Perspectives on *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*

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- **RESPONSES BY MARTIN S. KAPLAN AND RABBI A. JAMES RUDIN**
- **TEXTS OF THE VATICAN DOCUMENTS**

The American Jewish Committee

The American Jewish Committee protects the rights and freedoms of Jews the world over; combats bigotry and anti-Semitism and promotes human rights for all; works for the security of Israel and deepened understanding between Americans and Israelis; advocates public policy positions rooted in American democratic values and the perspectives of the Jewish heritage; and enhances the creative vitality of the Jewish people. Founded in 1906, it is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States.

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Foreword

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On March 16, 1998, the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews published *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*. The publication of that document represents the confluence of two of the major historical developments of the last half century, in both of which the American Jewish Committee was actively engaged.

The first of these developments is the transformation of the Catholic Church's relations with world Jewry. A major milestone in that development was the issuance by the Second Vatican Council in 1965 of *Nostra Aetate*, wherein the church deplored "hatred, persecution and display of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source" while calling for "the promotion of mutual understanding and respect." The American Jewish Committee played an important behind-the-scenes role in the formulation of the Vatican statement.

The decades following *Nostra Aetate* have witnessed a dramatic improvement in the relationship between the two religious communities that had so long been marked by bitterness and worse. This trend was given further momentum under the papacy of John Paul II by a series of notable actions including his historic visit to the Synagogue of Rome in 1986, the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel, the pope's denunciation of anti-Semitism as "a great sin against humanity," and, not least, his characterization of the twentieth century as "the century of the Shoah." Throughout this period, the American Jewish Committee worked to encourage better Catholic-Jewish relations through regular meetings with the pope, other Vatican officials, and

leaders of the American Catholic community. Only time will tell whether these advances will prove enduring, but it cannot be doubted that after two millennia of venomous hatred, hostility, oppression, and suspicion, these developments have been of historic significance and provide concrete grounds for hope for the future.

The second line of historic development is the continuously mounting interest in the Holocaust. Fifty years after the leaders of the Third Reich were convicted at Nuremberg for crimes against humanity, the Western world struggles with ever greater energy to come to grips with the reality and significance of the destruction of European Jewry. The fund of information continues to expand steadily. A growing army of scholars of many nationalities engage in the analysis of the evidence, producing a flood of publications. Official commissions of experts have now been established in some fifteen countries (both belligerents and neutrals in World War II) to explore issues of national responsibility, stolen assets, profiteering, treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, and other facets of the calamity. The curricula of high schools as well as universities attempt to present the matter to students. Museums and memorials designed to bring the memory and lessons of the Holocaust to a wide public continue to be established. Popular motion pictures and television programs attract vast audience throughout the world.

What accounts for this unpredictable persistence—indeed growth—of interest in events that transpired well before most of those now living were born? Plainly, it is more than a belated effort to do justice between perpetrators and victims, between Nazis and Jews. What is driving all this activity is the gnawing question: What does the Holocaust tell us about our civilization? How did it happen that, in one of the most industrially advanced, scientifically progressive, culturally sophisticated countries in Europe, at the very heart of what was once called Christendom, a massive program of human extermination was launched and carried forward across the continent with bureaucratic skill, indefatigable energy, and indescribable barbarism until European Jewry was all but annihilated?

That question will doubtless never receive a conclusive answer, but is increasingly clear that we cannot fail to wrestle with it. At its heart lies the secret of who we are. The Holocaust has become the defining event of our age, and any failure to seek and speak the truth concerning it risks an abject failure of self-knowledge.

In the efforts to understand the sources of the Holocaust, a special responsibility has, inevitably, been borne by the Roman Catholic Church,

which, for two millennia, has taken upon itself the leading role in the moral guidance of Europe. And it is precisely for that reason that the publication of the Vatican's *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* was anticipated with exceptional interest and received, by Jews and Christians alike, with profound ambivalence. Its virtues were acknowledged, but its evident shortcomings evoked expressions of grave disappointment.

It was against this background that the American Jewish Committee invited His Eminence Edward Cardinal Cassidy, the principal architect of the document, to address a plenary session of the Committee's Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., on May 15, 1998. Cardinal Cassidy accepted the invitation, traveled from Rome to Washington for the occasion, and gave a spirited defense of the document before a large and rapt audience. Equally spirited responses to his remarks were presented by Martin S. Kaplan, chairman of the American Jewish Committee's Interreligious Affairs Commission, and by Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department. In light of the importance of this occasion and the care and thoughtfulness that marked all three presentations on that May morning, we have reproduced them in their entirety here.

In introducing Cardinal Cassidy at the Annual Meeting I pointed out that, although portions of the Vatican's statement were in my view quite problematic, the AJC nonetheless received Cardinal Cassidy as a friend. I pointed out that he had worked closely with the Committee over many years, that he had addressed the Committee's Annual Meeting in 1991, that I had found him to be a great help at the time of our meeting with Pope John Paul II in the Vatican in 1995, and that he had been unfailingly constructive in his work over the years with Rabbi Rudin and other representatives of the Committee on a whole host of difficult and challenging matters.

It is men such as Cardinal Cassidy and exchanges such as this that sustain our hope for a better future. We publish these remarks as a contribution to a work in progress.

A Reflection on *We Remember*

Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy
President, Vatican Commission
for Religious Relations with the Jews

I'm pleased to have this opportunity this morning of reflecting with you on the document that we published on March 16 this year entitled *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*. But before I begin that reflection I would like to pay tribute to the contribution which the American Jewish Committee has made and continues to make to the process of reconciliation between Catholics and the Jewish communities not only within the United States of America but throughout the world. Your friendship and understanding and cooperation are greatly appreciated by the commission that I head, the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. We look forward to continuing working with you in the years ahead so that we Jews and Christians may indeed, to use some words of Pope John Paul II, "be a blessing to each other" and in this way be a blessing for the world. I'm particularly appreciative of Rabbi Rudin's very sincere friendship, a friendship which I am most grateful for as are all the members of our Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. You may not believe it but he sends me a letter every week and we thus are able to keep in touch with many of the things that are happening here in the United States in the Jewish world.

Our document that I wish to reflect on with you is the result of a process that began with the preparation of the visit of Pope John Paul II to the United States in September 1987. That was an especially difficult time for Jewish-Catholic relations. During a meeting in Rome in the summer of that year between representatives of our commission and of the International Jewish Commission on Interreligious Consultations, my predecessor

in the office of president of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Cardinal Willebrands, agreed that our commission would begin a study with a view of having a Vatican document on the relation of the church and the Shoah. And on the following day, which was just a few days before the pope's visit to the United States, September 1, 1987, the participants in that meeting were received at Castel Gandolfo by Pope John Paul II, who affirmed the importance of the proposed document for the church and for the world.

In the years following that decision, the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews engaged in a process of consciousness-raising and of reflection on the Shoah at several levels in the Catholic Church and in different local churches throughout the world.

Work began on the document soon after I look over responsibility for the commission in January 1990, and we set out with the idea that one single document would cover all that the Catholic Church throughout the world might wish to state at that time on this great tragedy of the twentieth century.

But as the work proceeded it became clear that the experience and the involvement of the local churches throughout the world in relation to the Shoah were very different. What the church in Germany or Poland would want to say in this regard would not be identical, and even their statements would not be appropriate for the particular churches in other continents.

The bishops' conferences in Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Hungary, and France went ahead and each issued a statement that, while dealing with the same general topic, referred in a special way to the particular experience of the peoples in their countries. Italy followed by presenting last March 16 a formal letter to the Italian Jewish community strongly condemning anti-Semitism and deeply regretting the past treatment of Jews in Italy. The way was thus open to the Holy See to speak to, and on behalf of, the universal church.

