

Opinion

Letter on Messianic Jews unfair

By David A. Rausch

I was interested to find an opinion letter in the Religion section of the Toronto Star (April 12, 1980) by Rabbi J. Immanuel Schochet, the man who has carried out his personal crusade against cults and missionaries and most recently has been outraged by the Toronto Messianic congregation, Melech Yisrael. As one who flew up to Toronto to cover the incident at the Kol Simcha concert for a book I am completing, I came back with a view diametrically opposed to what Rabbi Schochet conveyed.

Rabbi Schochet charged the congregation "has plastered synagogues, Jewish stores and neighborhoods with large posters" advertising the concert. In fact, no poster was hung in a synagogue by these Messianic Jews and only in the stores with the permission of those on duty. The posters clearly stated that the affair was put on by "Messianic" Jews, and in light of all the publicity Rabbi Schochet has raised in the Toronto press, it would have been difficult to mislead the Toronto Jewish community. I found that people turned away from the concert because of fear of violence to their person and to their cars from Rabbi Schochet's group rather than from "being informed about the missionizing nature of the concert."

Forged tickets

Rabbi Schochet has stated: "Some students infiltrated the concert on their own, to chant from within, but were soon ejected. Instructions of the police were followed meticulously." In fact, while I was interviewing the leader of the Jewish Defence League and others in front of the school, some of Rabbi Schochet's group were nervous about getting in the building before the doors were closed. They were informed that it had all been taken care of and not to worry — the meeting would be disrupted.

The demonstrators did not listen to the police, but tried to disrupt the whole concert by staging a fight inside, coughing, mocking, booing and whistling loudly. Many had forged tickets and were dispersed throughout the crowd, ignoring the police's wishes that they return outside after their initial protest inside. I took pictures of Hasids from Rabbi Schochet's group involved in this behavior inside — men old enough to know better.

Never before have I felt as I did that night. For once, I had seen religious oppression and hatred vented to an extent I never dreamed was possible in a free country. Jewish friends of mine have told me what it was like to be terrorized by Hitler's Brownshirts in Germany, and that night I understood the feeling of such an encounter. They cheated the people by forging their own tickets, they defrauded the audience by incessantly trying to disrupt the whole concert (I taped their catcalls to the very end), and their demeanor was appalling.

As Mr. Vanderwerff, the leader of the congregation, left after calmly talking to angry young men for more than an hour after the concert, a leader of the protesters moved the group to the back of the school to spit all over Vanderwerff's departing car.

Inaccurate statements

Rabbi Schochet has mentioned in his account "freedom of religion" that "we live in a free country and value this freedom." And yet, since Rabbi Schochet's stirring of this controversy over a "3 by 1 1/2" holiday greeting in the Canadian Jewish News, Mr. Vanderwerff's life has been filled with threats, and inaccurate statements to the press. Congregation Melech Yisrael does not overtly evangelize, nor does it prey on children. The concert was not evangelistic. Rabbi Schochet has never approached Mr. Vanderwerff personally to discuss their differences in private. Mr. Vanderwerff, whose family helped Jews escape the Nazis in Holland, has ironically been caricatured as a "spiritual" Nazi by Rabbi Schochet's group. This is all because one man believes that a Jew can retain his Jewish heritage and still accept Jesus as the Messiah, and the other man believes that this is impossible.

Who wins in such a situation? Certainly not the Jewish community, most of whom deplore such tactics. Certainly not the Hasidic community (most Lubavitcher's I know just see Rabbi Schochet as a personal crusader against the cults, and perhaps, a bit more upright about missionaries than most). Nor do the citizens of Toronto, "who care for honesty and decency." As a historian, what worries me is how this may get totally out of hand. The Jewish community and citizens of Toronto have a responsibility to defuse this confrontation.

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Conference on social justice

The Struggles of the 80s, a Working Conference on Social Justice, is the title of a six-day conference to be held Aug. 17 to 22 under the auspices of the Institute for Christian Life and the Toronto School of Theology.

Speakers include theologian Gregory Baum; Most Rev. Bernard Hubert, Roman Catholic bishop of St. Jean, Quebec; Rev. Pierre Goldberger, director of Union Theological College, Montreal; and Frank Walton, senior economist, Cabinet Secretariat, government of New Brunswick.

It will be held at Loretto College, 70 St. Mary St., and will cost \$70 for tuition, \$75 for those needing room and board. For further information and applications call (416) 923-2796.



ALBERT LEE/TORONTO STAR

Spreading the word: As a member of the Toronto Committee to Defend Quebec's Right to Self-determination, theologian Gregory Baum says Quebecois have a right to decide their own future.

