



# THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

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

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Box 47, Folder 9, Vatican, Undated.

DRAFT STATEMENT

Cardinal O'Connor has shown himself to be a ~~weak~~ <sup>strong</sup> friend of the Jewish community of New York, a ~~powerful~~ voice against anti-Semitism, and a ~~strong~~ supporter of many of the causes to which Jews are devoted, especially that of Soviet Jewry. ( We therefore looked forward to the Cardinal's trip to Israel at the invitation of then-Prime Minister Shimon Peres. )

[ While we understand that the Cardinal was constrained by the Vatican's political policies for which he not responsible, we are nevertheless disquieted and even distressed by many press reports of his trip. ]

Some of the statements attributed to the Cardinal we perceive as insensitive; others, particularly in political areas, as lacking balance.

*Yael Vashen*  
The Cardinal appeared profoundly moved by his visit to the Holocaust Museum in Israel. However, the characterization attributed to him in the press that the greatest tragedy in Jewish history "may be an enormous gift that Judaism has given the world" made it appear that the sacrifice of six million people served some <sup>national purpose</sup> principle. We found this to be especially painful.

We do not wish to challenge here the several positions and statements of the Cardinal with which we disagree, nor to enumerate the others which resonate

favorably within our community and reflect the man whom we want to acknowledge as a friend. Suffice it to say that the press reports of the Cardinal's visit portrayed him as favoring PLO political positions while ignoring the refusal of all Arab states (except Egypt) to come to the peace table.

Nor did he make mention of the rejection by these Arab states of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 or the Camp David Accords, which are the basis of a settlement accepted by every United States Administration. The Cardinal was moved by the circumstances of the Arab refugees, as who is not? But he did not, in published statements, place this situation in the context of the deliberate policy of Arab states, some prodigiously wealthy, to keep these people as refugees and in a dependent condition, serving as pawns in a war which they continue to wage against Israel. Nor was any public recognition given to the undisputed fact that Israel has resettled more Jewish refugees from Arab lands than there are displaced Arabs.

Similarly, the Cardinal failed to acknowledge the incessant and deadly Palestinian terrorist war to which Israel has been constantly subjected.

Knowing the Cardinal, and respecting his office and person as we do, ~~we believe that the reports of his visit do not represent his attitudes or policies.~~ We look forward to the Cardinal's ~~reflective~~ views now that he is home.

*fully expected of*



## FEATURES

ONE OF THE leading American Catholic authorities on Jewish-Catholic relations said this week that Jews and Israelis who have been pressing Pope John Paul II to establish diplomatic relations with Israel are deluding themselves if they think that the Vatican will agree to exchange ambassadors with the Jewish state until the issue of Jerusalem is resolved in a manner satisfactory to the Holy See.

Dr. Eugene Fisher, the Washington-based executive secretary for the Vatican Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, told *The Jerusalem Post* that in an encyclical entitled *Redemptio Anno* issued in 1984, Pope John Paul II "focused on the need for international guarantees for Jerusalem, no matter who has sovereignty." Reiterating this need, Fisher said:

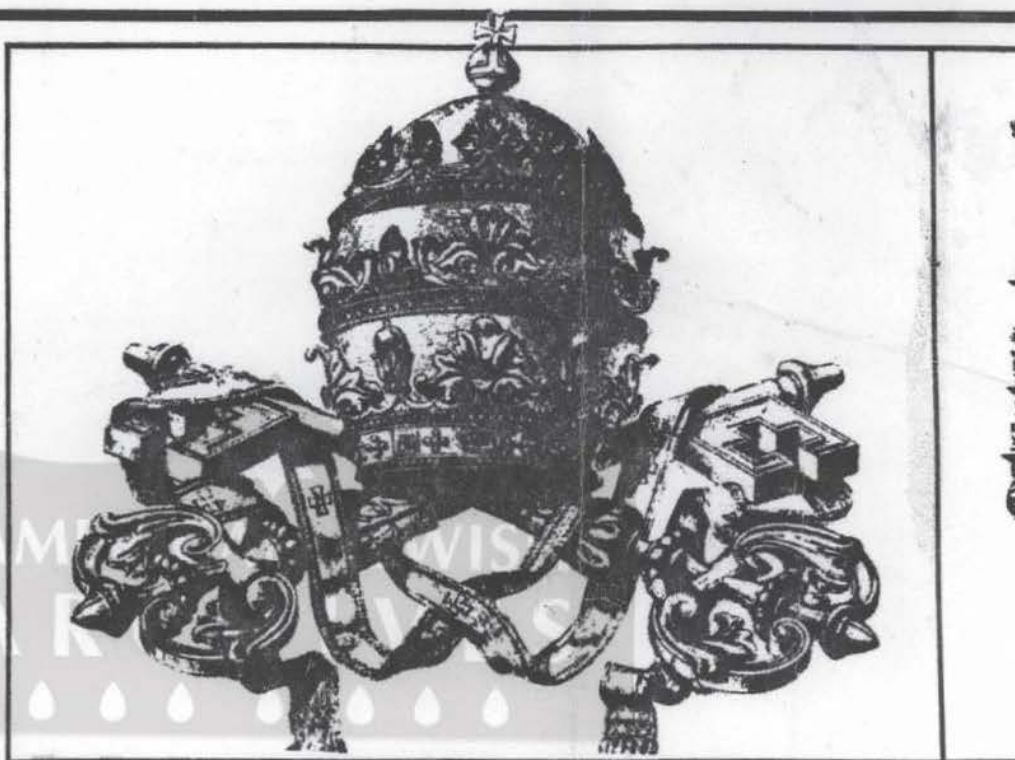
"As long as the issue of Jerusalem is unresolved, the Vatican will not play its most valuable card, which is a diplomatic exchange with Israel. I expect the Vatican will play its card in the context of an international resolution (of the Jerusalem question)."

Fisher's comments, coming in the wake of this week's controversy over the Vatican's insistence that New York Archbishop John Cardinal O'Connor cancel planned meetings in Jerusalem with President Chaim Herzog and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir vividly pointed up the reality that, despite 20 years of cordial dialogue between the Vatican and world Jewry, resulting in unprecedented Catholic efforts to uproot long-ingrained anti-Semitism within the Church, the two sides are still sharply divided over the issue of Israel.

The highlighting of the Vatican refusal to accord diplomatic recognition to Israel has led to a renewed debate in the Jewish community over whether Jews ought to press on with dialogue with Catholics on other issues of joint concern. A related controversy precipitated by the O'Connor imbroglio has raged this week between New York's Jewish Mayor Ed Koch, and Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, international affairs director of the American Jewish Committee.

Koch has upbraided Tanenbaum in the media, asserting that the rabbi sabotaged the chances of a successful O'Connor trip to Israel by stating in *The New York Times* that the cardinal was determined to play a special role in helping to solve the Middle East conflict by bringing Arab and Jew closer together.

Koch claimed that Tanenbaum betrayed O'Connor's confidence by going public with comments made in a private conversation, and that it was their appearance in *The Times* that had led pro-Arab officials in the Vatican Secretariat of State to order the



# The guest whose mi

The controversy over New York Cardinal John O'Connor's cur Jewish-Catholic relations. At the centre of this subject is the Va Israel. *The Jerusalem Post's* New York correspondent, Walter I see the present controversy as having different implications fo

cardinal to cancel his meetings with high Israeli officials.

Tanenbaum lashed back by noting that Koch had himself given an interview to the *Times* last August in which he divulged private comments made to him by O'Connor, supposedly expressing support for Vatican recognition of Israel. Nevertheless, other Jewish leaders here declined to express public support for Tanenbaum, privately expressing the opinion that he had blundered by divulging O'Connor's comments to the newspaper.

FISHER, WHO HAS met frequently over the years with Tanenbaum and other members of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, (IJCIC), the official body of world Jewry delegated to meet with Vatican leadership, is regarded by Jewish leaders as among the

Vatican spokesmen most sympathetic both to world Jewry and to the State of Israel.

In talking to *The Jerusalem Post*, Fisher acknowledged that "Catholics need to increase their understanding of the centrality of Israel to the Jewish religion and to world Jewry, just as we need to increase our understanding of the Shoah."

Admitting that he is aware of Jewish impatience with the position of the papacy on the question of Israel, Fisher remarked, "It should be noted, however, that there have been some significant advances over the years by the Vatican. When Pope Paul VI went there in 1965, he never once uttered the phrase 'State of Israel.' The present pope, by comparison, speaks about the State of Israel frequently, has condemned terrorism directed against Israel, and has acknowledged Israel's right to security and tranquillity, which as the pope said in

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Msr. Jorge Mejia

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS  
IN JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS  
FROM THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

~~(5th National Workshop, Dallas, April 22-24, 1980)~~

Jewish-Christian relations, and more specifically, relations between the RC Church and Judaism as a religion and as a people, are in a state of continuous flux. It is, I believe, wellnigh impossible, arbitrarily to choose a particular moment in the contemporary development and try to assess from there, backward and forward, what is presently happening at the international level, between two world religious communities so distinct, and yet so closely linked, with a hopefully by now past history of misunderstandings, mutual diffidence and persecution. This is, however, what I am asked to do in the present occasion.

The only feasible way to respond to such a challenge seems to be this: to describe the situation as it is now and as it is seen from the Catholic side, such being the necessary Vorverständnis of the speaker. This situation, as is always the case, will have clearer and darker aspects, positive and less positive developments. I shall endeavour to present them all, at least with a quick look at each. But then, I think, some thought should also be given to the perspectives which are (or should be) open for us in the contemporary plight of both our religious communities, with all their implications on each side, in the world of today. I shall not be able, for obvious reasons, to take up all the necessary subjects, nor even deal with the required completeness with those that I shall speak about. But such is the unavoidable limitation of any speech of this kind. The present one must be seen as a part or a chapter of an ongoing reflection, or evaluation, which belongs most certainly to the central tasks of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

1. A description. Where does one find the starting point for such description? It would be easy to compare the situation as it is in these early months of 1980 with what it was (or rather with what it was not) barely 15 years before, exactly at the end of the Second Vatican Council. But I do not think that this is what is expected from me here. Nevertheless, it is, I believe, both true to fact and healthy for all concerned, to assess, as it were with an eagle's view, the way we have already been able to walk. From almost no relations at all (I am always speaking of the international level) to the present complex network of relations, with an International Liaison Committee, two permanent representatives of important Jewish organisations in Rome and a constant flow of Jewish visitors to the Vatican, either individual or in groups, from the community leaders of all description to the rank and file, not to mention the representatives of the State of Israel.

Let me elaborate a bit on these three aspects. First, the International Liaison Committee. I earnestly hope that by now many people (not to say most) in both our constituencies do know about the existence of this very

significant and characteristic body. Created in 1971, after the very precise terms of reference of a Memorandum of Understanding, the ILC serves, since the beginning, as the meeting place of the Vatican and the main Jewish organisations, linked together for such purpose in a kind of ad hoc organisation called the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC). Its membership, from the Catholic side, intends to be as representative as possible and the persons appointed are approved by the Pope. Among them, besides the officers of the Commission (which include Bishop Torrella, Msgr. Moeller, Msgr. Salzmann and myself), there are two bishops, one North American (the Bishop of Brooklyn) and one German, and a group of experts. The Jewish side is also keen on wide representation, either from the different religious trends of present Judaism, or from various countries, including Israel and Latin America, or even from diverse personal backgrounds.

What does the ILC do? It could be said, rather peevishly, that it mostly talks. But even talking to each other, across the same table, after centuries (millenia) of abuse, silence, or talking at cross-purposes, happens to be an achievement in itself. And besides, what we talk about, as stated in the series of Press releases published after each meeting, is certainly not irrelevant. On the contrary, they are the subjects which each side deems important and necessary in the context of the mandate of the ILC. Thus, we have studied for eight years now, themes as complex and as divisive as the place of each religion in the teaching system of the other, people, religion and land in both traditions, human rights, religious freedom and education for dialogue. Even the geographical setting of the meetings is not indifferent. If Marseilles, Paris and Amsterdam may not seem very significant, Rome (1975), Jerusalem (1976), Toledo-Madrid (1978) and Regensburg in Western Germany are symbols in themselves. Even Venice (1977) was the occasion for the group to meet with whom was soon to become, for a short span of time, Pope John Paul I.