It is important to keep this fact in mind as one reads the Vatican's statement. We address our reflection to "our brothers and sisters of the Catholic Church throughout the world" and "we ask all Christians to join us in meditating on the catastrophe which befell the Jewish people." And we conclude with an invitation to "all men and women of goodwill to reflect deeply on the significance of the Shoah," stating that "the victims from their graves, and the survivors through the vivid testimony of what they have suffered, have become a loud voice calling the attention of all of humanity. To remember this terrible experience is to become fully con-

scious of the salutary warning it entails: the spoiled seeds of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism must never again be allowed to take root in any human heart."

It is also important for an objective understanding of the document to keep in mind that our commission saw in this initiative the possibility of promoting among the Catholics in those countries that were far removed by geography and history from the scene of the Shoah and awareness of past injustices by Christians to the Jewish people and encourage their participation in the present efforts of the Holy See to promote throughout the church "a new spirit in Jewish-Catholic relations: a spirit which emphasizes cooperation, mutual understanding and reconciliation, goodwill and common goals, to replace the past spirit of suspicion, resentment and distrust."[1]

In the *Guidelines and Suggestions for implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate, n. 4* published on December 1, 1974, the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews recalled that "the step taken by the council finds its historical setting in circumstances deeply affected by the *memory* of the persecution and massacre of the Jews which took place in Europe just before and during the Second World War." Yet, as the *Guidelines* point out, "the problem of Jewish-Christian relations concerns the church as such, since it is when 'pondering her own mystery' that she encounters the mystery of Israel. Therefore, even in areas where no Jewish communities exist, this remains an important problem."

Such a document had by its very nature to attract the attention of and not alienate those to whom it was addressed. As I stated in my presentation of this document on March 16, it is to be seen as "another step on the path marked out by the Second Vatican Council in our relations with the Jewish people" and I expressed our fervent hope at that time "that it 'will help to heal the wounds of past misunderstandings and injustices.'"[2]

What the Document States

As we approach the close of one Christian millennium and the birth of a third, the church has been called by Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, to become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to

the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counterwitness and scandal."[3]

The document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* is to be read in this context. Indeed, it concerns one of the main areas in which Catholics should seriously take to heart the pope's summons. While no one can remain indifferent to the "unspeakable tragedy" of the attempt of the Nazi regime to exterminate the Jewish people, for the sole reason that they were Jews, the church has a special obligation to reflect on this "horrible genocide," "by reason of her very close bonds of spiritual kinship with the Jewish people and her remembrance of the injustices of the past." Moreover, "the Shoah took place in Europe, that is, in countries of long-standing Christian civilization."

This, states the document, raises the question of the relation between the Nazi persecution and the attitudes down through the centuries of Christians toward Jews. In such a short document, it was not possible to dwell at any length on the history of these relations, but the text admits clearly the prevalence over many centuries of anti-Judaism in the attitude of the church toward the Jewish people. It acknowledges the "erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability," a "generalized discrimination" in their regard, "which ended at times in expulsions or attempts at forced conversions, attitudes of suspicion and mistrust, while in times of crisis "such as famine, war, pestilence or social tensions, the Jewish minority was sometimes taken as the scapegoat and became the victim of violence, looting, even massacres."

While lamenting this anti-Judaism, the document makes a distinction between this and the anti-Semitism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, based on racism and extreme forms of nationalism, theories contrary to the constant teaching of the church on the unity of the human race and on the equal dignity of all races and peoples. The anti-Semitism of the Nazis was the fruit of a thoroughly neopagan regime, with its roots outside of Christianity. In pursuing its aims, it did not hesitate to oppose the church and persecute its members also. The Nazi regime intended "to exterminate the Jewish people . . . for the sole reason of their Jewish origin."

No attempt is made in the document to deny that "the Jewish people have suffered much at different times and in many places while bearing their unique witness to the Holy One of Israel and to the Torah." But the Shoah was certainly the worst suffering of all. "The inhumanity with

which the Jews were persecuted and massacred during this century is beyond the capacity of words to convey. *All this was done to them for the sole reason that they were Jews*" (my emphasis).

That does not mean of course that the Nazi persecution of the Jews was not made easier by the anti-Jewish prejudices imbedded in some Christian minds and hearts. This is clear in the document. What we state, however, is that before making accusations against people as a whole or individuals, one must know what precisely motivated them in a particular situation.

There were members of the church who did everything in their power to save Jewish lives, even to the point of placing their own lives in danger. Many did not. Some were afraid for themselves and those near to them; some took advantage of the situation; and still others were moved by envy. Let me quote the document on this central point:

> As Pope John Paul II has recognized, alongside such courageous men and women (those who did their best to help), the spiritual resistance and concrete action of other Christians was not that which might have been expected from Christ's followers. We cannot know how many Christians in countries occupied by or ruled by the Nazi powers or their allies were horrified at the disappearance of their Jewish neighbors and yet not strong enough to raise their voices in protest. For Christians, this heavy burden of conscience of their brothers and sisters during the Second World War must be a call to penitence. We deeply regret the errors and failures of those sons and daughters of the Church.
>
> At the end of this Millennium the Catholic Church desires to express her deep sorrow for the failures of her sons and daughters in every age. This is an act of repentance (*teshuvah*), since, as members of the Church, we are linked to the sins as well as to the merits of all her children.

While remembering the past, the Vatican document looks to a new future in relations between Jews and Christians, reminding members of the church of the Hebrew roots of their faith and that the Jews are their dearly beloved brothers, indeed in a certain sense their "elder brothers."[4]

We Remember closes with the prayer "that our sorrow for the tragedy which the Jewish people has suffered in our century will lead to a new relationship with the Jewish people. We wish to turn awareness of past sins into a firm resolve to build a new future in which there will be no more anti-Judaism among Christians or anti-Christian sentiment among Jews,

but rather a shared mutual respect, as befits those who adore the one Creator and Lord and have a common father in faith, Abraham."

Relation of This Document to Similar Statements

The document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* is not to be seen as the final word on all the questions raised in this reflection. While we do not foresee any other statement from the Vatican in the near future, I am sure that our document will result in renewed study and discussion. Indeed, this has been happening already with the publication of important articles by historians on Pope Pius XII and the Second World War. The document itself notes that "much scholarly study still remains to be done."

It is also important not to take the present document in isolation from those already issued by the episcopal conferences of several European countries or from the numerous statements made by Pope John Paul II in the course of his pontificate. There is no contradiction in these various texts. There is a variety in the tone and in the emphasis placed on certain aspects of the question, due, as I have explained, to the context in which they were issued and to the audience being addressed.

It is not possible this morning to dwell at any length on these other declarations, but I would like to look for a moment at the *Drancy Statement* of the French bishops, issued on October 2, 1997. This document received almost universal praise from Jewish circles.

The *Drancy Statement* refers in particular to the period of the Vichy government, following the defeat of France by the German forces in 1940. While passing no judgment on the consciences of the people of that era, nor accepting guilt for what took place at that time, the French bishops acknowledge that "too many of the church's pastors committed an offense, by their silence, against the church herself and her mission" in face of the multifarious laws enacted by the government of that time.

The bishops find themselves "obliged to admit the role, indirect if not direct, in the process which led to the Shoah which was played by commonly held anti-Jewish prejudices, which Christians were guilty of maintaining. At the same time, they state: "This is not to say that a direct cause and effect link can be drawn between these commonly held anti-Jewish feelings and the Shoah, because the Nazi plan to annihilate the Jewish people has its sources elsewhere."

Reaction to *We Remember*

The publication of the Vatican document received an enormous amount of publicity worldwide. Our commission has been flooded with reactions from both Jewish and Catholic sources. I would like now to share with you an overall vision of these responses.

On the part of the Catholic Church—and it was to the members of this church that the document was primarily addressed—the reactions have been very positive. This, as I have already indicated, is important, for the document was intended as one that would teach, arouse interest, and cause reflection within the worldwide Catholic community.

Many of the early comments from the Jewish community were instead distinctly negative. Such comments ranged from "Vatican document dismays Jews" (*Australian Jewish News*), "It is too late, after 53 years, and it's not enough" (Chief Rabbi Yisrael Lau), "Document skirts the issue of church's long silences —Jewish reaction is cool" (*New York Times*), "An equivocal apology hurts more than it heals" (*Los Angeles Times*) to expressions of disappointment that this document was less forthright than those issued by various European bishops' conferences (Rabbi Leon Klenicki), that the apology contained therein was "less-than-unreserved" (*Melbourne Age*), and so on.

