



# THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 32, Folder 2, Jewish-Christian relations, 1988.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
SOCIETY, STATE AND RELIGION: THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

Jerusalem, February 15-17, 1988

co-sponsored by

The International Relations Department of the American Jewish Committee

and

The Leonard Davis Institute of International Relations of

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Monday, Feb. 15

9-10:45 AM

I. Place, Role and Status of Religion in the Modern World

(Speakers to focus on the religious responses to the challenges of modernization, secularization and the nation-state. Developments such as fundamentalism, radicalism, liberation theology, privatization of religion, religio-ethnic and national movements.)

A. The Christian World

Robert Berger or

Robert Bellah or

A James Reichley (Brookings)

B. The Islamic World

Bernard Lewis

C. The Jewish World

R.J. Zvi Werblowsky

Coffee Break

Discussion

Monday, Feb. 15.

11 AM - 1:30 PM

II. Place, Role and Status of Religion  
in Contemporary Judaism (Jewry)

1. Interaction of Nationalism and Religion

(secular nationalism, Zionism, religious nationalism ideological bases of religious anti-Zionism, universalist and particularist strains in Jewish tradition.)

Avi Ravitsky (Hebrew University) or

Eliezer Don Yihye (Bar Ilan)

Janet Aviad or

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein

2. Pluralistic Elements in Jewish Tradition

(historically how have differences been resolved? To what extent is halacha open to diverse interpretations? What are the limits of acceptable diversity (deviation). Relevance of historical disputes (Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai, Sadducees and Pharisees, Karaites, Samaritans, Hassidim versus Misnagdim) to contemporary divisions among Haredim, Modern (centrist) Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist. Why has there been no reform movement among the Sephardim? Tensions between the rabbinate and their congregants regarding enforcement of religious practice. (Examples: Catholic doctrine forbids birth control and abortion, but these are reportedly widely practiced. Similarly to what extent do members of Orthodox and Conservative congregations follow their rabbinical leaders' formal rules on Kashrut (especially outside the home), ritual purity and going to the Mikvah for women, use of electricity, phones, cars on Shabbat?)

Historically, what percentage of the Jewish people was truly observant? (Not many if one can rely on the Prophets.) How was this handled in the pre-modern period?

Michael Fishbane (Brandeis and Harvard)  
Reuven Kimmelman (Brandeis)  
respondents

Luncheon Break





Monday Feb. 15,  
3-6:30 PM

III. Place and Role of Religion in Diaspora Societies

A. Role of Religion in the United States

A panel discussion.

Is the U.S. unique because of its history, constitution, ethnic makeup?

Is American Jewish pluralism a reflection of the larger society?

Is the strict separation of church and state desirable?

How does it help or hurt Jewish interests?

Eugene Borowitz

Arnold Eisen "Chosen People in America"

Nathan Lewin (has given a paper on "Seeking Tolerance: Do Courts Respect Religious Observance) he is an attorney with Miller, Cassidy, Larroa & Lewin, Washington, DC

Charles Silberman

Yitzhak Greenberg

Rabbi Harold Schulweis, LA

Rabbi Alexander Schindler or  
Alfred Gottschalk

Michael Walzer (Institute for Advanced Studies Princeton) "Constitutional Rights and the Shape of Civil Society"

Martin Peretz (New Republic)

Leonard Fein (Moment)

Milton Himmelfarb

4:30-4:45 Coffee Break

Monday, Feb. 15

4:45-6:30 or possibly

till 7 PM

III. B. Role of Religion in Western Europe, Latin American, the English speaking countries, Among Russian Jews

A panel discussion.

How do various national, societal factors influence the development of Jewish life, interaction within the Jewish community and relations with the larger society?

For example the fact that some countries, e.g., Canada (?) use tax revenue to pay for religious schools, including Jewish religious schools, resulting in a higher enrollment in Jewish day school than if parents had to pay for them themselves.

How does the French centralized administrative system and non-pluralist ethos affect assimilation and maintenance of Jewish ethnic/religious identity?

What is the significance of France, Argentina and other Latin countries being predominantly Catholic?

How have the constitutional changes in Spain affected the Jewish position?

What does the official status of the Anglican religion in Britain affect its Jewish population?

What impact has the pluralistic nature and ethnic diversity of Brazil and to a lesser extent Mexico had on the development of the Jewish communities?

How is it that Sweden has a Conservative Jew as Chief Rabbi (Morton Naro). Has this lessened his authority?

How do these various societies provide funding for non-Orthodox groups? What is the standing of the non-Orthodox in the various countries? Does the strength of Orthodoxy depend on whether or not the local (or national) Jewish communal organization

(consistoire?) is Government sanctioned and is given power to tax Jewish adherents or is given Government funding?

**Panelists**

Nicole Goldman (executive director, European Council of Jewish Communities)

Rabbi Roberto Graetz (Buenos Aires)

Israel Klabin (Rio)

Alan Rose (Canadian Jewish Congress)

Rabbi Louis Jacobs or Sir Emanuel Jakobovits or William Frankel

Tullia Zevi (Rome)

Sam Toledano (Spain)

Dr. Ady Steig, head of Alliance (Paris)

Dr. Barry Kosmin, (formerly with the British Board of Deputies now research director for CJF in New York) excellent source for demographic sociological information on U.S. and British Jewry.

Do we want to discuss Russian Jews? If so, Prof. Zvi Gittelman can discuss the religious situation in the USSR in Israel.

Also Eliahu Essas has been suggested as one who can talk from his personal experience.

Tuesday, Feb. 16

9 AM - 1:30 PM

IV. Role of Religion in Israel

9-10:15

A. 1. Foundations and Values of Israeli Democracy

Justice Menachem Elon, Israel Supreme Court  
traditional Jewish law as a source for contemporary  
jurisprudence.

Justice Aron Barak (will be at Harvard and Yale in  
fall)

Professor Ruth Gavison, religion-state relations and  
civil rights

Moshe Lissak (Hebrew U) Christian-Jewish relations  
discussants Zalman Abramov

10:15-11:00

2. Political, Social and Cultural Cleavages within the  
Jewish Society, Including Position of Women

Gaby Sheffer (Hebrew University)

Eliezer Jaffe

Alice Shalvi

Leah Shaktiel

Coffee Break

11:15-12:30

B. Panel Discussion

Identification of main issues and groups with regard to  
the Secular-Religious Cleavage

Moshe Samet (Hebrew U.) Changing definitions of Who is a  
Jew

\*Mordechai Nisan "The Search for an Israeli Ethos"  
(pro-Gush)



Shlomo Avineri - The secular, socialist democratic elements in Labor Zionism, do they still provide a meaningful basis for identification and motivation of the people? or

\*Hanan Porat

Menachem Friedman (expert on the Haredim) What is happening within the religious camp (camps)?

Interaction of religious and secular elements in the peace movement.

Janet Aviad (Shalom Achshav)

Uriel Simon (Oz ve Shalom)

Sammy Smoocha and/or Yoram Perri - Sephardim and peace

Nissim Rejwan (as a respondent)

Luncheon Break



Tuesday, Feb. 16

2-4 PM

V. Identification and Discussion of Strategies for Change

1. What is the role of the school system in increasing religious-secular polarization, what can and needs to be done to reverse this trend and utilize schools, media, adult and youth organizations, etc., to inculcate a sense of Jewish unity, a love of Jewish ethical values, an understanding and respect for Jewish religious tradition without imposing conformity and while acknowledging pluralistic traditions and diversity of practice.

Michael Rosenak

David Hartman

Zevulun Hammer

someone from Project Democracy

Aluf Hareven of Van Leer

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Daniel Tropper (Gesher Foundation)

Prof. Ora Zohar (Hebrew U.) American-born Israeli who heads up teacher training programs in area of inculcating values

Pinhas Pelli, writes popular torah column

Nechama Leibowitz

2. Role of other education and opinion formation instrumentalities  
radio and television  
the army  
add to above persons:  
Elihu Katz, Hanna Zemer, Thomas Friedman, Eliahu Salpeter



Coffee Break = 4-4:15

This discussion leads naturally into the next subject

4:15-6:30

VI Strengthening the Values of Democracy and Pluralism  
in Israel and the Diaspora

1. Mutual Impact of Developments in the Diaspora and  
Israel

Daniel Elazar  
Yitzhak Greenberg

(Charles Liebman and David Hartman, cited above can  
briefly comment)

2. Role of Governmental and Private Groups

Stuart Eizenstat

Sol Linowitz

Ehud Olmert

Yossi Ben Aharon

Amnon Rubinstein

Norman Lamm or Haskel Lookstein

representatives of Conservative, Reform, Reconstruct-  
tionist

Tuesday, Feb. 16

Reception and Dinner 7:30 PM

VII. "WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN JEWISH UNITY  
WITHIN A DEMOCRATIC, PLURALISTIC FRAMEWORK"

Co-Chairman Theodore Ellenoff

Avraham Harman

President Chaim Herzog

Prominent Diaspora Leader (Sol Linowitz, Stuart Eizenstat?)

Professor Yossef Yerushalmi, Prof. of Jewish Culture &  
Society, Columbia University)

Mayor Teddy Kollek

Shlomo Riskin

Wednesday, Feb. 17

9:30-12:30

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP  
(Future action, study)

We may wish to move part of the program under VI and  
VII for discussion at the concluding session.

Possibly have a rapporteur e.g. David Sidorsky sum-  
marize key points and issues that emerged at the  
conference and have a free-for-all discussion among the  
participants (each intervention to be limited to five  
minutes maximum.)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of Media Relations

For Immediate Release

July 28, 1988

President Reagan today addressed the Student Congress on Evangelism of Youth for Christ. He told the 9,000 youths, gathered at the Washington, D.C. Convention Center, "Now, although we Americans have done much to put our national life back on the firm foundation of traditional values, there is still a great deal to be done. And so today I want to challenge you young people to see that our nation does still more -- still more to return to the life-giving values of faith and family."

Youth for Christ was founded in 1944 with evangelist Billy Graham as its first full-time staff member. Out of this ministry, 53 other organizations developed including the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; World Vision; and Gospel Film. Youth for Christ worked with over 200,000 students last year in over 1,200 ministries, including its recently founded junior high ministry and its work with over 133 public juvenile delinquent institutions.

Every three years, Youth for Christ holds its Student Congress on Evangelism, a leadership training conference in Washington, D.C. This year, the First Lady addressed the first day of the Congress, and the President the second day.

For more information, call (202) 456-6623.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 28, 1988

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE STUDENT CONGRESS ON EVANGELISM

Washington Convention Center  
Washington, D.C.

11:30 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, and don't sit down. To begin our time together, I just wonder whether you would all remain standing and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. (Applause.)

(The Pledge is recited.)

Thank you very much. Well, now, before I say anything else, I want you to know just how much Nancy enjoyed being with you last evening. (Applause.) She's put her heart into the battle against drug abuse, and -- well, it just plain did her good to see so many young people who are joining her in that crucial fight.

And, by the way, while having Nancy here yesterday was good news for you, it was bad news for me. You see, she's a tough act to follow. (Applause.)

But to all of you participating in this 1988 Student Congress on Evangelism, it's an honor to be with you. I know you come from all over America -- some even from as far away as Alaska -- (Applause.) -- and from a number of foreign countries as well. So let me say welcome to Washington. And I hope you don't mind the heat.

But since I'm talking to a churchgoing audience, this heat reminds me of a story that took place back in my hometown of Dixon, Illinois. (Applause.) It was one smeltering summer Sunday evening, and the minister in our little church mounted the pulpit and announced that he was going to preach the shortest sermon he had ever given. And then he said just a single sentence. "If you think it's hot now, just wait." (Laughter and applause.)

Well, I'm not going to preach a sermon. I thought instead I'd simply share a few thoughts with you on a subject I've had the opportunity to think about quite a bit during the years I've held this office -- the subject of moral and religious values in our public life. And first I'd like to spend a moment or two looking at the history of religion in our public life, and then I'd like to speak about the challenge before us today.

Whenever I consider the history of this nation, I'm struck by how deeply imbued with faith the American people were, even from the very first.

Many of the first settlers came for the express purpose of worshipping in freedom. Historian Samuel Morison wrote of one such group, "Doubting nothing and fearing no man, they undertook all to set all crooked ways straight and create a new Heaven and a new Earth. If they were not permitted to do that in England, they would find some other place to establish their city of God." Well, that place was this broad and open land we call America. (Applause.)

The debates over independence and the records of the

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Constitutional Convention make it clear that the Founding Fathers were sustained by their faith in God. In the Declaration of Independence itself, Thomas Jefferson wrote all men are "endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights." And it was George Washington who said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

Well, later, the statesmen gathered in Philadelphia to write what would become our Constitution. They often found themselves at odds, their purpose lost in acrimony and self-interest, until Benjamin Franklin stood one day and said, "I have been driven many times --" Oh, no, I'm sorry. "I have lived a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth -- that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?" (Applause.) And then he called that Constitutional Convention to open each day with prayer, which it did.

For decades, America remained a deeply religious country, thanking God in peacetime and turning to him in moments of crisis. During the Civil War, perhaps our nation's darkest hour, Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the conviction that I had nowhere else to go." Well, believe me, no one can serve in this office without understanding and believing exactly what he said. (Applause.)

During World War II, I remember a rally to promote war bonds that was held at Madison Square Garden in New York. (Applause.) The rally featured the great figures from government and great stars of the theater. And many times those people proclaimed -- almost virtually every one of them who came out on the stage and addressed the vast audience -- almost every one of them proclaimed that God was on our side.

And then it remained for a \$54-a-month buck private to speak nine words that no one there that day will ever forget. His name was Joe Louis -- yes, the Joe Louis who had come from the cotton fields to become the world heavyweight prize-fighting champion. And now, this \$54-a-month private walked out to center stage after all those other celebrities had been there, and he said, "I know we'll win, because we're on God's side." (Applause.) There was just a hushed moment of silence, and then that crowd came to their feet with just about the most heartfelt applause and ovation that anyone has ever heard. The master of ceremonies was the comedian George Jessel, and George said, "Joe, you have just laid a rose on Abraham Lincoln's grave."

Well, during the civil rights struggles of the fifties and early sixties, millions worked for equality in the name of their Creator. Civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King based all their efforts on the truth that, black or white, each of us is a child of God. And they stirred our nation to the very depths of its soul. (Applause.)

And so it has been through most of our history. All our material wealth and all our influence have been built on our faith in God and the bedrock values that follow from that faith. The great French philosopher visited our country, Alexis de Tocqueville, 150 years ago. He wanted to see if he could find the secret of our greatness already, as a young country. And then he observed that America is great because America is good. And if she ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great. (Applause.)

This brings me to the challenges of the present day. For we must admit that in recent years America did seem to lose some of her religious and moral bearings.

We saw the signs all around us. Years ago, pornography, while available, was mostly sold under the counter. By the mid-70s

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it was available virtually on every magazine rack in every drug store or shop in the land. Drug abuse used to be confined to limited numbers of adults. During the 60s and 70s, it spread through the nation like a fever, affecting children as well as adults and involving drugs that were once unheard of, drugs like LSD and PCP.

But perhaps most important, the American family used to be the unquestioned basic building block of our society. And then families too often found themselves under pressure from government taxation, welfare policies that were spinning out of control, and social mores that were being undermined. Liberal attitudes viewed promiscuity as acceptable, even stylish.

Between 1970 and 1980, the number of two-parent families dropped while the number of single-parent families almost doubled. Teenage pregnancies increased significantly. And although total births declined during the decade between 1970 and 1980, the number of illegitimate births rose about a quarter of a million.

These problems are still with us. But I believe there's been a change -- a change that you young people here today are part of. The Bible says: "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land." (Applause.) Many, many years ago, my mother had underlined that particular passage in the Bible. And I had her Bible that I could place my hand on when I took the oath of office in 1980. (Applause.) And I had it opened to that passage that she had underlined. Today, more and more Americans are seeking His face. And, yes, He has begun to heal our land. (Applause.)

An overwhelming nine out of ten Americans pray. Audiences for religious books are growing. The modern communications media are being used for evangelism -- just consider, for example, the videotapes made by Youth for Christ; or the wonderful programming on a new cable channel called Eternal Word Television -- a channel started by a woman of immense determination and joy, a nun called Mother Angelica. I was struck when, in my reading a while back, I came across this quotation from the Harvard Theologian, Harvey Cox: "Rather than the cynical careerist types who supposedly have filled the campuses, I see young people who are intensely interested in moral issues, in religious history and beliefs."

Well, if I might interject a personal thought here, there's something I've always wanted to say to a group of young people like all of you. Yes, you get a lot of advice from those of us who are older. But I feel so deeply about what I'm about to say that -- well, I'm going to go right ahead and give you one more piece of advice.

I'm sure that each of you believes that someday you'll find someone to fall in love with -- and you will. And sometimes you may get frustrated, and, yes, finding the right one may take longer than you thought. But don't worry, it will happen. For each of you, out there someplace is that -- to be a man or woman. And it's important for you not to pay any attention at all to all those who say that promiscuity is somehow stylish or rewarding. You know that when you meet that person, and even in marriage -- that you will be true to each other. Well, did you ever stop to think you can start being true to that one special person beginning now? (Applause.) No, the right thing to do is to wait for that one special person -- beginning now. (Applause.)

But as I was saying, our administration has worked hard to reflect the return to basic values that you and so many others across the country have helped to bring about.

Our administration has worked hard to reflect this return to basic values. In the courts, our administration has fought to defend America's cherished religious liberties -- always opposing

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those who would promote government hostility to religion. To this day, it astonishes me that some would so misread the Constitution as to claim that it forbids us from displaying in public symbols of God's promise to mankind -- or prevents us from mentioning His name in the Pledge of Allegiance in our schools.

We won a major victory in the Supreme Court this year that you might not have heard about, the Kendrick Decision.

In this case, Congress had included religious groups in its program of counseling young people in order to prevent teen pregnancies. This only makes sense -- since in so many other ways, churches are better at reaching young people than government could ever be.

Some challenged this program. But, I'm happy to say, the Supreme Court rejected that challenge.

On another front, our administration has enacted laws making it tougher -- much tougher -- for criminals to do business in what is perhaps the lowest form of human exploitation, child pornography. And we're working to do still more. Indeed, last year we submitted to Congress a major piece of antipornography legislation, the Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act of 1987. We submitted that legislation to Congress for its immediate consideration and enactment. But today, this legislation is still being held up. If the House and Senate leadership really care about family values, isn't it time they brought this antipornography legislation to a vote? (Applause.)

We enacted the Equal Access Act of 1984, giving voluntary religious groups the right to meet after school on the same basis as other groups. (Applause.) More legislation may prove necessary, but the basic principle is clear. I just have to believe -- and I'm sure you agree -- that if a math group or chess club can meet after school, then so can a prayer group. (Applause.)