I would like to underline here that such meetings, with all their limitations, are anything but an academic exercise. It is not only that we speak clearly and frankly to each other, not avoiding what happens to be in each community, but especially in the Catholic one, a reason for concern to the other side (the Jewish one), as the present manifestations of antisemitism here and there in the world. We also try to set the foundations for different forms of collaboration, with due attention to the very diverse structure of the Jewish people, on one side, and the Catholic Church, on the other. And we are deeply interested in making the fact, content and results of such meetings, known to our respective constituencies by other means than the normal press release, without in any way diminishing the importance of this. The Catholic part, since the Toledo-Madrid meeting and given the relevance of its subject for the daily pastoral life of the Church, decided to send out to Episcopal Conferences and Patriarchal Synods around the world a substantial report on the proceedings. And this has been repeated ever since. We know, by the reactions received, how seriously such information is taken and how far it goes to supplement and even correct newspapers and agencies' reports where it really counts, that is at the level of bishops.

Secondly, the presence of the two permanent representatives of the World Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Rome somehow prolongs in time and widens in scope the functions of the International Liaison Committee. It is fairly obvious that there are many other



subjects, problems, concerns and queries, which can be dealt with quietly and fruitfully through such channels. And I refer particularly to problems which on principle would fall outside the competence of the Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism and therefore of the mandate of the ILC. But which presented through the channels just mentioned, can reach more easily and directly the competent offices of the Holy See. Even for the day to day relationship, it is a completely different thing to have to persons to speak to, who are also good friends, than merely to receive and write letters, as important and necessary as this literary genre is still in this audio-visual world, especially in the Vatican. I can only hope that such presence shall remain what it is and be eventually enlarged. The old diplomatic principle, in spite of everything, is still very much alive in this world.

Thirdly, the Jewish visitors to the Vatican. If I mention this fact here, it is not primarily for statistical reasons nor out of the wish to put a golden coating upon the problems and differences existing. On the contrary, our Jewish visitors are not necessarily yes-men, fascinated by what the Vatican is and means and utterly disposed to accept our explanations. They are and they are not. I must say to their credit that they come here, and such is the main reason for coming, with a high idea of the person and the ministry of the Pope, but at the same time willing to put questions and have their questions answered, as far as possible. I am not at all speaking of isolated facts, separate in time from one another. To give only one example: in the past two or three months, we have had a Jewish presence, in one way or another, in almost every general audience of the Pope, on Wednesday, and in several more or less private audiences, which the Pope normally gives the same day, after the general one. Sometimes, the Pope makes a short speech, in which he takes up some point of Jewish-Catholic relations. Sometimes, he does not. It depends on the time at his disposal. Papal audiences are now what they are, from the point of view of crowds, Catholic and non Catholic, and time. Of course, for the present pontificate, the highwater mark was reached with the audience of the 12th March 1979, when the Pope officially and formally received the representatives of the main Jewish organisations and still other representatives from national Jewish communities around the world and made what can be called a programmatic speech on Jewish-Catholic relations. The present speaker has received and highly appreciated the many reactions, private or public, of many Jewish personalities, present in that audience.

I would not have dealt with such audiences and visits at any length if I were not convinced of their significance for our relations at the international level. Let me point out some of the reasons of this significance. First, the Catholic community, present in growing numbers in the audiences, or else hearing and reading about them, become more and more aware of the importance and solidity of the links which tie together Christianity and Judaism. Jews being received as Jews, their presence implies an element of a kind of permanent catechesis of what Jews are and mean in themselves for the Catholic Church. Secondly, all this happens in Rome, with the Pope, where, therefore, a certain example or model is set for the whole Catholic Church to follow. This is why, among other things, the invitation and presence of a Jewish observer in the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Puebla (Mexico) in January-February 1979, was first decided upon and then readily accepted by all concerned. And this in turn set another

example. Thirdly, those visits to the Vatican are almost always an occasion for meetings, sometimes protracted meetings with the staff of the Commission, where, with or without a formal agenda, all kinds of problems are posed, questions (including uncomfortable ones) are asked and answers hoped for. If ever the Commission officers and leaders get in touch with the grass-roots Jewish people, it is then and there, when, for instance you have before you sixty people of all walks of life, from (let's say) the British Council of Christians and Jews. These are no academic meetings.

I still would like to say a word of appreciation, in this same context, for the Jewish heartfelt presence in the events which shaped, for the Catholic community, the months of August through October of 1978. The passing away of two Popes and also the election of two were marked, for the first time in history, by a physical and spiritual Jewish presence which has left in all of us an indelible memory. I do not think it is widely known that most, if not all, of the telegrams and letters received were published, not only in the Information Service of the SPCU, which would be normal, the Commission being closely linked with the Secretariat, but also in the official publication of the Holy See, Acta Apostolicae Sedis, where they fill several pages.

Facts such as these are a substantial part of that growing together which accounts for mutual understanding and reconciliation more than many international Conferences.

2. Some limitations. Having taken some time to describe what may seem to be a rather optimistic picture, I think it will only be fair to dwell also at some length in the problems and difficulties which are also part and parcel of our relations at the international level. Such problems and difficulties are various and come from different sources. I will try to subsume at least some of them under a common heading.

Most come from what Henry Siegman has aptly called the asymetry of our two communities. The Catholic Church is a Church. Judaism is an ethno-cultural religious reality, linked to a State, the State of Israel. The Catholic Church is the home of many and different, sometimes even conflicting peoples. Judaism is a people in itself. The Church believes it has a universal mission, with all due respect to individual and collective consciences, which makes such mission something not only different but entirely alien from what is normally called proselytism. The Jewish people, on the other hand, particularly after the searing experience of the Holocaust, has a justified concern for its own survival, a concern linked, in the geopolitical situation of the Middle East, with the question of security and secure borders. While it would not at all be true to say that we look at questions of territory and physical land from a remote distance, it is however undeniable that we do not have the same concern for land and territory that the Jewish people has. I could easily go on with the listing. It wouldn't help much. But I must say now, before I go on, that such listing is not in any way intended as a comparison of values. I am convinced, on the contrary, and this is one of the many benefits of dialogue, that we can profit on each side from the value system of the other.

However that may be, the fact is that such asymetry -- as I have tried to describe -- implies as a consequence that our agendas and priorities



do not always overlap and even when they overlap, we do not approach them in the same way. It is against this background that the so-called "political" questions must be seen and the disagreements that sometimes affect the treatment (or lack of treatment) of such questions. This is not to say that we, Christians or Catholics, should not try to understand the Jews as they understand themselves, or, as the Guidelines say: "Christians... must strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience". But, after having understood and been understood, our respective agendas may continue to differ. Or, as Fr. Marcel Dubois sometimes says: we agree to disagree. To give an example: it might not be for us, in the Catholic Church, and more specifically in the Vatican, for all the understanding and appreciation that we may have, and should have, for the link between people and land, to give a religious backing of our own to the expression of such links, much less to any particular interpretation of it. On the other hand, it is quite clear that the right for existence and true security for all people, and indeed for the Jewish people and the State of Israel, is an ongoing concern of the Vatican, as has been repeatedly expressed by the Popes, Paul VI, John Paul I and John Paul II. The Vatican may have its own style of going about things, and this style may not always be easy to understand and even open to criticism. But there is no question that the humanitarian concerns that lie deep in the heart of the Jewish people, be it the question of its own survival, or its security, or the plight of the Soviet Jews, or antisemitism anywhere, are also concerns for the Vatican and a part of its pastoral mission. And it should not be a cause for nervousness or diffidence if such causes are seen sometimes, and presented, by the Vatican, in a wider perspective. They are not, for that reason, in any way forgotten or dismissed. Here again, particular commitments or attitudes should not be seen, nor intended to be seen, on either side, as affirmations of principle.

Thus, we insist more on a religious, or theological, agenda, on our common discussions. This is not just a way to find an alibi for other more burning, or in any case, more appealing questions. Much to the contrary, theological questions regarding Judaism and their proper solution in the context of sound Catholic doctrine, are vital for a true, deep, permanent, unprejudiced Jewish-Christian relationship. It is not politics nor diplomacy which have divided us for centuries, but theology and catechetics, whether the Jews were guilty of deicide, whether the Jewish religion (or the Synagogue, as was then said) was finished with the coming of Christ, whether the Jewish people was cursed, and so on. Most of this stereotypa have been laid to rest by the Second Vatican Council. But we still need very much of a positive Christian theology of Judaism, as some scholars have already begun to write, like Thoma and Mussner and others. A theology about the exact place of Judaism in the design of God, about the correct interpretation of Scripture regarding Judaism, about the questions and challenges put to our traditional teaching by the ongoing dialogue. This is admittedly difficult and protracted, but unavoidable. Academic teaching, preaching and catechesis will only suffer a complete change when this work is finally done and soundly done. I am glad to say that the Commission is committed to the promotion and implementation of such studies. I will also say, quite openly, that the same need exists on the Jewish side. Not only "odium theologicum" but simple "ignorantia elenchi" can have and does have terrible consequences.

3. Perspectives. Where do we go from here? Much has already been accomplished, as I hope I have made clear in the first part of this presentation, in spite of all the limitations, which I have also recognized. The question is now: having arrived at the present point, which path do we follow? what are our respective priorities? and, in final analysis, what is the aim of our dialogue?

I shall begin my tentative answer by saying that the mere fact that such questions can be asked shows by itself how far we have gone. In fact, similar questions are certainly not asked when the first steps in dialogue are being made. I shall immediately add that the existence of limitations, difficulties, differing agendas and so forth, does not mean at all that the dialogue or relations between the Jews and the Catholic Church at the international level are at a standstill or have got into a blind alley. Much to the contrary, I believe that no serious, all-engaging dialogue is possible without running into problems or difficulties as those described, and perhaps others still. Only the Lord knows what other difficulties are awaiting us round the corner. It is the will to come together and understand each other that counts, not the apparent easiness of the path. It is when we come to grips with the really difficult questions that the dialogue is worth the trouble. And it is not excluded, nay, it is certainly possible, that, at a certain point and upon a certain subject, we might, as I have just said, quoting from Fr. Dubois, agree to disagree. This need not be a disaster, but simply the respectful and even loving acknowledgement that our two religions, or religiously permeated institutions, for all their close kinship, have an irreducible identity of their own.

However that may be, a broad common field is still open in front of us. Christians have yet to learn, in many ways, "by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience" (Guidelines. Introduction). They have to learn more deeply about the Holocaust, the concern and the will for survival of the Jewish people and how this is linked to the secure existence of the State of Israel. This implies understanding the peculiar psychology of a people which has passed through this and other experiences. It also implies becoming more conscious of the pluralism of the Jewish community. All this, however, would not mean much if we were not, as Christians, to find the proper place of the Jews and Judaism in our theological synthesis or syntheses. This is why I underlined before the need for a sound theology of Judaism. In this we can and should be helped by the Jews. If we insist on including theological subjects in our common agenda. I am able to understand the reservations of large Jewish segments about airing in dialogue religious views and convictions, as I hope they are able to understand our reservations, at least for certain times and places, about discussing political questions. But I ought to say here that I am afraid we cannot avoid discussing theology, as our Jewish friends might say that we cannot avoid discussing politics.

In a similar way, a better information and knowledge about Christianity is still, I dare say, required in Judaism. I am sometimes amazed at the presentations of Christianity and the Christian faith I find in some Jewish books. It is said that, while Christianity needs Judaism for its own self-understanding, the same is not true for Judaism. This is as it may be. But the real question is whether we can go on ignoring each other or living with distorted ideas about what each side is and means "in the light of its own religious experience", not to mention elementary facts about history and the present.



Common studies, interchange of teachers, collaboration in publications, belong in this same context. This exists already in many places, notably in the USA. It still needs deepening, enlarging and extending to other places

Such mutual rediscovery in the proper identity of each cannot fail to open up new horizons for collaboration in the world of today. We profess faith in the same God, the God "of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Mc 12,26 and par., quoting Ex 3,6,15), the "God of the fathers" (Acts 3,13). We are conscious of the same obligation of "sanctifying the name", qiddus ha-Sem (cf. Mt.6,9). We have the same fundamental Law, the Decalogue, with exactly the same priority precepts (Dt 6,5; Lev.19,18; Mc 12,28-34 and par.). We have the same passion for justice, and for the same reason. We both expect and work for the Kingdom. I see here a lot of possibilities, or rather challenges, the present world being what it is. Should not these and other avenues of collaboration be explored and pursued? It is true, as I have said before, that our structures are basically different, but does this really make encounter and collaboration impossible, either at the grassroots or at the international level? An encounter and collaboration which, I would like to add, should never be closed to other religions, and to Islam in the first place, given the connection existing between the three monotheistic, Abrahamic, faiths, and in spite of all the present problems, which, I hope, are contingent.