Other Jewish reactions were more positive. While not denying that they would have wished for a more definitive statement, nor endorsing all the historical judgments contained in the document, these comments saw also positive aspects of the Vatican's statement: "Mea culpa is a good start" (Rabbi Raymon Apple, senior rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney); "The Vatican's welcome first step" (Dr. Paul Bartrop of Bialik College, Melbourne); "Jews didn't get everything they wanted, but what they got was so significant and it doesn't prejudice other important steps. The old things that gave rise to anti-Semitism are no longer part of Catholic doctrine" (Michael Berenbaum, president of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation);[5] "It is my sense that the document, if read in the context of history, represents both a true act of Christian repentance and an act of *teshuvah*" (David Gordis, president of Hebrew College in Brookline);[6] "This is a dramatic statement" (Rabbi Kopnick of Fort Wayne).

Rabbi Kopnick in his comments points out a fact that many overlooked, namely, "The Vatican didn't have to do anything." Indeed, Sir Owen Chadwick, a British authority on the Vatican in the Second World

War, in an article published in the *Tablet* on March 28, 1998, expresses the conviction that it would have been better to have said nothing:

> The Holocaust is the most brutal thing that ever happened. There are still people who suffer from it. There are still people living who remember fathers or brothers or sisters who died in some camp in Eastern Europe though they were innocent of wrong. Nothing that anyone could ever say in the way of apology or sorrow or repentance can ever be adequate; anything that is said is bound to be resented. If you wish to avoid resentment (which is a good thing to avoid), say nothing.

I cannot agree with this and was comforted by the reception given to the document in an editorial in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which received our document with this comment:

> The document released Monday by the Vatican, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," is a remarkable, perplexing text, at once an acknowledgment, an apology and a repentance. The very title is a breakthrough. How crucial that the Roman Catholic Church would tell the world "We remember the Holocaust." That puts an end to three generations of official silence.

Judith Banki, program director of the Marc Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, in a letter to the *New York Times*, indicates another aspect of our document that has been generally overlooked. In my presentation to the press on March 16 last, I pointed out that the Jewish delegation at the September 1, 1987, meeting with Pope John Paul II in Castel Gandolfo expressed the conviction that a Vatican document on the Shoah "will contribute significantly to combating attempts to revise and deny the reality of the Shoah and to trivialize its religious significance for Christians, Jews and humanity." Judith Banki rightly, I believe, states that the document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* "stands as a clear rebuttal to an entire industry of Holocaust denial and revision. To some 800 million Catholic faithful and to the world at large, the church has said it happened. One cannot explain away as of no significance a document of the Catholic Church, inadequate or not in the opinion of the Jewish community, which expresses repentance for the actions or silence of its members in regard to a tragedy of fifty odd years ago. That tragedy must have happened."

Some Questions Raised in the Document

One of the criticisms of the document we are reflecting upon is that it asks several important questions but does not give a satisfactory reply to them. I would like to say a few words about three of these questions.

The first is "the relations between the Nazi persecution of the Jews and the attitudes down through the centuries of Christians toward Jews." It seems to me that it is particularly on this point that most disappointment has been expressed by Jewish leaders.

There can be no denial of the fact that from the time of Emperor Constantine on, Jews were isolated and discriminated against in the Christian world. There were expulsions and forced conversions. Literature propagated stereotypes, preaching accused the Jews of every age of deicide; the ghetto, which came into being in 1555 with a papal bull, became in Nazi Germany the antechamber of the extermination.

It is also true that the Nazis made use of this sad history in their attacks on the Jewish people, adopting symbols and recalling events of the past to justify their deadly campaign. It is also true, I believe, that a part of the indifference shown toward the mass deportations and brutality which accompanied these forced movements of helpless and innocent people was a result of the age-old attitudes of Christian society and preaching toward those considered responsible for the death of Jesus.

But to make a jump from the anti-Judaism of the church to the anti-Semitism of the Nazis is to misread the nature of the Nazi persecution. To quote from the Vatican document: "The Shoah was the work of a thoroughly modern neopagan regime. Its anti-Semitism had its roots outside of Christianity and, in pursuing its aims, it did not hesitate to oppose the church and persecute her members also."

The church can justly be accused of not showing to the Jewish people, down through the centuries, that love which its founder, Jesus Christ, made the fundamental principle of his teaching. Rather, an anti-Jewish tradition stamped its mark in differing ways on Christian doctrine and teaching. "To the extent that the pastors and those in authority in the Church let such teaching of disdain develop so long, and that they maintained among Christian communities an underlying basic religious culture which shaped and deformed peoples' attitudes, they bear a heavy responsibility . . . this is not to say (however) that a direct cause-and-effect link can be drawn between these commonly held anti-Jewish feelings and the Shoah, because the Nazi plan to annihilate the Jewish people had its

sources elsewhere" (*Drancy Statement*). At no time did the church authorities seek to exterminate the Jewish people!

A second question that perhaps needs some explanation is a distinction that the Vatican document makes between "the church" and the "members of the church." In our document we quote Pope John Paul II, who stated in an address to the October 1997 Vatican Symposium on "The Christian Roots of Anti-Judaism":

> In the Christian world—I do not say on the part of the church as such—enormous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability have circulated for too long, engendering feelings of hostility toward this people.[7]

This distinction—the church and the members of the church—runs throughout the Vatican document and is not readily understood by those who are not members of the Catholic Church. Let me state firstly that when we make this distinction, the term "members of the church" does not refer to a particular category of church members, but can include according to the circumstances popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, and laity.

For Catholics the church is not just the members that belong to it. It is looked upon as the bride of Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem, holy and sinless. We do not speak of the church as sinful, but the members of the church as sinful—a distinction you may find hard to understand, but one which is essential to our understanding of the church.[8] An editorial in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on March 18, 1998, acknowledged that "in Catholic belief, it's impossible to conceive of the church, divinely ordained and inspired, itself falling into such evil error. But through free will, individual Catholics, even very prominent ones, could so sin."

And that brings me to the third question raised by the Vatican document: the responsibility of certain individual members of the church, holding the highest positions of responsibility. We have been criticized for mentioning by name some who spoke out against the Nazi ideology and anti-Semitism. The references to Pius XII, in particular, have been the object of much comment.

I think it important to give credit where credit is due. History will surely find guilty those who could have acted and did not, those who should have spoken and did not. We did not have the information that would have allowed us to enter into judgment of individuals who might have fallen within these categories.

As for Pope Pius XII, it is our conviction that in recent years his memory has been unjustly denigrated. You will all have read Kenneth Woodward's concise article "In Defense of Pius XII" in *Newsweek* of March 30 last. Why did we wish to bring Pius XII into our document? For the very reason that Kenneth Woodward wrote his article. Ever since the play of Rolf Hochhuth in 1963, *The Deputy*, monstrous calumnies regarding Pius XII and the period of the Second World War have gradually become accepted facts, especially within the Jewish community. In one page, Woodward shows how unjust this process has been.

Already two important articles by historians have appeared supporting the claims made in the document *We Remember:* one by Rev. Father Pierre Blet, S.J., published in *La Civiltà Cattolica* on March 21 this year and reproduced in *L'Osservatore Romano* on March 27. Rev. Father Blet is one of those who has studied all the documents in the Vatican Archives for the period of the Second World War. The second is an article in German, "Gerechtigkeit für Papst Pius XII," by Prof. Herbert Scambeck of the Johannes Kepler University of Linz, Austria, published recently in the *Rheinischer Merkur*.

