

## Guest Editorial

### A Time for Frank Catholic-Jewish Dialogue

By Rabbi William Berkowitz

Across the centuries, the relationship between the Jewish people and the Pope has always been strained and difficult. As the titular head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope has set and implemented many of the Church's policies toward the Jews.

We saw him visit last fall 1986 a synagogue in Rome, for which he was hailed. We have seen him receive numerous Jewish delegations and express positive notions about Jews and Judaism. We have seen him go to Auschwitz, and likewise speak of Jewish suffering.

However, at the same time, we have seen him welcome arch-terrorist Yasir Arafat to the Vatican gates. We have heard him mute Jewish suffering during a recent visit to the Maidanek concentration camp. And we heard him highlight Edith Stein's death as owing to her Catholicism, when her Jewishness was what most provoked the ire of the Nazis. To this record has now been added the Pope's recent welcoming of Kurt Waldheim, a man charged with being part of the Nazi death machine and who is banned from the United States. Even more painful is that while the Pontiff may have made reference to Waldheim's Nazi past in private, in public he spoke of Waldheim only as a "man of peace."

It is said that when someone mentioned the then-Pope Pius XII to Joseph Stalin, he replied: "How many divisions does he have?" Clearly, Stalin saw the Vatican and the role of the Pope only in temporal, political and pragmatic terms. While the Vatican acts as a state and the Pope acts as its head, the Pope also functions as a moral and religious leader. Hence, for the Pope more than any other political leader, to welcome a man of Waldheim's caliber is more than just paradoxical: It is deeply disappointing.

Within the Jewish tradition, much is written about the separation of that which is kosher—clean—from that which is treife — unclean. Entire talmudic tomes are devoted to the topic of what happens when the treife gets mixed up with the kosher. Thus, it is particularly painful for us Jews to witness a situation in which a religious leader gets mixed up with a Nazi, and brings such pain even to so many of his Catholic followers!

How, then, shall we proceed? There are extremist voices within the Jewish community who call for a rupture of relations between Catholic and Jews. One New York Jewish newspaper's editorial engaged in anti-Catholicism which was not only unbecoming, but if it appeared in a Catholic paper about Jews, would be viewed as deeply anti-Semitic. It is clear that the dialogue and advancement of relations between Catholics and Jews must go on, and must continue, despite the actions of any Pope. We have too much to lose to allow this incident to destroy that dialogue.

At the same time, we must continue to make clear to our Catholic friends that while we will not tolerate a backlash from our community, they cannot tolerate a backlash from theirs. Moreover, we must continue to talk so that they understand why the visit caused the Jewish community such anguish and rage. We must explore with them the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a Jewish event and consider how it relates to the State of Israel, with which the Vatican does not maintain relations.

And we must continue to talk, and at times (for only if we are honest can dialogue be authentic) even shout, when we are pained. To do otherwise is to allow the extremists to gain the upper hand and to destroy the great advances which we have made in Catholic-Jewish relations in the last two decades, since Pope John XXIII and Vatican II.

Rabbi William Berkowitz is national president of the American Jewish Heritage Committee.

## Inside the Charlotte Jewish Federation

By Ron Katz, Pres. CJF

As a new year approaches again, beginning for all Jews on Sept. 24 this year, our thoughts reflect over the past year and the challenges of the future.

When the 1987 Federation Campaign ended, our Charlotte Jewish community rose to new heights by meeting the needed financial demands, raising 1.25 million dollars. That achievement represented nearly a twenty-five percent increase over the previous year's campaign.

The warm response by our donors was extremely gratifying and stimulated the campaign solicitors in their untiring efforts to accomplish their assignments. All of you together made this success

happen. There is no way to show how much appreciation we feel to those who gave and those who worked.

Perhaps a traditional Todah Rabah, many thanks, for a start, will do. Anyway, thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

During the past months, much time was spent on searching for a new Executive Director. We spent countless hours and literally scoured the country. Candidates were considered from Hawaii to the eastern shores of New England and southern shores of Florida.

We feel very excited and truly fortunate to have Mr. Michael Minkin from Los Angeles, coming to us on August 1, as Executive Director. Mr. Minkin, or Mike as he

is known by his associates, brings the mixture of enthusiasm and experience. His background training as a professional will enable us to continue the momentum already started in our Federation.

Speaking for the entire Board, these past months have provided many experiences which are rewarding and stimulating. Our contact with both the National UJA and Council of Federation Leadership has been extremely supportive and inspirational.

The Federation will make every effort, as the 1988 season draws near, to invigorate its activities with the kind of dynamic programming to move ahead. The Campaign Committee is already working diligently on the 1988 goal. Chairpersons are in place and we fully expect to be on target for our "September Kickoff."

This column will be used regularly to keep the flow of communications going. As new information and pertinent details arise, we want, as part of the Federation, to be apprised of what's happening on the inside. The column may change to "What's Happening".

In conclusion, I must tell you that we are all very excited and upbeat in our hopes and aspirations for the new year. Let's all do what we can to keep the flow going.



## On The Issues ... By Ira Gissen, Va/NC Director ADL

### —Shame!—

"God does not hear the prayer of a Jew." That noxious defamation was uttered in 1980 and it was repeated again, just a few weeks ago. The Reverend Bailey Smith first uttered that insult in 1980, speaking as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Smith, a Del City, Oklahoma evangelist, reaffirmed his canard in June 1987 before a Southern Baptist evangelists conference. And, in response to his insult, he received a standing ovation from 2,000 people.

When questioned about his reiteration of the defamation, he offered the following explanation: "A lot of friends came to me saying that what I had said was true, but telling me I shouldn't have said it." He went on: "If the Bible says it,

it is true and you should tell it."

What was more shocking than the reiteration of his bigoted remark, was the fact that it was applauded by 2,000 people. No doubt, his view is shared by many.

There is also no doubt that a great many Southern Baptists reject his prejudice. As one gentleman wrote in a letter to the editor published in *The Charlotte Observer*: "There is no hole large enough to harbor the multitude of Baptists who hang their heads in shame at the statement by Bailey Smith that 'God does not listen to the prayers of the Jew.' Mr. Smith by no means represents Baptist doctrine, policy, creed or any other official position of our denomination. The statement was his opinion only.

"Those of us who do not stand in ovation (and I believe this to be the greatest majori-

ty of Baptists) are bewildered by the highly organized conservation element of our denomination. Please be reminded that each Baptist church is autonomous and we are obviously a most diverse group.

"I plead with the Jewish community and fellow Christians not to confuse all Baptists with the likes of Bailey Smith."

The challenge that faces the Anti-Defamation League and, indeed, faces all of us is not to permit ourselves to be so deeply offended by Bailey Smith's remarks, as to discontinue our efforts in building interfaith understanding and harmony. While the Bailey Smiths in this world may make headlines, they are vastly outnumbered by the countless people of goodwill who continue to reach toward one another through words and works of mutual understanding.

### JEWISH CALENDAR CANDLELIGHTING



Aug. 4 — Tisha B'Av  
Aug. 7 — 8:03 p.m.  
Aug. 14 — 7:55 p.m.  
Aug. 21 — 7:47 p.m.  
Aug. 28 — 7:38 p.m.  
Sept. 4 — 7:28 p.m.  
Sept. 4 — 7:20 p.m.

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