The work for peace is especially relevant in such context, needless to say. Peace is institutionalized by treaties and international instruments. But it is born in the hearts, it is founded on love and respect for the neighbour and it is constructed in the daily relationship between men and women. It is not opposed to security, but it includes and surpasses it.

If for all this atonement and the humble asking for forgiveness is required on the Christian side, for a long-standing debt with the Jewish people, well, we should be prepared to do it. Acknowledging one's own sins has never diminished anybody and has a liberating efficacy which can only be salutary. But I personally believe that acts are more important than words, or rather, in the best Hebrew tradition, acts are words, as is expressed by the use of dabar for both. So what we need are acts of reconciliation and reconciling acts, inspired by a brotherly mentality. Those described can help in such direction, more than many words.

Precisely, reconciliation is what we are seeking. Not necessarily personal reconciliation, but the coming together of two very different religious bodies, one of which is also a people, torn apart by the sins of men, but made to be together, in spite of all their differences, for their own benefit and that of all humanity. I am convinced that when this mutual transparency is arrived at, at all levels, then the aim of the Jewish-Christian dialogue is obtained. Or rather, more exactly, this is why such dialogue can never cease, once it has begun. Because men and women being what they are, either Jewish or Christian, the danger always exists that we begin again, or go on, misunderstanding each other and creating darkness instead of light. The only way to avoid this and heal it when it happens, is to keep together, never close our communication lines, serve each other and with each other serve the world. And, in the best Judaic tradition, be able to forgive each other.

This is what Judeo-Catholic relations are about. I hope to have made, by what I said, some contribution to them.

Thank you.

Jorge MEJIA

## I. INTRODUCTION

"Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it." These words of George Santayana are a call for remembrance, a prohibition of forgetfulness, an invitation and guide for us as we begin this conference.

Remembrance is a notion very familiar to Jews and Catholics. The liturgies of both synagogue and church enshrine remembrance as a primary act of worship. To remember all that God has done, taught and commanded is not viewed as a simple act of reminiscence or of rhapsodizing over what has occurred in centuries past, but as a spiritual experience that may be effective, and, indeed, redemptive, in the lives of the observant and the faithful.

It is to this effective and redemptive remembrance that we dedicate ourselves as we study the historical aspects of the Shoah. We who are Catholic do so, fully aware that for two thousand years the relations between Christians and Jews have "...often been marked by mutual ignorance and frequent confrontation."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the sufferings endured by the Jews during these centuries must be a source of regret for Catholics, because, as Pope John Paul wrote recently, "...of the indifference and sometimes resentment which, in particular historical circumstances, have divided Jews and Christians."<sup>2</sup>

I suggest to my fellow Catholics that we apply to ourselves the recent words of the Pope:

...we Christians approach with immense respect the terrifying experience of the extermination, the Shoah, suffered by the Jews during World War II, and we seek to grasp its most authentic, specific, and universal meaning.<sup>3</sup>

It is to that goal that this conference is dedicated. I suggest that we delineate for ourselves two broad areas for consideration: anti-Semitism and the



Nazi campaign against the Jews, a movement that was systematic, total, rationalized, dehumanizing, and, for many of those involved, praiseworthy.



## II. ANTI-SEMITISM

It is well known that over the past two decades anti-Semitism has been repeatedly condemned by the Catholic Church. We need only think of the words of Nostra Aetate in 1965,<sup>4</sup> the Guidelines of 1975,<sup>5</sup> and the various statements of Pope John Paul.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, however, earlier Christian history has frequently been characterized by anti-Semitism. This prejudice was often given a biblical origin based on the deicide charge and supersessionist theory.

This theological anti-Semitism would eventually lead to attempts to forcibly convert the Jews to Christianity, even though this practice was prohibited by ecclesiastical law, to liabilities of all kinds on the role of Jews in Christian society, to negative accusations and beliefs about them, to expulsions, to ghettoization, and, all too often, to massacres.

It would be obviously simplistic to hold that every anti-Semitic action was based on "Christian," theological motivation, and not on greed, fear, hatred, or other human emotions. It would be equally simplistic to believe that anti-Semitic theories and acts were the only characteristic of Jewish-Christian relations and to ignore all those places and times where both groups lived in harmony. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, it must be remembered that, no matter what the motivation, these anti-Jewish beliefs and acts thrived in a society that was avowedly Christian.

I do not wish to be accused of falling prey to the error in logic, Post hoc, ergo, propter hoc, but I have to frankly admit that I always find it chilling to read the lists of "Canonical and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures" presented by the Holocaust historian, Raul Hilberg.<sup>7</sup> It is erroneous to imply that the ecclesiastical regulations are simply precedents for similar Nazi laws. I describe the list as "chilling," indeed, as frightening, not because there is a causal relation



between the two lists, but because these Church laws reveal the anti-Jewish sentiment so frequently present in Christian society.

One cannot study the history of the Holocaust, therefore, without some reference to Christian anti-Semitism. It may be far too complex a matter for adequate discussion here, but let none of us forget that the Nazis were not the first anti-Semites. There had been a long tradition of prejudice against Jews in Christian society. Indeed, Christian anti-Semitism remains to this day.<sup>8</sup> Its racist parallel developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century and reached its apogee in National Socialist racial anti-Semitism.

Pope John Paul, in his Miami address, linked the Shoah to "...the historical roots of anti-Semitism that are related to it."<sup>9</sup> Father Edward Flannery has called this "the anguish of the Jews."<sup>10</sup> We cannot eradicate these actions by members of the Christian Church that caused such "anguish" to the Jews nor do we recall them here for motives of anger, vengeance or shame.

For Christians, this remembrance will become redemptive when we learn that theories denigrating the Jews may lead to actions against them, and that the name and cross of Christ have been used frequently to support these anti-Jewish attitudes and deeds.

Our attitude must be that expressed by the Pope in his address to Australian Jews. Not only did the Pope deny the supersessionist theory by his statement that "...the Jews are beloved of God, who has called them with an irrevocable calling," but also he plainly condemned theological anti-Semitism: "No valid theological justification could ever be found for acts of discrimination or persecution against Jews. In fact, such acts must be held to be sinful."<sup>11</sup>

### III. THE NAZI CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE JEWS

In looking at the Nazi persecution of the Jews, I suggest that there are five themes which we might discuss. Their attempt to annihilate the Jews of Europe was: systematic, total, rationalized, dehumanizing and praiseworthy.

#### A. SYSTEMATIC

Already in their 1920 platform the fledgling Nazi Party had determined that Jews could not be citizens of Germany.<sup>12</sup> In an even earlier statement in 1918, Adolf Hitler had espoused rational anti-Semitism and its logical consequence, the expulsion of the Jews of Germany.<sup>13</sup> In Mein Kampf, written in 1923-1924, Hitler had spoken of "the Jew" as a "noxious bacillus," "a parasite," that would destroy any host organism that would tolerate it.<sup>14</sup>

The National Socialists came legally to power in 1933. By power of the Enabling Act passed in late March 1933, the Hitler Cabinet could enact any legislation it wished without the consent of the Reichstag. The law of April 7, removing Jews from Civil Service, was to be the first of a whole series of anti-Semitic regulations, designed to systematically exclude the Jews of Germany from any role in society or in the economy. That which had been Nazi theory or propaganda was now becoming the law of the land.

The earliest anti-Jewish laws (1933) removed the Jews from various professions, established a quota on Jewish university students, and prohibited ritual slaughter. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the Racial Laws, defined the Jews as racially impure and prohibited them from becoming German citizens and from marrying Germans. Further economic and exclusionary acts were



mandated in 1938. Kristallnacht and its aftermath would further isolate and pauperize German Jews.

In these pre-war years in Germany, therefore, anti-Semitism was legalized as government policy and effectively introduced to the extent that Jews ceased to be functioning members of German society. It was a step-by-step process that was both systematic and endemic of Nazism.

The same procedures, mutatis mutandis, were applied in those countries occupied by Germany during the war or with whom they were allies. Jews were categorized in racial terms (although, sometimes, allowance was made for baptism). Once defined as such, they were subject to economically and educationally discriminatory laws.

In Poland, the Jews were concentrated in certain large cities and later put into ghettos. They were forced to wear identifying insignia, armbands or the yellow star. In every ghetto there was a Judenrat, a Jewish Council, designed to serve as a liaison between the German authorities and the Jewish population, and eventually to become a control mechanism over the Jews.

Systematization became the hallmark even of the death camps: Jews arriving on freight cars, disrobing, handing in their valuables, having their heads shaved, being selected for labor or for death. The passing process itself, the examination of the bodies and then their disposal also became routinized.

## **B. TOTAL**

Not only was this genocide systematic but also it was based on a motivation of total commitment. Pope John Paul himself described it in these terms when he spoke to the Jews of Warsaw: "...the unconditional extermination of your nation, an extermination carried out with premeditation."<sup>15</sup>

Seven months before the invasion of Poland, Hitler described "...the

annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe" as one of the consequences of a war.<sup>16</sup> His desire to achieve this goal was so intense that, at times, the campaign against the Jews took precedence over military needs, or, at least, was given equal priority.

For example, in the midst of the greatest military invasion in all of history, that of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, several thousand German personnel were given the "special duty" of murdering Soviet Jews.

The whole death camp system was also an example of total commitment. Even while engaged in the military campaign in the Soviet Union, and with the entry of the United States into the war, Jews from Poland and all over Europe were continually brought to the death camps throughout 1942 and 1943. Men, materiel, transportation facilities, were often diverted from military needs to contribute to the ideological warfare against the Jews.

It is amazing to note that Auschwitz continued to actively function until late 1944, and finally ended its work only with the Russian invasion of mid-January 1945.

Another startling indication of this total commitment to killing the Jews may be seen in an appeal from the German military commander in the Generalgouvernement to the German High Command. In September 1942, he argued with facts and figures that the removal of the Jews from essential war industries "...would cause the Reich's war potential to be considerably reduced, and supplies to the front as well as to the troops in the Generalgouvernement would be at least momentarily halted."<sup>17</sup>

A realization of the totality of Germany's commitment to annihilate the Jews is an important factor to consider in any interpretation of this period. To ignore this is to let questions rise as to why the United States or some other



allied power did not intervene to save the Jews, or why the Jews themselves did not more actively resist.

I suggest, therefore, that, in the final analysis, no military, governmental, diplomatic or religious power could have done much to help the Jews (particularly before 1944). This is not to imply that every possible effort was expended on behalf of the Jews; in fact, on the contrary, it was not. It is a realistic appraisal, however, of the situation in Europe as it existed at that time.

### C. RATIONALIZED

Such a killing process had to be rationalized and justified even by its most devoted adherents. In Mein Kampf, Hitler had expressed his opinion that "...today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."<sup>18</sup> Thus did Hitler align himself with anti-Semites of earlier centuries.

Heinrich Himmler spoke in similarly moral tones when he addressed his SS commanders in October 1943:

We had the moral right, we had the duty toward our people, to kill this people Jews which wanted to kill us. But we do not have the right to enrich ourselves with so much as a fur, a watch, a mark, or a cigarette or anything else. Having exterminated a germ, we do not want, in the end, to be infected by the germ, and die of it.<sup>19</sup>

Another important aspect of the rationalization process is linked to the prominent role of physicians during the Holocaust, particularly at Auschwitz. SS doctors did not perform real medical duties. Their "...primary function was to carry out Auschwitz's institutional program of medicalized genocide."<sup>20</sup>

The use of medical doctors in the selection processes at the camps, in the supervision of the gassing procedures, and in the experimentation upon the Jews,

all contributed to a "healing-killing paradox." Auschwitz, as a result, became a center for "therapeutic racial killing."<sup>21</sup> The Jews were dangerous germs within the body of Germany, and only by their eradication could Germany be healed.

#### D. DEHUMANIZING

The Jewish theologian, Eliezer Berkovits, wrote some time ago that:

The cruelty of the Germans surpasses everything known in the annals of human history. Yet, their greatest crime was not this cruelty, but their sophisticated system of planned destruction of the human status of their victims. Their terrible barbarous power over their helpless victims was not used just to destroy them physically, but to degrade them to the extent of losing the last vestige of self-respect.<sup>22</sup>

Berkovits considers the Holocaust the "unique German crime against humanity, against the status of man."<sup>23</sup> Jews in the ghetto were forced to live in squalor and on food rations one quarter those of the Germans; they were packed in freight cars like cattle and, in fact, numbered and tattooed like them; they were used as guinea pigs by Nazi doctors; they were forced to stand nude before members of their own families. Even in death, they were packed so tightly in some gas chambers that they died standing up,<sup>24</sup> or, in another, the gassing process was such that the terrified victims trampled upon one another to get a higher spot to gain another minute or two of air.<sup>25</sup> They were deceived and led to believe that they were being deloused or undergoing some inhalation therapy. During all of this, SS men watched, gave orders and casually smoked cigarettes.