Looking to a Common Future

We Remember calls on Catholics to renew the awareness of the Hebrew roots of their faith. It expresses deep sorrow for the failures of the sons and daughters of the church and states "this is an act of repentance (*teshuvah*)." The church approaches with deep respect and great compassion the experience of extermination, the Shoah, suffered by the Jewish people during World War II and sees this as a binding commitment to ensure that "evil does not prevail over good as it did for millions of the children of Jewish people. . . . Humanity cannot permit all that to happen again." "Most especially," we read in the Vatican document, "we ask our Jewish friends, whose terrible fate has become a symbol of the aberrations of which man is capable when he turns against God, to hear us with open hearts."

Finally, we pray that our sorrow for the tragedy of the Shoah will lead to a new relationship between Catholics and Jews. Indeed, we see this document as one step in the building up of that relationship.

I am well aware that declarations are not enough; the coming Christian Jubilee calls for a real conversion, both internal an external, before

God and before our neighbor. As members of the church, but also as ordinary members of the human race, past history questions us. The silences, prejudices, persecutions and compromises of past centuries weigh upon us. Is it possible for us, as human beings and as Christians, to kneel before God, in the presence of the victims of all times, to ask pardon and to hope for reconciliation? I believe that it is. And if it is possible, then we should do it without waiting or losing any time. Tomorrow may be too late. If we could heal the wounds that bedevil Christian-Jewish relations, we would contribute to the healing of the wounds of the world, the *tikkun 'olam* (the mending of the world), which the Talmud considers to be a necessary action in building a just world and preparing for the Kingdom of the Most High.

Our recent document appeals not only to Catholics but to all men and women of goodwill to make this kind of reflection, and I would see a particular challenge there for those Christians—Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestant—who seek to journey together along the ecumenical way of unity. Could they not join together in this act of *teshuvah*?

In his article published in the *Jewish Advocate* and already referred to above, David Gordis expressed the hope that Jews will see the document *We Remember* as a true act of Christian repentance and an act of *teshuvah*. He makes a comment that seems to me worthy of reflection when he writes:

> We have no "repentance" in Judaism; we have *teshuvah* or "return." The difference is important. As Jews reflect on the past, we look to a positive reshaping of our behavior and our relationship with God and with our fellow human beings. It is inevitable that we have missed the mark in small ways and big ways. We are called on not to punish ourselves but to reshape our lives, to refocus ourselves to the good and proper way, to the path of God.

And he then goes on to quote Pope John Paul II's letter accompanying the Vatican document on the Shoah, in which the fervent hope is expressed that this document will help heal the wound of the past and "enable memory to play its necessary part in the process of shaping a future in which the unspeakable iniquity of the Shoah will never again be possible." David Gordis himself then expresses the hope that the document will be read in this way and that Jews will "welcome it as another step in making the world a better place, safer and more secure for all people."

This, I believe, is the challenge that faces us, Jews and Christians, in the face of growing secularism, religious apathy, and moral confusion, a place in which there is little room for God. We may feel secure in a pluralistic, liberal-orientated society, and there are good reasons to do so. Yet it might be wise to keep in mind the possibility that a society with little room for God may one day have little room for those who believe in God and wish to live according to his law and commandments. Whenever we can give united witness to our common values, we should do so.[9]

In any case, I am convinced that Christians and Jews have today a new opportunity to contributing together to the well-being of the societies of which we are both members, and indeed to the world in which we live. The possibilities are immense: the care and conservation of the environment; respect for life; the defense of the weak and oppressed; the place of the woman in society and the promotion of the family; the protection of children; opposition to all forms of racism and anti-Semitism (which can also take on the form of anti-Zionism); the education of future generations; and so on.

On the theme of the family, the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Commission, during its 1994 meeting in Jerusalem, issued a joint statement on the importance of the family in society.[10] And the recent meeting of the commission, which was held in Vatican City last March, issued a similar document on the environment.[11]

Besides the diverse possibilities of cooperation in the field of human rights, there are challenges for us to work together for the protection of the rights of religion, for dialogue with the other great religions of the world—with a special place in this context for dialogue with the believing followers of Islam—and for collaboration in the realm of culture.

This calls for "cooperation, *mutual* respect and understanding, goodwill and common goals," to quote once again the Prague 1990 statement of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee.[12] Jews and Christians must learn to listen to each other, to seek to understand the other as the other understands him/herself rather than approach the other with an attitude of criticism or wish to argue or enter into a debate, be open to and respect the other, work together without compromising their own faith or distinct identity, be seen as children of the one and only God who know that God loves them and wants all men and women to know and experience that love, to be together a "light to the nations."

With the document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, the Catholic Church has renewed its "binding commitment to ensure that evil

does not prevail over good." We ask the Jewish community to take our hand and join us in this challenge.

Notes

1. Final Statement of the Prague 1990 meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity,* No. 75 (1990), p. 176.

2. Letter of Pope Paul II to Cardinal Cassidy on the occasion of the publication of *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah.*

3. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Nov.10, 1994, 33: AAS 87 (1995), 25.

4. Pope John Paul II, speech at the Synagogue of Rome, Apr. 13, 1986, 4: AS (1986), 1120.

5. Quoted in an editorial of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Mar. 18, 1998.

6. *The Jewish Advocate*, Apr. 3-Apr. 9, 1998.

7. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Nov. 1, 1997, p. 6.

8. No. 8 of the Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* distinguishes "the society furnished with hierarchical agencies and the Mystical Body of Christ" and states that they are not to be considered as two realities. "Rather they form one interlocked reality which is comprised of a divine and a human element." This reality is compared by the council to the mystery of the Incarnate Word.

9. In the former East Germany, less than 25 percent of the population have a church affiliation. The area known as "Lutherland" (Sachsen-Anhalt), which includes names dear to Lutherans, such as Wittenberg, Eisleben, etc., was 90 percent Christian before the war. Only 7 percent today are Lutheran, 3 percent Catholic. There are a few Jews and Muslims. The rest are without a religion.

10. Fifteenth ILC Meeting, Jerusalem 1994, Final Statement.

11. Sixteenth ILC Meeting, Vatican 1998, Final Statement.

12. *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 75 (1990), p. 176.

Response

Martin S. Kaplan
Chair, Interreligious Affairs Commission
The American Jewish Committee

We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah (which I shall refer to as the "Vatican Statement") is a crucial step in the history of Christian-Jewish relations, and includes two achievements of immense historical importance.

First, the Roman Catholic Church makes clear to all that there is no place within the Christian religion or Christian theology for anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism, no matter how those terms might be defined. The decisive clarity of this Statement will have great significance, not only to Roman Catholics throughout the world, but to members of all Christian faiths and to those who reside in predominantly Christian countries. The church has appealed once again to all Catholics to renew the awareness of the Jewish roots of their faith, and has reiterated Pope John Paul II's recognition that Jews "are our dearly beloved brothers, indeed in a certain sense, they are 'our elder brothers.'"

Second, the Roman Catholic Church affirms the grim truth of the Shoah, confirming that "unspeakable tragedy" as "a major fact of the history of this century," and in almost the same words as used by Jews everywhere, warns that it "can never be forgotten." With these powerful words, the church erects a permanent challenge to those who would deny the evil reality of the Holocaust and its sinfulness.

The thirty-three year effort commencing with Pope John XXIII, continued by Pope Paul VI, and now brought to fruition by Pope John Paul II, hopefully brings to a close over a thousand years of anti-Jewish attitudes and behavior supported by the Christian churches.

Then why the criticism of the Vatican Statement that is remarkable in so many ways? It is because of the even higher expectations that we had for this long-awaited document, expectations based on the call of His Holiness for all religions, and specifically Christianity, to commence the new millennium with "all the joy of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God and neighbor." Our disappointment at its shortcomings does not diminish the Vatican Statement's significant achievements, nor overcome our respect and acknowledgment for the remarkable progress in mutual Catholic-Jewish understanding, for we have come further in thirty-three years than in the prior two thousand.

For Jews and Christians to achieve full understanding of each other and reconciliation requires Jews to understand the reasons for the Vatican Statement's inclusion of defenses and comments we had not expected, and requires the Vatican and Catholic leaders to understand the distress and disappointment to Jews caused by their inclusion.