And there's another measure that we've worked for -- school prayer. So far, we haven't succeeded in persuading the Congress to enact legislation that would once again permit voluntary prayer in America's schools. But I'm convinced that, one day soon, such a measure will be passed. If Benjamin Franklin rose to invoke the Almighty as the Constitution itself was being drafted -- if the Congress of the United States opens each day with prayer -- then isn't it time we let God back into the classroom? (Applause.)

Now, although we Americans have done much to put our national life back on the firm foundation of traditional values, there is still a great deal to be done. And so today I want to challenge you young people to see that our nation does still more -- still more to return to the life-giving values of faith and family. I want to challenge you in particular to work and pray with regard to four crucial issues.

First, a matter much on my heart -- we must do our duty as a nation to generations yet unborn. We cannot proclaim the noble ideal that human life is sacred, and then turn our backs on the taking of some 4,000 unborn children's lives every day. This must stop. (Applause.)

Our Constitution guarantees "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." An abortion is the taking of a human life. (Applause.)

Many who seek abortions do so in harrowing circumstances. And just as tolerance means accepting that many in good faith hold views different from our own, it also means that no man or woman should sit in judgement on another. I believe -- and Vice President Bush believes with me -- that we must rise above bitterness and reproach to find positive answers to the tragedy of abortion.

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By the way, I was impressed and moved to learn that one young woman here today has done just that. Carolyn Deming, who became involved with campus life as a young person, has begun a home for unwed mothers. Who knows how many unborn children's lives Carolyn and others like her have saved? Using love and imagination to save lives, my friends -- (applause.) It's clear that you agree that that is the answer. Then there's the battle against drug abuse. I don't have to say much here, because Nancy said it all last evening. So let me just ask you: Won't you join Nancy, Vice President Bush, and me in urging all America's young people to, "just say no." (Applause.)

Then there's an issue you're not too young to begin thinking about, even now -- a restoration of the American family.

When we obey the commandment, "honor thy father and mother," we're recognizing all the sacrifices our parents made to raise us. But we're also honoring the institution our parents entered into and carried on -- the institution of marriage and the family itself. The family provides children with a haven of love and concern. For parents, it provides a sense of purpose and meaning in life. When the family is strong, the nation is strong. When the family is weak, the nation itself is at risk.

There's one specific issue that's important to mention here, an issue being discussed in the current presidential campaign -- child care. Vice President Bush has proposed an innovative plan, one that would strengthen the family for poor and working families. The Vice President's plan would provide a refundable tax credit of \$1,000 per child. Now, the basic idea here is that the government would simply let families keep up to \$1,000 more of their own money. That's money the family itself can decide on how to spend. Working mothers could put the money toward child care. But by giving each family this tax credit the Vice President's plan would also permit thousands of mothers to choose to stay home with their children. (Applause.)

Many of you also are already of voting age. And so in the name of the family itself, I urge you to join me in doing your part in local, state, and national politics. And with regard to voting, I like to paraphrase Will Rogers. He pointed out that people holding public office are no better or worse than the people who voted for them to send them there. But, he said, they're all better than those who don't vote at all. So if this democracy -- (applause) -- if this democracy of ours is to be preserved, we must all exercise our precious right to vote. (Applause.)

Finally, in this age when electronics beam messages around the globe in a few seconds, we must work to separate half-truths from the whole truth -- including the truth about the difference between free and totalitarian societies.

Today there are profound changes underway in the communist world -- my trip to Moscow convinced me of that. And of all the changes underway, perhaps none holds more hope for the future than Mr. Gorbachev's statements that the Soviet Union would soon grant its believers certain new freedoms. (Applause.)

But while we pray for those inside the communist world, we must cherish the freedoms that we already enjoy -- cherish a nation founded in freedom.

Just think of those words we recited a few moments ago.

The Pledge of Allegiance asserts that our nation is under God -- an unthinkable statement in too many countries around the world today. And it proclaims the ideals of liberty and justice -- ideals that we may not have completely achieved, but that as a free people we're constantly striving toward.

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If I could interject here something -- you know, I know in our land of freedom, everyone, if they want to choose atheism instead of a belief in God, that's their right to do so. But I have always felt that I would like someday to entertain an atheist at dinner and serve the most gourmet, perfect dinner that has ever been served, and then at the end of the meal, ask that atheist if he believes there's a cook. (Applause.)

We must cherish our nation, work to make her better still, and never stop saying this simple prayer, God bless America.

Permit me to close now on a personal note with a few thoughts from my heart. You know, hardly a day goes by that I'm not told -- sometimes in letters, sometimes by people I meet -- that they're praying for me. It's a warm but humbling feeling. I know that many of you pray probably for me and for all our government leaders. Well, I appreciate your prayers more deeply than I can say.

I grew up in a home where I was taught to believe in intercessory prayer. I know it's those prayers and millions like them that are building high and strong the cathedral of freedom that we call America; those prayers and millions like them that will always keep our country secure and make her a force for good in this too troubled world.

And that's why as a nation we must embrace our faith, for as long as we endeavor to do good -- and we must believe that will be always -- we will find our strength, our hope, and our true happiness in prayer and in the Lord's will. (Applause.)

I'd like to tell you a story that is related by Dr. Paul Brand, the noted leprosy specialist, in his book, "Fearfully And Wonderfully Made."

Dr. Brand tells of how, after World War II, a group of German students volunteered to help rebuild a cathedral in England that had been a casualty of the German -- the Luftwaffe bombings. And as these young Germans worked, progressed and progressed, and debate broke out on how best to restore a large statue of Jesus with his arms outstretched and bearing the familiar inscription, "Come Unto Me."

Careful patching could repair all the bomb damage to the statue except for Christ's hands, which had been destroyed by the bomb fragments. Should they attempt the delicate task of reshaping those hands?

And finally, the young workers reached a decision that still stands today. The statue of Jesus has no hands, but the inscription reads,

"Christ has no hands but ours."

Isn't that really what He was trying to tell us?  
(Applause.)

Thank you all and God bless you all. (Applause.)

END

11:59 A.M. EDT

# NEWS FROM THE Committee



The American Jewish  
Committee

Institute of Human Relations  
165 East 56 Street  
New York, New York 10022  
212 751-4000  
Morton Yarmon  
Director of Public Relations

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; defends democratic values and seeks their realization in American public policy; and enhances the creative vitality of the Jewish people. Founded in 1906, it is the pioneer human-relations agency in the U.S.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SARASOTA, Sept. 6... Swift action taken by the Sarasota-Tampa chapter of the American Jewish Committee, in cooperation with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, The Interfaith, Interracial Council and the Sarasota Ministerial Council, to publicize and condemn a political-religious document calling for a public and official "confession" of the "supremacy of Jesus Christ" as a criterion for holding office has led to retractions and apologies by seven of the nine Sarasota County candidates who had signed it and an outpouring of public outrage over the document's unconstitutionality and breach of church/state separation.

On August 2, 25 political candidates running for various positions in Sarasota County appeared at a forum sponsored by We The People, a four year-old, one-man organization that seeks to inform Christian voters about candidates' positions on issues, with specific focus on their personal relationship with God and how that would affect their behavior in office.

After a short speech, each candidate was asked to sign a "Declaration of Dependence" in front of an audience of approximately 125 people. The pledge read, in part:

"My desire is to see America return to its Christian heritage...

"I recognize that this will only be possible as I and other Americans...place our faith in Jesus Christ.

"May that day soon come when our beloved nation will publicly and officially confess: ... 'we the people of the United States of America distinctly acknowledge our responsibility to God, and the supremacy of his Son, Jesus Christ...and hereby ordain that no law shall be passed by the Congress of these United States inconsistent with the will of God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.'"

Of the 25 candidates, nine signed the document; 16 refused. The declaration was made public by We The People, who will later endorse candidates and run advertisements announcing the endorsements in local papers and in the newsletter published by Scott Carter, director of We The People, which boasts a circulation of 8,500. Mr. Carter claims that he is funded entirely through contributions and that volunteers help with the work.

In denouncing the pledge, Harriet Abrahm, director of the Sarasota-Tampa chapter of the AJC, stressed that the document is offensive to anyone who believes in democracy.

Theodore Ellenoff, President; Leo Nevas, Chair, Board of Governors; Robert S. Jacobs, Chair, National Executive Council; Edward E. Elson, Chair, Board of Trustees -more-  
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"This document is tantamount to promoting a state religion in this country," she stated. "Basically, it would be establishing an official national religion, which is contrary to Article VI of the Constitution."

Ms. Abrahm added: "The United States is not 'Christian'; it is a religiously pluralistic nation which treats all its citizens as equals and regards religious affiliation as a matter of personal choice."

"To insist that there is only one legitimate religion in this country, and that all people outside it are second-class citizens, goes against American history, American values and the American Constitution," she concluded.

Various interreligious, interracial and civic organizations as well as scores of local citizens joined the AJC in speaking out against the pledge.

In a statement issued by the Interfaith, Interracial Council, the organization stated: "We recognize that it is both legitimate and desirable for religious groups and clergy to take positions on issues and policies that relate to their ideals of what constitutes a good society. Similarly, it is appropriate to question candidates on their positions on these issues. We oppose those actions which attempt to convert political parties and candidates into sectarian groups and advocates. We oppose the action of initiating religious tests as a qualification for public office."

Oliver S. Thomas, General Counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, asserted that "such a blurring of the line of separation between church and state is always frightening, particularly when candidates acquiesce in this affront to religious liberty."

He added: "Article VI of the Constitution which states that 'no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States' makes clear this never was intended to be a Christian nation. It was intended to be a nation where Christianity, Judaism and any other religion would be free to prosper dependent solely upon the persuasion of its doctrine and the power of the truth."

After many letters of protest to-the-editor expressing "shock," "amazement" and "disgust" over the document, as well as articles and commentaries in local newspapers, and TV news reports, seven of the candidates withdrew their signatures from the document and publicly apologized for any offense it may have caused to Christians and non-Christians alike.

Commenting on the incident, Irving M. Levine, AJC's national affairs director, said:

"We were appalled and quite shocked that such a large number of candidates would sign a pledge that was so contrary to the spirit of religious diversity and which seriously violated the constitutional prohibition against a religious test for office. The editorials, letters to-the-editor and the support we received from Christian clergy and others was most heartening and we are certain it helped convince many of the candidates that they had made a serious error."

(The "Declaration of Dependence" is attached).

In a recent issue of a We The People newsletter, a campaign has been launched encouraging Christian subscribers to become "Ambassadors for Christ" by signing the declaration themselves and running for office as local precinct chairmen and later to form a majority in the Republican Executive Committees in Manatee and Sarasota counties, the main county level organization representing the Republican party.

Currently, 72 people have signed and returned the declaration to Mr. Carter, with 36 running unopposed.

"The AJC is most concerned with this latest development", said Ms. Abrahm, "and we, along with other concerned groups and individuals, will be closely monitoring these elections. We find this push for a shift from democracy to theocracy very frightening. It's a principle that runs counter to everything we stand for as a nation."

The American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. Founded in 1906, it combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people everywhere.



#### DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

My desire is to see America return to its Christian Heritage which gave us private property, the free enterprise system, biblical judicial law, a strong national defense, responsible fiscal policy, public morality and limited government.

I recognize that this will only be possible as I and other Americans freely confess our personal and national sins, place our faith in Jesus Christ, seek to be obedient to the principles of the Bible, and pray for God's mercy upon this nation.

As a candidate for public office I want my views to be publicly known and hope that enough voters share my concerns and in turn elect me to office.

Finally, I acknowledge that the following prayer expresses my feelings.

"May that day soon come when our beloved nation will publicly and officially confess: ... we the people of the United States of America distinctly acknowledge our responsibility to God, and the supremacy of his Son, Jesus Christ, as King of kings and LORD of lords; and hereby ordain that no law shall be passed by the congress of these United States inconsistent with the will of God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. AMEN. SO LET IT BE."

# ANTI-SEMITISM IS A SIN

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A Discussion of the document  
*The Church and Racism: Towards A More Fraternal Society*,  
Holy See Commission for Justice and Peace  
November 3, 1988.

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by Dr. Eugene J. Fisher and Rabbi Leon Klenicki

Made possible by the Joseph L. and Caroline Lichten Fund



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**"The Church and Racism": Implications for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue  
By Dr. Eugene J. Fisher, Director for Catholic-Jewish Relations,  
National Conference of Catholic Bishops**

On February 10, 1989, the Holy See's Council Iustitia et Pax (Justice and Peace) released one of the most remarkable documents to come out of Rome since the Second Vatican Council. Entitled "The Church and Racism: Toward a More Fraternal Society," the Holy See's statement at once synthesizes and analyzes a vast amount of historical data on the "phenomenon" of racism since the beginning of Christianity, and at the same time offers a theoretical and practical antidote to it. The following Section by Section commentary will seek to deal with the document's implications especially for Jewish-Christian relations today.

**1. Introduction and Part One: Racism in History**

The document defines racism as "contempt for a race characterized by its ethnic origin, color or language," and refines that definition by noting that the racist's sense of superiority is not just cultural but is based on a belief that the other is "inferior because of innate biological reasons." This definition will help the reader to follow certain critical distinctions made by the document in its presentation.

The document notes at the outset that its brief survey of "racist behavior throughout history" is presented in a spirit that does not seek "to gloss over the weaknesses and even, at times, complicity of certain Church leaders as well as of other members of the church" in the development and practice of racism over the centuries. Rather, it seeks to analyze the growth of intergroup antipathy to its apotheosis in modern, racial antisemitism, calling the latter "the most tragic form that racist ideology has assumed in our century," citing specifically the Holocaust in this context (Section 15). Indeed, with regard to the practices of the colonial powers and the slave trade, for example, the document candidly admits that Church leaders "at times even gave it encouragement on the basis of false interpretations of the Bible," a statement no less true, of course, of the development of antisemitism within Europe.

The document's historical analysis, I believe, is both persuasive and crucial to the contemporary dialogue between Jews and Christians. It states, quite correctly, that what we understand today to be racism as such was not a phenomenon that existed in the Greco-Roman world of antiquity, and much less among the Jews of biblical times.

"The Church and Racism" in this section and later in Section III confronts directly a lingering element of the ancient "teaching of contempt" against Jews and Judaism, the pernicious dichotomy between so-called Jewish particularity and Christian universalism. Stating that the Hebrew people "were aware to a unique degree of God's love for them" because of God's "gratuitous covenant" with them, it notes that biblical Judaism did not make other people, even idolators, "the object of disparagement or of a divine curse because of their ethnic diversity. The criterion of distinction was religious." Similarly, in para. 20, the document states that "The choice of the Jewish people does not contradict this universalism (evinced in the book of Genesis). It was a divine pedagogy which wanted to assure the preservation and development of faith in the Eternal, who is unique, thus giving a basis to the ensuing responsibilities. If the people of Israel were aware of a special bond with God, they also affirmed that there was a covenant of the entire



human race with God and that even in the covenant made with them, all peoples are called to salvation." This statement, I believe, captures the spirit of the Jewish self-view of the concept of chosenness. The text goes on to employ the same dynamic of complementary tension (rather than contradiction) between particularism and universalism to the Church's own self-image as a people called into being by God for the sake of God's plan of salvation for all humanity.

While Jewish readers might not be as sanguine as the authors about the practical effectiveness of the early Church's view of itself as being "a new people in whom the first two races from a religious perspective, that is the Jews and the pagans, met, having been reconciled in Christ," the analytical point at issue should be acceptable to all objective observers. That point is that the distinctions made by the Church Fathers and even in the Middle Ages were "spiritual" ones, not racial or historical distinctions. The distinction here will become important later in the text when it takes up the issue of modern, racial antisemitism as we know it today, a phenomenon that the authors perceive to be, while historically related, qualitatively different than the religious polemics which preceded the modern age. Thus, one cannot properly go directly from the pages of the New Testament to the death camps of Nazi-occupied Europe as some writers have erroneously done. Such historical shorthand, as I call it, is simply inadequate. It fails to take into account the two millenia of history that intervened between the one and the other.

The text does acknowledge with refreshing candor that the religious stereotypes and the prejudices founded on religious polemics did indeed have disastrous consequences in sins committed by Christians against Jews during the Middle Ages, a period when the Church quite often held direct political power over Jews: "The Jews, considered the tenacious witnesses of a refusal to believe in Christ, were often the object of serious humiliations, accusations and proscriptions." Meant here, of course, are such phenomena as the suppressive legislation of the Fourth Lateran Council in the 13th century (distinctive clothing, etc.), ghettos, disputations, Talmud burnings, etc., etc. The butchery of the Crusaders against the Jews, on the other hand, as well as such phenomena as the well-poisoning and blood libel charges, were explicitly, if too often ineffectually, condemned by the Popes even at the time and were considered to be sinful deeds then as now.

With reference to the widespread perception among medieval Christians reported here that Jews were "tenacious witnesses" of a rejection of belief in Christ, it is important to note another relevant document of the Holy See. This is the 1985 "Notes on the Correct Presentation of Jews and Judaism." The "Notes" rebut such misperceptions quite explicitly, at the same time neatly reversing the negative polemic that the Diaspora was a divine punishment visited upon Jews for the alleged "rejection" of Jesus: "The history of Israel did not end in 70 A.D. (cf., Guidelines, II). It continued, especially in a numerous Diaspora which allowed Israel to carry to the whole world a witness—often heroic—of its fidelity to the one God and to 'exalt God in the presence of all the living' (Tobit 13:4), while preserving the memory of the land of their forefathers at the heart of their hope (Passover Seder)." This seemingly innocuous statement turns the ancient polemic literally on its head. Continuing Jewish witness in and to the world is no longer to be viewed negatively by Christians as "tenacious" but positively as "heroic." The phrase "heroic witness" in the Church refers, of course, to martyrdom. What is being suggested in the "Notes," then, is that those Jews throughout the ages who suffered for their faith (Kiddush Ha Shem) at the hand of Christians are to be seen by Christians today as authentic martyrs. Just as the Catholic Church in its liturgical calendar remembers "the Holy Maccabees, martyrs" as models of faith



for Christians to emulate, so too should Christians commemorate the martyrdom of countless Jews over the centuries as witnesses to God's covenantal faithfulness to the Jewish people and of the Jewish people's faithfulness to God. When we Christians think of Jews, the category that should come to mind is "fidelity" not "rejection." Indeed, I would suggest that we Christians must remove the notion of "rejection" completely and permanently from our vocabulary when speaking of Jews and Judaism. It is inaccurate on both historical and theological grounds. The Jews did not and do not reject God's will for them as revealed on Sinai and through the prophets. As Pope John Paul II stated to the tiny remnant of the Jewish community in Warsaw, there is a continuing Jewish mission in and to the world that has its own distinctive purpose in God's plan: "Today this nation of Israel has become a loud warning voice for all humanity. More than anyone else, it is precisely you (Jews) who have become this saving warning. In this you continue your particular vocation, showing yourselves to be still the heirs of that election to which God is faithful." (June 14, 1987)

## **2. Colonial Racism and Modern anti-Semitism**

Paras. no. 3-6 of this Section offer an analysis I have not seen in any other official document of the Church with regard to anti-Semitism. They link together the pseudo-scientific racism, created by the colonial powers in Europe and the Americas in an attempt to rationalize the suppression of indigenous inhabitants and the depredations of the slave trade, with the development of modern, pseudo-scientific, racial antisemitism. Many scholars, such as Yosef Yerushalmi and Leon Poliakov, have noted the fact that if the polemics against Judaism of the New Testament and the early Church lead logically to genocide, that would logically have happened sometime in the medieval period when the Church held real political and even military power. But it didn't. In fact, in the papal states where Church law was applied with some consistency, very little violence was actually perpetrated against Jews over the centuries, since Church law throughout the Middle Ages held it an excommunicable offense to do violence against Jews or to disrupt Jewish worship. The relatively peaceful history of relations between Italian Catholics and Italian Jews may help to explain why, in the 20th Century, racial antisemitism of the type propagated so effectively by the Nazis in certain other parts of Europe never took hold in Italy. Despite the fact that Mussolini, until his demise, was a military ally of Hitler, and despite the fact that the Nazis directly took over control of the country, occupying Rome in September of 1943, some 80% of Italian Jews survived, many of them, as in Assisi, hidden in monasteries and convents throughout the country. So too, wherever the Italian army went, Jewish lives were saved. Again, while this does not at all exculpate Christians from the tragic results of centuries of the teaching of contempt in laying the groundwork, as it were, for Nazi antisemitism by marginalizing the Jews in Christian society and thus making of them an all too convenient scapegoat all too often in Christian history, it should give pause to those who would go simplistically from Church teaching to genocide. In assessing the Shoah, distinctions must be made on a country by country and even within a country on a region by region basis. We should today be well past the time when general statements of collective guilt are acceptable whether these apply to Jews or Christians.