Elie Wiesel recalled his ten day train ride through Germany to the camp at Buchenwald. They passed through various towns:

Sometimes men on their way to work would halt in their tracks to glare at us as though we were animals in a kind of demonic circus. Once a German hurled a chunk of bread into our car and caused pandemonium



to break out as scores of famished men fought each other in an effort to pounce upon it. And the German workers eyed the spectacle with sneering amusement.<sup>26</sup>

This may possibly be the most sordid aspect of the Holocaust, but, fortunately, it is not the last word. It is true that many Jews may have died devoid of their self-respect, and cursing, no doubt, God and their fate as Jews. There is ample evidence, however, that other Jews made every effort to remain faithful to God's law, whether in the ghettos, labor camps or even in the death camps.

Studies of Holocaust responsa reveal to what lengths observant Jews went in attempting to lead authentically Jewish lives.<sup>27</sup> We know that many of them viewed their deaths as martyrdom, in sanctification of the Name of God (Kiddush ha-Shem) and that many of them chanted the Ani Maamin on their way into the gas chambers. There is evidence that even in the death camps religious festivals were observed in whatever way, even minimal, that was possible.

Such fidelity to God's word is not only a source of edification, but more fundamentally it contradicts the Nazi attempts to dehumanize the Jews. Every Jew who prayed, or consciously made an effort to follow one of the precepts, or who affirmed his faith or who gave value to his apparently absurd death, was denying the Germans that very goal of depersonalization that they so desperately sought.

There is nothing more uniquely human than our relationship with God. Every Jew who attempted to maintain this relationship during the Holocaust, in whatever way he could, proclaimed his humanity, his unique self as a creature of God, and his personhood as a child of God.

#### E. PRAISEWORTHY

Alice Eckardt has written that in the Holocaust "...the final restraints on human behavior were abolished. Worse, they were transmuted into praiseworthy standards of behavior."<sup>28</sup>

The Holocaust was a systematic and total program directed against the Jews; it was justified and rationalized by the Nazis; it attempted to remove from the Jews their very humanity. Most remarkable, these intrinsically evil deeds, this cruelty and persecution, became a source of approval and praise.

The reports from the Einsatzgruppen commanders reveal their satisfaction at how many Jews they were able to kill in such a short period of time.<sup>29</sup> Records from Auschwitz demonstrate the care and pride involved in inventorying and shipping out all the items confiscated from the gassed Jews.<sup>30</sup>

The most dramatic example of this aspect of the Holocaust may have occurred during Himmler's visit to the death camp at Sobibor in February 1943. The camp officers wanted to demonstrate to the SS Chief the efficiency of their killing procedures. On this particular occasion, they brought together several hundred young Jewish girls and gassed them in an effort to impress Himmler. He was so pleased with the entire spectacle that he attended a banquet at the camp that same evening and rewarded the SS officers with various decorations and promotions.<sup>31</sup>



#### IV. CONCLUSION

Any historical overview of the Holocaust should make Christians aware of what the Holocaust means to the Jews of today.

Not only was it a loss of family members, but all the survivors and, indeed, their children have been scarred by this tragedy. The fragility of Jewish life in the diaspora continues to haunt many Jews because of the Holocaust.

During his visit to the chief synagogue of Rome on April 13, 1986, the Pope expressed his "abhorrence for the genocide decreed against the Jewish people during the last war, which led to the holocaust of millions of innocent victims."<sup>32</sup>

He recalled on this same occasion what he had said when he paused before the memorial stone at the death camp of Auschwitz:

This inscription stirs the memory of the people whose sons and daughters were destined for total extermination...this people, who received from God the Commandment: 'Thou shalt not kill.' has experienced in itself to a particular degree what killing means. Before this inscription it is not permissible <sup>33</sup>for anyone to pass by with indifference.

Far removed from this "indifference" to which the Pope refers is the fact that the uniqueness and unprecedented horror of the Holocaust weighs heavy on those of us who accept the Bible as God's revelation.

The Jews are the covenanted people of God. It was their fidelity to Him and to His law over so many centuries that preserved them as a different and unique people. Because of this they have suffered immensely in many places and at various times, and, worst of all, of course, during the Holocaust. For the believer, therefore, specific questions of theodicy arise that would not necessarily be present in other catastrophes or acts of genocide.

Moreover, for Christians, the uniqueness of the Holocaust rises out of the realization that in one way or the other Christianity is implicated. Christianity

did not cause the Holocaust. It was not Christians who killed Jews. Rather, it was men who had been exposed to, or instructed in, Christianity, but chose to ignore this teaching and way of life to turn against the Jewish people.

For me and for others, Christianity is implicated not because the Nazi leaders had Christian backgrounds which they shunned, but because Christians did not raise their voices in defense of the Jews, at those times when it was possible to do so. As much good as individual Christians did for Jews, much else was left undone. For many Christians, therefore, the Holocaust has become a matter of conscience unlike any other historical event.

I suggest that there is an echo of this effect upon Christian conscience in the remarks of the Pope to the Jews of Warsaw several months ago:

I think that today the nation of Israel, perhaps more than ever before, finds itself at the center of the attention of the nations of the world, above all because of this terrible experience, through which you have become a loud warning voice for all humanity, for all nations, all the powers of this world, all systems and every person. More than anyone else, it is precisely you who have become this saving warning.<sup>34</sup>

We conclude our remembrance with the hope that for all of us, Jews and Catholics, it may be effective and redemptive in our lives.



1. Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, Nostra Aetate (n.4), January 1975; see Helga Croner, compiler, Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations: An Unabridged Collection of Christian Documents (New York: Stimulus Books, 1977), p.11

2. Letter of Pope John Paul II to Archbishop John May of St. Louis, President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, August 8, 1987; see Origins: NC Documentary Service, September 3, 1987, 17:12, p. 183.

3. Ibid.

4. "...she the Church deplores the hatred, persecutions and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source."

5. "...the spiritual bonds and historical links binding the Church to Judaism condemn (as opposed to the very spirit of Christianity) all forms of anti-Semitism and discrimination, ..."

6. See Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki, editors, Pope John Paul II on Jews and Judaism, 1979-1986 (Washington: NCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, 1987) pp. 14-16.

7. Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), pp. 5-6.

8. It appears from the statements and conversionary activities of certain fundamentalist Christians that they consider the Jews in very negative theological terms.

9. September 11, 1987; see Origins: NC Documentary Service, September 24, 1987, 17:15, p.240

10. Edward H. Flannery, The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-three centuries of Anti-Semitism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965).

11. Fisher, Klenicki, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

12. Yitzhad Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margalio, editors, Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981), p.15.

13. Werner Maser, Hitler's Letters and Notes, trans. by Arnold Pomerans (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1974), pp.213-215.

14. Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), p. 305, and passim.

15. June 14, 1987; Origins, NC Documentary Service, September 10, 1987, 17:13, p. 200.

16. Speech of January 30, 1939; see Arad et al, pp. 134-135.

17. September 18, 1942, General Gienanth to General Jödl; see Lucy Dawidowicz, editor, A Holocaust Reader (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1976), pp. 101-103.

18. Hitler, op. cit., p. 65.

19. Dawidowicz, op. cit., pp. 132-134.

20. Robert Jay Lifton, The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1986), p. 147.

21. Ibid.

22. Eliezer Berkovits, Faith after the Holocaust (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1973), p. 78.

23. Ibid.

24. See Dawidowicz, pp. 104-109, for a description of Belzec; see Jacob Glatstein, Israel Knox and Samuel Margoshes, editors, Anthology of Holocaust Literature (New York: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 178-185 for a description of Treblinka.

25. Miklos Nyiszli, Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account, trans. by Tibere Kremer and Richard Seaver (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1960), p.46.

26. "The Death Train," in Glatstein et al, p. 5.

27. See Irving J. Rosenbaum, The Holocaust and Halakhah (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1976).

28. Alice Eckardt, "Yom Ha-Shoah Commandments: A Christian Declaration," Midstream, 27:4, April 1981, p. 38.

29. Dawidowicz, op. cit., pp. 89-96.

30. Hilbergh, op. cit., pp. 611-618

31. Sobibor: Martyrdom and Revolt; Documents and Testimonies Presented by Miriam Novitch (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980), pp. 27, 59, 137, and 156.

32. Fisher, Klenicki, op. cit., p.81.

33. Ibid.

34. June 14, 1987; see Origins: NC Documentary Service, September 10, 1987, 17:13, p. 200.



International Liaison Committee,

THE SHOAH, ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS  
SEEN FROM A HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

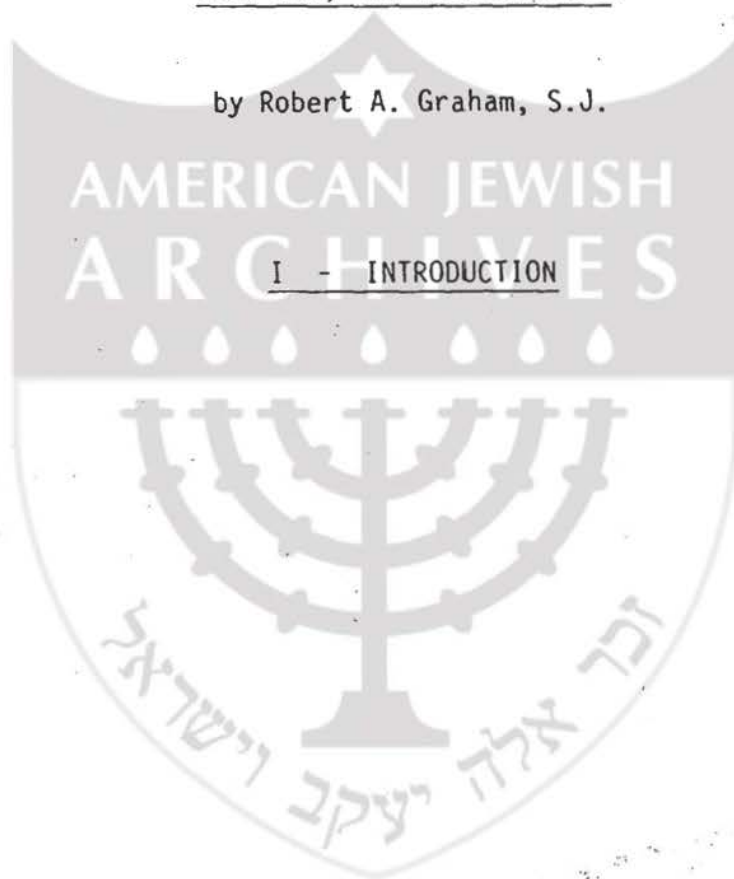
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THE CHURCH AND MODERN ANTI-SEMITISM.

PIUS XII, THE PROBLEMATICS.

by Robert A. Graham, S.J.

AMERICAN JEWISH  
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I - INTRODUCTION



2. The theologian, the biblicist, the philosopher, even the poet has his contribution to make to advance the theme that engages us. The historian has also much to contribute within the limits of the genre. I do not propose to set forth two thousand years of history but to bring out certain neglected aspects of the relatively few years during which the tragedy of the Jews was accomplished. We are still searching for understanding of these years. At that time, what was happening had no name. Even today we are trying, not too satisfactorily, to find the most apt way of describing what is evidently proving indescribable.
3. Pope John Paul II, in his historic address to Jewish representatives at Miami, on September 11, 1987 provided a text which can be, I think, profitably adopted as a point of departure at this moment. The Pope declared: "I am convinced that history will reveal even more clearly and even more convincingly how profoundly Pius XII felt the tragedy of the Jewish people, and how intensely and effectively he applied himself to assist them in the Second World War." Is it so difficult to evaluate the Pacelli pontificate, over forty years since the end of the war and thirty years after his death? Evidently it is so. Religion is a subtle and delicate force in human affairs and never perhaps more than in the greatest war in the history of a Europe used to war. Pius XII was only too conscious of this. And we, today, are witness likewise, as the debate continues over half a century.
4. It would be vain to pretend or assume that all the elements can be assembled in one short paper. There are special features making historical judgements elusive to define. In our time, the Holy See, the Papacy, has been catapulted into world consciousness in an entirely new perspective. It is suggestive that the polemics over Pius XII and his role in World War II, was triggered by a drama or play produced



in Berlin in February 1963, a bare few months after the stirring first session of Vatican Council II. Horizons expanded. "New worlds" opened. Walls came crumbling down. World opinion watched, fascinated, and began to identify with what was going on, in both secular and religious circles. Now it is understood that what the Pope of Rome says, or does not say, does or does not do, can in important instances transcend, exceed, the boundaries of purely religious or confessional concerns. This awareness was not always in evidence before that.