The Connection Between Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism

The Vatican Statement must be judged by Pope John Paul's own 1995 standard, which it quotes: "The common future of Jews and Christians demands that we remember for 'there is no future without memory.'" And the Statement addresses the key issue directly: "The fact that the Shoah took place in Europe, that is, in countries of long-standing Christian civilization, raises the question of the relation between the Nazi persecution and the attitudes down the centuries of Christians toward the Jews." And it continues:

> Historians, sociologists, political philosophers, psychologists and theologians are all trying to learn more about the reality of the Shoah and its causes. Much scholarly study still remains to be done. But such an event cannot be fully measured by the ordinary criteria of historical research alone. It calls for a "moral and religious memory," and, particularly among Christians, a very serious reflection on what gave rise to it.

But having raised the key question of the relationship between the Shoah and historic Christian anti-Jewish attitudes and behavior, the Statement then proceeds to prejudge the issue and announce the conclusion that

European anti-Semitism was secular, pagan, and non-Christian, the result of sociological and political history, even before the historical analysis is undertaken. To contend that Christianity had no impact on the development of anti-Semitism in Europe is to contend that Christianity had no impact on the social, cultural, and political history of Europe. Nothing could be further from the truth. Christianity has been an all-pervasive aspect of European life for the past thousand years. The Statement disregards the fourth Lateran Council requiring distinctive clothing for Jews in 1215, the Papal Encyclical of 1555 establishing the Rome ghetto, and the expulsion of the Jews from the Papal States by Pope Pius V in 1569. It is a meaningless distinction to contend that those acts were only anti-Jewish when the same actions became key steps in the Nazi persecution.

But we all know that history, and we know the role that the church, its bishops and priests played in the teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism, frequently inciting the populace against Jews, and in teaching that Jews should be held responsible in all generations for the crucifixion of Jesus, which happily was repudiated by the church in 1965.

The Vatican Statement denies responsibility for any connection between historic Christian anti-Judaism and the anti-Semitism that led to the Shoah, claiming that "The Shoah was the work of a thoroughly modern neopagan regime. Its anti-Semitism had its roots outside of Christianity . . . ."

The Vatican Statement thus articulates a vast new problem, seeking to disconnect a thousand years of anti-Jewish behavior and persecution from the Final Solution of the Holocaust, as if a split personality allowed Christians to be anti-Jewish, but once their behavior crossed a certain line in the Holocaust, then they were reflecting their pagan roots. Perhaps this document has revealed more than intended, and we have learned more than we expected. For we now know how serious is the need for Christian study of the roots of anti-Semitism, which has been largely a European phenomenon.

No one accused the Christian churches of perpetrating the Holocaust. No one expected an apology for the Holocaust. But must we really analyze a thousand years of European history further to determine whether there is a connection between Christian anti-Judaism and the anti-Semitism that resulted in the Shoah?

The history and memory called for by Pope John Paul are not well served when the Statement concludes that there is a difference "between anti-Semitism, based on theories contrary to the constant teaching of the

Church . . . and the long-standing sentiments of mistrust and hostility that we call anti-Judaism . . . ." We welcome the call to the study of history, and an answer to the question of why the "Shoah took place in Europe, that is, in countries of long-standing Christian civilization . . . ." It may be "inconvenient" for Christians to acknowledge the Christian roots of anti-Semitism, but the suffering of too many generations of European Jews at the hands of Christians requires us to deny this new myth that the anti-Semitism of the Shoah had no Christian roots.

Had the Roman Catholic Church taken this opportunity to acknowledge that there were roots of anti-Semitism in the Christian religion, and expressed regret and remorse for the role of its leaders and clergy in the thousand-year history of hatred and persecution of Jews, I believe we would all be light-years ahead toward the goal of Pope John Paul to achieve the "joy of a Jubilee . . . that is based on the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God and neighbor." Indeed, an acceptance of greater responsibility for anti-Semitism would have required a lesser analysis of history!

The Statement's Selective Use of History

We are distressed too by the Statement's defensive analysis of history. Why analyze the history of the first century in depth, but not even mention the sad history of the Crusades, when Christian fervor to recapture the Holy Land led to the slaughter of thousands of Jews throughout Europe? Or the church's role in the expulsion of Jews from Iberia, or in the Inquisition? Why discuss several brave Christian clergy and laity who saved Jews or were themselves persecuted by the Nazis in a document relating to the murder of 6 million Jews, when there is no discussion of those Christian clergy and laity who joined in perpetrating the Shoah, or the vast majority who were silent?

And why the unnecessary inclusion of the defense of Pope Pius XII? Had there been an acknowledgment of some responsibility of Christianity and Christians for Europe's history of anti-Semitism, and acknowledgement that the church could have done more to oppose Nazism, there would have been no need for the extensive defense of Pius XII in the midst of this Statement on the Shoah. It is the Statement's insistence that church leaders only acted well during the Holocaust that requires us to delve more

deeply into the history of that period. Indeed, if the record is so good, why are so many of the records still shut so tight?

We are surprised too that a formal Vatican Statement relating to the Shoah contains language complaining of the attitude of Jews toward Christians. The Statement calls for "a firm resolve to build a new future in which there will be no more anti-Judaism among Christians, or anti-Christian sentiment among Jews." Surely we agree with that, but the document suggests a moral equivalency between the treatment of Jews in Christian Europe over a millennium, with anti-Christian sentiments among some Jews. Did the Vatican consider that the overriding sentiment of European Jews toward Christians may have been "fear"?

In his letter accompanying the Vatican Statement, Pope John Paul said: "The Shoah remains an indelible stain on the history of the century that is coming to a close," and prays that "the Lord of history" may guide the efforts of Catholics and Jews as we work together for a world of true respect for the life and dignity of every human being.

Just as His Holiness has called on all religions to account for their behavior and bring an end to a thousand years of religious warfare and violence, it is also time to bring the accounting for the twentieth century to a close. The allocation of responsibility for actions committed or omitted during the Holocaust and World War II is being undertaken now, late as it is, delayed by the Cold War, and no nation and no institution can be exempt.

The freight train of twentieth-century history has sat on the siding for fifty years, its empty boxcars waiting to reach their moral destination. Many nations and institutions will account for their attitudes and actions, and help the boxcars get there. We hope the Vatican will do so too.

Cardinal Cassidy, in your eloquent remarks you stated: "The silences, prejudices, persecutions and compromises of past centuries weigh upon us. Is it possible for us, as human beings and as Christians, to kneel before God, in the presence of the victims of all times, to ask pardon and to hope for reconciliation?" We are touched by your everlasting and sincere commitment to achieving a permanent end to anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism, and to the achievement of universal respect by Jews and Christians for the religion of the other. We note how different the reaction to the Vatican Statement would have been had your powerful and moving call been included in that Statement. The Vatican Statement is now part of the long and complex history of Christian-Jewish relations. Cardinal Cassidy, let me assure you that we of the American Jewish Committee, and all Jews

everywhere, are committed forever to going forward with you, with His Holiness, and with the Roman Catholic Church to undertake those studies and those actions in order to achieve that mutual respect and peace that represent the highest and best teachings of both of our great faith communities.

Response

Rabbi A. James Rudin
Director, Interreligious Affairs Department
The American Jewish Committee

I am extremely pleased and honored that Cardinal Edward Cassidy traveled from Rome to be with us this morning. As you heard, he presented a comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of the recently issued Vatican Statement on the Shoah. All of us appreciate the time and energy that the Cardinal gave to this task.

And I also appreciated the rapt attention that you, the 600 members of the American Jewish Committee gathered here this morning, gave to the Cardinal's address. What we experienced is an extraordinary example of interreligious dialogue.

I want to use this opportunity to thank personally Cardinal Cassidy for the leadership and hospitality that he tendered to the American Jewish Committee when our leadership delegation visited the Vatican in February 1995. That delegation was led by the AJC's president, Robert Rifkind, and included Martin Kaplan, the chair of our Interreligious Affairs Commission, and his predecessor, Richard Berkman.

Thanks to Cardinal Cassidy, we had a private audience with Pope John Paul II that commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. It was, of course, that Council which promulgated the historic *Nostra Aetate* declaration on Jews and Judaism. So today is an opportunity for the American Jewish Committee to reciprocate the Cardinal's hospitality. And you may recall that Cardinal Cassidy also spoke at a plenary session during the 1991 AJC Annual Meeting here in Washington, D.C.

I also believe it is important for AJC members to know that last Ha-

nukkah it was Cardinal Cassidy who kindled the first such holiday candles at the Vatican. It was the first time that such a ceremony took place within the Holy See. And the Cardinal and I have worked together on a host of programs, including the 1994 Vatican Concert to commemorate the Holocaust, and Cardinal Cassidy's efforts in working to achieve full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Vatican are deeply appreciated.

In addition, Cardinal Cassidy has given continued support to the American Jewish Committee's academic exchange program between the United States and Poland in which Jewish scholars teach at Polish Catholic institutions of higher learning and Catholic scholars do the same at American Jewish seminaries.

Cardinal Cassidy, you may recall that in 1992 I was a dinner guest in your apartment in Rome where we discovered that we both resonate positively to the term "pragmatist." And it is with this in mind that I offer some comments on the Vatican document's implications for Catholic-Jewish relations in general and for the American Jewish Committee in particular.

I strongly believe that after 1945 the word "Holocaust" must always be spelled with a capital "H" and without any plural ending. Unfortunately, today the term "Holocaust" is being misused and abused when it is employed to describe every terrible event currently taking place. Such continued abuse of the word means that ultimately it may lose its distinctive meaning. For that reason, I commend the Vatican for using the Hebrew word "Shoah," which now and forever can refer only to the destruction of 6 million Jews between 1933 and 1945.

The Vatican document is a permanent refutation of those who deny the reality of the Shoah as well as those who minimize the horrors of the Shoah. A century from now when all the survivors of the Shoah and all of us will be gathered to the God of our fathers and mothers, there will still be the powerful words of the pope from Poland that introduce the 1998 Vatican document: ". . . the sufferings of the Jewish people during the Second World War. The crime which has become known as the Shoah remains an indelible stain on the history of the century . . ." I repeat the words of the Pope: "An inedible stain. . . ." And in another context, John Paul II has declared: "This is the century of the Shoah."

We Remember is, as Cardinal Cassidy correctly notes, rich with remembrance of past tragic history, it is abundant with calls for repentance *(teshuvah)*, and it is eloquent in its resolve to improve future Catholic-Jewish relations.

But the fourth "r" of responsibility is inadequately and incompletely addressed in the document. I find it interesting that the word "responsibility" is found only once in the entire statement, and not surprisingly, in the eloquent letter of contrition from the pope that is addressed to Cardinal Cassidy. The pope's letter is the introduction to the entire document.

In that letter the pope writes: "[The church] encourages her sons and daughters to place themselves humbly before the Lord and examine themselves on the responsibility, which they too have for the evils of our time."

I especially appreciated the Cardinal's clear explanation of the difference between "the church" and "members of the church." His words are important: ". . . when we make this distinction, the term 'members of the church' does not refer to a particular category of church members, but can include according to the circumstances popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, and laity."

Because the Vatican document relies so heavily upon history, those people holding contrary views will dispute the claims made in the statement about the wartime activities of Pope Pius XII. *We Remember*'s defense of Pius XII is certain to evoke vigorous negative responses, and it already has.

But happily, as Cardinal Cassidy points out, the publication of the Vatican document with its acknowledged strengths and weaknesses along with John Paul II's powerful letter, is not the church's last word on the Shoah. And it is precisely on this point that I offer these specific suggestions.

It is extremely important that the Vatican document be properly implemented and interpreted to the world's 1 billion Catholics. Hopefully, people like Cardinal Cassidy, Dr. Eugene Fisher of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops here in the United States, and other Catholic leaders will continue to develop the appropriate teaching materials and the appropriate liturgical forms to augment and strengthen the Vatican document.

To help in this important effort, the American Jewish Committee plans to establish a joint working group of historians and theologians from both faith communities to explore the Shoah in all its ramifications. We also plan to be part of the joint team of Jewish and Catholic scholars who will "review the relevant material in the volumes produced by Catholic scholars—covering the historical period concerned, and if questions still remain, they should seek further clarification."

This language is from the joint statement that was adopted last March

in Rome by the Catholic and Jewish leaders who met there as part of the International Liaison Committee. Cardinal Cassidy and I were both signatories to that statement.

The American Jewish Committee is already working with Catholic educators in this country to enhance the teaching of the Shoah in parochial high schools. C/JEEP, the Catholic-Jewish Educational Enrichment Project, is currently operating in Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco. This fall we will add Philadelphia to the program.

Catholics and Jews need to move now in all these and in many more areas of education and teaching about the Shoah. As Cardinal Cassidy said this morning: ". . . we should do it without waiting or losing any time. Tomorrow may be too late."

As Cardinal Cassidy well knows, I wanted, I expected, I devoutly wished for a stronger document from the Vatican, and I have repeatedly said so publicly. I voiced this view last March in two separate meetings at the Vatican shortly after *We Remember* was published. And I shall continue to do so.

But one thing is certain: as Jews and Catholics, we have just begun to probe the Shoah in all its aspects. The American Jewish Committee looks forward to continued cooperation with the Vatican Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews that is so ably led by Cardinal Cassidy. For the AJC, the Vatican document, despite its ambiguities and ambivalences, represents not the end of the process but only the beginning.

Appendix 1

Letter from Pope John Paul II

To my Venerable Brother
CARDINAL EDWARD IDRIS CASSIDY

On numerous occasions during my Pontificate I have recalled with a sense of deep sorrow the sufferings of the Jewish people during the Second World War. The crime which has become known as the Shoah remains an indelible stain on the history of the century that is coming to a close.

As we prepare for the beginning of the Third Millennium of Christianity, the Church is aware that the joy of a Jubilee is above all the joy that is based on the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God and neighbor. Therefore she encourages her sons and daughters to purify their hearts, through repentance of past errors and infidelities. She calls them to place themselves humbly before the Lord and examine themselves on the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our time.

It is my fervent hope that the document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, which the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews has prepared under your direction, will indeed help to heal the wounds of past misunderstandings and injustices. May it enable memory to play its necessary part in the process of shaping a future in which the unspeakable iniquity of the Shoah will never again be possible. May the Lord of history guide the efforts of Catholics and Jews and all men and women of goodwill as they work together for a world of true respect for the life and dignity of every human being, for all have been created in the image and likeness of God.

From the Vatican, 12 March 1998.

Appendix 2

We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah
Text of the Document

I. The Tragedy of the Shoah and the Duty of Remembrance

The twentieth century is fast coming to a close and a new Millennium of the Christian era is about to dawn. The 2000th anniversary of the Birth of Jesus Christ calls all Christians, and indeed invites all men and women, to seek to discern in the passage of history the signs of divine Providence at work, as well as the ways in which the image of the Creator in man has been offended and disfigured.

This reflection concerns one of the main areas in which Catholics can seriously take to heart the summons which Pope John Paul II has addressed to them in his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*: "It is appropriate that, as the Second Millennium of Christianity draws to a close, the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counterwitness and scandal."[1]

The century has witnessed an unspeakable tragedy, which can never be forgotten: the attempt by the Nazi regime to exterminate the Jewish people, with the consequent killing of millions of Jews. Women and men, old and young, children and infants, for the sole reason of their Jewish origin, were persecuted and deported. Some were killed immediately, while others were degraded, ill-treated, tortured and utterly robbed of their

human dignity, and then murdered. Very few of those who entered the camps survived, and those who did remained scarred for life. This was the Shoah. It is a major fact of the history of this century, a fact which still concerns us today.

