

## CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

*Does the Church 'Get' the Holocaust?*

A Response to Kevin Madigan's  
*Has the Papacy 'Owned' Vatican Guilt for the Church's Role in the Holocaust?*

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Thank you Professor Madigan, for a wonderful paper. I am more of a theologian than a historian. Even when thinking about history, I think of the history of ideas and of memory. Furthermore, I am coming from a Jewish perspective. Yes, I am positive about the Church's gestures and I think that the Vatican does, indeed, understand the Holocaust and I do think they are deeply committed to reconciliation. There are, however, some Jewish perspectives that the Church does not "get."

The first relates to how the history of patristic, medieval, and early modern anti-Judaism led to the Holocaust. For example, on page five of his classic work *The Destruction of European Jewry*, Raul Hilberg, lists twenty-two Conciliar decrees—including the decree on the badge—that were directly used by the Nazis. The Church has neither acknowledged nor worked through this history of antisemitism. While this teaching of contempt has been a sincere motivation for reconciliation, the details of the lachrymose history have not been discussed.<sup>1</sup>

Second, when John Paul II visited Auschwitz, a Catholic commentator noted that "he courteously refrained from interpreting that the Jewish people had suffered in terms of Christian redemptive categories." But his talk did not sound this way to Jewish ears. At Auschwitz the Pope stated:

I kneel before all the inscriptions that come one after another bearing the memory of the victims, before the inscription in Hebrew. This inscription awakens the memory of the people whose sons and daughters were intended for total extermination. This people draws its origin from Abraham, our father in faith, as was expressed by Saul of Tarsus.

His memorial at Auschwitz focused on the Abrahamic connection to Saul of Tarsus. As the author Peter Manseau noted: "It was not the first time, and it would not be the last, that a Christian tried to understand Jewish suffering on Christian terms."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*. (New Haven Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Peter Manseau, "Catholics and the Shoah: Appropriating the Suffering of Others" *Commonweal* (March 13, 2009) Volume 136: 5. <http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/catholics-shoah-0> (accessed Oct 26, 2009). See also Avery Dulles, Leon Klenicki, and Edward Idris Cassidy, *The Holocaust, Never to Be Forgotten: Reflections on the Holy See's Document "We Remember."* *Studies in Judaism and Christianity*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2001); John Paul II, "The Sixtieth Anniversary of the Liberation of the Prisoners of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp."

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/pont\\_messages/2005/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_20050127\\_auschwitz-birkenau\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/pont_messages/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20050127_auschwitz-birkenau_en.html) (accessed October 26, 2009).

Another example: when Benedict XVI visited Auschwitz in 2006, the prayer service he led began with the words “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” These words from the Psalms in the Hebrew Bible are familiar to Jews. Yet, the Pope invoked these words because Christians hear this same verse as the words cried out by Jesus on the Cross before He died. In speaking of the Nazis, the Pope stated “By destroying Israel, they ultimately wanted to tear up the taproot of the Christian faith.” In acknowledging history there is the tendency to see one’s own theology being played out at every turn. Emmanuel Levinas cautions that most Jewish theology does not consider suffering redemptive.<sup>3</sup>

A third observation: While speaking about the Holocaust in the year 2000, on the anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, Pope John Paul II said that there were “sins committed by not a few of their numbers against the people of the covenant and the blessing.” The Pope mentioned the generic “thongs of innocents,” but did not specifically mention Jews. If one attends an event such as a Holocaust memorial to honor Jewish memory, then one should not merely speak of the eternal problem of evil. One should specifically mention Jews, and mention them as exterminated during the course of WWII.<sup>4</sup>

A fourth observation concerns the fact that reconciliation is not *teshuvah*. In 2001-2002 the differences between *teshuvah* and reconciliation were still being discussed by Jews and Christians. Most of the papers at that time pointed out that in Judaism *teshuvah*, unlike reconciliation before God, is actually a full confession to the one that you hurt. It involves regret and a resolve for the future. Repentance is called for if the hurt of the Jewish community caused by antisemitism is to be healed.<sup>5</sup>

I now turn to the paper of Professor Madigan. Basically I agree with his conclusions that the European episcopal statements were considered a success, but *We Remember* was not.<sup>6</sup> However, I agree for different reasons. For me it comes down to history versus memory.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Benedict, “Pope’s Message at Auschwitz” Also called “Pope Benedict’s 2006 Message at Auschwitz-Birkenau” <http://www.zenit.org/article-16150?l=english> (accessed Oct, 26, 2009); Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). passim.

<sup>4</sup> “Service Requesting Pardon,” *Origins* (March 12, 2000):40; (March 23, 2000): 648.