## II -- WHAT PIUS XII DID OR DID NOT DO

5. With this, we already have the outline of this paper: 1. What Pius XII did (or did not do) and, 2. What he said (or did not say). And, 3. Why. For there are two distinguishable aspects of the wartime pontificate of Pius XII, two sides, so to speak, of the same coin. And they need to be studied in reference to each other, not as if they were mutually unrelated.
6. From the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939 (the invasion of Poland) Pius XII set as his goal to alleviate as much as possible the sufferings brought on by the war he had tried by every means to prevent. There followed a multiplicity of démarches, initiatives, projects, etc. directed to keep to a minimum, if not to prevent, the moral and material destruction that accompanies the state of war. In this striving the Pope had in mind his own personal experiences in the First World War, as the representative of Pope Benedict XV, caring for the wounded and the prisoners of war. Pius XII prided himself that his work went forward without distinction of religion, race, nationality or politics. This was, after all, the model proposed by Jesus Christ to his followers in the parable of the Good Samaritan.
7. The Holy See left an impressive record of humanitarian work during the war. Four volumes of the eleven-volume official documentary Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale carry the diplomatic and other correspondence of the Vatican on the theme "War victims". These papers demonstrate the wide scope, the disinterestedness, the persistence and perseverance of the Pontiff in the pursuit of his goal. The efforts were often not crowned with



success, the effects often far short of the need, misunderstandings of motives and positive opposition almost a daily diet. But of the concern on the part of Pius XII for stricken humanity during World War II even the failures remain a striking witness.

8. Throughout the above-mentioned four volumes, the concern of the Holy See for the special predicament of the Jews of Europe stands out in increasing degree. Both individual Jews in jeopardy and the local or world leadership addressed themselves to the Pope with hope and confidence. In the course of the war, as the situation became more and more desperate these appeals multiplied, particularly on the part of the world rescue agencies outside the danger zone and in a position to know and to act. They acted on the basis of their known readiness of the Pope to respond to their urgings. And the Holy See did not have to wait for outside signals before moving on its own initiative to intervene where intervention stood some chance of success.
9. The degree of communication between the Holy See and the Jewish community in these years can be said to have no parallel in history. On the local scene community leaders approached the papal representatives for their support. These reported to Rome for instructions and in many cases did not wait before making the needed démarches to the authorities for the thousands who stood at their mercy. In their turn, the major world rescue organizations repeatedly made their needs known to the Vatican and encountered, as is evident in the record, immediate corresponding action. In the latter years of the war, the U.S. Refugee Board, amalgamating Jewish efforts hitherto dispersed among sometimes competing agencies, kept up the existing tradition of confident relationships with the Holy See.
10. In the initial years of the war, when emigration was still possible, the appeals took the form of requests for Vatican influence in favor

of those needing exit or transit visas, whether for individuals or for groups. Spain and Portugal were key countries in this respect, for instance, and it was thought that Vatican pressure or recommendations could have some effect. After 1940 and with 1942, the possibilities of emigration evaporated and instead the spectre of deportation loomed. Though the ultimate destination, or fate, of the deportees could not be ascertained, the circumstances of the transportation -- violent, inhumane, with pitiless disregard for the sick, the aged, women and children, -- already gave the operation a macabre, grim significance in the Vatican. At the first major indication, the deportation of 80,000 Slovak Jews in March 1942, the reaction of the Vatican was immediate. The warning came simultaneously from the papal representative in Bratislava and from Jewish officials in the Swiss Agudat Israel. Soon after came another anguished appeal from the papal Nuncio in Hungary. The Vatican official in Slovakia, reporting on March 9, described the deportation as "an atrocious plan." He wrote: "The deportation of 80,000 persons to Poland, at the mercy of the Germans, is equivalent to condemn them to certain death." In reply to the protests of the Cardinal Secretary of State, Maglione, the Slovak official explanation was that these Jews were going to "work." Their treatment, it was said, would be "humane." A year later the government in Slovakia announced a new wave of deportations against which, as before, the Vatican protested.

11. In the years from 1942 onwards, there was hardly a country or a point in Europe where the papal intervention was not solicited, and acted upon. The papal involvement necessarily took various forms according to the circumstances and the Vatican's real possibilities of action. The 1942 deportation of Jews from France was the subject of exchanges by the papal nunciature at Vichy, with Pierre Laval. In Italy the interventions took, first, the form of recommendations for exemptions from



the anti-semitic laws and, in particular, for the foreign Jews, in the sense of dissuading the Fascist government from handing over refugee Jews to the Germans. In the end, no foreign Jews were ever handed over to the Germans at this time by the fascist government. It is not necessary to claim that this perhaps surprising dénouement was attributed solely to Vatican efforts. But it remains true that the Holy See was constantly present in the unfolding drama. With the fall of Fascism and the German occupation of the country, the danger reappeared.

12. On October 16, 1943, in a rapidly executed raid, special SS squads seized over a thousand Roman Jews for dispatch to "Poland", from which few ever returned. The same morning, on the Pope's orders, Cardinal Maglione, Secretary of State, summoned the Reich ambassador Ernst von Weizsäcker to protest. "It is painful, painful beyond telling," said Maglione to the embarrassed German ambassador, "that precisely in Rome, under the eyes of the Common Father, so many persons are being made to suffer solely because they belong to a certain race.....". In the aftermath, those Jews who had escaped the Nazi fury in Rome found secret shelter by the hundreds in the convents and religious houses of the Eternal City for the agonizing nine months of the German occupation.
13. In the several Balkan states, there were different possibilities of intervention. In Croatia, the papal representative, who was in fact only an "Apostolic Visitor" and hence without any diplomatic status before the new-born Croatian state, made frequent démarches, both with the government and with the local hierarchy, naturally on instructions from the Holy See. In Rumania (predominantly Orthodox Christians), already in 1941 thousands of Jews were deported by the Rumanians themselves, not to Poland but into the newly occupied former Russian zones of Moldavia (Transistria, beyond the Bug river) where many died. In this period the Nuncio Cassulo, on Vatican instructions, was in close

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touch with Rabbi Alexander Safran and with the famous lay leader William Fildermann. In Bulgaria, also predominantly Orthodox Christians, the papal representative had only the status of an Apostolic Delegate, that is, without diplomatic standing. But some influence could be exercised, despite the small number of Catholics. As is well known, the papal Delegate in Turkey, Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, addressed a personal letter to King Boris (June 30, 1943) imploring him to spare the Jews from deportation.

14. In far-off Salonika, a Greek city, where there was a notable concentration of Jews long resident, an easy target for the Nazi's, the interest of the Holy See was also manifest. The appeals from the Jewish leadership came to the Pope through the papal representative in Athens, Giacomo Testa, Apostolic Delegate. The region was partially occupied by Italian troops and the Holy See could in this instance address itself to the drama through this channel.
15. In Hungary prior to the German take-over the Jewish community enjoyed some measure of toleration, despite anti-semitic laws. In March 1944 they came into immediate mortal danger. Pius XII, warned by his own nuncio Angelo Rotta in Budapest, on June 25, sent a famous "open telegram" to the Hungarian Regent, Admiral Horthy, on behalf of those suffering, "because of their nationality or their race." An allusion whose meaning could not be misunderstood. There followed a rain of telegrams from the Jewish organizations and a succession of diplomatic protests of the Nuncio to the anti-semitic, German-supported successors of Horthy.
16. In Slovakia at this time, the situation became almost identical. The papal representative at Bratislava reported that the chase after Jews was continuing and, in general, the government and the President (Dr. Josef Tiso, a priest) were servile executors of the orders of the



occupation. The telegram of reply was signed by Msgr. Domenico Tardini of the Secretariat of State (Cardinal Maglione had died in August) 1944 on date of October 29, 1944 (the original draft bearing the handwritten corrections of Pius XII): "Your Excellency shall go at once to President Tiso and, informing him of the profound distress of His Holiness for the sufferings to which so many persons are subjected -- against the laws of humanity and justice -- because of their nationality or race, summon him, in the name of the August Pontiff, to sentiments and resolutions conformable to his dignity and conscience as a priest. Let him know also that these injustices committed under his Government damage the prestige of his country and that the adversary exploit them to discredit the clergy and the Church in the whole world."

17. The case of the Latin American passports, in the spring of 1944, illustrates in a particularly graphic way, how Vatican diplomatic intervention could serve the Jewish organizations in their relentless struggle to save what could be saved. Some several hundred refugees were still in France, under German control, but spared deportation because they had passports of a number of Latin American countries. In fact, many of these passports were manifestly illegal. Under pressure from Berlin some of these countries formally denounced them as invalid, thus leaving the holders liable to deportation. There followed desperate appeals representing that lives were in danger if the passports were repudiated. On the prayers of, for instance, among others, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, the Vatican sent instructions, in a circular telegram, to its representatives in a half a dozen of the Latin American republics in this sense. The landing of June 6 put an end to this crisis but not before many of the persons concerned had already been transferred.

18. This is only a skeleton outline of the interventions on behalf of the beleaguered Jews in World War II, on the part of the Holy See. Is its

significance to be measured only by its degree of success, and not rather by the evidence it offers of the continuing and consistent papal concern also for this specially tormented category of "War's Victims"? The action of the Holy See stemmed from its conception of its own humanitarian mission in time of war. But it was also in harmony with the needs and prayers of the Jewish organizations dedicated to the saving of their own people. The concerns of the Holy See, on the humanitarian level, coincided with those of the Jewish community. The Holy See and the world organizations were united at the same points of crisis in the unfolding tragedy.

19. On June 2, 1943, Pius XII lifted the veil momentarily on his activities for the Jews pursued so fanatically and murderously by the National Socialists. He first said that he regarded all peoples with equal good will. He continued: "But don't be surprised, Venerable Brothers and beloved sons, if our soul reacts with particular emotion and pressing concern, to the prayers of those who turn to us with anxious eyes of pleading, in travail because of their nationality or their race, before greater catastrophies and ever more acute and serious sorrows, and destined sometimes, even without any fault of their own, to exterminating harassments." "Let the rulers of nations not forget," he went on, "that they cannot dispose of the life and death of men at their will". At the time the contemporary reader, if he even saw the text, could be possibly excused for not completely understanding what Pius XII meant. Today, with the knowledge, documented and published, of the continuing efforts of the Holy See for the afflicted Jews of Europe, these words ought to have profound meaning for any fair-minded observer.
20. A year later, 2 June 1944, on the same occasion of his Nameday, St. Eugenio, Pius XII alluded in similar terms to his continuing preoccupation for the safety of the Jews under Nazism. "To one sole goal, Our thoughts are turned day and night: how it may be possible to abolish



such acute suffering, coming to the relief of all, without distinction of nationality or race." More, the Pope could not say and few understood what these words implied at the time. There is no excuse, however, for not understanding them today. The innumerable messages to governments and other correspondents emanating from the Holy See on his personal authority and under his personal supervision eloquently substantiate what the Pontiff declared cryptically in 1943 and 1944.



### III - WHAT PIUS XII SAID OR DID NOT SAY

21. Pius XII was not "silent" during World War II. He was not even "neutral". His public statements, from the first encyclical, were clearly directed against the National Socialist regime, and were so understood on both sides. They were commented on with enthusiasm by the British, and confiscated with equal zeal by the Nazi police. But the Pope's style was not, and could not be, that of the warring belligerents. He spoke, and wrote, instead, in generic phrases, in allusions, with judgements marked by indirectness, naming no names and no country. From the start, before the war had taken on such a horrendous aspect, Pius XII refused systematically to pronounce special express condemnations. This tantalizing restraint was a disappointment to the Allies, who thought they had more than a good case. They sought to elicit from the Holy See some specific denunciation of Nazi aggression and Nazi atrocities, which they themselves stigmatized. They encountered resolute resistance from Pius XII to the end. He considered his public statements were already perfectly clear to those who wished to listen and he remained determined not to descend into particular details which might please the belligerents at a given moment but whose enunciation ran counter to the concept that the Holy See had of its own proper role in time of a great war.