### 3. Modern Racial anti-Semitism

Para. 3 suggests that the motivation for the development of modern racist theory can be found in the attempt by the colonial conquerors and slavers "to justify their actions." Though denounced by the Holy See, "unhappily" with little effect, this pseudo-scientific theory "sought to deduce an essential difference of a hereditary biological nature, in order to affirm that the subjugated peoples belong to intrinsically inferior 'races' with regard to their mental, moral or social qualities. It was at the end of the 18th century that the word 'race' was used for the first time to classify human beings biologically" (para. 5).

It did not take long for the racial theorists of Europe to apply their pernicious ideology to the traditional "other" in Europe's midst, the Jewish people. Interestingly, leading the way in this evil endeavor appear to have been leading figures in the so-called "Enlightenment," such as Voltaire (cf., A. Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, Columbia University, 1968).

Thus began a distinctively new phase in the history of anti-Semitism (cf., E. Fisher, "Anti-Semitism and Christianity: Theories and Revisions of Theories" in H. Hirsch and J. Spiro, eds., *Persistent Prejudice: Perspectives on Anti-Semitism*, George Mason University, 1988). While from the perspective of the teaching of contempt the "solution" to the theological "problem" posed by Jewish unbelief in Christ was conversion, from the perspective of the secular theoreticians of race, there simply was no solution to "the Jewish problem." Jews, Voltaire and his followers such as Gobineau, Wagner and Chamberlain opined, could not be assimilated into European culture no matter what they did. Jews were no longer simply "reprobate" or "unbelievers." They were subhuman. As the Vatican document succinctly comments: "Such theses had considerable resonance in Germany. It is well known that the National-Socialist totalitarian party made a racist ideology the basis of its insane program aimed at the physical elimination of those it deemed belonging to 'inferior races.' This murderous folly struck first and foremost the Jewish people in unheard-of proportions, as well as other peoples, such as the Gypsies . . . and categories of person such as the handicapped."

Likewise, along with the rise of the "Enlightenment" there came a corresponding relaxation of the traditions of moral restraint that had typified Christian Europe. With the Church's voice muted by secularism, and with the sense of the God-centeredness of the world similarly dissipated as an underlying social force, one had only to re-define a group out of the category of "human" in order to loose all bonds of moral hesitancy on what a dominant group could or would do to a minority group.

### 3. The Church and the Shoah

Para. 7 cites several clear and unambiguous condemnations of antisemitism issued by the Holy See beginning with a directive of 1928, and including a major encyclical issued in German by Pope Pius XI in 1937, and strong condemnations issued by Pope Pius XII in 1939 and 1942 (cf., Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, *Pius XII and the Holocaust*, 1988, containing essays by Dr. Joseph Lichten of ADL and Rev. Robert Graham, S.J.).

Can such papal statements, clear as they were at the time according to contemporary accounts, be considered to be sufficient or adequate to the challenge of the day? By one criterion—effectiveness, clearly not. Had they been sufficient, simply put, six million Jews would not have been systematically murdered in lands presumably "Christian" for centuries. While Nazis were



certainly not Christians but in their ideology apostates from Christianity, the fact remains that they were in the main baptized into the Church. And so a specific sense of Christian responsibility, if not guilt, remains for us to grapple with today, especially in view of the long, tragic history outlined above. (Cf., John Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust*, Schocken, 1980.)

But the criterion of effectiveness is two-edged. The presumption behind German Protestant Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 propagandistic attempt (*The Deputy*) to place all blame on the lonely shoulders of Pope Pius XII was that papal utterances hold some kind of magic wand. A single word from the pope and national socialism would have disappeared. World War II would not have happened. Therefore, Hochhuth believed, it was all the fault of the pope, whose "silence," consciously and maliciously, as he portrays history, allowed it to happen.

If one accepts Hochhuth's definition of the question, of course, one is driven to his conclusion, as for example Marc Saperstein is in his otherwise excellent and well-balanced recent book, *Moments of Crisis in Jewish Christian Relations* (SCM/Trinity Press, 1989, pp. 53 ff.). But if one allow for a more nuanced view of what were the possible options actually open to the Holy See at the time, one ends up with a still quite critical but much less naive understanding of the painful decisions made by this much-misunderstood pope, as has, recently, Michael Marrus in his volume, *The Holocaust in History* (University Press of New England, 1987).

For my own part, I will not attempt to adjudicate this vastly complex issue here, save to note that it must, on all sides, be approached with extreme care and sensitivity. I would urge both Jews and Catholics not to attempt to approach the manifold interrelated issues involved in isolation from one another. Rather, they ought to be worked on by scholars of both communities working together in dialogue, avoiding both the temptation to defensiveness on the one hand and polemics on the other. Happily, representatives of the Holy See and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations began such a process, in Prague, in September 1990, issuing a joint statement calling for "Teshuvah (Repentance) and Reconciliation" (*origins*, September 20, 1990, page 235).

As an American Catholic born in 1943, one who quite literally attended his first interreligious event (a joint banquet of B'nai B'rith and the Knights of Columbus organized by my father) in his mother's womb, I feel no personal guilt for what was done by declared enemies of my country and my Church. On the other hand, as a Catholic united in faith and sacrament with all members of the Church, I must assume responsibility for the past and more significantly for the future of Christianity. I must make my own the words of Pope John Paul II: "There is no doubt that the sufferings endured by the Jews (in the Shoah) are also for the Catholic Church a motive of sincere sorrow, especially when one thinks of the indifference and sometimes resentment which, in particular historical circumstances, have divided Jews and Christians. Indeed, this evokes in us still firmer resolutions to cooperate for justice and true peace" (Letter to Archbishop John L. May, President, NCCB, on receiving a volume of papal addresses on Jews and Judaism co-edited by myself and Rabbi Leon Klenicki, *John Paul II on Jews and Judaism*, Washington, D.C. USCC/ADL, 1987). And again: "Considering history in the light of the principles of faith in God, we must also reflect on the catastrophic events of then Shoah, that ruthless and inhuman attempt to exterminate the Jewish people of Europe, an attempt that resulted in millions of victims—including women and children, the elderly and the sick—exterminated only



because they were Jews. It is to be hoped that common educational programs on our historical and religious relations, which are well developed in your country, will truly promote mutual respect and teach future generations about the Holocaust so that never again will such a horror be possible. Never again! (Miami, September 11, 1987)

#### **4. Section II: anti-Semitism, Terrorism and Anti-Zionism**

Section II, para's 8-16 speak of several contemporary "manifestations of systematic racial mistrust" around the world, citing anti-semitism as "the most tragic form" of the century. Speaking in an uncharacteristically caustic tone of those who feel they have "nothing to learn from the crimes of the past," the document mentions "organizations, with branches in many countries" which "keep alive the anti-Semitic racist myth with the support of networks of publications" (para. 15), and renews once again the Holy See's consistent and strong condemnation of any and all "terrorist acts which have Jewish persons or symbols as their targets," a monitum sadly most pertinent in these days of desecrations of Jewish cemeteries in France and fearful rumblings of new anti-Semitic uprisings in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Interestingly, it is in this context of a condemnation of terrorism that the document takes up so-called anti-Zionism. Noting that it is not necessarily "of the same order" as anti-Semitism since there can be a valid questioning of the policies of the State of Israel, it cautions Catholics that anti-Zionism "serves at times as a screen for anti-Semitism, feeding on it and leading to it." Here, it might be recalled that Presidents of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1975 and again in 1986 have condemned the United Nations resolution labelling Zionism a form of racism as "unjust" and "deplorable" and called for its immediate repeal.

#### **5. Anti-Racism: The Christian Vision**

Section III (para's. 17-23) presents the Christian doctrine of the human person as the basis of the Church's response to the appeals of racist ideology. As in Judaism, Catholic doctrine is rooted in the vision of Torah: "According to biblical revelation, God created the human being—man and woman—in his image and likeness. This bond between the human person and the Creator provides the basis of his or her dignity and fundamental inalienable rights of which God is the guarantor. Faith in the one God, creator and redeemer of all mankind, made in God's image and likeness, constitutes the absolute and unescapable negation of any racist ideologies. The Fatherhood of God means the brotherhood among men." It is within this context, as discussed above, that the document notes that "the choice of the Jewish people does not contradict this universalism," since Israel is chosen to be a blessing for all (Genesis 12:3).

The document thus acknowledges that this central Christian doctrine is rooted in Judaism: "The New Testament reinforces this revelation of the dignity of all persons, their basic unity and their duty of fraternity" (no. 21). But while stressing the continuity between Judaism and Christianity on the essential level of the unity of humanity and the Unity of God, it also posits a distinctiveness about the Christian vision that is not exhausted in what is shared with the Jewish witness. It sees this in the mystery of the Incarnation, which has its own distinctive universalism since, in Christ, "the work of salvation . . . is no longer destined only for the chosen people. It is the whole 'race of Adam' which is involved and which is 'recapitulated' in Christ." Thus, one encounters in the Christ event a calling of all people into "the definitive covenant with God, over and above circumcision, the law of Moses and race."



Does this sense of Christian universalism negate the universalism ascribed to Judaism? Does the "definitive" nature of God's covenant with humanity in Christ negate the acknowledged continuing "chosenness" of the Jewish people as particularly God's people? I think that the answer of the authors of this text to both of these questions would be "of course not!" A positive self-affirmation does not necessarily imply a negative evaluation of another party, even if too many Christians did in the past fall victim to such a triumphalist temptation. One can see this, again, with reference to the above-mentioned Vatican "Notes." Section no. 7 of the "Notes" affirmed the centrality of Christ in the Christian vision and Christ's unique value in the economy of salvation. In an article commenting on the text of the "Notes," which was published in *L'Osservatore Romano* on the same day and same page (June 24, 1985) as the Notes themselves, then Monsignor (now Bishop) Jorge Mejia anticipated a likely concern of the Jewish community: "Clearly this (affirmation of Christ's universality) does not mean, however, that the Jews cannot and should not draw salvific gifts from their own traditions. Of course they can and should do so." Bishop Mejia, interestingly, is also a co-signer of the presently discussed text.

With regard to the reference to the "definitive" covenant being "over and above . . . the law of Moses," one must also realize that for Catholics, the law of Moses, as synthesized in the Decalogue and proclaimed by the prophets, remains quite valid as God's revealed will for Christians. So it is not a matter of the new replacing the "old." The nascent Church quite early picked up the Jewish notion of a Noahide covenant and applied it, in essence, to gentile converts (cf., Acts 15; Gal 2-3), accepting the argument that Christ alone is sufficient for salvation. But the issue of the day that was resolved at the Council of Jerusalem and in the Pauline writings was never that of the essential validity of the Law, certainly not as it pertained to Jews. The "Law" is no more and no less than God's revelation to the Jewish people. It has a particularity, therefore, that pertains only to Jews and a universality through the faithful witness of the Jewish people to God, a witness which the Church's own unique witness joins but does not replace.

Understood in this way, I do not believe that the Christian vision, proclaimed here in its fullness and without compromise, should be a bar to further theological dialogue between believing Jews and believing Christians. Certainly, Jews will not accept the Christian faith claim, for example, with regard to the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. Nor will the Christian feel the need to limit his or her faith to what is shared in common with the Jewish people. But what is shared is substantive and salvific, both groups can agree, a necessary proclamation for humanity as a whole.

The references in the following paragraph of the text need to be understood properly as not merely historical but most profoundly eschatological. Thus the claim made by Saint Paul that "there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, there is only Christ" would be foolish in the light of subsequent history if one forgot that for Paul the eschaton (end of the world, final judgment, coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, all these are included in the concept, which in turn is based on the Jewish notion of *olam haba* but which, again, has its own distinctiveness) is not only mystically present but historically immanent.

The awareness of the eschatological nature of Christian claims about Jesus of Nazareth as the "Christ" (a Greek work meaning "anointed" or "messiah," but a Christian concept again distinct today from its Jewish original) is reclaimed for Church teaching in the 1985 Vatican Notes: "In underlying the eschatological dimension of Christianity we shall reach a greater awareness that the people of God of the Old and the New Testament are tending toward a like end in the future:

the coming or return of the Messiah—even if they start from two different points of view. . . . Attentive to the same God who has spoken, hanging on the same word, we have witness to one same memory and one common hope in Him who is the master of history. We must accept our responsibility to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah.”

In other words, we Jews and Christians need, to put it colloquially, to keep our eye on the ball, which is not what we “have” or possess in our spiritual traditions, but what God is calling us, Jew and Christian alike, to be and to do in the world for the sake of his kingdom. Christianity no less than Judaism prays, as Jesus taught us, “Thy Kingdom Come!” The Kingdom, the *Malchut Shamayim*, we must ever recall, is not ours but God’s alone.

## **7. The Joint Promotion of Solidarity among Peoples**

This final section contains a number of practical suggestions for implementing the vision of the oneness of humanity articulated in Section III. It needs little commentary save the note that it is very positive in its attitude toward pluralism: “It is important to educate to a positive appreciation of the complementary diversity of peoples. A well understood pluralism resolves the problem of closed racism.”

In this article, I have tried to comment upon not only the aspects of this remarkable document to which the Jewish community will quickly relate, but also those which reflect the religious diversity between our two ancient traditions. Today we must go beyond simply “agreeing to disagree” as is the American habit (and a healthy one for our society at that). We must seek also to understand more precisely and more profoundly the nature of those very disagreements. For we can learn much about ourselves and about each other by analyzing where and why we disagree, and then learning how not only to tolerate, but to delight in our very differences.

June, 1990



## **Every Person is My Brother or Sister The Church and Racism: Toward a More Fraternal Society**

A Jewish Reading by Rabbi Leon Klenicki  
Director of ADL's Department of Interfaith Affairs

History has not shown, in general, examples of charity among persons, of basic respect for the "other." Through the centuries we have experienced the inhumanity of the human being, his or her evil potentiality that resulted in persecutions, crimes, and the denigration of the person. The human being has been a beast for the other. The 20th century is not an exception, it is indeed a time of great contradictions. It is a time of hope because of the unlimited core of the scientific and spiritual development that allows for social improvement. But it is also a time of nearly total disrespect for the human condition, of organized human denigration by political fanaticism, state ideology or racism.

### **The Scourge of Racism**

Races and racial matters are facts of the human condition. There are in the vast universe different races and many racial cultures. The differences are extraneous and contingent to the essence of the group, and constitutes genuine humanity. But when differences are turned into absolutes, race becomes racism. When the relative factor of white or colored skin is absolutized, racism emerges. When Hitler absolutized Nordic origin, Nazism was born. James Daane properly points out that,

Racism of whatever kind, and there are many kinds, is at best dangerous. At worst it is demonically destructive, for the demonic by definition is that which exalts itself against God and projects itself as though it were God. Theologically understood, racism is a vaulting, arrogant human attempt to seize for itself that special status which in biblical thought is called election. As such racism is a profound perversion of election, for in biblical definition election belongs to God alone. The God who exalts the humble and casts down the proud. (1)

Racism transforms persons into objects of contempt and discrimination. Racist ideology makes human beings "things," objects to be used and abused, overlooking, denying, the sacredness of the human condition.

Racism was and still is a sad reality in the world. It is a shameful presence that concerns all people and specially those committed religiously. Racism is a transgression of God's call and covenantal obligation, a situation of sin that requires religious denunciation and condemnation. Pope John Paul II in his address to the U.N. Special Committee against Apartheid, July 7, 1984, expressed his condemnation of South African Apartheid echoing the conscience of the world, and reflecting both the Jewish and Christian indictments of South African racism. John Paul II strongly reaffirmed,

Man's creation by God in His own image' confers upon every human person an eminent dignity; It also postulates the fundamental equality of all human beings . . . Hence every form of discrimination based on race . . . is absolutely unacceptable.



The spirit of John Paul's comment is reflected in an 1988 Vatican Document reminding Catholics, religious people and men and women of good will the religious-spiritual obligation to eradicate the scourge of racism and anti-Semitism.

## **The Church and Racism**

In 1988 the Roman Catholic Church issued a special document, *The Church and Racism: Toward A More Fraternal Society* denouncing all forms of racism past and present. Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, who signed the document along with Bishop Jorge Mejia, at a special seminar at the United Nations organized by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN and the Holy Family Church Society of the UN community explained the aim of the Vatican Document. Cardinal Etchegaray said,

Racism is "a wound in humanity's side that mysteriously remains open" (No. 33). That is why the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, at the request of Pope John Paul II, published a document "to help enlighten and awaken consciences: in view of a more fraternal society." . . . Racism is a modern-day hydra. Its principal head is that of racism in the strict sense, that is to say the accentuation of differences, interpreted scientifically or ideologically, as establishing the superiority of one race over another, in order to justify acquired or desired advantages. (2)

### **Catholicism and Racism**

The Vatican document clearly and strongly denounces the evil of racism:

Racism and racist acts must be condemned. The application of legislative, disciplinary and administrative measures, or even appropriate external pressure, can be timely. Countries and international organizations have at their disposal a whole range of initiatives to be taken or encouraged. It is equally the responsibility of the citizens concerned, but without, for that reason, going so far as to replace violently one unjust situation with another injustice. Constructive solutions must always be envisaged.

