yet another wound to a heart already broken. Please, let us have no more miseries by not assembling the people, even the strangers in the city, to know and love the Torah.

Sincerely,

Jennie Abrams
Jennie Abrams

5319 24th N.E. #203
Seattle, Washington 98105

Dearest Rabbi Schindler,

October 22, 1979

I wanted to write and thank you personally for the time you took to answer my letter, and the trouble you went to, seeing that it reached someone who could be of assistance to me.

I hope to be in touch with Rabbi Herman by the middle of this week, and, perhaps meet with him toward the end of next week. I spend most of my weekends in Beverly Hills, and so it would be an ideal way to spend a few of them; something very exciting to look forward to!

I also wanted to thank you for the "Presidential Address" that you sent along with your letter. I must say, I was quite fascinated by it, as I have been somewhat "victimized" by my own interest in entering the Faith, and I could relate to it in many, many ways. My fondest dream would be to one day be an intrinsic part of such a program as you have proposed, as I know all too well the problems and obstacles involved in conversion and intermarriage, firsthand!

A very close friend of mine is attending one of the Hebrew Universities in New York (he is studying to be a doctor), and I hope to be visiting him during the Easter vacation. By then I am certain that I will have some interesting stories to tell, and I would most definitely be honored to meet you and share some of my experiences.

Again, Thank You, your kind words brought me much warmth and new Hope.

Most Sincerely,



* Oh, my! Another "omen"! As I close this letter, the Muzak in my office plays "Sunrise, Sunset", it is almost too bizarre, I kid you not!

58
ELH

✓
October 16, 1979

Ms. Dori M. Barnes
8 Ima Loa Court
Newport Beach, CA. 92663

Dear Ms. Barnes:

Your letter of September 27 to The Jewish Agency has been forwarded to me for response. I was deeply touched by your comments on your personal situation. It is my fond hope our organization can be of assistance to you.

The UAHC has an Outreach Program and the enclosed address which I delivered to the UAHC Board of Trustees will give you an idea as to its thrust. We have active Introduction to Judaism programs in many centers throughout the country and the Los Angeles program is particularly active. I am therefore taking the liberty of sharing your letter with the director of our UAHC Pacific Southwest Council Rabbi Erwin L. Herman, so he will be apprised of your desire to learn more about the Jewish faith and the Jewish people. I believe it would be most helpful for you to chat with him or one of our lay people active in the program. His office is located at 13107 Ventura Boulevard, North Hollywood, CA. 91604 and the telephone number is 213-872-3550. I am confident your call will be welcomed with sensitivity and understanding.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.
cc: Rabbi Erwin L. Herman

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החסתדרות הציונית העולמית — אנף אמריקאני

WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION

American Section, Inc.

515 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022

PLaza 2-0600

Cable Address: JEVAGENCY

October 10, 1979

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

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Enclosed please find a copy of a letter I recently received from a young lady named Dori. M. Barnes. Perhaps there is some way in which you can assist Ms. Barnes.

Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Mary Wisotsky
Mary Wisotsky
Director of Personnel

MW:cjm
Enclosure

September 27, 1979

The Jewish Agency
515 Park Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

Dear Sirs:

I do not quite know where to begin. I am a twenty-year-old female, currently in college, studying Sociology and Social Ecology, near my home in Newport Beach, California.

I am certain everyone has a long story to tell. I will make mine as brief as possible:

I was born and raised in California, mostly around the Los Angeles area. My father was a Catholic and I was raised as one, along with my four brothers. My Mother had a sketchy religious background, as she was tossed around from parent to parent for the better part of her growing up years, and had very little guidance.

Around the age of eight or nine, I became aware of how stale and unfulfilling my religious life was. I became restless and obsessed with questions and paradoxes, yet all the time believing there was "something out there", as I do to this day. Around this same time, I became almost as obsessed with Jewish people, and many things about them, all for no apparent reason, since I had never come in contact with them, and knew literally nothing about Judaism. By the age of eleven, I had all but ceased going to Church, perhaps even being a Catholic.

Around the age of twelve, my "Jewish Obsession" dwindled, but kept to the back of my mind. Then, in my later years of high school, it crept back to the surface. Having been exposed to the media, I was aware of the stereotypical Russian Jewish Immigrant, and took on the habit of addressing my family in this accent at all times. It was infectious, and actually became a part of my family, yet we all looked upon it as some sort of game. I graduated high school, and this behaviour had all but disappeared once again.

Now, for the past three and a half years, I have worked part time, and gone to school part time. Over the past year, my hunger for education has greatly increased, and I have tried gradually to concentrate on a full-time schedule, although, financially, it is quite difficult.