22. The refusal of the Pope to pass specific moral judgments against offenders during the war, has never been appropriately or adequately analyzed. But an effort of clarification is necessary because this policy, particularly as applied to the fate of the Jews in the course of the war, has lent a prejudicial hue to his whole pontificate. Yet Pius XII had a right and a duty to define for himself the dimensions of his own work, in the light of his own situation and mission. He also was entitled to have his own viewpoint fairly considered. For his self-restraint was identical with the precedent set earlier in



World War I by Pope Benedict XV. From 1914 onward, after some damaging mistakes, the policy was adopted by the Vatican not to venture on the terrain of specific condemnations but to condemn atrocities in general terms, "wherever they may be committed." The young Pacelli, who was at the center of papal diplomacy in those years, learned this lesson at first hand. Later, as Pope, he was able to convince himself that he had no alternative but to follow the same line of conduct, on the penalty of involving himself in an endless series of fruitless moralizings. In the end, the real moral authority of the Papacy would be compromised in all eyes, rather than enhanced.

23. The traditional papal policy had to undergo severe challenges on many occasions during World War II. The British and the French could not understand why the Pope had not excommunicated their enemies. In the crisis of war both of these countries forgot their long years of "No Popery", or anticlericalism, to revert to medieval conceptions, certainly anachronistic, of a Boniface VIII launching the curse of Rome on malefactors. The Vatican was not impressed by this belated deference to the "moral authority" of the head of the Catholic Church. Its essentially political motivation and its limited terms were too obvious. They were probably not even meant seriously but served as an excellent propaganda platform. The invitation to the Pope to condemn Nazi crimes in the name of his religious authority did not include a like invitation to stigmatize crimes outside of the narrow terms set unilaterally by the petitioners.
24. In the first month of the war the French Premier Edouard Daladier lectured the Vatican for not having condemned the invasion of Poland by the Germans (and the Soviets). The Pope's silence seemed, he said, to give sanction to the cynical violations of the principles that the Pope himself had emphasized, on the higher principles of morality.

The fact that the Soviet Union was also guilty, said Daladier, ought to persuade the Pope to come out with a condemnation of Poland's fate. This was to misjudge the Vatican's alleged obsession, so popular in the minds of the diplomats, with atheistic communism. About this same time (September 30) Pius XII addressed a group of Polish refugees, among whom was the Primate himself, Cardinal Hlond. They were profoundly disappointed that the Pope did not utter words of condemnation of the German invasion of their country, though he did express his confidence in the eventual rebirth of Poland.

25. It was in 1942 that calls for the Pope to denounce Nazi atrocities reached a peak. Individually and jointly, the coalition centered in London and in the United States, urged the Pope to condemn Nazi actions with clear and express words. The leader in this drive was the Polish government-in-exile which felt it had a particular claim to the Holy See's support. The atrocities in question were the occupation policy in general, with emphasis on the taking and shooting of hostages, reprisals on the civilian population, on the principle of "collective responsibility", the plundering of material goods, the deportation of youth, particularly of young girls.

In mid-1942 the nine governments-in-exile then in London addressed an appeal to the major powers (Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union), calling to their attention the ruthlessness of the German occupation of their respective countries. This initiative was therefore mainly directed at the three powers. But an additional message, of the same tenor, was directed also to the Holy See. It was delivered to the Vatican on September 12. The ambassadors of Poland and Belgium divided the reading of the document in a formal session before Msgr. Tardini. The two diplomats, after enumerating the Nazi atrocities in their respective countries expressed the hope that the Holy Father "sensible to so many horrors in the present and those which



threaten in the future, would raise his voice, in order to help to save countless innocent victims."

26. In the meantime, the Brazilian ambassador to the Holy See Ildebrando Accioly took a parallel initiative, for which he solicited and got the support of the British and American representatives living with him in Vatican City. Speaking on September 14 in the name and under the instructions of his government, he said, he urged a formal stand by the Holy See on German atrocities. "It is necessary that the authorized and respected voice of the Vicar of Christ be heard against these atrocities." On the same day, duly alerted and authorized by their home governments, d'Arcy Osborne for the British and Harold H. Tittmann jr. for the United States, pressed the Vatican for a "public and specific denunciation of Nazi treatment of the populations of the countries under German occupation." A few days later the representatives of Cuba, Uruguay and Peru had followed suit. It was a concerted démarche.

27. The German war crimes and crimes against humanity, to use terms then coming into use instead of "atrocities", as mentioned in the various documents, did not include the treatment of the Jews of Europe. Only Osborne mentioned this latter manifestation of Nazi brutality. The concerted appeal therefore envisaged the ensemble of Nazi occupation policy, in which doubtless the Jewish travail was implicit. To these different appeals coming to him at this time, the Pope did not give an immediate answer. An inkling of the reaction felt in the Vatican was provided in a few days by d'Arcy Osborne in a report to the Foreign Office of October 9. He said he had asked Msgr. Domenico Tardini if the Pope was going to speak. The Vatican official said he did not know. "He went on to say that collective pressure in which even South American countries had participated looked like an attempt to involve the Pope

in political and partisan action. I said that the Catholic Latin American countries although not victims of the Nazi tyranny were entitled to express surprise at the Pope's silence. He offered the strange argument that no neutral country had urged the Pope to speak ... I think the reference is that the Vatican are embarrassed and the Pope himself resentful, both of (the) criticism and of (the) painful prospect of taking action which will expose him to Axis counter-criticism."

28. But the pressure continued. On September 17, Myron C. Taylor, personal representative of President Roosevelt, arrived in Rome, passing from the airport to Vatican City despite the state of war between the United States and Italy. He bore with him a bundle of memoranda for long and repeated discussions with Pius XII. But, in the Vatican, he acquired another memorandum which Taylor said later in his report to the President, he had been urged by Osborne and Tittmann and others, to submit to the Pope. In this paper Taylor said that it was thought that a word of condemnation from the Pope would encourage all those who were working to save these thousands of persons from suffering and death. He referred globally in these words to the victimization of prisoners of war, of Catholics and Jews, of the civilian populations, especially the shooting of hostages, estimated at 200,000. Taylor told President Roosevelt he had the impression that at the right moment the Pope would make a public statement in line with his recommendation. In the Vatican, continued Taylor, there was small inclination to condemn individuals or persons by name, but a general condemnation of such inhumanities, such as the Pope had already uttered on different occasions, could be repeated. What Taylor meant is illustrated by the memorandum of the same day, 22 September, recorded by Msgr. Tardini after his own talk with Taylor. The presidential Envoy raised the question of the "opportuneness and necessity" of a word from the Holy Father against so many atrocities committed by the Germans, and how this desire was



felt on all sides, in different circles. Tardini recorded this exchange: "I answered that the Pope has already spoken, many times, condemning crimes, by whomsoever committed and I added that some people want the Pope to condemn and name explicitly Hitler and Germany, which is impossible. His Excellency Mr. Taylor answered me: 'I did not ask that. I did not ask to name Hitler.' And when I repeated the Pope had already spoken, Mr. Taylor said, 'He can repeat.' To which I could not but assent."

29. A few days later, September 25, Taylor had an exchange with Cardinal Maglione, the papal Secretary of State. He brought up again the question of refugees, of the imprisonment and execution of hostages, and the transfer of populations. He insisted anew, as already with the Pope, that "a further condemnation of this system would be welcomed in the United States." Maglione told him that a declaration would be issued at the first opportune moment, in the beginning of October, but in general terms. More detailed is the record of this conversation recorded by the American Msgr. Walter Carroll, who was present:

30. V. Condemnation to be made by the Holy Father of the maltreatment of the occupied nations, of refugees and of hostages.

"Ambassador Taylor says there is a general impression, in America as in Europe -- an impression that His Excellency Mr. Taylor cites personally as without any question - that it is now necessary that His Holiness denounce again the inhuman treatment of refugees, of the hostages and in particular of the Jews in the occupied territories. This condemnation is sought not only by Catholics but also by Protestants. His Eminence replies that the Holy See works incessantly to assist the suffering populations. The Secretary of State, and other pontifical institutions,

are constantly engaged and with all solicitude with this grave problem. The representatives of the Church in the various countries have openly denounced the maltreatment of peoples and have sought by every means to aid the oppressed. His Holiness has often condemned the oppressors of peoples and of individuals and has said that the blessing or the malediction of God would fall upon rulers, according to the way they treat the occupied countries. This, continues His Eminence, is rather a strong declaration, as strong as it was possible to make without getting into political discussions, asking for documentation, reports, and so forth. Evidently the Pope cannot do this. Mr. Taylor signifies his agreement but insists on the opportuneness of an appeal of a higher character. The previous declarations having been made some time ago, it would seem that the moment has arrived to make another. Certainly it would be well received by everybody. Unfortunately both individuals as well as peoples have a short memory. Many would desire that His Holiness should make a denunciation of these evils every day. His Eminence assures Mr. Taylor that in his opinion, the Holy Father will not fail to express anew and clearly his thought, at the first occasion that presents itself."

31. At a last moment, September 27, Taylor received from Washington a notice received in turn by the U.S. State Department from the Jewish Agency of Palestine (Geneva), giving details of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, as brought by two recent escapees from Poland. Among other details, it was said that the Jews deported from Germany, Belgium, Holland, France and Slovakia were sent to their deaths, to be massacred.



The non-Jews from France and Holland were put to work. On behalf of the U.S. Secretary of State, Taylor was instructed to ask: (1) If the Vatican could confirm this information, and, (2) if the Vatican had any recommendations how to mobilize public opinion. As it turned out, information of this kind had just come to the Vatican from an Italian government official returned from a mission in Poland. According to him, there were "incredible massacres" every day. "The massacre of Jews had reached shocking and fearful proportions and forms." Maglione accordingly replied to the U.S. query, that the Holy See had received information of severe treatment of Jews but had not yet been able to verify the information. Maglione added that "the Holy See has not failed to intervene in behalf of Jews everytime the possibility is offered."

32. In (1942, during the month of September, what could only be described as unprecedented pressure was put on Pius XII to make a formal and explicit condemnation of Nazi atrocities, not simply maltreatment and killing of Jews, but a wide range of inhuman actions against the weak and the innocent. Had the time come for the Holy See to change or attenuate its established position? No doubt this was one of the gravest decisions Pius XII had to face in his entire wartime pontificate. Weeks went by without any indication whether and how the Pope would react to the urgings of the Allies. The two diplomats following the affair closest, Osborne and Tittmann, did not expect any change.
33. The Pope, in his Christmas Eve address, they thought, would stick to his policy of not naming specific atrocities or particular countries. In fact, in this discourse, under the heading "Considerations on the World War and the Renewal of Society," Pius XII gave what obviously was his answer to the appeals made to him in September. He spoke of the horrors of war, striking every category of society: families bereft of support, refugees expelled from their homeland. Also, "the hundreds of thousands of persons who, without any fault of their own, sometimes

only by reason of their nationality or race, are destined to death or a progressive destruction." The Pope added, at the close of this listing, the weight of which fell on the German side, what could be, at that moment, and was, taken as a denunciation of the Allied aerial bombardment of German cities, allegedly indiscriminately. The Pope alluded to the "many thousands of non combatants, women, children, the ailing and the old, whom the aerial war -- whose horrors, from the very beginning we have many times denounced -- without discrimination and without sufficient carefulness, have been deprived of life, goods, health, homes and places of succor and prayer."

34. The last-cited condemnation implied, that is, non-specific of obliteration bombing as practiced by the RAF at this time over Germany, was no doubt displeasing to the Allies, particularly the British. But it would have been awkward for them to make an issue of this "allusion", after having spent so much effort to prove to the Vatican that only specific condemnations had any meaning. Or, to put it in another way, did the demands that the Pope "speak out", mean, in their minds, that the Pope was expected to condemn and denounce only crimes committed by the Germans, while the Allies must at all times be considered as beyond reproach?