While studying the history of racism, the *Church and Racism* examines Catholic involvement in fighting racism pointing out that "this by no means implies an effort to gloss over the weaknesses and even, at times, the complicity of certain church leaders, as well as of other members of the Church, in this phenomenon." The Document points out that,

Of course, Christians themselves must humbly admit that members of the church, on all levels, have not always lived out this teaching (the Christian teaching denouncing racism. LK) coherently throughout history. Nonetheless, they must continue to proclaim what is right while seeking to 'do' the truth.

The Document denounces medieval Church anti-Jewish attitudes saying that "the Christian Middle Ages also made distinction among people on the basis of religious criteria: Christians, Jews, and Infidels. It is for this reason that, within 'Christendom,' the Jews, considered the tenacious witnesses of a refusal to believe in Christ, were often the object of serious humiliations, accusations and prescriptions." I feel, however, that another paragraph should have described what the "prescriptions" meant for the Jewish people in Europe: forced alienation from the general society and the target of popular persecution. It was part of a teaching of contempt that

helped to prepare the atmosphere for the Nazi totalitarian ideology of anti-Semitism. The teaching of contempt involved a denial of Judaism and the Jewish people in God's design that still requires a joint Christian-Jewish reflection, both at academic and public levels.

*The Church and Racism* stresses the effects of the 19th-20th centuries racist ideology that could find the justification for its prejudice in science. The racist ideas of that time according to the Vatican paper "have considerable resonance in Germany" and influenced the Nazi decision that produced one of the "greatest genocides in history":

Such theses had considerable resonance in Germany. It is well known that the National-Socialist totalitarian party made a racist ideology the basis of its insane programme, aimed at the physical elimination of those it deemed belonging to "inferior races". This party became responsible for one of the greatest genocides in history. This murderous folly struck first and foremost the Jewish people in unheard-of proportions, as well as other peoples, such as the Gypsies and the Tziganes, and also categories of persons such as the handicapped and the mentally ill. It was only a step from racism to eugenics, and it was quickly taken.

It is true that Nazis included in their racist program the destruction of Poles and Russians, gypsies and handicapped people, but the Jewish case was a unique case. Jews were sentenced to death and destruction by birth, the Nuremberg laws were part and essence of a specific national plan of destruction. Death to others was at times a matter of policy (as in the systematic attempt to destroy the Polish clergy and intellectual leadership), and at other times a matter of misfortune, though no less tragic for the individuals involved. Death to Jews was a top priority of state ideology, more important to the Nazis, it turned out, than even the war effort. It was a legal matter.

### **Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism**

*The Church and Racism* devotes section 15 of Part II to condemning anti-Semitism:

Amongst the manifestations of systematic racial distrust, specific mention must once again be made of anti-Semitism. If anti-Semitism has been the most tragic form that racist ideology has assumed in our century, with the horrors of the Jewish "holocaust", it has unfortunately not yet entirely disappeared. As if some had nothing to learn from the crimes of the past, certain organizations, with branches in many countries, keep alive the anti-Semite racist myth, with the support of networks of publications. Terrorist acts which have Jewish persons or symbols as their target have multiplied in recent years and show the radicalism of such groups. Anti-Zionism—which is not of the same order, since it questions the State of Israel and its policies—serves at times as a screen for anti-Semitism, feeding on it and leading to it. Furthermore, some countries impose undue harassments and restrictions on the free emigration of Jews.

The Vatican Document sums up in a few sentences the horrible anti-Semitic reality of the 20th century. It also adds a committed denunciation of present anti-Zionism as a "screen" for anti-Semitic attacks.

*The Church and Racism* denounces anti-Zionism that is essentially a new, more sophisticated form of anti-Semitism. There is no reference to the U.N. Resolution calling Zionism a form of racism. The Document however does not list the vicious 1975 Resolution among the U.N.



Documents on racism. It is a subtle diplomatic way of denouncing the invidious concept embodied in the U.N. Resolution.

Bishops' Conferences took, even before the publication of the Holy See Document a strong position denouncing the U.N. stand. In 1986 Bishop James W. Malone, president of the United States Catholic Conference, said that "Eleven years ago, November 10, 1975, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution classifying Zionism as a form of racism. My predecessor, as president of the United States Catholic Conference, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, rightly deplored the resolution as "unjust," stating that because of its substantial inadequacy it both retards the necessary struggle against racism in the world and opens the door to harassment, discrimination and denial of basic rights to members of the Jewish community throughout the world. I would like to reaffirm Cardinal Bernardin's statement today, and to reverse its very bad judgment in this matter." The U.N. and its representatives received a strong, clear message.

### **John Paul II and Anti-Semitism**

The document's condemnation of anti-Semitism follows the thought of Pope John Paul II who as a Pole has known the horror of Nazism and expressed his condemnation of anti-Semitism on many occasions. On August 27, 1989 the Holy See issued his Apostolic Letter on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. Pope John Paul II stressed that,

... Among all these anti-human measures, however, there is one which will forever remain a shame for humanity: the planned barbarism which was unleashed against the Jewish people.

As the object of the "final solution" devised by an erroneous ideology, the Jews were subjected to deprivations and brutalities that are almost indescribable. Persecuted at first through measures designed to harass and discriminate, they were ultimately to die by the millions in extermination camps.

The Jews of Poland, more than others, lived this immense suffering: the images of the Warsaw ghetto under siege, as well as what we have come to learn about the camps at Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka, surpass in horror anything that can be humanly imagined.

On the occasion of this sorrowful anniversary, once again I issue an appeal to all people, inviting them to overcome their prejudices and to combat every form of racism by agreeing to recognize the fundamental dignity and the goodness that dwell within every human being, and to be ever more conscious that they belong to a single human family, willed and gathered together by God.

I wish to repeat here in the strongest possible way that hostility and hatred against Judaism are in complete contradiction to the Christian vision of human dignity. (2)

### **The Other as a Fellow Being**

Racism, its presence and social exercise requires an active counteraction as well as a committed reflection of the "other" as a fellow being. A distinguishing mark of evil is the human operation by which one person is perceived and considered, even treated, as an object. Many times the human being is not seen as a creation of God, a sacred dimension, but as a useable element that



can be manipulated for certain purposes. Thusly, the otherness of the other person does not become a complement to my being a meaningful entity but rather a continent of useable material.

The biblical account of the creation of mankind seeks to teach one grand lesson valid for all times: the foundation of the world is belief in one God as Creator and Father, and its corollary, brotherly love accompanied by a constant awareness that all human beings are of one human father (Adam). The prophet Malachi (2:10) stresses,

Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we treat treacherously every man against his brother?

Human failure to realize this breeds misunderstanding, prejudice, and ill-will leading to fratricidal hate; it is the great illness that produces strife, ruin and desolation, and especially the scourge of racism.

Malachi's question is familiar to all human beings though people are far from accepting its true and its every day reality. Human beings generally relate to each other as entities belonging to political parties or ideologies. Men and women project prejudices coming from family, education, society, and present societal trends. What is needed is a change of the heart: to discover fully the other as a legitimate person. The encounter of meaning is a concrete meeting of realities in a special context: It is an I meeting a you. Meaning cannot be realized by being alone and alienated. A person is not the product of himself or herself. Robinson Crusoe in an island lacks total reality. Persons are making themselves, projecting themselves, by an interchange with others. The very text of the book of Genesis points out the need for company. Adam and Eve are created as two human beings to fulfill God's design. But they are also two in a spiritual relationship to fulfill themselves. They go beyond the loneliness, external exclusiveness to existential all inclusiveness. Adam and Eve achieve a meaningful dialogue. It is a mutual recognition of existence, their existence in the Garden of Eden, and later on in the world. It is a community of faith as Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik described this,

A community is established the very moment I recognized the thou and extend greetings to the thou. One individual extends the 'shalom' greeting to another individual; and in so doing he creates a community. . . recognition means sacrificial action: the individual who withdraws in order to make room for the thou. (3)

The recognition of the other is a recognition of quality. It doesn't separate the other pointing out limitations or specific traits. Rabbi Soloveitchik clarifies the significance of recognition in an essential manner that defines the very value of personhood and the hurtful dangers of racism:

Quite often a man finds himself in a crowd among strangers. He feels lonely. No one knows him, no one cares for him, no one is concerned for him. It is again an existential experience. He begins to doubt his own theological world. This leads to alienation from the crowd surrounding him. Suddenly someone taps him on the shoulder and says: "aren't you Mr. so and so? I have heard so much about you." In a fraction of a second his awareness changes. An alien being turns into a fellow member of an existential community (the crowd). What brought about the change? The recognition by somebody, the word. To recognize a person is not just to identify him physically. It is more than that: it is an act of identifying him existentially, as a person who has a job to do, that only he can do properly. To recognize the person means to affirm that he is irreplaceable. To hurt a person means to tell him that he is expendable, that there is no need for him. (4)



The denial of the other as a person climaxed in the Nazi persecution of Jews. That horror will be in the memory of the West for centuries to come. That evil denied God by denying God's creation, the human being, and God's election, the Hebrew people. One example will testify the diabolic nature of Nazism. It is the testimony of Bruno Shatyn, a Polish Jew who survived in Poland on false papers. In his book *A Private War* he describes the most horrible example of racism in action:

I usually rode into town through Rynek Podgorski. Circling the ghetto, I would arrive at the so-called Thrid Bridge; across the Vistula River was Starowislna Street, my destination. As I was driving past one wall of the ghetto I saw two SS men coming toward me, engrossed in conversation. One of them must have told a joke, for they were both laughing heartily. Suddenly a child was thrown over the wall—undoubtedly some frantic parents inside had done this in the desperate hope that some kind soul outside would find her, take pity on the innocent child, and raise her as his own. She was a beautiful little girl, about six years old, with dark hair in a long braid. She fell right between the SS men and my carriage. As I stared, she scrambled up. The SS man who had been telling the story walked over to her. She looked up at him for a moment as if in a trance, paralyzed with fear, while he drew his pistol, placed it to her head, and fired. I never heard the shot because of what I saw. The girl's head literally burst apart. The back of her skull with its long braid flew up in the air like a rocket as the front exploded into several fragments and flew off in different directions. Now instead of the child's head all that remained was a stump, the end of her spinal column. What gushed forth was not even blood but some sort of yellowish red gelatinous substance. The body stood upright for a moment, its arms still raised for balance, then toppled to the ground and lay twitching convulsively. The SS man returned his pistol to its holster, carefully checked his polished boots to make sure that they had not been dirtied, and sauntered back to his friend to continue their conversation. (5)

No word can qualify this horror. What is left is silence, or the recitation of the *Kaddish*, the Jewish prayer honoring the memory of the dead by honoring God's name. Silence should be followed by the denunciation of anti-Semitism, and appropriate action. There is no passivity vis-a-vis racism, but action to raise the conscience of society, alert the community to the evil of racism and anti-Semitism and respond accordingly. *The Church and Racism*, as pointed out before, expresses the clear and categorical condemnation of the Holy See of racism and anti-Semitism.

### **Religious Tradition and Personhood: A Jewish Perspective**

The reading of *The Church and Racism* entails a reflection on person and creation, and specially the sacredness of the person. The Vatican Document in many passages points God's design and purpose in creating Adam. John Paul II's reflection is mentioned in the document,

Man's creation by God in 'His own image' confers upon every human person an eminent dignity. It also postulates the fundamental equality of all human beings.

Jewish religious thought would accept this statement that mirrors much of Israel's religious covenantal commitment.

Jewish theology has emphasized through the centuries the centrality of the concept of person. One text from the Rabbinic sources, Talmud Jerusalem, Nedarim, chapter 9:41c, reports an



interesting and highly significant discussion, between two of its most outstanding scholars, Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Ben Azzai. The former declared "thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself, the text of Leviticus chapter 19:18 is the greatest principles of the Torah." While Ben Azzai observed: "This is the book of the generations of Adam (man) that Genesis chapter 5:1—is an even greater principle."

Rabbi Akiba's statement is self-explanatory. Ben Azzai's, however, is not so self-evident. Nevertheless it lays down a fundamental tenet of Judaism. For in the verse quoted the rabbinic sage saw the basic declaration of human fellowship: by tracing back the whole of the human race to the one single ancestor, created by one God, the Bible thought that all human beings have *one* Creator—God and *one* ancestor, Adam. Thus all people, notwithstanding differences and variations produced by external conditions are brothers and sisters. If, then, Rabbi Akiba saw in the command to love one's neighbor the prime motivation of Judaism, Ben Azzai went behind this precept, as it were, seeking the basis on which it rests and the sanction which gives its validity, and he found it in this biblical account of creation. Rabbinic theology points out that "for this reason was man created alone, to teach that whosoever destroys a soul is as guilty as though he had destroyed the whole world." (Sanhedrin 37a). This is an emphatic assertion of human worth.

*The Church and Racism* document echoes these concepts stressing God's creation and the centrality of the person in God's design,

According to biblical Revelation, God created the human being—man and woman—in his image and likeness. This bond between the human person and the Creator, provides the basis of his or her dignity and fundamental inalienable rights of which God is the guarantor. To these personal rights obviously correspond duties toward others. Neither the individual nor society, the State nor any human institution can reduce a person, or a group of persons, to the status of an object.

The belief that God is at the origin of humankind transcends, unifies and gives meaning to all the partial observations that science can amass about the process of evolution and the development of societies. It is the most radical affirmation of the equal dignity of all persons in God. With this concept, a person eludes all those manipulations of human powers and of ideological propaganda which seek to justify the servitude of the weakest. Faith in the one God, Creator and Redeemer of all humankind made in his image and likeness, constitutes the absolute and unescapable negation of any racist ideologies.

The demand for consideration and respect for human dignity stemmed from the biblical conception of the human being as created in the image of God. Thus we read "Rabbi Akiba said: beloved is the human being for he was created in the divine image. He is granted an exceeding great life, for he was created in the divine image. As it is said (Genesis 7:9,) "for in the image of God did he make man."

Another master, Simeon Duran, explains the text from Genesis as follows,

The form in which the human being was made is called the image of God, to teach that it is the most excellent of all. In the same way the man honored above all men was called the man of God; the Temple, too is called the house of God, since it is exalted above all the houses for the acceptance of prayer. . . and in the matter of being created in his image, all human beings are equal, the righteous as the wicked. (6)



Classical rabbinic theology and medieval Jewish philosophical thought recognized however that the human being's tendency has always been to look down upon the stranger and to oppress him in greater or lesser degree, a tendency which history has all too amply proven. Biblical obligations demanded that the human being should be respected and protected against discrimination, but also loved: "and if a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you should not do him wrong. A stranger that sojourns with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: and the lord your God. (Leviticus 19:33f)

This "love" was not to lose itself in the abstract, but to be given concrete acceptance in the daily dealings with the other person. Thus a classical source, *Sefer Hahinuh*, Mitzvah 431 states,

We were commanded to love aliens. This means that we may not cause them to suffer hurt in anything, but to treat them kindly with acts of benevolence, even as it seemingly lies in our power. Moreover, this noble commandment exalts us to have compassion on any human being who is not in the city of his home and birthplace, or in the dwelling-place of his parents or family. When we find a stranger alone far from those who might help him, we must not mislead him on the way for the Torah has commanded us to have compassion on any one in need of assistance. He will carry out this commandment faithfully, we shall be privileged to enjoy God's mercy too and the blessing of heaven will rest upon our heads. The Bible has indicated the reason for this commandment: For you were strangers in the land of Egypt. It reminds us that we ourselves are being seared by the great torment which befalls every person who finds himself among a strange and alien folk. We must bear in mind the depth of anxiety and distress pertaining to this condition, for our nation experienced it until the almighty delivered us in his love and favor. Since this is so, we should feel warm pity for any human being in that condition.

Following rabbinic theology Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in the 20th century stresses the need of recognition as the basis for human responsibility for "the other" as a person in God:

Once I have recognized the thou I invited him to join the community, I ipso facto assume responsibility for the thou. Recognition is identical with commitment. Here again we walk in the way of our Maker, God created man; God did not abandon him; he showed concern for him. God cared for Adam; God said it is not good for man to be alone. He provided him with a mate. He placed him in Paradise, and allowed him to enjoy the fruit of the Garden. Even after man sinned and was exiled from the Garden, the Almighty did not desert him. Of course he punished him. Yet he was concerned with man even while man was in sin. In a word, God assumed responsibility for whatever and whoever he created: "he gives breath to all flesh for his loving kindness is everlasting." (Psalm 136:25) As we have said above, the same relationship should prevail with me and the thou whom I have recognized and with whom I have formed a community. I assume responsibility for each member of the community to whom I have granted recognition and whom I have found worthy of being my companion. In other words, I am responsible for the physical and mental welfare of the thou. (7)

The responsibility is for a subject, a person, not for an object. We are responsible and responsive for the other as a spiritual entity, a subject of faith, a child of God. It is a perception of mutuality for a fellow you, respectful of the spiritual and physical integrity of the other. To recognize the other is to identify the other as a person with meaning. Martin Buber will state this as a basic in the human relationship,

Once one ceases to regard the other as merely an object of observation and begins to regard the other as an independent other standing over against him, then we have the beginning of the I-thou relation.<sup>8</sup>

*The Church and Racism* concerned with this matter points out the need for recognition of the "other" as a partner in God and its responsibility,

Racial prejudice, which denies the equal dignity of all the members of the human family and blasphemes the Creator, can only be eradicated by going to its roots, where it is formed: in the human heart. It is from the heart that just or unjust behaviour is born, according to whether persons are open to God's will—in the natural order and in the Living Word—or whether they close themselves up in those egoisms dictated by fear or the instinct of domination. It is the way we look at others that must be purified. Harboring racist thoughts and entertaining racist attitudes is a sin against the specific message of Christ for whom one's "neighbour" is not only a person from my tribe, my milieu, my religion or my nation: it is every person that I meet along the way. It is not through external means—legislation or scientific proofs—that racial prejudice can be uprooted. It is indeed not enough that laws prohibit or punish all types of racial discrimination: these laws can easily be gotten around if the community for which they are intended does not fully accept them. To overcome discrimination, a community must interiorize the values that inspire just laws and live out, in day-to-day life, the conviction of the equal dignity of all.

### **A Note of Concern**

Vatican documents are generally provided with a theological section that inserts the statement in the tradition of the Church. *The Church and Racism* refers to the history of Catholicism vis-à-vis slavery referring to the Hebrew Bible, to Judaism and the Jewish people's role in history. The language is careful in avoiding the triumphalism that has characterized the Christian understanding of Judaism for centuries. It stresses the uniqueness of the Jewish People's mission in God's design and choice, and its "universal" vocation.

There are however two matters of concern to the Jewish reader. One is of theological nature, the other a historical one.