Before this horrible genocide, which the leaders of nations and Jewish communities themselves found hard to believe at the very moment when it was being mercilessly put into effect, no one can remain indifferent, least of all the Church, by reason of her very close bonds of spiritual kinship with the Jewish people and her remembrance of the injustices of the past. The Church's relationship to the Jewish people is unlike the one she shares with any other religion.[2] However, it is not only a question of recalling the past. The common future of Jews and Christians demands that we remember, for "there is no future without memory."[3] History itself is *memoria futuri*.

In addressing this reflection to our brothers and sisters of the Catholic Church throughout the world, we ask all Christians to join us in meditating on the catastrophe which befell the Jewish people, and on the moral imperative to ensure that never again will selfishness and hatred grow to the point of sowing such suffering and death.[4] Most especially, we ask our Jewish friends, "whose terrible fate has become a symbol of the aberrations of which man is capable when he turns against God,"[5] to hear us with open hearts.

II. What We Must Remember

While bearing their unique witness to the Holy One of Israel and to the Torah, the Jewish people have suffered much at different times and in many places. But the Shoah was certainly the worst suffering of all. The inhumanity with which the Jews were persecuted and massacred during this century is beyond the capacity of words to convey. All this was done to them for the sole reason that they were Jews.

The very magnitude of the crime raises many questions. Historians, sociologists, political philosophers, psychologists, and theologians are all trying to learn more about the reality of the Shoah and its causes. Much scholarly study still remains to be done. But such an event cannot be fully measured by the ordinary criteria of historical research alone. It calls for a "moral and religious memory" and, particularly among Christians, a very serious reflection on what gave rise to it.

The fact that the Shoah took place in Europe, that is, in countries of long-standing Christian civilization, raises the question of the relation between the Nazi persecution and the attitudes down the centuries of Christians toward the Jews.

III. Relations Between Jews and Christians

The history of relations between Jews and Christians is a tormented one. His Holiness Pope John Paul II has recognized this fact in repeated appeals to Catholics to see where we stand with regard to our relations with the Jewish people.[6] In effect, the balance of these relations over two thousand years has been quite negative.[7]

At the dawn of Christianity, after the crucifixion of Jesus, there arose disputes between the early Church and the Jewish leaders and people who, in their devotion to the Law, on occasion violently opposed the preachers of the Gospel and the first Christians. In the pagan Roman Empire, Jews were legally protected by the privileges granted by the Emperor, and the authorities at first made no distinction between Jewish and Christian communities. Soon, however, Christians incurred the persecution of the State. Later, when the Emperors themselves converted to Christianity, they at first continued to guarantee Jewish privileges. But Christian mobs who attacked pagan temples sometimes did the same to synagogues, not without being influenced by certain interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people as a whole. "In the Christian world—I do not say on the part of the Church as such—erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability have circulated for too long, engendering feelings of hostility toward this people."[8] Such interpretations of the New Testament have been totally and definitively rejected by the Second Vatican Council.[9]

Despite the Christian preaching of love for all, even for one's enemies, the prevailing mentality down the centuries penalized minorities and those who were in any way "different." Sentiments of anti-Judaism in some Christian quarters, and the gap which existed between the Church and the Jewish people, led to a generalized discrimination, which ended at times in expulsions or attempts at forced conversions. In a large part of the "Christian" world, until the end of the eighteenth century, those who were not Christian did not always enjoy a fully guaranteed juridical status. Despite that fact, Jews throughout Christendom held on to their religious tra-

ditions and communal customs. They were therefore looked upon with a certain suspicion and mistrust. In times of crisis such as famine, war, pestilence or social tensions, the Jewish minority was sometimes taken as a scapegoat and became the victim of violence, looting, even massacres.

By the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jews generally had achieved an equal standing with other citizens in most States and a certain number of them held influential positions in society. But in that same historical context, notably in the nineteenth century, a false and exacerbated nationalism took hold. In a climate of eventful social change, Jews were often accused of exercising an influence disproportionate to their numbers. Thus there began to spread in varying degrees throughout most of Europe an anti-Judaism that was essentially more sociological and political than religious.

At the same time, theories began to appear which denied the unity of the human race, affirming an original diversity of races. In the twentieth century, National Socialism in Germany used these ideas as a pseudoscientific basis for a distinction between so called Nordic-Aryan races and supposedly inferior races. Furthermore, an extremist form of nationalism was heightened in Germany by the defeat of 1918 and the demanding conditions imposed by the victors, with the consequence that many saw in National Socialism a solution to their country's problems and cooperated politically with this movement.

The Church in Germany replied by condemning racism. The condemnation first appeared in the preaching of some of the clergy, in the public teaching of the Catholic bishops, and in the writings of lay Catholic journalists. Already in February and March 1931, Cardinal Bertram of Breslau, Cardinal Faulhaber and the bishops of Bavaria, the bishops of the Province of Cologne and those of the Province of Freiburg published pastoral letters condemning National Socialism, with its idolatry of race and of the State.[10] The well-known Advent sermons of Cardinal Faulhaber in 1933, the very year in which National Socialism came to power, at which not just Catholics but also Protestants and Jews were present, clearly expressed rejection of the Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda.[11] In the wake of the *Kristallnacht*, Bernhard Lichtenberg, provost of Berlin Cathedral, offered public prayers for the Jews. He was later to die at Dachau and has been declared Blessed.

Pope Pius XI too condemned Nazi racism in a solemn way in his Encyclical Letter *Mit brennender Sorge*,[12] which was read in German churches on Passion Sunday 1937, a step which resulted in attacks and

sanctions against members of the clergy. Addressing a group of Belgian pilgrims on 6 September 1938, Pius XI asserted: "Anti-Semitism is unacceptable. Spiritually, we are all Semites."[13] Pius XII, in his very first Encyclical, *Summit Pontificatus*,[14] of 20 October 1939, warned against theories which denied the unity of the human race and against the deification of the State, all of which he saw as leading to a real "hour of darkness."[15]

IV. Nazi Anti-Semitism and the Shoah

Thus we cannot ignore the difference which exists between anti-Semitism, based on theories contrary to the constant teaching of the Church on the unity of the human race and on the equal dignity of all races and peoples, and the long-standing sentiments of mistrust and hostility that we call anti-Judaism, of which, unfortunately, Christians also have been guilty.

The National Socialist ideology went even further, in the sense that it refused to acknowledge any transcendent reality as the source of life and the criterion of moral good. Consequently, a human group, and the State with which it was identified, arrogated to itself an absolute status and determined to remove the very existence of the Jewish people, a people called to witness to the one God and the Law of the Covenant. At the level of theological reflection we cannot ignore the fact that not a few in the Nazi Party not only showed aversion to the idea of divine Providence at work in human affairs, but gave proof of a definite hatred directed at God himself. Logically, such an attitude also led to a rejection of Christianity, and a desire to see the Church destroyed or at least subjected to the interests of the Nazi State.

It was this extreme ideology which became the basis of the measures taken, first to drive the Jews from their homes and then to exterminate them. The Shoah was the work of a thoroughly modern neopagan regime. Its anti-Semitism had its roots outside of Christianity and, in pursuing its aims, it did not hesitate to oppose the Church and persecute her members also.

But it may be asked whether the Nazi persecution of the Jews was not made easier by the anti-Jewish prejudices imbedded in some Christian minds and hearts. Did anti-Jewish sentiment among Christians make them less sensitive, or even indifferent, to the persecutions launched against the Jews by National Socialism when it reached power?

Any response to this question must take into account that we are dealing with the history of people's attitudes and ways of thinking, subject to multiple influences. Moreover, many people were altogether unaware of the "final solution" that was being put into effect against a whole people; others were afraid for themselves and those near to them; some took advantage of the situation; and still others were moved by envy. A response would need to be given case by case. To do this, however, it is necessary to know what precisely motivated people in a particular situation.

At first the leaders of the Third Reich sought to expel the Jews. Unfortunately, the governments of some Western countries of Christian tradition, including some in North and South America, were more than hesitant to open their borders to the persecuted Jews. Although they could not foresee how far the Nazi hierarchs would go in their criminal intentions, the leaders of those nations were aware of the hardships and dangers to which Jews living in the territories of the Third Reich were exposed. The closing of borders to Jewish emigration in those circumstances, whether due to anti-Jewish hostility or suspicion, political cowardice or shortsightedness, or national selfishness, lays a heavy burden of conscience on the authorities in question.