35. The English Minister d'Arcy Osborne had the opportunity to talk with the Pope at year's end. He reported to the Foreign Office: "It is clear that the Pope regards his broadcast as having satisfied all demands for stigmatisation of Nazi crimes in the occupied countries. The reaction of some at least of my colleagues was anything but enthusiastic. To me he claimed that he had condemned the Jewish persecution. I could not dissent from this, though the condemnation is inferential and not specific, and comes at the end of a long dissertation on social problems. As a matter of fact his criticism of the totalitarian systems

moral  
relativism  
equivalency



— was unmistakable and, given his temperament, I think he deserves much credit for much of what he said." Osborne repeated his impressions in a later report of January 5, 1943. The British minister had on December 29 given the Pope the joint Allied memorandum on anti-Jewish atrocities issued on December 17. The Pope, he wrote, "promised that he would do whatever was possible on behalf of the Jews. I doubt there will be any public statement, particularly since (the) passage in his Christmas broadcast clearly applied to Jewish persecution. I impressed on him that Hitler's policy of extermination was a crime without precedent in history."

36. Osborne's colleague among the Allied diplomats living in Vatican City, Harold H. Tittmann jr. of the United States had his own audience with the Pope on December 29. The U.S. chargé d'affaires reported to Washington: "...the Pope gave me the impression that he was sincere in believing that he had spoken therein clearly enough to satisfy all those who had been insisting in the past that he utter some word of condemnation of the Nazi atrocities and he seemed surprised when I — told him that I thought there were some who did not share his belief. He said that it was plain to everyone that he was referring to Poles, Jews and hostages when he declared that hundreds of thousands of persons had been killed or tortured through no fault of their own, sometimes — only because of their race or nationality." Tittmann said the Pope added he could not specifically name the Nazis for their atrocities without at the same time naming the Bolsheviks, which would not be welcomed by the allies of the Soviets. Tittmann did not comment on the Pope's (implicit) denunciation of Allied indiscriminate bombing of German cities.

37. If the Christmas Eve broadcast was a disappointment to the Americans and the British, which they could absorb, it was a bitter delusion — for the Polish government-in-exile. The Poles were the main mover in the campaign for an explicit papal condemnation of Nazi atrocities.

A solemn letter, signed by the President of Poland Wladislaw Raczkiewicz, under date of January 2, 1943 was brought to the Pope by Ambassador Casimir Papée on January 21. It made no mention of the Christmas message and insisted anew, as if the Pope had not spoken, for "a word that would clearly and distinctly indicate where the evil is and which would scourge its ministers." In an audience that lasted 45 minutes, Pius XII expressed his displeasure at the message which, he said, displayed no recognition of all that the Pope had done, and was doing, for the benefit of the Poles in Poland and outside of Poland, for whom the London government claimed to stand up. Ambassador Papée described to his superiors the tense moments he had to experience in the presence of the Pope:

"When I had finished, the Pope who had been before smiling and benevolent, said to me clearly irritated: 'In the first place I ask myself if the President has read my Christmas message. I am astonished. I am also saddened. Yes, saddened. Not one word of gratitude or recognition, of acknowledgement and yet I said everything, everything. I was clear and precise.' At this point the Pope began to cite various passages from his Christmas discourse, dwelling, in particular, on the condemnation pronounced by him, of the persecutions because of nationality or race, of the executions, deportations and plunderings. He cited entire passages by memory."

Papée defended his chief, emphasizing the dire straits of the Polish nation. He ended his dispatch with this observation: "Going away from the audience I felt reinforced in my conviction that Pius XII is sincerely and profoundly convinced to have said clearly and distinctly all that was possible to say in the defense of our country and that they are demanding the impossible of him."



38. New circumstances in 1943 entered into play to bring this pressure on the Pope to an end. The military situation of the Allies which in 1942 was grave, took a progressively better turn with the successes in North Africa and the Wehrmacht defeat at Stalingrad. The suppositions as to how much "declarations" really contributed to an amelioration of the bad situation were (re-dimensioned.) The British themselves soon took the line that they had said enough in the December 1942 statement and that so far from helping the Jews it did not frighten the Germans and raised false hopes that more could be done for the Jews in Europe. When the three major Allied powers met in Moscow in October 1943 they did issue a statement on atrocities but did not mention a word about the situation of the Jews. The Dutch government had objected to singling out the Jews for special notice: they had already experienced the spiteful reprisals of the Nazis in their own country.

#### IV - WHAT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS BROUGHT

39. The Holy See was not the only international institution brought face to face with the problem of the Nazi "war crimes and crimes against humanity". In the crucial months of the war the World Council of Churches ("in process of formation", to use its self-designation at this time) also had to answer the question of its attitude to the war and the conduct of hostilities. The simplest, formal answer consisted in the declaration that, after all, the Council did not "exist" apart from its individual and separate member churches, found among all the belligerents. These were able to make their own declarations, on their own responsibility, and it was not the mission of the Council, which had received no mandate. In fact, as the moving power in the world body was Visser 't Hooft, the Secretariat of the Council was actively anti-Nazi. It had, like the Vatican, opened an office for refugees and was keenly interested in the fate of Jews. But it knew better than to compromise this work by public statements. During the war its ecumenical news service was rich in information on ecumenical developments in the Nazi-occupied countries -- with little or no mention of the plight of Jews.
40. The drama within the International Committee of the Red Cross, based also in Geneva, took even more precise form, but with the same conclusion: this was the time for action and not for "protests." The pressure on the Vatican in 1942 recorded in the foregoing was felt, and keenly, in the leadership of the Geneva Committee. The agency had a recognized and functioning competence for prisoners of war; it could visit camps for the military personnel and it employed ships from overseas which passed through the British blockade, loaded with relief materials. But it could not enter concentration camps and its right even to inquire about civilian refugees, above all Jews, was challenged by the Reich



authorities of occupation. The category of civilian prisoners loomed ever large, for whose assistance the Committee had no legal basis of intervention. It had to resort to stratagems and various circuitous routes, with some satisfactory results, even to the point of being able to send relief packages to concentration camps.

41. But the sentiment for a "public" protest brought a dilemma and division within the Committee. Other relief organizations were consulted, including the papal nunciature in Switzerland, to whom it was explained that the great fear was that, in making public statements, which in all likelihood would change nothing, the Committee would only compromise what was already possible and in the end cut themselves off from the Nazi power zone entirely. But Red Cross personnel got to work drafting a statement, under the direction of President (Dr. Max Huber). The fourth draft was ready for presentation on (September 16, 1942). It was entitled, "Appeal in favor of the application of the essential principles of the law of nations relative to the conduct of hostilities." It was addressed to all the signatories of the Geneva Conventions but was meant really for Nazi Germany. The draft, however, circled ambiguously around the main objective in view, the tragic lot of deportees. The allusion to Jews was put in a subordinate place and nearly lost in circumlocutions. The draft alluded to the fact that "alongside of civil internees properly so-called, certain categories of civilians of various nationalities have been, for reasons depending on the state of war, deprived of their liberty, deported or taken as hostages and are liable by this fact to risks to their lives for acts of which they are often not the authors." The draft was presented on (October 14, 1942) to the full session of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and rejected. It was never issued.

42. Relevant to this decision of the Red Cross is the meeting of Prof. Carl Burckhardt of the Committee, on November 17, with (Gerhart Riegner), the local representative of the "World Jewish Congress". Burckhardt revealed that the Committee had thought very seriously to publish an

official protest on the subject of the treatment of the civilian population and of the Jewish question and he wanted Riegner's ideas. Burckhardt said that he himself thought that such a protest would have no positive result and on the contrary the whole activity of the International Committee could be put in jeopardy, especially as at this moment they had barely averted the denunciation of the Geneva conventions by Germany.

43. What could the answer be, under the circumstances? Riegner declared  
— he saw that a protest was still necessary, but it need not be envisaged  
until one was convinced that there was nothing more to hope. At the  
time that it was learned that Hitler had ordered the extermination  
of all the Jews of Europe it indeed appeared that nothing remained  
— to be done to save them. But recent political developments had ap-  
parently modified the situation. Riegner further declared in conclusion,  
[ according to his own record, "I believe a protest is necessary only  
in the case where there is really nothing more to be done at the time.  
But if one can still exercise some influence and if one wishes to re-  
frain from a protest, it is necessary to act and not to satisfy oneself  
with passively recording news of deportees."



## V - CONCLUSIONS

44. Is it possible to apply this line of reasoning also to the problem as it presented itself to the Holy See? The Vatican, too, had to face the possibility, even the probability, that a formal and explicit protest, even in the indirect form (rejected) of the Red Cross draft, would destroy at once the meagre possibilities existing, on which human lives depended. The difference between the Holy See and the Red Cross however, consisted in the fact that the Vatican did find a way of going on the record with a public protest, however indirectly phrased. Those engaged in humanitarian work were agreed that the results in terms of human lives were more important and urgent than the manifestation of public indignation that might quiet consciences but would have no real effect and be positively disadvantageous to the persons one is anxious to help.
45. "They are demanding the impossible of the Pope." These words of the Polish ambassador Casimir Papée, to his own government, summed up his analysis of what he had been instructed to get from the Pontiff. He, more than others, having bombarded the Holy See in all these months with accounts of Nazi oppression, and the treatment of Jews in his homeland, had direct experience that the Pope felt himself responsible for the consequences. That the Polish government-in-exile thought otherwise, for reasons satisfactory to itself, did not mean that the Pope had to agree with them launching on a course which went against his own better judgment. It was not weakness but courage, not passivity but concern, that dominated the papal motivation at this point.
46. The Allies, led by the Poles, asked for and would be satisfied with nothing less than, a provocation, regardless of the consequences. This was a reckless attitude that the Pope could not accept, the more so that his own statement would be on his own authority, for the aftermath

of which he would have to bear personal responsibility. He was being asked to open a Pandora's box with tragic impact.

47. We can surmise some of the considerations on the practical level that entered into the Pope's reflections during these autumn months of 1942, fixing papal policy on atrocities. The Germans would in the first place deny the charges, which the Vatican itself had no means of proving. Some of the acknowledged Nazi reprisals, such as the razing of the Czech village of Lidice, would be defended with ferocity. The Vatican would be accused of being in the hands of the British and the American enemies of Germany. The alleged "moral message" would be reduced to a mere political action, especially when the inevitable enthusiastic use of the papal statement became a top theme of Allied propaganda. (The British themselves used the annihilating accusation of "pressure", when the Vatican did something that did not please them.) The Pope would be assailed as having joined the campaign of lies of which Germany had been the victim for long.
48. In short, in Germany, the papal statement would be cut down to nothingness. In the occupied countries, where the Nazi machine was already organized for oppression, the screw would be turned even more tightly, except that this time the Pope would be blamed for it. In the satellite governments, the access of the Vatican would be cut off by German pressure. And the war still had a long way to go. In the coming years, the interventions of the Holy See, above all for the Jews, continued, with good effect. Of this the Jewish organizations were themselves first hand witnesses and they gave voice to their recognition and gratitude.



## A Historical Overview

## I. The New Testament Epoch

In its origins Christianity is deeply rooted in Judaism. So without a sincere feeling for the Jewish world, and a direct experience of it, one cannot understand Christianity. Jesus is fully Jewish; the apostles are Jewish; and one cannot doubt their attachment to the traditions of their forefathers. In announcing and inaugurating the messianic passover, Jesus, the universal redeemer and the suffering servant, did not do so in opposition to the covenant of Sinai. Rather it fulfills the sense of Sinai. True, one does find anti-Jewish polemics in the New Testament. These have to be taken at different levels:

- (a) On the historical level they can be seen within the atmosphere of sectarian assaults aimed at different groups (Pharisees, Saduccees, Qumram, Essenes, ...);
- (b) On the theological level, the term "the Jews," particularly as found in the Gospel of John, is a category used to describe anyone who refuses salvation. This categoric use of the term was well demonstrated by Karl Barth (cf. e. g. his "Commentary on Romans");
- (c) On the eschatological level, the goal of the structures which flow from the Covenant came to be seen as necessitating the

Kingdom, when God reigns "over all and in all";

(d) On the ecclesial level these polemics are a reaction to the demands advanced by Judaizers in circles of Christians with pagan backgrounds.

But all this does not mean that from the start Christianity and the New Testament had an antisemitic character. The strong emphasis which Paul places on the tradition and the Covenant with the Patriarchs in his Epistle to the Romans counters such a view. It even seems intended to counter a certain current of opposition in Rome to Jews that was then manifesting itself among some Christians in Rome with their background in the Greco-Roman world.

## II. The Patristic Period.

Yet to be completed is a study of the Church Fathers to determine their understanding of the relationship between the Judaism of 'Erez Israel' and that of the diaspora (particularly as this was expressed in the Talmud). Moreover the study of first century heresies, especially those of Asia Minor and the Middle East, as well as their relationship with Jewish currents, would be valuable in helping to understand the birth of Islam.