### **Theological Concern**

A specific reference might lead, once again, to the teaching of contempt, a doctrine that denies Judaism and the Jewish people a meaningful role in God's design after Jesus' death and the Jewish denial of his messianism. It is on Part I, Section 2,



According to the message of Christ, for which the people of the Old Covenant were to prepare humanity, salvation is offered to the whole of the human race, to every creature and to all nations.

Was Biblical Judaism only the preparation for the coming of Christianity? Have the Jewish people lost its covenantal vocation of witnessing God? What of Pharisaism, and Rabbinic Judaism, that inspired Jews and continued for centuries God's Sinai call and covenant?

### **Historical Concern: Pius XI, Pius XII and The Holocaust**

The Vatican document notes that "the Church did not hesitate to raise her voice" to denounce racism. It was done already on March 25, 1928, by a decree of the Holy Office condemning anti-Semitism. Pius XI, a Catholic spiritual leader that deserves much study and greater consideration, condemned Nazi doctrines in his famous Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (1937) and in the letter addressed by the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities "to all rectors and deans of faculties, asking all professors of theology to refute, using the method proper to each discipline, the scientific pseudo-truths with which Nazism justified its racist ideologies." As early as 1937, Pius XI had begun to prepare another major encyclical on the unity of the human race which was to condemn racism and anti-Semitism. Due to his death he was not able to complete the document.

Pius XII, who succeeded Pius XI, in his first Encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, denounced racism, as well as in his 1942 Christmas message. He referred to "Hundred of thousands of persons who, without the slightest guilt on their part, but simply because they belong to a given race or nationality, are doomed to death or to gradual extinction." There is no reference to Jews in his message. This could have been due to prudence because of Nazi and Fascist reactions to his Encyclical. Prudence in language is sometimes necessary, prudence as a rule, however diminishes the effect of a denunciation. It was Pius XII's way, but *The Church and Racism* follows a different procedure, clearly condemning by name any form of racism, and specially anti-Semitism.

The Jewish reader feels however that the document's references to Pope Pius XII (Part I, Paragraph 7) appears as defensive if not apologetic. There have been, still are, highly negative, aggressive Jewish criticism of Pius XII's conduct vis-a-vis Jews during the Second World War. Both historical as well as fictional works have been written about him. The Vatican archives for the period are not open for the public or academic research. This does not help for an unbiased view of the Pope and his actions. Some, but not all, of the Vatican archives for the period are open for the public and for academic research. (See the 11 volumes of the *Actes et Documents du Saint Siege relatifs a la Second Guerre Mondiale*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965-1978). In addition, crucial material remains in the archives of dioceses throughout Europe. The lack of complete access to all relevant materials allows too much room, I believe, for speculation and bias in the treatment of the Pope and his actions during the period. Until the files of the Holy See and other sources are completely open for research, caution in speech and description of these complex matters is in order by all. Prudence should prevail for Catholics and Jews until full evidence is available for accurate remarks.

### **Overcoming Racism Through Education**

*The Church and Racism* stresses the need to educate in order to eradicate prejudice pointing out that "racial prejudices most often come from ignorance about others which gives full vent to



imagination and engenders fear." Education, according to the Document emphasizes the recognition of differences, mutual respect and fraternity as the basis for a better human relationship.

The Document states that,

In the formation of a non-racist conscience, the role of schools is primordial. The Magisterium of the Church has always highlighted the importance of an education that stresses what is common to all. It is also important to show that others, precisely because they are different, can enrich our experience. While it is normal, for instance, for history to cultivate esteem for one's country, it is regrettable that it can lead to a blind chauvinism and to according only a secondary place to the achievements of other nations, considered inferior. As has already been done in some countries, it may be necessary to revise scholastic texts which falsify history, pass over historical misdeeds of racism in silence or justify the principles behind it. In the same way, civic education must be conceived in such a way so as to uproot discriminatory reflexes toward persons belonging to other ethnic groups. More and more, the schools provide the occasion for the children of immigrants to mix with the children of the receiving country. Hopefully this will provide an opportunity to help both groups to know one another better and to prepare a more harmonious coexistence.

This spirit of dialogue and mutual respect inspired ADL and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops—Secretariat of Catholic-Jewish Relations to prepare educational materials to surmount prejudice and lack of mutual knowledge. *Understanding the Jewish Experience* and *Within Context* are two good examples. The former is directed to Catholic teachers recommending courses on Judaism from Biblical days to the 20th century, including classes on the Holocaust and the State of Israel.

Complementing the recommended courses Dr. Eugene J. Fisher, Executive Secretary of the above mentioned Secretariat, and I prepared a set of 24 study guides for teachers. Published by PACE Publishing Company on different subjects related to Catholic-Jewish relations, the study guides are on *Nostra Aetate*, creation, evil, promised land, anti-Semitism, on *Church and Racism*, etc.

*Within Context*, which is not an official document of the American Bishops, was prepared by a group of Christian and Jewish scholars. The document, widely used in the USA, implemented the Vatican *Notes* on Catholic education and the presentation of Judaism. *Within Context* is a set of guidelines on teaching the New Testament and Judaism. The text has been translated and published in French, Italian, German, and Polish. Another program, *A World of Difference*, is an educational and media project that celebrates intergroup differences and the joy of mutual understanding.

ADL is presently editing a booklet on the meaning of Christianity for Jewish readers and participants in interfaith dialogue. It was prepared by Father Michael Carroll.

CELAM (Latin American Bishops Conference) and ADL have cooperated in some projects, like the preparation of a set of guidelines on Catholic education and Judaism to be published by a grant of the Samuel H. Born Foundation of ADL. CELAM has published a book on Jews and Judaism, an introductory material for popular readership and sections of *Understanding the Jewish Experience*. CELAM has also published a Spanish version of *From Desolation to Hope*, an inter-religious Holocaust memorial service prepared by Eugene J. Fisher and myself.



## The Ever Present Reality of Anti-Semitism

*The Church and Racism* is a most welcomed document. It will contribute to fighting discrimination in all its forms and manifestations. Anti-Semitism is ever present in the world. The ADL issued its Annual Report on the subject, and the 1989 analysis shows a dangerous increase of anti-Semitic aggressions. A sad evidence is Eastern Europe. It is ironical that the democratic revolution that ended years of communist totalitarianism brought along a ghost of the past, the scourge of anti-Semitism. The Vatican document's condemnation of anti-Semitism, its knowledge and influence upon Eastern Europe will contribute to overcoming an evil that still pervades in the social and political realities of Poland, Hungary, the Soviet Union and other countries. (9)

Anti-Semitic incidents in the United States in 1989 rose to their highest level in at least 11 years—totalling 1,432—ADL, which has conducted an audit on the subject annually since 1979, revealed that the current total comprised 845 incidents of anti-Jewish vandalism and desecrations, and 587 episodes of harassments, assaults or threats against Jews or Jewish institutions; both figures were up over 1988. The vandalism figure includes arson, bombings, cemetery desecrations and swastika daubings against Jewish institutions, Jewish-owned property and public property.

The neo-Nazi Skinheads movement continues its campaign of racist hatred and anti-Semitism all over the country. This is a matter of concern to religious and ethnic leadership. (10)

Anti-Semitism is not an exception for Western Europe. The recent desecration of Jewish cemeteries in France is a reminder of anti-Jewish hatred. Pope John Paul II, deeply concerned and aware of this reality, called the attention of European Bishops of the ever present danger of anti-Semitism in his speech to 40 European Bishops attending a meeting in the Holy See, June 5-7, 1990, to prepare the 1991 Special Assembly of European Synod of Bishops, representing both Eastern and Western Bishops. Pope John Paul II said,

The tragic series of events that have followed one after another during this century, particularly since the outbreak of the Second World War, have contributed perhaps in some measure to opening the human heart to the freedom which comes from the Spirit, that freedom by which Christ has set us free (cf. Galatians 5:1).

The war itself with its immense cruelty, a cruelty that reached its most brutal expression in the organized extermination of the Jews, as well as of the Gypsies and of other categories of people, revealed to the European the other side of a civilization that he was inclined to consider superior to all others. Certainly, the war also brought out people's readiness to show solidarity and make heroic sacrifices for a just cause. But these admirable aspects of the war experience seemed to be overwhelmed by the immensity of evil and destruction, not only on the material plane but also in the moral order. Perhaps in no other war in history has man been so thoroughly trampled upon in his dignity and fundamental rights. An echo of the humiliation and even desperation caused by such an experience could be heard in the question often repeated after the war: How can we go on living after Auschwitz? Sometimes another question presented itself: Is it still possible to speak about God after Auschwitz? (11)

*The Church and Racism* is intended to the Catholic community but its message of peace and spiritual healing touches all people religiously committed. *The Church and Racism* invites all people of good will to a recognition of mutuality as expressed by the French Jewish thinker Emmanuel Levinas,

The existence of God is sacred history itself, the sacredness of man's relation to man through which God may pass. (12)

In this spirit the last words of *The Church and Racism* is a call for universal human redemption: "Every person is my brother and sister."





## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, Editor, *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1978.
- <sup>2</sup> Holy See Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Vatican City, 1989.  
For additional Papal critical references to anti-Semitism see, *Pope John Paul II on Jews and Judaism 1979-1986*. With Introduction and Commentary by Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki, Editors, NCCB-ADL, Washington, DC, 1987.
- <sup>3</sup> Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Community, Tradition*, New York, Spring 1978, p. 15.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.
- <sup>5</sup> Bruno Shatyn, *A Private War, Surviving Poland on False Papers 1941—1945*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1985.
- <sup>6</sup> See Also, Leon D. Stitskin, *Jewish Philosophy, A Study in Personalism*, New York, Yeshiva University Press, 5736-1976.  
Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Jerusalem, At the Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1975. See Chapter X, Man.
- <sup>7</sup> Soloveitchik, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>8</sup> Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, New York, Harper Torch Books, 1951, pp. 173-174.
- <sup>9</sup> Jeffrey A. Ross and Leon Klenicki, *The Politics of Transformation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union: The Religio-National Dimension*, New York, ADL—Points to Consider, May 1990.
- <sup>10</sup> *1989 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents*, New York, ADL of B'nai B'rith, 1989. *Neo-Nazi Skinheads: A 1990 Status Report*, New York, ADL, 1990.
- <sup>11</sup> *Origins*, Washington, DC, Catholic News Service, June 21, 1990, Vol. 20, No. 6.
- <sup>12</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1987, p.24.

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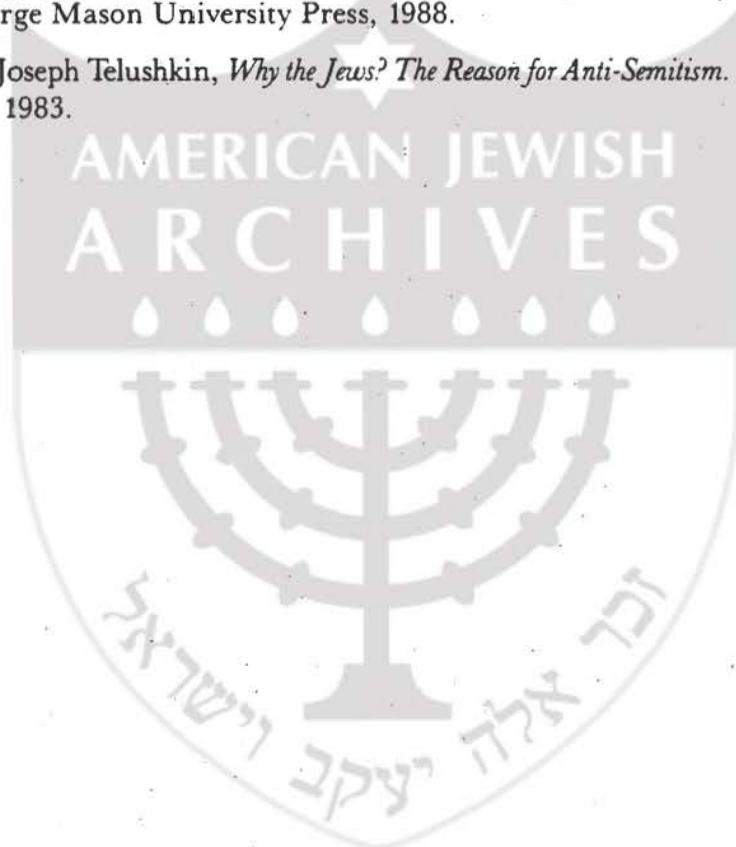
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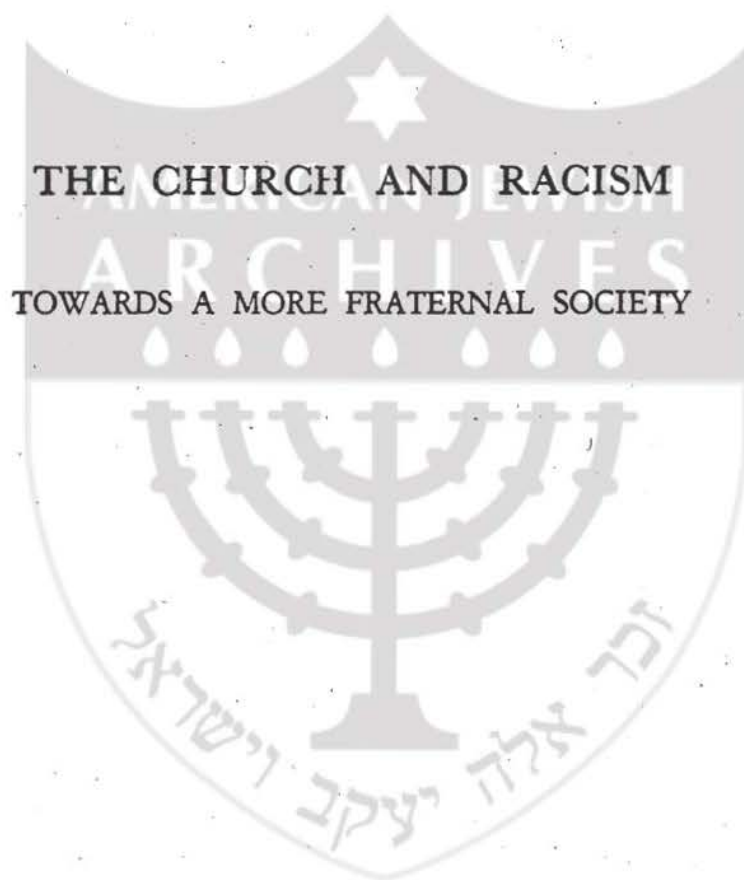
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PONTIFICAL COMMISSION "IUSTITIA ET PAX"

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VATICAN CITY 1988

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## 1. *Introduction*

Racial prejudice or racist behaviour continues to trouble relations between persons, human groups and nations. Public opinion is increasingly incensed by it. Moral conscience can by no means accept it. The Church is especially sensitive to this discriminatory attitude. The message which she has drawn from biblical Revelation strongly affirms the dignity of every person created in God's image, the unity of humankind in the Creator's plan, and the dynamics of the reconciliation worked by Christ the Redeemer who has broken down the dividing wall which kept opposing worlds apart<sup>1</sup> in order to recapitulate all persons in him.

For this reason, the Holy Father asked the Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax" to help enlighten and awaken consciences about this major concern: namely, the reciprocal respect between ethnic and racial groups as well as their fraternal coexistence. Such a task presupposes a lucid analysis of complex situations of both past and present, as well as an unbiased judgment about moral shortcomings and positive initiatives, in the light of fundamental ethical principles and the Christian message. Christ denounced evil, even at the risk of his life. He did this not to condemn but to save. Likewise, the Holy See feels that it has the duty to denounce deplorable situations prophetically. In so doing, it is careful, however, not to condemn or exclude persons. It wants, rather, to help them find a way out of such situations through concrete and progressive efforts. It wishes, with all due realism, to reinforce the hope of renewal, which is always possible, and to propose suitable pastoral guidelines for Christians and all people of good will who seek the same objectives.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ep 2:14.

This document sets out to examine, in the first place, the phenomenon of racism in the strict sense. On occasion, however, it also treats some other manifestations of conflictual attitudes, intolerance and prejudice, in so far as these have a kinship with racism or contain racist elements. In the light of its principal focus, the document thus notes the bonds which exist between certain conflicts and racial prejudice.





PART I  
RACIST BEHAVIOUR THROUGHOUT HISTORY \*

2. Racist ideologies and behaviour are long-standing: they are rooted in the reality of sin from the very beginning of humanity, as we can see in the biblical accounts of Cain and Abel as well as in that of the Tower of Babel.

Historically, racial prejudice, in the strict sense of the word, that is, awareness of the biologically determined superiority of one's own race or ethnic group with respect to others, developed above all from the practice of colonization and slavery at the dawn of the modern era. In rapidly considering the history of earlier major civilizations in the West as in the East, in the North as in the South, one can already find unjust and discriminatory behaviour, but one cannot in every case speak about racism as such.

*Greco-Roman antiquity*, for example, does not seem to have known racial myths. If the Greeks were convinced of the cultural superiority of their civilization, they did not, by the same token, consider the so-called "barbarians" inferior because of innate biological reasons. Slavery doubtlessly kept many people in a deplorable situation. They were considered "things" at their masters' disposal. However, in the beginning, these were largely persons who belonged to groups conquered in war, and not persons who were despised because of their race.

\* No attempt is made here to trace a complete history of racism, nor of the attitude of the Church in this regard. Rather, some highlights of this history are indicated, emphasizing the consistency of the teaching of the Magisterium concerning the phenomenon of racism. This by no means implies an effort to gloss over the weaknesses and even, at times, the complicity of certain Church leaders, as well as of other members of the Church, in this phenomenon.

The *Hebrew people*, as the Books of the Old Testament testify, were aware to a unique degree of God's love for them, manifested in the form of a gratuitous covenant with him. In this sense, since they were the object of a choice and a promise, the Hebrew people stood apart from others. The criterion of distinction, however, was God's plan of salvation unfolded in history. Israel was considered the Lord's very own amongst all peoples.<sup>2</sup> The place of other peoples in salvation history was not always clearly understood in the beginning, and these other peoples were at times even stigmatized in prophetic preaching to the degree that they remained attached to idolatry. They were not, however, the object of disparagement or of a divine curse because of their ethnic diversity. The criterion of distinction was religious, and a certain universalism was already foreseen.

According to the *message of Christ*, for which the people of the Old Covenant were to prepare humanity, salvation is offered to the whole of the human race, to every creature and to all nations.<sup>3</sup> The first Christians gladly accepted being considered as the people of a "third race", according to an expression of Tertullian.<sup>4</sup> This clearly was not to be understood in a racial sense, but rather in the spiritual sense. They considered themselves a new people in whom the first two races from a religious perspective, that is the Jews and the pagans, met, having been reconciled by Christ. The *Christian Middle Ages* also made distinctions among peoples on the basis of religious criteria: Christians, Jews and "infidels". It is for this reason that, within "Christendom", the Jews, considered the tenacious witnesses of a refusal to believe in Christ, were often the object of serious humiliations, accusations and proscriptions.

3. With the *discovery of the New World*, attitudes changed. The first great wave of European colonization was, in fact, accompanied by a massive destruction of pre-Colombian civilizations and a brutal

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ex 19:5 ("my very own", translation from the Jerusalem Bible).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ad Nat.* 1, 8; *PL* 1, 601.



enslavement of their peoples. If the great navigators of the fifteenth and sixteenth century were free from racial prejudices, the soldiers and traders did not have the same respect for others: they killed in order to take possession of the land, reduced first the "Indians" and then the blacks to slavery in order to exploit their work.

At the same time, they began to develop a racist theory in order to justify their actions.

The Popes did not delay in reacting. On 2 June 1537, the Bull *Sublimis Deus* of Paul III denounced those who held that "the inhabitants of the West Indies and the southern continents ... should be treated like irrational animals and used exclusively for our profit and our service". The Pope solemnly affirmed that: "In the desire to remedy the evil which has been caused, We hereby decide and declare that the said Indians, as well as any other peoples which Christianity will come to know in the future, must not be deprived of their freedom and their possessions—regardless of contrary allegations—even if they are not Christians and that, on the contrary, they must be left to enjoy their freedom and their possessions".<sup>5</sup> The directives of the Holy See were extremely clear even if, unhappily, their application soon met with difficulties. Later Urban VIII went so far as to excommunicate those who kept Indians as slaves.

For their part, theologians and missionaries had already come to the defence of the indigenous people. The resolute commitment on the side of the Indians of *Bartolomé de Las Casas*, a soldier who became a priest, then a Dominican religious and bishop, was soon taken up by many other missionaries. It led the governments of Spain and Portugal to reject the theory of the human inferiority of the Indians, and to impose protective legislation from which, a century later, the black slaves brought from Africa would also benefit in a certain way. The work of Las Casas is one of the first contributions to the doctrine

<sup>5</sup> *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía*, vol. 7, Madrid, 1867, 414. See also the Brief, *Pastorale officium*, of 29 May 1537 to the Archbishop of Toledo in *ibid.*, 414, and H. Denzinger - A. Schoenmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, Barcelona, 1973.

of universal human rights, based on the dignity of the person, regardless of his or her ethnic or religious affiliation. In the same way, the great Spanish theologians and jurists, *Francisco de Vitoria* and *Francisco Suárez*, pioneers of the rights of peoples, developed this same doctrine of the basic equality of all persons and of all peoples. However, the close dependency of the clergy of the New World on the Patronage system meant that the Church was not always able to take the necessary pastoral decisions.

4. In the context of racial contempt—although the motive was primarily to obtain cheap labour—mention must be made of the *slave trade* of blacks from Africa, bought by the hundreds of thousands and brought to the Americas. Their capture and travelling conditions were such that many died, even before their departure or their arrival in the New World. There they were destined to the most menial tasks, to all intents and purposes as slaves. This trade began in 1562 and the slavery that resulted was to last nearly three centuries. Here once again, the Popes and theologians, at the same time as numerous humanists, rose up against this practice. Leo XIII vigorously denounced it in his Encyclical *In plurimis* of 5 May 1888, in which he congratulated Brazil for having abolished slavery. The publication of this present document coincides with the *centenary of that memorable Charter*. John Paul II, in his speech to African intellectuals in Yaoundé (13 August 1985), did not hesitate to deplore the fact that persons belonging to Christian nations had contributed to the black slave trade.

5. Because of its constant concern for the deeper respect of indigenous peoples, the Apostolic See again and again insisted that a careful *distinction be made between the work of evangelization and colonial imperialism*, with which the former risked being confused. It is in this spirit that the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* was created in 1622. In 1659, that Congregation addressed an *Instruction* "to Apostolic Vicars departing for the Chinese Kingdoms of Tankin and



Cochinchine" that clarified the Church's attitude toward these peoples to whom she then had the possibility of announcing the Gospel.<sup>6</sup>

In places where missionaries were more closely dependent on political powers, it was more difficult for them to curb the colonists' attempt to dominate. At times, they even gave it encouragement on the basis of false interpretations of the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

6. In the eighteenth century, a veritable *racist ideology*, opposed to the teaching of the Church, was forged. It stood in contrast, moreover, with the commitment of some humanist philosophers who promoted the dignity and freedom of the black slaves, at that time the object of a shameless and wide-spread trade. This racist ideology believed it could find the justification for its prejudices in *science*. Apart from the difference in physical characteristics and skin colour, it sought to deduce an essential difference, of a hereditary biological nature, in order to affirm that the subjugated peoples belonged to intrinsically inferior "races" with regard to their mental, moral or social qualities. It was at the end of the eighteenth century that the word "race" was used for the first time to classify human beings biologically. In the following century, we can even find an interpretation of the history of civilizations in biological terms, as a contest between strong races and weak ones, with the latter being genetically inferior to the

<sup>6</sup> "Do not put any pressure on or bring forth any arguments to convince these peoples to change their rites, their customs and habits unless they are obviously contrary to religion and morality. What could be more absurd than transporting France, Spain, Italy or any other European country to the Chinese. Do not present our countries to them but rather the faith... Do not try to substitute European customs for those of these peoples and be most careful to adapt yourselves to them". *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu Decreta, Instructiones, Prescripta pro apostolicis missionibus* (1622-1866), vol. I, Rome, 1907, no. 135; and *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes* (ed. Cardinal J. Serédi), Vatican, 1935, vol. VII, no. 4463, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the interpretation that some fundamentalists gave to the curse made by Noah on his son Shem, condemned, in his grandson Canaan, to be his brothers' slave is well known (cf. *Gen.* 9:24-27). They misunderstood the meaning and scope of the sacred text which referred to a certain historical situation: the difficult relations between the Canaanites and the people of Israel. They wanted to see in Shem or Canaan the ancestor of the African peoples whom they had subjugated and, consequently, they considered them marked by God with an indelible inferiority which destined them to serve whites forever.

former. The decadence of the major civilizations was explained by their "degeneration" - i.e., the mixing of races which weakened the purity of blood.<sup>8</sup>

7. Such theses had considerable resonance in Germany. It is well known that the *National-Socialist totalitarian party* made a racist ideology the basis of its insane programme, aimed at the physical elimination of those it deemed belonging to "inferior races". This party became responsible for one of the greatest genocides in history. This murderous folly struck first and foremost the Jewish people in unheard-of proportions, as well as other peoples, such as the Gypsies and the Tziganes, and also categories of persons such as the handicapped and the mentally ill. It was only a step from racism to eugenics, and it was quickly taken.

The Church did not hesitate to raise her voice.<sup>9</sup> Pope Pius XI clearly condemned Nazi doctrines in his Encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge*, stating in particular: "Whosoever takes race, or the people or the State ... or any other basic value of the human community ... in order to withdraw them from (their) scale of values ... and deify them through an idolatrous cult, overturns and falsifies the order of things created and established by God".<sup>10</sup> On 13 April 1938, the Pope had the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities address a letter to all Rectors and Deans of Faculties, asking all professors of theology to refute, using the method proper to each discipline, the scientific pseudo-truths with which Nazism justified its racist ideologies.<sup>11</sup> As

<sup>8</sup> Cf., among others, the works of J. A. Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 4 vol., Paris, 1853-55. Gobineau took his inspiration from Darwin and extended his theses on the natural selection of species to societies and civilizations.

<sup>9</sup> On March 25, 1928, a decree of the Holy Office condemned anti-Semitism: AAS XX (1928), 103-104.

<sup>10</sup> AAS XXIX (1937), 149.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Documentation Catholique* (DC), 1938, 579-580. In a discourse to the members of the College of Propaganda Fide on 28 July 1938, Pius XI again stated: "Catholic means universal, not racist, not nationalistic in the separatist meaning of these two attributes ... We do not wish to separate anything in the human family ... The term 'humankind' reveals precisely what the human race is. It must be stated that people are first and foremost all one great and single species, one great and single family of living beings ... There is only



early as 1937, Pius XI had begun to prepare another major Encyclical on the unity of the human race which was to condemn racism and anti-Semitism. Death overtook him before he could make it public. His successor, Pope Pius XII, took certain elements from it for his first Encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*,<sup>12</sup> and especially from his 1942 Christmas Message in which he stated that among the erroneous postulates of juridical positivisms "must be included a theory which claims for such and such a nation, race, class, the 'juridical instinct', supreme imperative and norm without appeal". The Pope launched a vibrant appeal for a new and better social order: "Humanity owes such a commitment to hundreds of thousands of persons who, without the slightest guilt on their part, but simply because they belong to a given race or nationality, are doomed to death or to gradual extinction".<sup>13</sup> In Germany itself, there was a courageous resistance on the part of the Catholic Church to which Pope John Paul II referred on 30 April 1987<sup>14</sup> during his second visit to that country.

This insistence on the drama of Nazi racism should not make us forget other massive exterminations of populations, such as that of the Armenians right after World War I and, more recently, for ideological reasons, that of an important part of the Cambodian people.

The memory of such crimes must never be erased. The young generations and those yet to come must know to what extremes persons and society are capable of going when they yield to the power of scorn and hatred.

In Africa and Asia, there are societies in which there is still a sharp division of castes as well as social stratifications that are difficult

one human, universal 'catholic' race... and with it and in it, different variations... This is the Church's response", in *L'Osservatore Romano* (OR), 30 July 1938 cf. DC 1938, 1058-1061.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, 28 October 1939. AAS XXXI (1939), 481-509.

<sup>13</sup> 1942 Christmas Radio Message. Nos. 20 and 70. AAS XXXV (1943), 14: 23.

<sup>14</sup> To the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference meeting in Maternushaus of the Archdiocese of Cologne, John Paul II pointed out the witness given by the Cardinal Count Clemens August von Galen, the Carmelite Edith Stein, the Jesuit Rupert Mayer and "numerous other courageous witnesses who, in the face of inhuman tyranny, stood up on grounds of religious belief or humanitarianism... All of them together represent the other Germany which refused to bow to arrogance and brute force and which was able, after the final collapse, to serve as a sound nucleus and source of strength for the magnificent moral and material reconstruction which followed" (OR, English ed., 18 May 1987, 17).

to overcome. The phenomenon of slavery, once more or less universal in both time and space, has not unfortunately totally disappeared. Such negative signs—and many others could be enumerated—are not always rooted in racist philosophical conceptions in the strict sense but instead reveal the existence of a rather widespread and troubling tendency to use other human beings for one's own ends and, by that very fact, to consider them of lesser value and, as it were, of an inferior status.





## PART II

### FORMS OF RACISM TODAY

8. Today racism has not disappeared. There are even troubling new manifestations of it here and there in various forms, be they spontaneous, officially tolerated or institutionalized. In fact, if cases of segregation based on racial theories are the exception in today's world, the same cannot be said about phenomena of exclusion or aggressivity. The victims are certain groups of persons whose physical appearance or ethnic, cultural or religious characteristics are different from those of the dominant group, and are interpreted by the latter as being signs of an innate and definitive inferiority, thereby justifying all discriminatory practices in their regard. If, in fact, race defines a human group in terms of immutable and hereditary physical traits, racist prejudice, which dictates racist behaviour, can be applied by extension, with equally negative effects, to all persons whose ethnic origin, language, religion or customs make them appear different.

9. The most obvious form of racism, in the strictest sense of the word, to be found today is *institutionalized racism*. This type is still sanctioned by the constitution and laws of a country. It is justified by an ideology of the superiority of persons from European stock over those of African or Indian origin or "coloured", which is, by some, supported by an erroneous interpretation of the Bible. This is the regime of *apartheid* or of "separate development". This regime in the Republic of South Africa has long been characterized by a radical segregation in vast areas of public life, between the black, coloured, Indian and white peoples, with only the latter, although numerically a minority, holding political power and considering themselves masters of by far the greatest part of the territory. All South Africans are defined by a race to which they are officially assigned. Although some

steps towards change have been taken in recent years, the black majority of the population remains excluded from effective representation in national government and enjoys citizenship in word only. Many are relegated to "homelands" which are hardly capable of being self-sustaining and are moreover economically and politically dependent on the central power. The majority of Christian Churches of that country has denounced the segregationist policy. The international community<sup>15</sup> and the Holy See<sup>16</sup> have also made strong pronouncements in this regard.

South Africa is an extreme case of a vision of racial inequality. The prolongation of a state of repression, of which the majority of the population is victim, is less and less tolerated. Such a situation carries within it the seed of racist reflexes on the part of the oppressed, which would be as unacceptable as those of which they are victim today. For this reason, it is urgent that these prejudices be overcome in order to build the future on the principle of the equal dignity of every person. Experience has shown moreover that peaceful evolutions are possible in this regard. The entire South African community, as well as the international community, must make every effort to promote a concrete dialogue between the principal parties involved. It is important that the fear which causes so much inflexibility be banished. And it is just as important to avoid allowing internal conflicts to be exploited by others to the detriment of justice and peace.<sup>17</sup>

10. In some countries, forms of racial discrimination still persist with regard to *aboriginal peoples*. In many cases, these peoples are no more than the remaining vestiges of the original populations of the region, the survivors of veritable genocides carried out in the not too

<sup>15</sup> On 30 November 1973, the United Nations adopted an *International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid*. See also, concerning the consequences of *apartheid* on employment: Seventh Regional Conference of the ILO in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 29 November to 7 December 1988.

<sup>16</sup> Paul VI, Allocution to the U.N. Special Committee on *Apartheid*, 22 May 1974 in AAS LXVI (1974), 342-346; John Paul II, Allocution to the same Committee, 7 July 1984, in OR, English ed., no. 29, 16.7.1984, 11-12; Discourse to the Civil Authorities and Diplomatic Corps in Yaoundé, 12 August 1985, No. 13, in OR, English ed., no. 35, 2.9.1985, 8-9.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Discourse of John Paul II to the Diplomatic Corps, 11 January 1986, No. 4, in OR, English ed., no. 3, 20.1.1986, 1-4.



distant past by the invaders, or tolerated by the colonial powers. It is also not uncommon to find these aboriginal peoples marginalized with respect to the country's development.

In many cases, their situation is similar in fact, if not in law, to segregationist regimes in that they are relegated to limited territories or subjected to statutes which the new occupants of the country have, in most cases, unilaterally granted to them. The right of the first occupants to land, and a social and political organization which would allow them to preserve their cultural identity, while remaining open to others, must be guaranteed. With regard to indigenous peoples, often numerically small, justice demands that two opposing risks be avoided: on the one hand, that they be relegated to reservations as if they were to live there forever, trapped in their past; on the other hand, that they be forced to assimilate without any concern for their right to maintain their own identity. Solutions are indeed difficult, and history cannot be rewritten. However, forms of coexistence can be found which take into consideration the vulnerability of autochthonous groups and offer them the possibility of maintaining their own identity within the greater whole to which they belong with all due rights. The greater or lesser degree of their integration into the surrounding society must be made on the basis of a free choice.<sup>18</sup>

11. Other States still have varying traces of discriminatory legislation which limit to one degree or another the civil and religious rights of

<sup>18</sup> Cf. five discourses of John Paul II:

— to the Indians of Ecuador. in Latacunga. 31 January 1985 in OR, English ed., no. 9, 4.3.1985, 5-10;

— to the Indians of Peru. in Cuzco. 3 February 1985, in OR, English ed., no. 12, 25.3.1985, 3-4;

— to the aborigines of Australia, in Alice Springs. 29 November 1986, in OR, English ed., no. 49, 9.12.1986, 16-18;

— to the North American Indians. in Phoenix. 14 September 1987 in OR, English ed., no. 38, 21.9.1987, 21-22;

— to the Indians of Canada. in Fort Simpson. 20 September 1987, in OR, English ed., no. 40, 5.10.1987, 11-12.

— Cf. also John Paul II. 1989 World Day of Peace Message: "To Build Peace. Respect Minorities".

those belonging to *religious minorities* which are generally of *different ethnic groups* from those of the majority of the citizens. On the basis of such religious and ethnic criteria, even though they are granted hospitality, the members of these minorities cannot, if they request it, obtain citizenship in the country where they live and work. It also happens that conversion to the Christian faith brings about a loss of citizenship. These persons, at any rate, remain second-class citizens with regard, for instance, to higher education, to housing, to employment and especially to public and administrative services in local communities. In this context, mention must also be made of those situations where a particular religious law, with its consequences for day-to-day living, is imposed on other communities within the same country, as, for example, the "sharia" in some predominantly Muslim States.

12. Some mention must also be made of *ethnocentricity*. This is a very widespread attitude whereby a people has a natural tendency to defend its identity by denigrating that of others to the point that, at least symbolically, it refuses to recognize their full human quality. This behaviour undoubtedly responds to an instinctive need to protect the values, beliefs and customs of one's own community which seem threatened by those of other communities. However, it is easy to see to what extremes such a feeling can lead if it is not purified and relativized through a reciprocal openness, thanks to objective information and mutual exchanges. *The rejection of differences* can lead to that form of cultural annihilation which sociologists have called "ethnocide" and which does not tolerate the presence of others except to the extent that they allow themselves to be assimilated into the *dominant culture*.

Rarely do the political boundaries of a country coincide perfectly with those of peoples. Almost all States, whether of recent or ancient foundation, experience the problems of diverse minorities settled within their borders. *When the rights of minorities* are not respected, antagonisms can take on the aspect of ethnic conflicts and give rise to racist and tribal reflexes. The disappearance of colonial regimes or situations of racial discrimination has therefore not always meant the end of racism



who benefit from the indifference or active complicity of the authorities. These are new forms of slavery which are frequent in the Third World. There is no great difference between those who consider others their inferiors because of their race, and those who treat their fellow citizens as inferiors by exploiting them as a work force. In such situations, the universal principles of social justice must be applied effectively. Among other things, this would also prevent the over-privileged classes from sinking to actual "racist" feelings toward their own fellow citizens and finding in them a further alibi for maintaining unjust structures.

14. The phenomenon of *spontaneous racism* is still more widespread, especially in countries with high rates of immigration. This can be observed amongst the inhabitants of these countries with regard to *foreigners*, especially when the latter differ in their ethnic origin or religion. The prejudices which these *immigrants* frequently encounter risk setting into motion reactions which can find their first manifestation in an exaggerated nationalism — which goes beyond legitimate pride in one's own country or even superficial chauvinism. Such reactions can subsequently degenerate into xenophobia or even racial hatred. These reprehensible attitudes have their origin in the *irrational fear* which the presence of others and confrontation with differences can often provoke. Such attitudes have as their goal, whether acknowledged or not, to deny the other the right to be what he or she is and, in any case, to be "in our country". Of course, there can be problems of maintaining a balance between peoples, cultural identity and security. These problems, however, must be solved with respect for others and confidence in the enrichment that comes from human diversity. Some large countries of the New World have found increased vitality in the melting-pot of cultures. On the other hand, the ostracism and the harassment of which *refugees and immigrants* are too often the object are deplorable. The result is that they are forced to cling to one another, to live, so to speak, in a ghetto which slows down their integration into the society which has received them administratively but which has not welcomed them in a fully human way.

in States which have become independent in Africa and Asia. Within the artificial borders left behind by the colonial powers, cohabitation by ethnic groups with different traditions, languages, cultures and even religions, often runs up against obstacles of mutual hostilities that can be characterized as racist. *Tribal oppositions* at times endanger if not peace, at least the pursuit of the common good of the society as a whole. They also create difficulties for the life of the Churches and the acceptance of Pastors from other ethnic groups. Even when the constitutions of these countries formally affirm the equality of all citizens with regard to one another and before the law, it is not rare that some ethnic groups dominate others and refuse them the full enjoyment of their rights.<sup>19</sup> At times, such situations have, indeed, led to bloody conflicts which leave lasting impressions. Still again, at times, public authorities have not hesitated to utilize ethnic rivalries to distract people from internal problems to the great detriment of the common good and of justice which they are called to serve.

It is important to mention some analogous situations, such as when, for complex reasons, entire populations are kept uprooted, as refugees from the country where they had legitimately settled. They are often homeless, and, in any case, without a country. There are other peoples who, although living in their own land, are subjected to humiliating conditions.<sup>20</sup>

13. It is not an exaggeration to say that within a given country or ethnic group forms of *social racism* can exist. For example, great masses of poor peasants can be treated without any regard for their dignity and their rights, be driven from their lands, exploited and kept in a situation of economic and social inferiority by all-powerful land owners

<sup>19</sup> With regard to Africa, see Paul VI, *Africae terrarum* Message to the Catholic Hierarchy in Africa, 20 October 1967, in AAS LIX (1967), 1073-1097; Discourse to the Parliament of Uganda, 1 August 1969, in AAS LXI (1969), 584-585; Discourse to the Diplomatic Corps, 14 January 1978, AAS, LXX (1978), 172-173; John Paul II, Discourse to the Authorities and to the Diplomatic Corps in Yaoundé, 12 August 1985, nos. 11 and 12, in OR, English ed., no. 35, 29.1985, 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> In particular, Pope John Paul II has often recalled that the Palestinian people have the right to a country as do the Jewish people.



15. Amongst the manifestations of systematic racial distrust, specific mention must once again be made of *anti-Semitism*. If anti-Semitism has been the most tragic form that racist ideology has assumed in our century, with the horrors of the Jewish "holocaust",<sup>21</sup> it has unfortunately not yet entirely disappeared. As if some had nothing to learn from the crimes of the past, certain organizations, with branches in many countries, keep alive the anti-Semite racist myth, with the support of networks of publications. Terrorist acts which have Jewish persons or symbols as their target have multiplied in recent years and show the radicalism of such groups. Anti-Zionism—which is not of the same order, since it questions the State of Israel and its policies—serves at times as a screen for anti-Semitism, feeding on it and leading to it. Furthermore, some countries impose undue harassments and restrictions on the free emigration of Jews.

16. There is widespread fear that new and as yet unknown forms of racism might appear. This at times is expressed concerning the use that could be made of "techniques of artificial procreation" through *in vitro* fertilization and the possibilities of genetic manipulation. Although such fears are still in part hypothetical, they nonetheless draw the attention of humanity to the new and disquieting dimension of man's power over man and thus to the urgent need for corresponding ethical principles. It is important that laws determine as soon as possible the limits which must not be surpassed so that such "techniques" will not fall into the hands of abusive and irresponsible powers who might seek to "produce" human beings selected according to racial criteria or any other characteristic. This would give rise to a resurgence of the deadly myth of *eugenic racism*, the misdeeds of which the world has already experienced.<sup>22</sup> A similar abuse would be to prevent the

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Discourse of John Paul II during his visit to the Synagogue of Rome on 13 April 1986 in *OR*, English ed., no. 16, 21.4.1986, 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Instruction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation, *Donum Vitae*, 22 February 1987, III: "Eugenism and forms of discrimination between human beings could come to be legitimized: this would constitute an act of violence and a serious offence to the equality, dignity and fundamental rights of the human person".

birth of human beings of one or another social or ethnic category through abortion and sterilization campaigns. Wherever the absolute respect for life and its transmission according to the Creator's intentions disappears, it is to be feared that all moral restraint on a person's power will also disappear, including the power to fashion humanity in the derisive image of these apprentice sorcerers.

In order firmly to reject such actions, and eradicate racist behaviour of all sorts from our societies as well as the mentalities that lead to it, we must hold strongly to convictions about the dignity of every human person and the unity of the human family. Morality flows from these convictions. Laws can contribute to protecting the basic application of this morality, but they are not enough to change the human heart. The moment has come to listen to the message of the Church which gives body to and lays the foundation for such convictions.



PART III  
THE DIGNITY OF EVERY RACE  
AND THE UNITY OF HUMANKIND:  
THE CHRISTIAN VISION

17. The Christian doctrine about the human person has developed from and is enlightened by biblical Revelation, as well as from a continuous confrontation with the aspirations and experiences of peoples. This doctrine has inspired the Church's attitudes, as we have already mentioned, throughout history. It has been clearly taken up and synthesized for our times by the Second Vatican Council in several key texts. The following passage is an example of this: "All men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all men and it must be given ever greater recognition.

"Undoubtedly not all men are alike as regards physical capacity and intellectual and moral powers. But forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design".<sup>23</sup>

This doctrine has frequently been repeated by the Popes and bishops. For example, Paul VI specified, when speaking to the Diplomatic Corps: "For those who believe in God, all human beings, even the least privileged, are sons of the universal Father who created them in his image and guides their destinies with thoughtful love. The fatherhood of God means brotherhood among men: this is a strong

<sup>23</sup> Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 29; cf. also *ibid.*, no. 60 (for the right to culture); cf. Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, no. 5; Decree *Ad Gentes*, no. 15; Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, no. 1 (for the right to education).

point of Christian universalism, a common point, too, with other great religions and an axiom of the highest human wisdom of all times, that which involves the promotion of man's dignity".<sup>24</sup>

John Paul II in turn reaffirmed: "Man's creation by God 'in his own image' confers upon every human person an eminent dignity; it also postulates the fundamental equality of all human beings. For the Church, this equality, which is rooted in man's being, acquires the dimension of an altogether special brotherhood through the Incarnation of the Son of God. ... In the Redemption effected by Jesus Christ the Church sees a further basis of the rights and duties of the human person. Hence every form of discrimination based on race ... is absolutely unacceptable".<sup>25</sup>

18. *This principle of the equal dignity of all persons*, of whatever race, already finds solid support in the sciences and a firm basis in philosophy, ethics and religions in general. The Christian faith respects this intuition, this affirmation, and rejoices in it. It represents a considerable convergence among the *various disciplines* which reinforces the convictions of the majority of people of good will and allows universal Declarations, Conventions and International Agreements for the protection of human rights and the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination to be drawn up. It is in this sense that Paul VI spoke about "an axiom of the highest human wisdom of all times".

Nevertheless, these approaches are not all of the same order and their respective levels must be respected.

*The sciences*, on their part, contribute to dispelling much of the false evidence used to justify racist behaviour, or to delay necessary changes. According to a declaration prepared at UNESCO on 8 June

<sup>24</sup> Discourse to the Diplomatic Corps, 14 January 1978: AAS LXX (1978), 172. Many other previous texts expressed similar thoughts, in particular: Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, nos. 47 and 63; Message of Paul VI to the peoples of Africa read before the Ugandan Parliament on 1 August 1969: AAS LXI (1969), 580-586; Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* of Paul VI, no. 16: AAS LXIII (1971), 413; Message for the 1971 World Day of Peace: "Every man is my brother".

<sup>25</sup> Allocution of John Paul II to the U.N. Special Committee against *Apartheid*, 7 July 1984, in OR, English ed., no. 29, 16.7.1984, 11-12.



1951 by a group of prominent scientists: "Experts generally recognize that all human persons living today belong to the same species, *homo sapiens*, and that they descended from one same stock".<sup>26</sup> But the sciences are not sufficient to substantiate anti-racist convictions. Because of their methods, they do not allow themselves to say the last word about the human person and his or her destiny, and to define universal moral rules of a binding nature for consciences.

*Philosophy, ethics and the major religions* are interested in the origin, nature and destiny of human beings on a level that escapes scientific research left to its own means. They seek to base unconditional respect for all human life on a more decisive level than the observing of customs and the consensus of an age, which is always fragile and ambiguous. They can therefore, in the best of cases, adopt a universalism which Christian doctrine bases solidly on Revelation received from God.

19. According to biblical Revelation, God *created the human being—man and woman—in his image and likeness*.<sup>27</sup> This bond between the human person and the Creator, provides the basis of his or her dignity and fundamental inalienable rights of which God is the guarantor. To these personal rights obviously correspond duties toward others. Neither the individual nor society, the State nor any human institution can reduce a person, or a group of persons, to the status of an object.

The belief that God is at the origin of humankind transcends, unifies and gives meaning to all the partial observations that science can amass about the process of evolution and the development of societies. It is the most radical affirmation of the equal dignity of all persons in God. With this concept, a person eludes all those manipulations of human powers and of ideological propaganda which seek to justify the servitude of the weakest. Faith in the one God, Creator and Redeemer of all humankind made in his image and likeness, constitutes the absolute and unescapable negation of any racist ideologies.

<sup>26</sup> *Le racisme devant la science*, UNESCO, Paris, 1973, no. 1, 369.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-2; 9:6 — it is forbidden to shed the blood of man created in God's image.

It is still necessary to draw out all the consequences of this: "We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image".<sup>28</sup>

20. Revelation, indeed, insists just as much on the *unity of the human family*: all persons created in God have the same *origin*. Whatever may, throughout history, have been their dispersion or the accentuation of their differences, they are *destined* to form one sole family according to God's plan established "in the beginning". In the first man, the unity of all humankind, present and future, is typologically affirmed. Adam—from *adama*, the earth—is a collective singular. It is the human species which is the "image of God". Eve, the first woman, is called "the mother of all those who live",<sup>29</sup> and from the first couple "the human race was born",<sup>30</sup> and everyone is of the "family of Adam".<sup>31</sup> As St. Paul told the Athenians: "From one single stock he ... created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth", and so everyone can say with the poet that they are of God's same "race".<sup>32</sup>

The choice of the Jewish people, does not contradict this universalism. It was a divine pedagogy which wanted to assure the preservation and development of faith in the Eternal, who is unique, thus giving a basis to the ensuing responsibilities. If the people of Israel were aware of a special bond with God, they also affirmed that there was a Covenant of the entire human race with him<sup>33</sup> and that, even in the Covenant made with them, all peoples are called to salvation: "All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you", God told Abraham.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, no. 5, quoted in the Discourse of John Paul II to Muslim Youth in Casablanca, 19 August 1985, which adds: "This obedience to God and love for man must lead us to respect human rights, those rights which are the expression of God's will and the requirement of human nature just as God created it". OR, English ed., no. 37, 16.9.1985, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Gen 3:20.

<sup>30</sup> Tb 8:6.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Gen 5:1.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ac 17:26, 28, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Gen 9:11 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Gen 12:3; Ac 3:25.



21. The *New Testament* reinforces this revelation of the dignity of all persons, their basic unity and their duty of fraternity, since all are equally saved and gathered together by Christ.

The *mystery of the Incarnation* shows in what esteem God held human nature since, in his Son, he wanted to unite it to his own nature without any confusion or separation. In a certain way, Christ has united himself with each person.<sup>35</sup> Christ is, in a unique way, "the image of the invisible God".<sup>36</sup> He alone manifests perfectly God's being in the humble human condition which he freely assumed.<sup>37</sup> This is why he is the "new Adam", the prototype of a new humanity "the eldest of many brothers"<sup>38</sup> in whom the divine likeness disfigured by sin is restored. By becoming flesh amongst us, the eternal Word of God "humbled himself to share in our humanity",<sup>39</sup> in order to make us share in his divinity. The work of salvation carried out by God in Christ is universal. It is no longer destined only for the chosen people. It is the whole "race of Adam" which is involved and which is "recapitulated" in Christ, according to the expression of St. Irenaeus.<sup>40</sup> With Christ, all are called to enter, through faith, into the definitive Covenant with God,<sup>41</sup> over and above circumcision, the Law of Moses and race.

This Covenant is fulfilled and sealed through the sacrifice of Christ who obtained *the Redemption* of a sinful humanity. Through Christ's cross was abolished religious division—which had hardened into ethnic division—between the people of the promise that was already fulfilled and the rest of humanity. The pagans who were until that time "excluded from membership of Israel, aliens with no part in the covenants with their Promise ...", have been brought very close, by the

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

<sup>36</sup> *Col* 1:15; cf. *2 Cor* 4:4.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ph* 2:6-7.

<sup>38</sup> *Rm* 8:29.

<sup>39</sup> *Roman Missal*, Offertory.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Adversus Haereses*, III, 22, 3: "The Lord is the one who recapitulated in himself all the scattered nations descended from Adam, all the languages and generations of men including Adam himself". Irenaeus was inspired by St. Paul: *Ep*. 1:10; *Col* 1:20.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Rm* 1:16-17.

blood of Christ".<sup>42</sup> It is he who had "made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility ...".<sup>43</sup> Out of the Jew and the pagan, Christ wanted "to create one single New Man in himself". This New Man is the collective name of humanity redeemed by him, with all the diversity of its components, reconciled with God in a single Body which is the Church, through the Cross which killed hostility.<sup>44</sup> In this way, now "... there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised or the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything".<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the believer, whatever his previous condition may have been, has put on the New Man who is constantly renewed in the image of his Creator. And Christ gathers together in unity the scattered children of God.<sup>46</sup>

Christ's message envisages not only a spiritual fraternity. It presupposes and entails very important *concrete behaviour* in daily life. Christ himself gave the example. The narrow context of Palestine where nearly all his earthly life took place did not give him many opportunities to meet people from another race. However, he accepted all the categories of persons with whom he came into contact. He did not hesitate to spend time with the Samaritans,<sup>47</sup> to refer to them as an example,<sup>48</sup> although they were despised by the Jews who treated them as heretics. He made all who were marginalized in one way or another benefit from his salvation: the sick, sinners—men and women, prostitutes, publicans, pagans such as the Syro-phoenician woman.<sup>49</sup> Only those were left aside who excluded themselves because of their own self-sufficiency, such as certain Pharisees. And he warned us solemnly: we will be judged on the attitude we have toward the

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ep. 2:11-13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 2:14.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 2:15-16.

<sup>45</sup> Col 3:11; cf. Ga 3:28.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Jn 11:52.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jn 4:4-42.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Lk 10:33.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Mk 7:24.



stranger or the least of his brothers; for, without our even knowing it, it is Christ himself whom we meet in them.<sup>50</sup>

*Christ's resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost* ushered in this new humanity. Incorporation into this new humanity comes through faith and Baptism, following the preaching of and free adherence to the Gospel. This Good News is meant for all races. "Make disciples of all the nations".<sup>51</sup>

22. The *Church* has therefore the vocation in the midst of the world to be the people redeemed and reconciled with God and amongst themselves, forming "one body, one spirit in Christ",<sup>52</sup> and giving witness before all to respect and love. "Every nation under heaven" was symbolically represented in Jerusalem at Pentecost,<sup>53</sup> the antitype and victory over the dispersion of Babel.<sup>54</sup> As Peter said, when he was called to the house of the pagan, Cornelius, "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean ... God shows no partiality ...".<sup>55</sup> The Church has the sublime vocation of realizing, first of all within herself, the unity of humankind over and above any ethnic, cultural, national, social or other divisions in order to signify precisely that such divisions are now obsolete, having been abolished by the cross of Christ. In doing this, the Church contributes toward promoting the fraternal coexistence of all peoples. The Second Vatican Council has rightly defined the Church as "sacrament, a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men" <sup>56</sup> since "both Christ and the Church ... transcend the distinctions of race and nationality".<sup>57</sup> Within the Church "no inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or sex" should exist.<sup>58</sup> This is indeed the meaning of the word "Catholic"—i. e. universal, which

<sup>50</sup> Mt 25:38, 40.

<sup>51</sup> Mt 28:19.

<sup>52</sup> Eucharistic Prayer III.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Ac 2:5.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Gen 11:1-9.

<sup>55</sup> Ac 10:28, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Decree *Ad Gentes*, no. 8.

<sup>58</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no. 32.

is one of the marks of the Church. As the Church spreads, this catholicity becomes more manifest. The Church actually gathers together Christ's faithful from all the nations of the world, from the most diverse cultures, who are led by Pastors from their own peoples, all sharing the same faith and the same charity.

The repeated failures due to people's insensibility and the sins of her own members can in no way weaken what the Church has the vocation and mission to accomplish by divine mandate. They confirm rather that it is not a human undertaking but a plan that surpasses merely human forces. In any case, it is important that *Christians* become more aware that they are all called to be a sign in the world. Should they banish all forms of racial, ethnic, national or cultural discrimination from their conduct, the world would recognize better the newness of the Gospel of reconciliation. In the Church, they must anticipate the eschatological and definitive community of the Kingdom of God.

23. The Christian teaching, which has just been presented, has in fact *serious moral consequences* which can be summarized in three key words: respect for differences, fraternity, solidarity.

If people, and human communities, are all equal in dignity, that does not mean that they all have, at a given moment, equal physical abilities, cultural endowments, intellectual and moral strengths or that they are at the same stage of development. Equality does not mean uniformity. It is important to *recognize the diversity and complementarity* of one another's cultural riches and moral qualities. Equality of treatment therefore implies a certain *recognition of differences* which minorities themselves demand in order to develop according to their own specific characteristics, in respect for others and for the common good of society and the world community. No human group, however, can boast of having a natural superiority over others,<sup>50</sup> or of exercising any discrimination that affects the basic rights of the person.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of John XXIII, 11 April 1963, which denounces, following Pius XI, the scandal constituted by the persistence of ideologies according to which "some human beings or nations are superior to others by nature".



Mutual respect is not enough: *fraternity* must be established. The dynamism necessary for such fraternity is none other than charity, which is also very much at the heart of the Christian message: "Every man is my brother".<sup>60</sup> Charity is not just a simple feeling of benevolence or pity. It aims at enabling each and every one to benefit effectively from worthy conditions of life due in justice: for survival, freedom and development in all circumstances. It makes a person see him or herself, in Christ, in every other man and woman, according to the divine precept: "Love your neighbor as yourself".

Recognition of fraternity is not enough. One must go on to effective *solidarity* between all, in particular between rich and poor. Pope John Paul II's recent Encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), insists on interdependence "sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world ... and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue', is solidarity".<sup>61</sup> Peace among people and nations is at stake: "*Opus solidaritatis pax*, peace is the fruit of solidarity".<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Theme of the 1971 World Day of Peace.

<sup>61</sup> Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 38.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 39.

#### PART IV

### CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANS, IN UNION WITH OTHERS, TO PROMOTING FRATERNITY AND SOLIDARITY AMONGST RACES

24. Racial prejudice, which denies the equal dignity of all the members of the human family and blasphemes the Creator, can only be eradicated by going to its roots, where it is formed: *in the human heart*. It is from the heart that just or unjust behaviour is born,<sup>63</sup> according to whether persons are open to God's will—in the natural order and in the Living Word—or whether they close themselves up in those egoisms dictated by fear or the instinct of domination. It is the way we look at others that must be purified. Harboured racist thoughts and entertaining racist attitudes is a sin against the specific message of Christ for whom one's "neighbour" is not only a person from my tribe, my milieu, my religion or my nation: it is every person that I meet along the way.

It is not through external means—legislation or scientific proofs—that racial prejudice can be uprooted. It is indeed not enough that laws prohibit or punish all types of racial discrimination: these laws can easily be gotten around if the community for which they are intended does not fully accept them. To overcome discrimination, a community must interiorize *the values* that inspire just laws and live out, in day-to-day life, the conviction of the equal dignity of all.

25. A change of heart cannot occur without *strengthening spiritual convictions* regarding respect for other races and ethnic groups. The Church, on its part, contributes to forming consciences by clearly pre-

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Mk 7:21-23.



senting the entire *Christian doctrine* on this subject. She particularly asks pastors, preachers, teachers and catechists to explain the true teaching of Scripture and Tradition about the origin of all people in God, their final common destiny in the Kingdom of God, the value of the precept of fraternal love, and the total incompatibility between racist exclusivism and the universal calling of all to the same salvation in Jesus Christ. *Recourse to the Bible* to justify *a posteriori* any racist prejudice must be firmly denounced. The Church has never authorized any such deformed interpretation of Scripture.

The Church's persuasive task is equally carried out through the *witness* of life of Christians: respect for foreigners, acceptance of dialogue, sharing, mutual aid and collaboration with other ethnic groups. The world needs to see this *parable in action* among Christians in order to be convinced by Christ's message. Of course, Christians themselves must humbly admit that members of the Church, on all levels, have not always lived out this teaching coherently throughout history. Nonetheless, they must continue to proclaim what is right while seeking to "do" the truth.<sup>26</sup>

26. Doctrine and examples by themselves are not sufficient. The *victims of racism*, wherever they may be, must be *defended*. Acts of discrimination amongst persons and peoples for racist or other reasons—religious or ideological—and which lead to contempt and to the phenomena of exclusion, must be denounced and brought to light without hesitation and strongly rejected in order to promote equitable behaviour, legislative dispositions and social structures.

An increasing number of people have become more sensitive to this injustice and are opposing all forms of racism. They may be doing so out of religious conviction or for humanitarian reasons. This inspires them at times to stand up against repression by certain powers, or at least against the pressures of a sectarian public opinion, and to face scorn and imprisonment. Christians do not hesitate, with the

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Jn 3:21.

necessary discernment, to assume their responsibilities in this struggle for the dignity of their brothers and sisters, always showing a preference for non-violent means.<sup>66</sup>

27. In her denunciations of racism, however, the Church tries to maintain an *evangelical attitude* with regard to all. This is undoubtedly her particular gift. While she is not afraid to examine lucidly the evils of racism and disapprove of them, even to those who are responsible for them, she also seeks to understand how these people could have reached that point. She would like to help them find a reasonable way out of the impasse in which they find themselves. Just as God does not take pleasure at the death of a sinner,<sup>67</sup> the Church aspires more to helping them if they consent to remedy the injustice committed. She is also concerned with preventing victims from having recourse to violent struggle and thus falling into a racism similar to that which they are rejecting. The Church wishes to be a place for reconciliation and does not want to heighten opposition. She invites all to act in such a way that hatred be banished. She preaches love. She patiently prepares a change in mentality without which structural changes would be in vain.

28. In the formation of a non-racist conscience, *the role of schools* is primordial. The Magisterium of the Church has always highlighted the importance of an education that stresses what is common to all. It is also important to show that others, precisely because they are

<sup>66</sup> Instruction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Christian Freedom and Liberation*, 22 March 1986, nos. 78, 79. "Situations of grave injustice require the courage to make far-reaching reforms and to suppress unjustifiable privileges. But those who discredit the path of reform and favour the myth of revolution not only foster the illusion that the abolition of an evil situation is in itself sufficient to create a more humane society; they also encourage the setting up of totalitarian regimes. The fight against injustice is meaningless unless it is waged with a view to establishing a new social and political order in conformity with the demands of justice. Justice must already mark each stage of the establishment of this new order. There is a morality of means.... Indeed, because of the continual development of the technology of violence and the increasingly serious dangers implied in its recourse, that which today is termed 'passive resistance' shows a way more conformable to moral principles and having no less prospects for success".

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Exk 18:32.



different, can enrich our experience. While it is normal, for instance, for *history* to cultivate esteem for one's country, it is regrettable that it can lead to a blind chauvinism and to according only a secondary place to the achievements of other nations, considered inferior. As has already been done in some countries, it may be necessary to revise scholastic texts which falsify history, pass over the historical misdeeds of racism in silence or justify the principles behind it. In the same way, *civic education* must be conceived in such a way so as to uproot discriminatory reflexes toward persons belonging to other ethnic groups. More and more, the school provides the occasion for the children of immigrants to mix with the children of the receiving country. Hopefully this will provide an opportunity to help both groups to know one another better and to prepare a more harmonious coexistence.

In addition, many *young people* today seem to be less prone to racial prejudice. This provides a hope for the future which must be fostered. On the other hand, it is regrettable to see other young people organized into gangs in order to commit acts of violence against certain racial groups, or turning sports events into chauvinistic demonstrations which end up in vandalism or massacres. Unless they are ideologically nurtured, racial prejudices most often come from ignorance about others which gives full vent to imagination and engenders fear. There is no lack of occasions today for accustoming young people to respect and esteem for differences: international exchanges, travel, language courses, the twinning of cities, vacation camps, international schools, sports and cultural activities.

29. Persuasion and education must be coupled with the will to translate respect for other ethnic groups into *legislation* and into the structures and functioning of regional or national institutions.

Racism will disappear from legal texts only when it dies in people's hearts. However, there must also be direct action in the legislative field. Wherever discriminatory laws still exist, the citizens who are aware of the perversity of this ideology must assume their responsibilities so that, through democratic processes, legislation will be put in harmony

with the moral law. Within a given State, *the law must be equal* for all citizens without distinction. A dominant group, whether numerically in the majority or minority, can never do as it likes with the basic rights of other groups. It is important for ethnic, linguistic or religious *minorities* who live within the borders of the same State, to enjoy recognition of the same inalienable rights as other citizens, including the right to live together according to their specific cultural and religious characteristics. Their choice to be integrated into the surrounding culture must be a free one.<sup>67</sup>

The *status* of other citizens or persons, such as *immigrants or refugees*, or temporary *foreign workers*, is often more precarious. It is all the more urgent that their basic human rights be recognized and guaranteed. It is precisely these people who are most often the victims of racial prejudice. The law must take care to check any act of aggressivity toward them as well as the conduct of anyone—employers, functionaries or private individuals—who attempts to subject these more vulnerable persons to various forms of exploitation, be it economic or other.

Of course, it is up to the public powers who are responsible for the common good to determine the number of refugees or immigrants which their country can accept, taking into consideration its possibilities for employment and its perspectives for development but also the urgency of the need of other people. The State must also see to it that a serious social imbalance is not created which would be accompanied by sociological phenomena of rejection such as those which can occur when an overly heavy concentration of persons from another culture is perceived as directly threatening the identity and customs of the local community that receives them. In the apprenticeship to difference, everything cannot be expected all at once, but the possibilities for new ways of living together and even of mutual enrichment must be considered. Once a foreigner is admitted to a country

<sup>67</sup> Cf. John Paul II, 1989 World Day of Peace Message: "To Build Peace. Respect Minorities".



and accepts the rules of public order, he or she has the right to protection by the law for the entire duration of his or her stay there.

In the same way, *labour legislation* should not permit that, for equal work, non-citizens who have found employment in a country should suffer discrimination compared to native-born workers with regard to salary, social security and old age insurance. It is precisely in work relations that a better knowledge about, and mutual acceptance of, persons from different ethnic and cultural origins should grow, and a human solidarity be built which is capable of overcoming earlier prejudices.

30. *On the international level*, it is important to continue to draw up *juridical instruments to overcome racism* and, above all, to make them fully effective.

After the excesses of Nazism, the *United Nations* committed itself wholeheartedly to respect for persons and peoples.<sup>68</sup> An important *International Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination* was adopted by the Twentieth General Assembly of the United Nations on 21 December 1965. Among other things it stipulates that "there is no justification for racial discrimination in theory or in practice, anywhere" (Preamble, § 6). It also foresees legislative and judicial measures for enacting these provisions. It came into force on 4 January 1969, and the Holy See formally ratified it on 1st May of the same year.

The United Nations also decided on 2 November 1973 to proclaim a "*Decade to combat racism and racial discrimination*". Pope Paul VI immediately expressed "his lively interest" and "deep satisfaction" for this new initiative:

"This pre-eminently human undertaking will once again find the Holy See and the United Nations in close accord—albeit on different levels and with different means".<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> In particular: United Nations Charter of 26 June 1945, art. 1, § 3; Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, art. 1, 2, 16, 26; 11; United Nations Declaration on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination of 20 November 1963.

<sup>69</sup> Message to the United Nations for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1973, AAS LXV (1973), 673-677. On the occasion

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) has had, since 1946, a Commission on Human Rights, which, in turn, set up a Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

The Holy See's contribution continued through the participation of its delegations in several important manifestations of the Decade, and also in other inter-governmental meetings.<sup>70</sup> Since then a second "Decade" has been proclaimed (1983-1993).

31. These efforts by the Holy See, as a duly recognized member of the international community, must not be considered in isolation from the many and diverse efforts of *Christian communities* around the world nor from the personal commitment of Christians in civil institutions.

In this context, special mention could be made of the contribution of various episcopates across the world. One could cite, by way of example, the efforts made by the bishops of two countries which have experienced the problems of racism in a particularly acute, if albeit, different way.

The first example is that of the *United States of America* where racial discrimination had been maintained in the legislation of several States long after the Civil War (1861-1865). It was only in 1964 that the Civil Rights Law put an end to all forms of legally practiced discrimination. This represented a considerable step forward, matured over a long period and marked by numerous initiatives of a non-violent

of the above-mentioned Decade, in 1978, the Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax" published a brochure written by Rev. Roger Heckel, S.J., entitled: *Struggle against Racism: the Church's Contribution* which gave an overview of the issue.

<sup>70</sup> Particular mention could be made of:

- the International Conference on Namibia and Human Rights (Dakar, 5-8 January 1976);
- World Conference for action against *apartheid* (Lagos, 22-26 August 1977);
- the Meeting of governmental representatives charged with drawing up a draft Declaration on race and racial prejudice (UNESCO, Paris, 13-21 March 1978);
- the World Conference on the struggle against racism and racial discrimination (Geneva, 14-25 August 1978);
- the Second World Conference on the struggle against racism and racial discrimination (Geneva, 1-12 August 1983).



nature. The Catholic Church, especially through its extensive educational system, as well as through the declarations of the Episcopate, contributed to this process.<sup>71</sup>

Despite on-going efforts, much still remains to be done to eliminate completely racial prejudice and behaviour even in what can be considered one of the most interracial nations of the world. Proof of this is the statement adopted by the Administrative Board of the United States Catholic Conference on 26 March 1987 which pointed out the persistence of signs of racism in American society and condemned the activity of racist organizations such as the "Ku Klux Klan".

The second example is that of the Church in *South Africa*, faced with quite a different situation. The commitment of the South African Bishops, very often in close collaboration with the other Christian Churches, to racial equality and against *apartheid* is well known. In this regard, the following more recent documents of the Episcopal Conference could be mentioned: Pastoral Letter published on 1 May 1986, with the significant title: "Christian Hope in the Current Crisis"<sup>72</sup> and the Message addressed to the Head of State in August 1986.<sup>73</sup>

The situation in South Africa has given rise, across the world, to manifestations of solidarity with those who suffer because of *apartheid* as well as in support of ecclesial initiatives.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, these initiatives are frequently carried out ecumenically. Pope John Paul II, for his part, has repeatedly expressed his concern to the Catholic bishops of South Africa.<sup>75</sup>

On 10 September 1988, during his visit to Southern Africa, the Pope addressed all the bishops of the region, gathered in Harare, and,

<sup>71</sup> Cf. the most important document of the last decade: "Brothers and Sisters to Us: a Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day", published in 1979.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Origins*, vol. 16, no. 1, 11.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *OR*, English ed., no. 46, 17.11.1986, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Particular mention must be made of the letter which Cardinal Roger Etchegaray addressed to the Most Rev. Denis Hurley (then President of the Episcopal Conference) on 8 March 1986 in order to encourage the Bishops' efforts and envisage possible steps for overcoming the conflicts. Cf. *OR*, English ed., no. 17, 28.4.1986, 10.

<sup>75</sup> In particular on the occasion of *Ad limina* visits, the last of which took place in November 1987. Cf. Discourse of John Paul II in *OR*, English ed., no. 49, 7.12.1987, 2.

in particular, he said to them: "The question of *apartheid*, understood as a system of social, economic and political discrimination, engages your mission as teachers and spiritual guides of your flocks in a necessary and determined effort to counteract injustices and to advocate the replacement of that policy with one consistent with justice and love. I encourage you to continue to hold firmly and courageously to the principles which are at the basis of a peaceful and just response to the legitimate aspirations of all your fellow-citizens.

"I am aware of the attitudes expressed over the years by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, from the first corporate statement of 1952. The Holy See and I myself have drawn attention to the injustices of *apartheid* on numerous occasions, and most recently before an ecumenical group of Christian leaders from South Africa on a visit to Rome. To them I recalled that 'since reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel, Christians cannot accept structures of racial discrimination which violate human rights. But they must also realize that *a change of structures is linked to a change of hearts*. The changes they seek are rooted in the power of love, the Divine Love from which every Christian action and transformation springs' (Address to a Joint Ecumenical Delegation from South Africa, 27 May 1988)".<sup>76</sup>

32. Lastly, if racism troubles the peace of societies, it also poisons *international peace*. Where there is no justice on this major issue, violence and wars easily break out, and relations with neighbouring nations are disturbed.

In *relations between States*, a faithful application of the principles of the equal dignity of all peoples should exclude that certain nations be treated by others on the basis of racial prejudices. In tensions between States, certain political decisions of an adversary can be condemned, as well as unjust behaviour on one or another given point, or possibly the failure to keep a promise, but a people cannot be globally condemned for what is often the fault of its leaders. It is through

<sup>76</sup> OR, English ed., no. 37, 12.9.1988, 3.



such primary, irrational reactions that racial prejudices can get the upper hand and poison relations between nations in a lasting way.

The international community does not have any means of coercion at its disposal with regard to States which, through their legal system, still practice racial discrimination toward their own peoples. Nevertheless, international law does allow for *appropriate external pressure* to be exercised in their regard, to lead them, according to an organic and negotiated plan, to abolish racist legislation in favour of a legislation in conformity with human rights. However, the international community must take the greatest care in these delicate situations lest its action precipitate the country concerned into even more dramatic internal conflicts.

As for countries where serious racial tensions exist, they must become aware of the precariousness of a peace which does not rest on the consensus of all the society's components. History shows that the prolonged failure to recognize human rights almost always ends in outbreaks of uncontrollable violence. In order to establish an order based on law, *antagonist groups* must let themselves be won over by *supreme and transcendent values* which are the basis of all human communities and all peaceful relations among nations.

### 33. Conclusion.

The effort to overcome racism does in fact seem to have become an imperative which is broadly anchored in human consciences. The 1965 U.N. Convention expressed this conviction forcefully: "Any doctrine of superiority based on the difference between races is scientifically false, morally condemnable and socially unjust and dangerous".<sup>77</sup> The Church's doctrine affirms it with no less vigour: all racist theories are contrary to Christian faith and love. And yet, in sharp contrast to

<sup>77</sup> Par. 6 of the Preamble of the *International Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination*, which was adopted on 21 December 1965 and which entered into force on 4 January 1969.

this growing awareness of human dignity, racism still exists and continually reappears in different forms. It is a wound in humanity's side that mysteriously remains open. Everyone, therefore, must make efforts to heal it with great firmness and patience.

There is no question, however, of grouping everything together. There are different degrees and forms of racism. Racism as such is applied to contempt for a race characterized by its ethnic origin, colour or language. Today *apartheid* is the most marked and systematic form of this: change is absolutely necessary and urgent here. There are, however, many other forms of exclusion and rejection for which the reason invoked is not race, but which have similar effects. All forms of discrimination must be firmly opposed. It would be hypocritical to point a finger at only one country: rejection based on race exists on every continent. Many practice a discrimination in fact which they abhor in law.

Respect for every person and every race is respect for basic rights, dignity and fundamental equality. This does not mean erasing cultural differences. Instead it is important to educate to a positive appreciation of the complementary diversity of peoples. A well-understood pluralism resolves the problem of closed racism.

Racism and racist acts must be condemned. The application of legislative, disciplinary and administrative measures, or even appropriate external pressure, can be timely. Countries and international organizations have at their disposal a whole range of initiatives to be taken or encouraged. It is equally the responsibility of the citizens concerned, but without, for that reason, going so far as to replace violently one unjust situation with another injustice. Constructive solutions must always be envisaged.

The Catholic Church encourages all these efforts. The Holy See has its role to play in the context of its specific mission. All Catholics are invited to work concretely side by side with other Christians and all others who have this same respect for persons. The Church wants first and foremost to change racist attitudes, including those within her own communities. She appeals first of all to the moral and re-



ligious sense of people. She states exigencies but uses fraternal persuasion, her only weapon. She asks God to change hearts. She offers a place for reconciliation. She would like to see promoted initiatives of welcome, of exchange and of mutual assistance as regards men and women belonging to other ethnic groups. Her mission is to give soul to this immense undertaking of human fraternity. Despite the sinful limitations of her members, yesterday and today, she is aware of having been constituted a witness to Christ's charity on earth, a sign and instrument of the unity of humankind. The message she proposes to everyone, and which she tries to live is: "Every person is my brother or sister".

November 3, 1988

Liturgical memorial of St. Martin of Porres

(Born in Lima of a Spanish father and a black slave mother)

ROGER Card. ETCHEGARAY

*President*

*Pontifical Commission*

*"Iustitia et Pax"*

✠ JORGE MEJÍA

*Vice-President*

*Pontifical Commission*

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