Theologian heads Toronto group backing Quebec's right to vote

Gregory Baum, Toronto's internationally known Roman Catholic theologian, is spearheading a campaign to persuade English Canada that Quebecers have a right and a duty to choose their own future. He and other members of the Toronto Committee to Defend Quebec's Right to Self-determination have taken their case to schools here and across the country as well as to other public meetings.

"It's a justice issue," said Baum in an interview. "What is at stake is no less than the collective right of a people to choose their destiny." In a frank, sometimes sharp, interchange with about 75 Grade 7 and 8 students at the Spectrum School this week, the 57-year-old theologian said that if the May 20 referendum in Quebec goes in favor of sovereignty-association the rest of Canada must be prepared to negotiate a new deal for that province.

Baum explained to the students (who are part of an alternative school within the Toronto School Board) that a "yes" vote will not mean automatic independence for Quebec.

Familiar refrain

"The May 20 vote simply gives the Parti Quebecois the mandate to negotiate a new constitutional arrangement," he said. "This has to be followed by a second referendum in the future to decide the issue of separation or not."

Students who objected with the familiar refrain that if Quebec separates so will the Prairie provinces or the Maritimes were told that there is no parallel between Quebec and any other region.

"The nationalists in Quebec are not saying they're dissatisfied with this and that; they're saying 'we are a distinct people.' Peoplehood is the crux of the matter. Quebec society has a homogeneity and a 300-year history not found elsewhere in Canada."

The former priest (he requested a return to lay status from Pope Paul VI, Nov. 29, 1976, and was married to a former nun 13 months later) joined with a group of five other Toronto academics about a year ago to form the defence committee. However, with the referendum just around the corner, their activities have suddenly taken a higher profile.

A large advertisement in the



TOM HARPUR Religion editor

University of Toronto Bulletin, April 21, asks all who support Quebec's right to self-determination to sign an attached petition. Over 300 signatures have been obtained so far.

The advertisement says in part: "As English-speaking Canadians we are disturbed by the refusal of our politicians to acknowledge Quebec's right to self-determination. Quebec is not a province like the others; the Quebecois constitute a people. They have a distinct history, a common language, their own civil institutions and cultural traditions; and they possess a strong sense of their national identity." "The Quebecois, therefore, cannot be denied the right to define democratically their own political future, even if they opt for independence."

According to Baum and his cohorts, the People to People petition, associated with the national unity campaign, is "nice" but wrong-headed.

Baum told the youngsters: "It's very beautiful to say to Quebecers 'we love you, we want you, and want to be friends,' but by assuming they are just Canadians like the rest of us these people show they haven't heard a thing Quebec has been saying ever since it was conquered by the English."

While everybody else thinks of Canada as a unity with many component minorities, the Quebecois think of it as two nations, he explained. "It's very difficult for the English-speaking majority to realize this is what Quebec has really been saying all along." Baum makes it very clear that the committee is not arguing for Quebec opting out but simply for its right to make its own decisions: "Our hope is a new constitutional arrangement. Personally I don't even think of Quebec eventually separating. I'm not a great friend of the Parti Quebecois or even of sovereignty association."

He told The Star his own reasons for involving himself in the Quebec issue, apart from his concerns as a Christian

about justice, stem largely from his belonging to the Roman Catholic Church:

"In Canada, our church is a completely bilingual institution. Everything at our head office in Ottawa is done in the two languages. All our bishops must be totally bilingual. I lecture frequently in French in Quebec and have been brought face to face with the distinctively Quebecois point of view."

In Baum's view, the institutions you belong to largely shape your views on Quebec. For example, he notes that those labor unions with membership in Quebec are the ones in favor of negotiating a new deal. In other words, to know is to come close to understanding.

Public opinion

In any case, the Toronto committee is growing optimistic about the way public opinion now seems to be swinging away from former, headline attitudes to the referendum crisis.

He said: "In the last three or four weeks we have felt a shift. More and more people are now saying: 'We hope the vote will be a no; but if it is yes, we want to negotiate.' That's the only position we feel is fair and just."

On a more personal note, Baum was asked whether, in the light of the present crackdown on liberal theologians by the Vatican and the fact that he is a former priest, he has been under any pressure to keep silent or to quit his teaching post.

He replied: "None at all. I could be on the run all the time speaking at Catholic universities and I continue to publish articles in Catholic journals."

"I'm not saying there hasn't been criticism. I'm just not very sensitive to that kind of thing. The truth is, people who didn't like me before I left the priesthood still don't, while those who trusted me then continue to do so now."

In addition to membership in the Quebec committee, Baum is involved in groups from the Canadian Civil Liberties Committee to Catholics for Social Change.