<sup>5</sup> See Edward Cassidy, “The Future of Jewish-Christian Relations in Light of the Visit of Pope John Paul II to the Holy Land,” *Common Knowledge* 8.1 (2002) 10-19; Michael A. Signer, “Can Jews Trust Catholics? A Rabbi Looks Forward” *Commonweal* 128 (January 12, 2001): 12.

<sup>6</sup> Before commenting on Prof Madigan’s paper I consulted: Robert S. Wistrich, “The Vatican Documents and the Holocaust: A Personal Report,” in Antony Polonsky, ed., *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 413-443; idem, “Reassessing Pope Pius XII’s Attitudes toward the Holocaust,” JCPA 89, November 1, 2009. [www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=3&DBID=1&LANGID=1&TMID=111&FID=624.&PID=0&IID=3108&TTL=Reassessing Pope Pius XII](http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=3&DBID=1&LANGID=1&TMID=111&FID=624.&PID=0&IID=3108&TTL=Reassessing Pope Pius XII) (accessed October, 24, 2009); Michael Marrus, “Pius XII and the Holocaust: Ten Essential Themes” in Carol Rittner and John K. Roth. *Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust*. (London: Leicester University Press, 2002) 43-55; Idem, “A Plea Unanswered : Jacques Maritain, Pope Pius XII, and the Holocaust,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 21 (2005): 3-11; Idem, “Understanding the Vatican during the Nazi Period” Carol Rittner, Stephen D. Smith, Irena Steinfeldt and Yehuda Bauer. *The Holocaust and the Christian World: Reflections on the Past, Challenges for the Future*. (London: Yad Vashem, 2000): 126-129; Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000). Finally, I discussed my talk with John Morley, author of *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews during the Holocaust, 1939-1943* (New York: Ktav 1980); “Pope Pius XII in Historical Context” in Judith H. Banki and John Pawlikowski, eds., *Ethics in the Shadow of the Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Perspectives*, Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 2001, 133-162.

Professor Madigan deals with the history of the Holocaust while Jews are dealing with the memory of the Holocaust. When Jews are disappointed, their disappointment is related to memory.<sup>7</sup>

I wish to offer a few considerations about memory:

1. The early leaders of the state of Israel spoke positively about Pius XII because no one had expected anything at all from him. Jews assumed the Church was antisemitic and they assumed that the Holocaust was perpetrated by Christians. Therefore, they did not expect that the Church would do anything to save the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust. So, any saving of Jews was a good thing in the eyes of early leaders. Yes, this was politically expedient, but it actually showed that the expectations had been very low. Jewish reactions to *The Deputy* in the 1960s vividly reveal how little they expected. In 1960 Golda Meir and others would have seen any help as a good thing, especially from a religion which they saw as hostile to Jews. (I will return to this later when I discuss what antisemitism means in a given era.)

In citing the letter from Slovakian Jews to the Pope Madigan characterized their perception of the Church as the “safest refuge” as ironic. But it was not ironic. It was, rather, a desperate appeal to a European monarch. Jews have always turned to monarchs and clergy for help in the past. Similar letters were sent to the Czar in the nineteenth century, and even in 1933 there were letters by the Agudas Yisrael to the Nazi Party. I am not implying that the letters are prove that the Jews were helped; however, Madigan’s characterization of irony may not be a good rhetorical device for unfolding the attitudes of that era.

2. Madigan’s presentation quotes many of the reactions to *We Remember*—some of them written by people here in this room. But while questioning whether the reviews or reactions were positive or negative he failed to observe that many of the reactions were couched in caveats and visions for the future. For example, some of the positive reactions held expectations of forthcoming papal statements on the Crusades and Jan Huss, statements which would deal with the problem of medieval antisemitism. *We Remember*, unfortunately, had not dealt with this at all. Many respondents, expecting further developments later, were relatively satisfied with *We Remember* in 1999 or 2000. But as the decade wore on there was an increasing gnawing awareness that more needed to be done. This was evident in James Rudin’s rejection of *Dabru Emet*, a rejection based on the unresolved issue of the Church and the Holocaust. The expectation had been that the Church’s acknowledgment of the Holocaust and antisemitism would be a process continuing over several years—not a short opening that was quickly resolved.

In his presentation Madigan drew on op-eds and brief responses to *We Remember*, but he did not consider the longer theological reflections of Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, Avery Dulles, and John Pawlikowski. These were more than merely positive or negative. They were less about whether the document understood history correctly, and more about what theology calls for in the process of reconciliation. This is a more subtle task, and that is why we are still discussing it here today.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004); Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> See Judith Banki and John Pawlikowski, eds., *Ethics in the Shadow of the Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Perspectives*. (Franklin, WI: Sheed & Ward, 2001). See also Avery Dulles, Leon Klenicki, and Edward Idris Cassidy, eds., *The Holocaust, Never to Be Forgotten: Reflections on the Holy See’s Document “We Remember”* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001).