In any case, for the past year now, the Jewish thing has returned, full-force, and to such a degree that it is hard for me to live a normal life. I am never without a book by a Jew, about a Jew, or about Judaism. I eat Jewish, sleep and dream Jewish, and, largely by chance, have come to find that all of the people I now share my life with have turned out to be Jewish... Needless to say, most people have thought me to be rather bizarre, but that's okay. My family simply humored me all along, yet figured there must have been some underlying reason. THEN:

About three weeks ago, I went on a vacation with my mother, to Arizona, to visit her mother. Seemingly out of the blue, my Grandmother began discussing her will, and what she was to leave me, her major concern being a family heirloom, a gold locket (watch) on a long chain. She brought it out to show it to me, and I opened it up. On the inside there was an inscription: "To Emma, with Love, Harry, 1887". I had never in my life heard of these people. I have always been very close to my Grandmother, but never in my life have I seen, or heard about, anyone in her family, except her. She proceeded to inform me that Emma and Harry were married, and that they were both Jewish, living all their lives in Germany. They had a daughter, Harriet, who, in turn, had a daughter, my Grandmother, who had my mother. Knowing that the descent is through the maternal line, I asked if any of them had converted, they had not. I still have no idea why I was never informed of this before, and my mother could not have told me, as it was the first she had heard of it. In any case, I was utterly shocked, and at the same time, ecstatic. It was all so odd, I cannot describe the feelings I have had for these past weeks, but I cannot help feeling that it must have been pre-destined...but why so long???

Now, I desperately want to make up for lost time, and find out all of the many things I need to know. I feel I have been cheated, and I want to know my ancestry, my people, from the ground up. Perhaps I am not TECHNICALLY Jewish, but I feel Jewish, in many ways, I always have.

And so, I am asking for your help. I do not know where to begin, who to talk to. Is there any sort of scholarship for a person like myself, here, in the U.S., or over in a place such as Jerusalem, which is my ideal. There just isn't a way that I could afford it on my own, and I feel that every day that goes by is another day wasted. My Grade point average is around 3.6, and I would be most happy to send a copy of my transcripts to whoever might be interested. If you cannot be of assistance, please forward this letter to someone who possibly could, or refer me to someone else; if nothing else, a reply would be greatly appreciated.

THANK YOU!!!
Doris M. Barnes

DORI M. BARNES
8 IMA LOA COURT
NEWPORT BEACH, CA. 92663



VIA AIR MAIL
CORREO AEREO

THE JEWISH AGENCY
515 PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

CHECKED

OCT X2 1979

PAR ✱
AVION

September 24, 1979

Mrs. Joe Baxt
6935 Forestglade Circle
Dallas, Texas 75230

Dear Mrs. Baxt:

Thank you for your letter following my appearance on the Phil Donahue Show. I appreciate your writing.

You make a very valid point. Unfortunately, during interviews on TV and radio it's not always possible to say all one wants to say. You are so right, our synagogue doors are open to all who wish to attend Shabbat and/or week-day services. It is unfortunate that so many people cannot comprehend the need to support the synagogue and its programs.

With best wishes to you and yours for the New Year, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

9/18/79

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

We enjoyed hearing you on the Donahue program.

One thing I think should have been brought out is that everyone is welcome at any service except the High Holy Days. Any temple I have known is only too happy for visitors at any Friday night or Saturday service at no charge.

Sincerely

Elma Baxt (Mrs Joe)

From Arizona

Although brought up as a Protestant, I became "unchurched" years ago. After a series of bad experiences with the church, and even though I lost my faith in religion, I didn't lose my faith in God. In these eight years I have tried to go back into the church but each time they have been all unsuccessful. I'm 22 years old now and feel a need for some kind of religious affiliation. Over the years I've prayed, meditated and done almost anything I could to find out what would be the best thing for me to do. It is because of this that I found out that the only way that I could receive spiritual fulfillment was by converting to Judaism that is why I am writing to you. I am hoping that you could help me. I had some exposure to the Jewish faith and what I know of it I can truly endorse. What are the mechanics of converting, how can I go about learning more about the Jewish faith so that I can make an intelligent decision. If I would convert I could only do so, if I feel that it would be truly honest as far as my feelings, my life experiences go, I could not do it for ~~only~~ the sake of family, unity, we have two children.

Maryland:

A woman who signs her name and then indicates that she is ^aWASP. *P.*

Even though it comes too late in life for me, always admiring of the works and aspirations of Jewish persons and groups, in social, personal, and so many other areas - all the beautiful music that has so enriched my life - I'm happy to see this move to turn the tide from the exclusiveness, arisen from cause, but depriving Jews and the rest of us the benefits that might be realized in acceptance of the worth of Judaism.

From Montana

I know that it is possible to be a child of God and to lead the good life without ever being a "member" of the organized religious groups. Every man has that capability. But I also have other needs. I need the affirming experience of praising God in company with my fellows. I need to do some act of commitment, some symbolic things, some ritual if you will. I can be a Jew only in my heart but I want also to be a Jew in a congregation. I want to become Jew, in some formal way. I am already a Jew in my soul.



From New York

The summary of my Jewish background is brief. I converted to Judaism over two years ago. I'm an active congregant at my temple where I serve on the Board of Trustees. After taking the conversion course at UAHC I became very interested in Hebrew and continued to study on my own at temple and college. I also spent a month in Israel study at ulpon. It is my hope to live in Israel for a year sometime in the not-too-distant future and to improve my Hebrew to a point where I can write a childrens book in that language. I grew up in a religious environment, being the son of a Protestant minister. I was very active in religious education and youth groups in that setting.



From a small town in New Mexico

I was born of a Jewish lady, illegitimate. Later she married a non-Jew. As I grow older I feel lost not having the customs, traditions, history and beliefs which I should have been taught nor the unity of the Jewish communities. Here there is no Jewish community. I am writing to ask where is the nearest community and what books shall my wife and I study toward Judaism. Can we receive instructions by mail?



Minneapolis

Little over a year ago, I wrote to you about my interest and desire to learn more about Judaism. I appreciated your kind response in encouragement that I seek out others who might assist me. In August I relocated from Michigan to live and work here in Minneapolis. I have been regularly attending Temple Israel with Rabbi Max Shapiro. I have thoroughly enjoyed the temple and I'm very much looking forward to learning more and becoming a part of this fine congregation.



From a Bar-Mitzvah speech of a Jew-by-Choice

What has brought to this very special day, what has inspired me motivated me to become a son of a the commendmant which Bar-Mitzvah means in the Hebrew language? It was my study of the Hebrew language. It was my search for roots through Abraham through the little Hebrew children, through Noah, through Adam and Eve, it was my search through God. From early childhood and possible from brith I was developing this oneness in God -- people would ask me if I was Jewish and I would say no, I am a Jewish sympathizer. This line of reasoning when on for a year or so. Then one day without having a formal conversion I admitted to myself that I was indeed a Jew, a Hebrew child linked with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and part of the covenant. Judaism seems to natural to me. Although at the time I did not attend synagogue services, every High Holiday season I felt motivated to attend services. In 1978 I moved my family to New Orleans and once again as the High Holiday season began the urge came upon me to attend the services. I resumed my study of the Hebrew language at the Jewish Community Center. While there I heard about a special program entitled "Jews-by-Choice." I attended and enrolled in the conversion class. After completing the class I again spoke with the rabbi about converting. He asked when I would like to convert without hesitation I say "how" Bar-Mitzvah for boys and Bath-Mitzvah for girls is the time when a person moves to adulthood ready to accept responsibility as an adult. Jockingly, my wife has informed that when I complete my Bar-Mitzvah that I too must accept full responsibility for my actions as an adult. And, becoming an adult in the Jewish teaching I intend to do just that.

From Lake Jackson, Texas

I am a Jew and ~~because I~~ come from a very small Jewish community in the ex-Portuguese colony of Angola in Africa, and I live presently in a town of also very small Jewish community, and the nearest synagogue is Galveston about 60 miles from Lake Jackson. I been having problems trying to explain to my wife, whom I married only two weeks ago, what she needs to know to convert. My wife has been very interested in our faith all her life and I wanted her to know more about it before she starts a program on conversion. ~~Since~~ ^B because of our jobs (both in shift-work), there is no way we can go to all the classes in Galveston and also because all my books are in Portuguese).

From Idaho

I recently contacted the synagogue here. I was referred to a man who might be able to help me to convert to Judaism. When I called this man he informed me that they didn't really condone conversion and said that he couldn't help me and gave me another number to call of someone who might be able to help me. He wished me luck and hung up the phone as if I were - the black plague. I called the other number and got almost the same treatment, almost as if he was frightened of me. He told me that I would lose my friends and family if I became Jewish. I told him that if this was part of me being converted, then so be it. But my mom and I are very close and she knows that I wouldn't do it just because its there, and my friends couldn't really be my friends if this caused trouble between us.

From Missoula, Montana

I need your help with a serious problem. You made a reference on the Donahue show that there are required courses that Gentiles take when converting to Judaism. The problem is that I live in Missoula, Montana and there isn't a rabbi or a large amount of Jews in this area. The only hope I have is that you can explain to me what is required. Trusting I will hear from you soon.



From Florida

The program you are endeavoring to launch is entirely worthwhile. In our family we have a recent convert to our beautiful religion. She was converted at a Reform congregation. My grandson met his wife at a kibbutz in Israel. She is from Holland. We think she is anxious and willing to be the balebaste of a Jewish home. Would you please send her the books necessary to increase her knowledge.



From Colorado

At the moment I'm a member of the Methodist Church, but I want to go back to my family's old religion, the Jewish faith. How is it possible for me to convert back to Judaism? I am 19 years old and have therefore passed my Bar-Mitzvah age. I have been thinking about this for many years, and have decided, but I need advice --- I have lived in Europe and visited synagogues, but I've always felt like a Methodist visiting a synagogue, not a Jew. How can I become a Jew? In my heart I feel like a Jew, but knowledge of Judaism is minimal.



non-jewish

A letter from Georgia

"Many years ago I listened to my grandmother tell me of our faith and people. It always made her cry and I loved her very much. She was Hebrew. Her family were strict Jews and she married a young man ~~not acceptable~~. She said she never heard from them again but she loved her faith and her family. I am now a mother and I too have tried to teach my sons and daughters of God. The light she lit many years ago was almost dead until my son met a young Jewish girl and married her. The rabbi, asking about my Hebrew name and speaking of old customs, blew the still small flame to a glow again. I have always told anyone who asked of my heritage, but not having a lot of money and ten small ones to raise ~~them~~ and no other Jews near made for a poor training for the little ones -- all of this is only background to ask for material to help answer questions the children ask.



From Ohio from a rabbi

I consider myself a convert even though I am^a descendant, on my mothers side, from a large Latvian Jewish family. My mother chose to abandon Judaism before I was born and married my father who is not Jewish. Essentially I was raised in a non-Jewish home: no mention was made of my Jewish descent or of the fact that, according to the Halacha, I was born Jewish. Our family observed the Christian holidays complete with Christmas tree. Judaism was never mentioned. When I was about 15 years of age I became interested independently in Judaism. To the initial consternation of my family, I began to take steps towards conversion. During this process I discovered that because my mother was Jewish I did not need to undergo formal conversion. Nevertheless I experienced, in embracing Judaism, all that a "normal" convert would experience. My interest in Judaism persisted until today. I'm on the verge of being ordained a rabbi.



A letter from a young man in West Germany

My immigrant grandparents were active members of their respective Reform congregations, while the next generation drifted into a more secular variety of the faith. This generation (i.e. me) expects to find itself living and working here in Berlin for several years. The critical role this city has played for Judaism, both during the tragic period earlier in the century as well as the creative years before, make unavoidable an awareness of my personal religious roots and with this a sense of responsibility towards continuing these traditions --- I vaguely remember reading that Reform Jews in the U.S. had adopted a policy that would return Judaism to being a religion of conviction and conversion as well as of simple birthright. This is a policy I would support and consider long (about 1900 years) overdue.



from Madras, India --- I am quite happy to welcome your decision to end a four century old moratorium on seeking proselytes to the Jewish faith. ... I am unable to identify myself intellectually and emotionally with any of the Christian sects. I would like to try whether I could find my identity in Judaism which I find is nearest to my heart of all the religions.

Hyderabad, India.....I feel very much elated to learn that with the advent of the New Year the UAHC has taken an unprecedented decision to do away with the four century long moratorium to the practice of proselytizing to Judaism. ---I have been trying for more than a decade to embrace Judaism, because I have come to love that faith passionately, from the very core of my heart.



From a participant in a Outreach weekend in Houston

It was a most stimulating and exciting meeting that I have ever had the chance to participate in. ~~I must say that I liked the concept of only the "Jews-by-choice" in attendance. I did not care for the visitors that sat in the sessions. It did restrain my remarks and curtailed my verbalizing at will. Perhaps my position in Sisterhood made me aware that my remarks were of a private nature and I did not care to have others know about them. I was delighted to share with others there who were in the same position that I was in. However~~ The free feelings and emotional expressions of the participants were most welcomed. We all had the chance of conveying our innermost feelings whenever we wanted to. It was and still is an exceptional weekend that I shall never forget. I do sincerely hope that the UAHC will continue with this program for the future. I do feel that it is a must, not only to retain our members but to educate and accept them for what they are — Jews!