Until the 5th century the term "Jew" did not have a pejorative sense in the writings of Church Fathers. Semitic thought categories and mentality continue to penetrate Christian thought especially up until the Council of Nicea. But even later the fruits of such thinking can be seen in Syrian authors such as St. Ephrem. Because of these writers, and St. Ambrose as



well, they are to be found also in the West. This is even more the case when it comes to liturgical life and prayer since this was essentially related to the experience of the synagogue, as we see in Alexandria at the time of Origen. This intimate connection began to be broken down in Visigoth Spain (7th century) when church councils pressured Jewish converts to abjure and to abandon every earlier tradition.

For his part Augustine introduced a negative element into judgment on the Jews. As one who was always seeking to collect grains of truth (the logoi of the Stoics), even those found in pagan authors, he advanced the so-called "theory of substitution" whereby the New Israel of the Church became a substitute for Ancient Israel. But still we not have arrived at a situation of heavy intolerance. Evidence for this can be found even in Rome, for instance, in the early Christian mosaic in the Church of Santa Sabina. Next to a figure representing the "Church of the Nations," it depicts the "Church of Circumcision" as a noble matron. Later, in the Middle Ages, this image would be replaced by that of the blindfolded Synagogue.

### III. The Medieval Period

Poliakov has shown in an exhaustive study that up until the Crusades the situation of Jews in Europe generally remained one of serene coexistence with the Christian population.

A brutal and bloody turn was provoked by the fanatical masses who mobbed together in the armies directed at the Holy

Land. They were responsible for ferocious massacres of entire Jewish communities in Germany, notwithstanding the opposition of bishops and of counts. The Jews were left only with a choice between baptism and martyrdom, and by the thousands they chose the latter, proclaiming their own fidelity to God. After 1144 there spread about the accusation of ritual homicide. Still later came the charge of a hateful plot being carried out against the human race by the Jews, who were cursed because they were God-killers. The consequences were very grave especially at the popular level. The Jews came to be regarded nearly as a symbol of satanic evil to be implacably extirpated by every available means.

The Church did not share these aberrations; nevertheless it showed the effects of this atmosphere. Thus in 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council imposed on Jews the distinctive "sign."

Still in the 13th and 14th centuries one finds a particularly flourishing Jewish community in Rome. The Council of Vienna (1310 - 1311) decreed that throughout Europe chairs of Hebrew and Aramaic should be established for the study of the Talmud, although this reform of higher studies never actually came about. However in Spain, France and Italy between Jews and Christians there was deep collaboration at the cultural level. This atmosphere shows through in Boccaccio's novel on "Melchisedech the Jew and Saladin" (Decameron I, 3).

For the Jews the Middle Ages in Europe up until the time of the French Revolution continued to be marked by two very serious



events: the expulsion from Spain (1492) and the establishment of the ghetto, decreed by the papal bull "Cum Nimis Absurdum" (1555), accompanied by burnings of the Talmud, harassments, religious trials, and cultural degradation. These persecutions ought to inspire us to serious research to determine the causes. It is certain that religious prejudice, fed by inflammatory popular preaching (cf. Saint Bernardino), easily offered pretexts to those who sought to draw political or economic advantage from the insecure and menaced Jews. It is humble wisdom to recognize the errors of a badly informed religiosity, or worse, a blind fanaticism. Religious intolerance can mask even an irreligious mentality, and an unwary religiosity can be used to other non-religious ends. Examples of this are not lacking in Scripture. For this reason Jesus calls for a conversion of the heart, in order to adore the Father "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4, 23).

#### IV. The Modern and Present

After their emancipation the Jews became active participants in the scientific, literary, philosophical, political, economic and artistic fields in nations born in the modern era. Meanwhile, currents favoring return to the "land" in Palestine flourished, inspired either by religious or by purely political-ideological motives.

In the same period, however, the Church experienced a season of uneasy relationships with the new social order and new

mentality. Is it conceivable that had fraternal relations been established between Christianity and Judaism, we would not have experienced certain sad misunderstandings between the Church and the modern world?

New pogroms followed on in Russia at the end of the 19th century. Also here fanaticism, intolerance and religious prejudices were united with political motivations. The programmatic extermination of the Jews of Europe carried out with systematic and absurd ferocity by the Nazis is a tragic and indescribable horror. This new idolatrous state tyranny ably exploited secular prejudices against the Jews that were widespread among the people. The horror this instills in us is joined with vivid sorrow when we consider what indifference, or worse, what spite separated even Jews and Christians in those years; even though one can still remember the heroism of many who came to the aid of the persecuted Jews.

Pius XI was preparing an encyclical condemning antisemitism, and only his death interrupted this project.

The period after the war saw the rebirth of a "Jewish" state with its own autonomy and a democratic character. The majority of Jews saw it as a answer to their prayers, saluting it as "the beginning of the flowering of the Redemption." The Church, for its part, took on an attitude of dialogue with the world, attentive to discern the "signs of the times" in a spirit of service to humanity still lacerated by grave contradictions. The Second Vatican Council gave full expression to the passion of the



Church for the salvation of the world and for peace. It repudiated the accusation of "deicide" and "the teaching of contempt" (Jules Isaac) with respect to the Jews. To the contrary, it underlined our great common inheritance of faith in the mysterious plan of salvation willed by God (Nostra Aetate), n.4.). The signs of these major openings, such as the visit of John Paul II to the synagogue of Rome or the grand prayer for peace in Assisi, are before the eyes of all of us. This very year, on May 2nd, the Holy Father will proclaim blessed a daughter of the Jewish people who at Auschwitz offered herself with Christ "for true peace" and "for her people."

#### B - Theological Overview

These brief historical notes intend only to be a stimulus in order to show how necessary it is to have an ever more accurate critical analysis of the past. The Church will always be grateful to anyone who offers it such a serious cultural contribution, since this is very valuable for interpreting history in the light of the principles of faith.

I would like only to indicate some of these principles. A wearying and until now sorrowful historical journey has brought them to the fore in theological reflection. They appear as well in documents published by the Commission for the Religious Relations with the Jews which seek to apply the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. This Commission was established in 1974,

and for several years I was a consultant to it. Our journey must continue, and theology is invited ever more insistently now since the shoah to "be confronted with the history and the experience of faith of the Jews at Auschwitz" (J. B. Metz).

#### I. The Common Roots Which Make Us Brothers.

John XXIII, the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI (the encyclical "Ecclesiam Suam"), John Paul II: that is to say, the entire recent universal magisterium of the Church together with documents from episcopal conferences and individual local churches, all unanimously drive home the point that the Church and the Jewish people are bound by a profound bond "at the level of their proper religious identity." This bond does not destroy but validates the two communities and their individual members in their specific differences and in their common values.

Here I would like to try to offer a quick but not exhaustive summary of these common elements as they are found in Scripture and Tradition.

1. The faith of Abraham and of the Patriarchs in the God who has chosen Israel with irrevocable love;
2. The vocation to holiness: "be holy, because I am Holy: (Lev 11, 45) and the necessity for Conversion of the heart" (Teshuvah);
3. The veneration of the Sacred Scriptures;
4. The tradition of prayer, both private and public;
5. Obedience to the moral law expressed in the Commandments of Sinai;



6. The witness rendered to God by the "sanctification of the Name" in the midst of the peoples of the world, even to the point of martyrdom if necessary;
7. Respect and responsibility in relationship to all creation, committed zeal for peace and for the good of all humanity without discrimination.

Nevertheless, these common elements are understood and lived out in the two traditions in profoundly different ways.

## II. Differences

These deep values which unite us do not suppress certain characteristics which distinguish us and which come to be seen with so much clarity at the basis of an honest dialogue: in Jesus who died and rose we Christians adore the only begotten Son beloved of the Father, the Messiah Lord and Redeemer of all people, who draws together in himself all creation. However with this act of faith we retain and confirm the Jewish values of the Torah, as Paul asserted (Rom 3, 31). Our dynamic and eschatological exegesis of the Scriptures places us in a line of continuity-discontinuity with the Jewish interpretation.

There remains for us the urgent duty to undertake ecclesiological research in order to clarify how the two communities of the Covenant, Church and Synagogue, are not simply amalgamated by their participation in a common mission of service to God and man. Saint Ambrose, in speaking of the relationship between the two "Covenants" (Old Testament-New Testament), speaks of a "wheel within a wheel." The image is an attractive one.

Saint Paul used the vivid image of the cultivated olive tree and the wild olive branches (Rom 10, 17-24).

Past history, on the other hand, has shown us how much damage this mission has suffered because excessive and sometimes tragic polemical counter positions have divided us.

### III. One Hope and a Common Goal

Not only the sources and many elements of our journey are common. Even the final goal can be expressed and understood in convergent terms. Hope in a messianic future, when God alone will reign, King of justice and of peace; faith in the resurrection of the dead, in the judgment of God rich in mercy, in the universal redemption - these are all common themes for Jews and Christians. Perhaps even more than it would seem, the very differences which distinguish us from one another on these points can be regarded as reciprocally complementary.

### IV. Collaboration and Fraternal Cooperation

It is on the basis of these principles, which certainly deserve further, more attentive and deeper study, that there is already apparent a broad area for a responsible common commitment, especially at the spiritual and ethical level, in the field of human rights and in assistance to people and persons in need of solidarity both for peace and for the integral development of humanity. I believe this will become more apparent still. More and more frequently there appear kindred points of contact which broaden our common responsibilities with respect to other believers, in particular with respect to the



Islamic faithful.

For this reason a common commitment of Jews, Christians and Muslims to seek a balanced solution which will bring a "just and complete" peace to Israel (John Paul I, September 6, 1978), to the Palestinian people and to Lebanon becomes ever more urgent. Jerusalem is, as it were, at the center and the symbol of these common religious, historical, ethical and cultural values which must be harmoniously drawn together and respected.

As Jesus wept at the sight of Jerusalem "in order that it might obtain pardon through the tears of the Lord" (St. Ambrose, De paenitentia, I. II), so all of us hope that from Jerusalem there will flow forth a river of peace and a cascade of pardon and love.

+Carlo Maria Card. Martini

from NORT

THIS MORNING A GROUP OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CONFERRED WITH JOHN CARDINAL O'CONNOR IN HIS RESIDENCE. THE MEETING WAS CORDIAL AND THE DISCUSSION CANDID, AND SERVED TO CLARIFY THE VIEWS OF THE CARDINAL AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY ON ISSUES AFFECTING THE MIDDLE EAST, AND CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS

THE MEETING UNDERScoreD THE FUNDAMENTAL AGREEMENT OF BOTH THE CARDINAL AND THE JEWISH REPRESENTATIVES ON ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO SECURE AND RECOGNIZED BOUNDARIES.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AND THE FLIGHT OF THE REFUGEES AS WELL AS THE NEED TO MOVE TOWARD PEACE IN THE REGION.

BOTH THE CARDINAL AND HIS GUESTS AGREED THAT THERE WERE FAR MORE ISSUES ON WHICH THEY HELD SIMILAR VIEWS THAN THOSE ON WHICH THEY DIFFERED.

THE JEWISH REPRESENTATIVES RECOGNIZED THAT THE CARDINAL IS BOUND BY VATICAN POLICY AND REITERATED THEIR APPRECIATION OF HIS SINCERE APOLOGY IN JERUSALEM FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING THAT DEVELOPED OVER HIS PLANNED MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS OF THE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT.

THE JEWISH LEADERS REGARD THE

CARDINAL'S VISIT AS A HELPFUL CONTRIBUTION TOWARD GREATER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO COMMUNITIES.

THE JEWISH LEADERS ALSO CONVEYED THE PURPOSE OF THE STATEMENT OF JANUARY 10, EMPHASIZING THAT IT WAS NOT INTENDED IN AN UNFRIENDLY SPIRIT TO THE CARDINAL

BUT RATHER WAS DIRECTED AT THE ISSUES. THEY VOICED REGRET AT ANY MISUNDERSTANDING THAT MAY HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY THE TIMING OF THE STATEMENT'S RELEASE.

IN TURN, CARDINAL O'CONNOR

ELUCIDATED THE CONTEXT OF VARIOUS STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN THE PRESS AND TOLD OF OTHER IMPRESSIONS OF HIS TRIP THAT HAD NOT BEEN REPORTED.

BOTH THE CARDINAL AND THE JEWISH REPRESENTATIVES, MEETING IN A SPIRIT OF MUTUAL RESPECT AND GOOD WILL, LOOK FORWARD TO A CONTINUING DIALOGUE ON ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN.