

THE VANUNU AFFAIR: (SEE SELECTIONS No. 145, pages 1-4)

"THE CLERIC, VANUNU AND THE BOMB": A feature article by Tom Segev in the weekly KOTERET ROSHEET (29.10.86) interpreted the Jerusalem press conference conducted by Rev. John McKnight. "The location, the American Colony Hotel, was the right place: Its origin over a century ago also derived from religious eccentricity. At a certain moment it was impossible not to ask the Australian cleric, the spiritual shepherd of Mordecai Vanunu, whether he knew Michael Dennis Rohan, the Australian lunatic who set fire to the El Aksa mosque in 1969. McKnight had indeed heard of him, but — praise God — he didn't belong to his congregation in Sydney, a small conservative congregation.

McKnight urges secular Christians to repent, by means of 'Project Nicodemus.' (Nicodemus saw the light before coming to Jesus.) When McKnight came to Jerusalem, the good Lord arranged a meeting for him with Prof. Israel Shakak (who advised him about the media situation and suitable local contacts). The good man didn't know who the Mayor of Jerusalem was, or whether he was a Jew or a Muslim."

Segev continued his article with a swipe at the authorities who make Israeli journalists dependent on the foreign media, and who therefore have to "wait for the visit of that cleric seeking Vanunu, who was the first to provide details about his (Vanunu's) life beyond what was already published overseas."

Two weeks later the same journal published a feature article by Yanon Shenker from Sydney, Australia, headed: "CHRISTIANITY HE BROUGHT WITH HIM FROM BEER SHEBA." Shenker interviewed Rev. McKnight and several of the volunteers and staff at the Kings Cross Church he heads in Sydney. "Mordy (Vanunu) came to us ready for Christianity," McKnight emphasized. "From conversations with him it was absolutely clear that he was a thoughtful person, and that the process of his conversion to Christianity had begun at the University of Beersheba. Mordy only received reinforcement to the strong faith he had brought with him to Australia," McKnight says.

A description follows of the activities of the church in ministering to seekers, penitents and lawbreakers. Their average age is 27. The church provides meals, cultural activities, heart-to-heart talks, living quarters ... not only the New Testament. Several of Vanunu's friends gave their impressions of him, quite positive, as a "seeker of something beyond what life had offered him. He spoke about his way in Judaism, how for a long time he had moved among various churches in Israel and moved about in other places, and about his inner emptiness."

"DIARY OF AN APOSTATE": Y. Mattityahu of HAMODIYA (17.11.86) in a vitriolic article heaped scorn on the media and Vanunu over Vanunu's diary, excerpts from which were recently revealed. "How the reporters have jumped on the bargain! A peek into his spiritual world ... when it revealed neither world nor spirit, but all of vanity and a striving after the wind ... A man who saw himself as a natural candidate for failure, and this debased person had nothing left but to enlist the ideas of a German philosopher to assure himself a philosophical anchor for his vile deeds ... The diary has not the minimum signs of creativity, an absolute zero philosophically ..."

"YANETZ": "EREV SHABAT," the Orthodox weekly published an "investigative" article about "YANETZ," Ltd., the Messianic printing and binding company in Jerusalem, by Yaakov Gal and Zvi Ben-Eliezer (5 Dec 86). The feature included photographs of the plant director, Victor Smadja, and some of the literature produced or carried by the plant ("THE

MESSIAH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE LIGHT OF THE WRITINGS OF THE SAGES," "THE TALMUD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT" by Rabbi Eliyahu Soleveitchik). Excerpts follow:

The merchandising of Jewish sacred literature and propagation of the Christian "Gospel" never have gone together. One of the largest printers in Jerusalem, however, engaged in the printing and binding of holy books, is none other than a Messianic missionary centre named "YANETZ," well-known among the "Gospel propagators." A super-modern printing establishment in the Industrial Area of Talpiot, thousands of books are printed there each day, professionally in the first rank. ... A significant number of its orders come from the ultra-Orthodox Jews, many of whom apparently do not know about the Messianic "belief" of the printers. The plant director, Victor Smadja, declares with no little professional pride: "We print all kinds of books except pornography; Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox circles have their books printed by me." Indeed, they apparently don't print pornographic literature, but missionary preaching literature - absolutely yes!

During a lengthy conversation this week we had an extended confrontation with a Messianic Jew who for dozens of years has been in the service of Gospel promotion, and we disclosed an astonishing detail: The publication of Jewish sacred books is funding the "Messianic enterprises" of Victor Smadja and his son.

Victor Smadja is no doubt an impressive figure, graced with all the gifts a man requires for disseminating his ideas among others ... and he does not hesitate to tell us of his way of spreading his belief. "Why shouldn't I persuade others of what I believe?" he asks rhetorically. "Israel is a democratic state and it is my right to do so. I believe in Jesus for more than 50 (sic!) years. ... He describes his life as a "Messianic Jew," full of love for his Jewish brethren who have yet to "discover the Messiah". ... With a "paternal" smile he pats us on the shoulder ... and furnishes us with literature of "special interest to Orthodox Jews": Proofs from the Talmud and midrashim about that man (Jesus) ...

If the self-confidence he displays is a measure of the situation of the Messianics in Israel, then it is first-class. No more shame, no more secretive missionary activity. ... With the voice of authority he "fires" orders at his employees, Arabs and Jewish apostates. The place is humming with activity. ...

The story of his life is pathetic and sad, the first-born son of a respected Jewish family in Tunis. Grandfather Rabbi Yehuda Jermo was considered one of the most famous cabbalists in Tunis. Grandson Victor studied at the Jewish school of the Alliance Israelite. At the age of 18 "his eyes were opened," he claims. What exactly brought him into the arms of Christianity isn't clear, but it is clear that since then his life has been "consecrated" to the new religion he discovered. The fact that in the name of Christianity his father was killed by the Germans in a concentration camp did not disturb him. "There are wicked people as among the Israelis who do similar things to the Palestinians," he says.

At present he is considered No. 1 among the Messianic Jews in Jerusalem. The congregation which he heads numbers close to 150 believers. They meet on the Sabbath in a large hall on Prophets Street in Jerusalem. He has to his "credit" dozens of Jews who were baptized into Christianity and to belief in that Man (Jesus). The printing company he manages and the YANETZ publishing company are the centre of activity for many of the Messianics. (END EXCERPTS)

"THE MISSION IN THE WORLD AND IN ISRAEL": An article in a series appeared in SHEARIM (10 DEC 86) by A. A. Gershoni, providing an

ultra-Orthodox perspective of mission and Christianity, especially its Jewish aspect. Gershoni contends that anti-Jewish hatred is inherent in Christianity because (a) the Jewish people were supposed to disappear with the appearance of Christianity; (b) of the Christian belief in Jewish guilt for the crucifixion; and (c) of the Christian view of Judaism as a competitor for the souls of pagans. Eventually the Christians became reconciled to Jewish survival and developed the thesis of Jewish witness to the truth of Christianity. Thus, Augustine taught that "the Jews must be kept in their low estate in order to testify to the truth of the Christian religion." This also deterred pagans or former pagans from joining the degraded religion. Forced attendance of Jews at Christian sermons was also a method used in Christian countries in cooperation with civil authorities.

With the loss of political authority by Christianity, antisemitism took on a different character (economic, social, racial), but new methods of persuading Jews to embrace Christianity developed, especially in Protestant countries, with the rise of missionary societies to the Jews, which extended even to the Land of Israel from the 19th century onward.

It must be understood how central to Christianity is mission, and how it affects Israel. In June 1980 a conference was held in Lausanne in Thailand (sic!) for the purpose of funding world-wide evangelism among Muslims, Chinese, nonbelievers, Jews, etc. Report No. 7 issued by the conference dealt with "Christian Witness to the Jewish People," and was prepared by a team of experts on Jewish mission, including two Israeli representatives. The report covers both theological and practical issues, including antisemitism, various Jewish groupings, Jewish aversion to Christianity, and a special chapter on methods of work among the Jewish populace in Israel.

The main communication block existing between Judaism and Christianity, according to the report, is the deep-rooted feeling of the Jewish people that it is the eternal victim of hatred and persecution by Christian believers. The report therefore recommends that the churches emphasize the humanitarian love of Christianity, which includes love for the Jews, and to give prominence to those Christian personalities who devoted themselves to preserving the Jews. In order to uproot from Jewish hearts hatred for Christians, the Mission must demonstrate friendship and kinship to Jews ideologically and practically, preaching that Christianity does not negate the existence of the Jewish people, its State and culture, but the Jew must believe in "Y'sh'u" (a pejorative ultra-Orthodox designation for Jesus - TRANS.), and thereby become a better Jew. The Mission must also emphasize that the Jewish people are the chosen people in that they gave the world the Holy Scriptures and "Y'sh'u," but also to stress the commonality with all Christians.

(DETAILS OF MISSION ACTIVITY IN THE NEXT ARTICLE D.V.)

THE MISSION IN THE KNESSET: During a Knesset debate about the setting up of a second TV channel for Israelis, Minister of Communications Rubinstein noted, among other things, that Israelis were availing themselves of Jordanian, Lebanese, and some 700 piratical stations. Some of these were hostile to the State of Israel, some were pornographic, some were Christian missionary, and some featured violence. (HAARETZ 18 NOV 86) Rabbi Porush of Agudat Yisrael, in a Parliamentary Question addressed to the Minister of Agriculture, called on him to act against a missionary sect seeking to purchase land in the north. (HAMODIYA 21 NOV 86)

M. K. Shapiro of Agudat Yisrael appealed to Prime Minister Shamir to activate immediately the paragraph in the coalition agreement to set up a government watchdog committee over the Christian Mission. He proposed that it be headed by Prof. Nahum Rackover, the deputy to the

agents into congregational activities, by telephone threats, by tracking and patrolling meeting places ..." Sorko-ram categorically denies the charges that he conducted missionary activity among fellow-soldiers and Jewish volunteers at I.D.F. bases.

"ETERNITY EXPRESS": An American Christian pop music group, "Eternity Express," is presently performing at I.D.F. bases and in Israeli prisons on a volunteer basis. Rev. Gaub, a devoted friend of Israel (who has been in Israel some 50 times, and organizes tours), also heads up a youth aid organization called Y.O.U. Their music is mostly religious in content and "European synthesizer rock." They don't smoke or drink or engage in extra-marital sex. Their music deals with real-life situations - drugs, child prostitution, child abuse, confused youth, unbelief ... and the faith solution. The I.D.F. loves them and they have been told that they are "a positive element in a corrupt world," and they have been invited to perform again.

They admit to being modern-style missionaries, but they don't seek to change anyone's religion. "It would be arrogant to come and try to save Israel," they say. "We are here to show that there are Christians who care about Israel." Still, they are happy when they have a chance here and there to save a soul. They tell a tale of a young man in the U.S. who, following one of their performances, climbed up on the stage to say that he had been planning to commit suicide that night but their performance changed his mind. They say they're quite universal and their songs speak to everyone. Their song "DONT GIVE UP" is very popular with Israeli soldiers. Or take the song "LONELY HEARTS FOR SALE": That could easily be (Mordecai) Vanunu's song. (KAWL HA'IR BYLINE: Yael Hadiya 5 DEC 86)

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS: "The Christian Friends of Israel is a new international organization (which) desires to be a channel by which all believers who have an interest in Israel will become better informed ... to impart an understanding of their Jewish roots, to eradicate antisemitism among Christians ... to assist and pray for the liberation of Jewish communities ... who wish to return to Israel, to encourage and pray for the reconciliation of Jews and Arabs, and to establish fellowship with Christians in Israel." (Ray Sanders, Exec. Director, C.F.I., Jerusalem. CHRISTIAN LIFE IN ISRAEL No. 21)

PHOENIX, ARIZONA: "... both Revs. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson (who participated in a prayer breakfast honoring Israel) have been intimately involved in efforts to proselytize Jews. It has been virtually impossible to find an evangelical "Zionist" who is not tainted by missionary zeal or motivated by cryptic "end-times" prophecies. Will we ... allow the infiltration of our communities by fundamentalist missionaries in the name of Zionism?" (Rick Ross PHOENIX JEWISH NEWS 10 APR 86)

THE REFORM AND THE MISSIONARIES: A reader of the ultra-Orthodox daily HAMODIYA (19 NOV 86) berates the Reform Jews who, when consecrating their new "church" in Jerusalem with its kosher kitchen, mezuzot, etc., reminded him of the devices of the Christian missionaries in the 19th century who opened missionary hospitals and provided strictly kosher food for the patients. (Yitzhak Mann, Petah Tikva)

END TRANSCRIPT

15 December 1986/mb

FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS WRITE TO:
UCCI/SELECTIONS
POB 116, JERUSALEM 91000
ISRAEL

SUBSCRIPTION RATE:
\$20 PER YEAR (OUTSIDE ISRAEL)
\$15 PER YEAR (INSIDE ISRAEL)

NOTE: NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT UCCI PERMISSION.