He is a very active member of the New Democratic Party (he has been asked to run as a candidate several times but declined) and continues his interest in promoting Christian unity by editing the learned journal of ecumenical thought, the Ecumenist.

of us who think we can be cured by psychiatry alone. However, it also challenges those of us who believe we can be cured by faith alone.

Kurelek's story offers the hope of recovery to those who are depressed or emotionally disturbed. "Not only is it possible for them to recover, it is possible to take advantage and put to work the suffering they are going through."

However, it would seem that Kurelek did not hope for a total recovery or complete mental health. At some point, he seems to have accepted his limited portion of physical and mental health and said it was "enough" to go on. At this point his art became more than a means of self-expression. It became an expression of his concern about the illnesses of our contemporary society. His art reflected a passionate social concern about the well-being of our country and our world.

Kurelek's example should call us to question the self-centred obsession with physical and psychological "wellness" which is prevalent today. He did not share the secular belief in the salvific myth of total health.

Kurelek did not passively accept his mental illness. However, he also accepted the limits of his own psychic growth. Thus, Kurelek has trod the path of the relatively happy life which is open to us when we are well "enough" to care for the well-being of others.

"There is Someone with me and always has been. And He has asked me to get up because there is work to be done."

Religion

Churchwomen protest attitude of men officials

By Aubrey Wice

Angry and frustrated over treatment by male officials, church women will contest the situation on several fronts. Anglican officials will be confronted in Peterborough, June 17-25, during the church's General Synod, and in Waterloo, June 20-22, there will be a United Church women's conference to discuss the issue. On an international scale, regional consultations on women's role in the church are being held by the World Council of Churches. The WCC says "They (women) want to be given equal rights in a community that respects the uniqueness of every human being whether man or woman."

Another WCC statement out of Geneva said it is widely recognized the church has been set in a triangular framework with men at the top and women at the base. It said the triangle needs to be substituted for a circle so women will have a real partnership. There will be a change but everyone expects it will be a long process, it concluded.

Delegates to a Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada seminar were told discrimination against women had been fostered by biblical interpretation, ignorance, culture, tradition and the law, and that re-interpretation of scripture and re-education of clergy and others is necessary to counteract it. "Clergymen must learn to share their leadership with women," the seminar was told.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools of the Toronto Province who operate De La Salle College will observe their 300th anniversary May 10 with a one-day celebration. Brother George Morgan says the day-long conference will concentrate on the direction of Catholic education in the 1980s and "consider shaping the curriculum of our schools so as to reflect a Christian concern for the people who live on the margins of society." He said they will also consider student involvement in volunteer projects to help the needy.

Morgan says Jean Baptiste De La Salle, founder of the Brothers, had a concern for people in distress and that members of the Order are now doing similar work. One brother is working with prisoners in Louisiana and another with troubled young people in the Bronx.

Bible experts from Europe, Africa, Asia and other parts of the world are coming to Toronto as members of Studium Novi Testamenti Societas, an international learned society of New Testament scholars. It will be the first time they have met in Canada.

The conference, Aug. 25-29, will be hosted by the University of Toronto which issued the invitation, and will use facilities of Trinity College.

A Canada Council grant of \$6,000 has been promised to help pay confer-

The Pray and Play gang get together twice a week

By Perry Lefko

Jewish religious services for men are traditionally suit-and-tie affairs, but in the chapel of the downtown Jewish Community Centre (JCC) it is not unusual to see men praying in gym shorts or sweat pants.

They are part of the "Pray and Play Gang," a group of men who combine physical and spiritual fitness. They have been praying together Thursday and Sunday mornings for five years and, according to Branch Director Irwin Soren: "It fortifies their Jewishness."

The average attendance on Thursdays ranges between 15 and 20 men. Sundays the group expands to as many as 50. The group consists of businessmen, doctors, lawyers and retired men, their ages varying from the early 20s to 90.

The relaxed dress code was one of the principles of the chapel. "There were to be no restrictions as to how you dressed when you came," Soren said. "The only condition was that you prayed."

Harold Cherry, 80, believes the service is special. "I feel it's a unique experience, regardless of whether you come dressed up or not," Cherry said. "It's a feeling of doveness (praying) and many men will come to pray before they play."

The suggestion for a JCC chapel came from a group of members who were saying kaddish, an affirmation of God's name. Kaddish is recited three times daily for one year and must have a minimum of 10 Jewish males at least 13 years old.