In the lands where the Nazis undertook mass deportations, the brutality which surrounded these forced movements of helpless people should have led to suspect the worst. Did Christians give every possible assistance to those being persecuted, and in particular to the persecuted Jews?

Many did, but others did not. Those who did help to save Jewish lives as much as was in their power, even to the point of placing their own lives in danger, must not be forgotten. During and after the war, Jewish communities and Jewish leaders expressed their thanks for all that had been done for them, including what Pope Piux XII did personally or through his representatives to save hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives.[16] Many Catholic bishops, priests, religious, and laity have been honored for this reason by the State of Israel.

Nevertheless, as Pope John Paul II has recognized, alongside such courageous men and women, the spiritual resistance and concrete action of other Christians was not that which might have been expected from Christ's followers. We cannot know how many Christians in countries occupied or ruled by the Nazi powers or their allies were horrified at the disappearance of their Jewish neighbors and yet were not strong enough to raise their voices in protest. For Christians, this heavy burden of con-

science of their brothers and sisters during the Second World War must be a call to penitence.[17]

We deeply regret the errors and failures of those sons and daughters of the Church. We make our own what is said in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, which unequivocally affirms: "The Church . . . mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews, and motivated by the Gospel's spiritual love and by no political considerations, deplores the hatred, persecutions and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source."[18]

We recall and abide by what Pope John Paul II, addressing the leaders of the Jewish community in Strasbourg in 1988, stated: "I repeat again with you the strongest condemnation of anti-Semitism and racism, which are opposed to the principles of Christianity."[19] The Catholic Church therefore repudiates every persecution against a people or human group anywhere, at any time. She absolutely condemns all forms of genocide, as well as the racist ideologies which give rise to them. Looking back over this century, we are deeply saddened by the violence that has enveloped whole groups of peoples and nations. We recall in particular the massacre of the Armenians, the countless victims in Ukraine in the 1930s, the genocide of the Gypsies, which was also the result of racist ideas, and similar tragedies which have occurred in America, Africa, and the Balkans. Nor do we forget the millions of victims of totalitarian ideology in the Soviet Union, in China, Cambodia and elsewhere. Nor can we forget the drama of the Middle East, the elements of which are well known, Even as we make this reflection, "many human beings are still their brothers' victims."[20]

V. Looking Together to a Common Future

Looking to the future of relations between Jews and Christians, in the first place we appeal to our Catholic brothers and sisters to renew the awareness of the Hebrew roots of their faith. We ask them to keep in mind that Jesus was a descendant of David; that the Virgin Mary and the Apostles belonged to the Jewish people; that the Church draws sustenance from the root of that good olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:17-24); that the Jews are our dearly beloved brothers, indeed in a certain sense they are "our elder brothers."[21]

At the end of this Millennium the Catholic Church desires to express her deep sorrow for the failures of her sons and daughters in every age. This is an act of repentance (*teshuvah*), since, as members of the Church, we are linked to the sins as well as the merits of all her children. The Church approaches with deep respect and great compassion the experience of extermination, the Shoah, suffered by the Jewish people during World War II. It is not a matter of mere words, but indeed of binding commitment. "We would risk causing the victims of the most atrocious deaths to die again if we do not have an ardent desire for justice, if we do not commit ourselves to ensure that evil does not prevail over good as it did for millions of the children of the Jewish people. . . . Humanity cannot permit all that to happen again."[22]

We pray that our sorrow for the tragedy which the Jewish people has suffered in our century will lead to a new relationship with the Jewish people. We wish to turn awareness of past sins into a firm resolve to build a new future in which there will be no more anti-Judaism among Christians or anti-Christian sentiment among Jews, but rather a shared mutual respect, as befits those who adore the one Creator and Lord and have a common father in faith, Abraham.

Finally, we invite all men and women of goodwill to reflect deeply on the significance of the *Shoah*. The victims from their graves, and the survivors through the vivid testimony of what they have suffered, have become a loud voice calling the attention of all humanity. To remember this terrible experience is to become fully conscious of the salutary warning it entails: the spoiled seeds of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism must never again be allowed to take root in any human heart.

16 March 1998.

Notes

1. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 10 November 1994, 33: *AAS* 87 (1995), 25.

2. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Speech at the Synagogue of Rome*, 13 April 1986, 4: *AAS* 78 (1986), 1120.

3. Pope John Paul II, *Angelus Prayer*, 11 June 1995: *Insegnamenti* 181, 1995, 1712.

4. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Address to Jewish Leaders in Budapest*, 18 August 1991, 4: *Insegnamenti* 142, 1991, 349.

5. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 1 May 1991, 17: *AAS* 83 (1991), 814-815.

6. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Address to Delegates of Episcopal Conferences for Catholic-Jewish Relations*, 6 March 1982: *Insegnamenti*, 51 1982, 743-747.

7. Cf. Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*, 24 June 1985, VI, 1: *Ench. Vat.* 9, 1656.

8. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Speech to Symposium on the roots of anti-Judaism*, 31 October 1997, 1: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1 November 1997, p. 6.

9. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Nostra Aetate*, 4.

10. Cf. B. Statiewski (Ed.), *Akten deutscher Bischöfe über die Lage der Kirche*, 1933-1945, vol. I, 1933-1934 (Mainz 1968), Appendix.

11. Cf. L. Volk, *Der Bayerische Episkopat und der Nationalsozialismus 1930-1934* (Mainz 1966), pp. 170-174.

12. The Encyclical is dated 14 March 1937: *AAS* 29 (1937), 145-167.

13. *La Documentation Catholique*, 29 (1938), col. 1460.

14. *AAS* 31 (1939), 413-453.

15. *Ibid.*, 449.

16. The wisdom of Pope Pius XII's diplomacy was publicly acknowledged on a number of occasions by representative Jewish organizations and personalities. For example, on 7 September 1945, Dr. Joseph Nathan, who represented the Italian Hebrew Commission, stated: "Above all, we acknowledge the Supreme Pontiff and the religious men and women who, executing the directives of the Holy Father, recognized the persecuted as their brothers and, with effort and abnegation, hastened to help us, disregarding the terrible dangers to which they were exposed" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 8 September 1945, p. 2). On 21 September of that same year, Pius XII received in audience Dr. A. Leo Kubowitzki, Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress, who came to present "to the Holy Father, in the name of the Union of Israelitic Communities, warmest thanks for the efforts of the Catholic Church on behalf of Jews throughout Europe during the War" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 September 1945, p. 1). On Thursday, 29 November 1945, the Pope met about 80 representatives of Jewish refugees from various concentration camps in Germany, who expressed "their great honor at being able to thank the Holy Father personally for his generosity toward those persecuted during the Nazi-Fascist period" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 30 November 1945, p. 1). In 1958, at the death of Pope Pius XII, Golda Meir sent an eloquent message: "We share in the grief of humanity. When fearful martyrdom came to our people, the voice of the Pope was raised for its victims. The life our times was enriched by a voice speaking out about great moral truths above the tumult of daily conflict. We mourn a great servant of peace."

17. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Address to the New Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Holy See*, 8 November 1990, 2: *AAS* 83 (1991), 587-588.

18. *Loc. cit.* no. 4.

19. Address to Jewish Leaders, Strasbourg, 9 October 1988, no. 8: *Insegnamenti* 113, 1988, 1134.

20. Pope John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 15 January 1994, 9: *AAS* 86 (1994), 816.

21. Pope John Paul II, *Speech at the Synagogue of Rome*, 13 April 1986, 4: *ASS* 78 (1986), 1120.

22. Pope John Paul II, *Address on the occasion of a commemoration of the Shoah*, 7 April 1994, 3: *Insegnamenti* 171, 1994, 897 and 893.

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July 1998

Single copy $2.50
Quantity prices on request