Because most of the men worked in the downtown area and wanted to pray in a synagogue, they had little time for their exercise program. Most of the synagogues in Metro Toronto are in North York and, though there is a JCC at 4588 Bathurst St., it does not contain a chapel. The downtown JCC provides the men with a facility for prayer along with the handball and racquetball courts, gym, pool and sauna.

Religion roundup

ence expenses but other financing is being sought. Local churches are being asked to sponsor delegates and to invite them as guest speakers while they are here. Conference officials say that without sponsorship it would be difficult for East European members and scholars from the Third World to attend.

A Lutheran congregation is wondering if it has set some kind of hymn singing record. The Rhode Island Lutherans sang all 550 hymns from its hymn book in one sitting.

There is a lack of convincing evidence the death penalty is a deterrent to murder says the United Church in an editorial.

The church says, "Given the uncertain evidence, can capital punishment be justified?"

Lord Roy Thomson, late founder of the Thomson newspaper chain, has had a plaque unveiled to his memory in St. Paul's Cathedral. Cardinal Carter has named Rev. John Iverinci his special representative to the Italian community. The Ontario Bible College will hold a day-long seminar on the New Testament at Church Hill Heights Baptist Church, May 10. Rev. Keith Glead, chaplain of Lakefield College, has been named associate pastor of St. Thomas Church.

Rev. William Harding will say a special mass in his church, Annunciation of Our Lady, at noon tomorrow to honor Anthony Feisco, named Knight Commander of the Order of St. Gregory by the Pope. Rev. Paul Feehely says the Rogers Cable TV Inter-Faith Council is different. It includes other faiths besides Christians and Jews, including the Hare Krishna. The congregation of St. Peter's Church, Scarborough, will pay off its \$18,000 mortgage this year as a 25th anniversary parish gift.

Lutherans will mark the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession May 10, 7:30 p.m. in St. Andrew's Church, Carlton and Jarvis Sts. Victoria College convocation and Emmanuel College graduation will be 8 p.m. Thursday in Convocation Hall. The annual Ontario Prayer Breakfast under the patronage of Lt.-Gov. Pauline McGibbon and Premier William Davis will be 8 a.m. Wednesday in the Royal York Hotel. Toronto diocesan Anglican women will hold their annual meeting Tuesday and Wednesday at 135 Adelaide St. E. A day of prayer for world evangelization is being observed by churches around the world tomorrow. Testimonies from students will feature the Ontario Theological Seminary graduation Friday, 8 p.m. in Bayview Glen Church.

Artist's story offers new hope

William Kurelek's recently published autobiography may well become a classic of Canadian spirituality. Someone With Me describes a personal journey which challenges us to examine many of our notions of mental illness and mental health.

Some have called the autobiography of this famous Canadian painter a depressing account. I believe it is a testament of hope.

Kurelek's autobiography has none of the high drama of spiritual classics such as Augustine's Confessions or Thomas Merton's Seven Storey Mountain. It is a muted story told in a self-deprecating manner. In that sense it is an eminently Canadian story.

Kurelek's journey did not lead from a life of wanton pleasure, but rather from a life of chronic depression. His journey took him from the stern environment of a Ukrainian family on the Prairies, through a lumber camp and the Ontario College of Art, and onto the roads of Mexico and the United States.

The most significant stopping place along Kurelek's way was a four-year stay in a mental institution in England. He was not forced to live with emotional and social misfits. He chose to do so. Why? Because he had a desperate desire to be cured of the depressing sense of inferiority which continually plunged him into despair.

Some may see Kurelek's stay in a mental institution as a sign of his mental illness. Others may see Kurelek's desire for mental health as already a sign of healthiness. Kurelek himself later saw his desire to be



SISTER MARY JO LEDDY

cured as a sign that "Someone" was with him in his journey. Unlike so many, Kurelek neither denied his mental illness nor fatalistically accepted it.

Kurelek was not cured by the battalion of eminent English psychotherapists who sought to treat his illness. He was shocked out of his depression — by electricity and by the personal concern of a therapist who was a Catholic.

He was not cured, but at least he was no longer immune to life. After his release, this self-professed atheist wended his way slowly and thoughtfully towards Christianity. No flashes of light, no spiritual shocks, accompanied Kurelek's conversion to Roman Catholicism.

Kurelek was not completely cured by his new-found faith, but he was "in a quiet way a happier, more glad-to-be-alive person."

This journey had, what Kurelek called, "a happy ending." On his return to Toronto, the Isaacs Gallery exhibited some of his paintings. Kurelek's reputation was quickly established. He also met his future wife at the Catholic Information Centre.

Kurelek's story challenges those



Prayer time: After work out, Louis Lefko winds a tephillin (ritual ribbon) round his arm in preparation for the service.