3. While the French Bishops' letter was an acknowledgement of the Holocaust, a fuller picture of French theological literature is more complex. This is apparent when we turn, for example, to the writings of Cardinal Lustiger from the same period. Lustiger writes about his attempt to come to grips with antisemitism. "Christians have opened their eyes to Jewish pain," requiring an examination of conscience about their role in fostering a culture of antisemitism. But, his noble conclusion after the examination is that there cannot be such a thing as Christian antisemitism. Any reading of Christianity which includes a need for the persecution and punishment of Israel is simply a misreading of Christianity. When a journalist posed questions such as: Didn't antisemitism take shape in the patristic period? Are not the Church's teachings on Judaism teachings of contempt and degradation? Was not the church responsible for ritual murder, segregation, the badge, and the myth of the wandering Jew? Lustiger answered: "History and sociology may support your opinion, but it is not true from the point of view of faith and theology." His position held that Judaism and Christianity are theologically connected and therefore there cannot be enmity between them. Nevertheless, basing his observation on the idealized Church, he stated that the Europeans, as inheritors of Christian culture, cannot be absolved of their historical actions. This is reflected in the French Bishops' letter.

Lustiger asks: How can Christianity come to terms with the animosity of the past? One of his answers is that Christians maintained a pagan mentality. For him a Christianity not grounded in Judaism reverts back to mythology, violence, and idolatry of the self. For Lustiger the Shoah is the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:7). The nations need repentance and a return to the Church. He gives a universal answer: French Catholics during the war had reverted to paganism. He asks: How can Christian compliance with the Holocaust exist? He responds that the immense *tremendum* of the Holocaust fulfills the typology of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, the suffering of the Messiah. The people of Israel are the bearers of revelation about humanity's need for goodness and dignity. As the suffering servants during the Holocaust they revealed humanity's need for redemption. But from a Jewish point of view this theological interpretation, in the light of faith, of the murder of six million Jews as messianic suffering, obliterates the unique elements of the extermination camps with their horrific forms of degradation.<sup>9</sup>

4. In his presentation Professor Madigan tends to judge everyone—past and present—by current standards. In this example of historical presentism we see him applying present-day norms to a moving standard. Robert Caro, in his detailed study of Lyndon Johnson and his slow change from a natural Southern racist to a Civil Rights proponent, illustrates that change developed slowly and in a zig-zag manner. Studies of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robinson on race also reveal a process of slow change, so that at the end of their lives their movements could say the gospel was never racist, but always integrated. How would Robert Caro approach the situation we are addressing today? How can we achieve a thicker description? What is antisemitism for a given age? How did its expression change from the 1920s to today? (Here we might also take note of some private statements by Truman and Nixon—statements which were not considered extreme in their day.)

We cannot judge past representatives of the Church by today's standards. During the Nazi era there was a wide range of anti-Jewish attitudes and actions within the Church. To perceive Jews as Bolsheviks was somewhat the norm, and it was especially relevant in the 1930s and 40s when a framework for Vatican decision-making was its fight against liberalism and socialism.

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<sup>9</sup> Quotations from *Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger on Christians and Jews*. Edited by Jean Duchesne (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, forthcoming). These paragraphs are based on my epilogue to this volume.

The Church had little sympathy for Poles, communists, and Eastern Europeans.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, theological exclusivism at that time was not considered anti-Jewish or antisemitic. Fulfillment schemes, missionizing, or the rejection of dialogue may not be perceived as antisemitic in every given situation. Unfortunately, willful ignorance is part of modern life. We currently live in a world willfully ignorant of its many atrocities.<sup>11</sup>

Must one be a progressive by contemporary standards on all issues? In the 1950s, some liberal Catholics thought that Jews, overwhelmed by the Holocaust, would convert to Christianity. We can learn from Monsignor John Oesterreicher's slow journey in the 1950s and 60s—from a stance of mission to the Jews, to acceptance, and then to assisting in the formulation of Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate*. Even though the Church resisted interfaith dialogue, John Oesterreicher and Karl Thieme were part of the Freiberg Circle which engaged in theological dialogue with Jews in the 1940s. Its hidden agenda, however, was conversion. In 1948 both Martin Buber and Theodore Adorno wrote to Thieme that the goal of conversion with its concurrent devaluation of Judaism is one of the reasons that antisemitism exists. Thieme changed his ideas at that time, but it took Monsignor Oesterreicher more than a decade to catch up to his colleague.<sup>12</sup>

One has to contextualize the views of Pope Pius XII, especially his disinterest in Poland, his neglect of Polish Catholics, and his view of Communism as the true enemy. Susannah Heschel sees aiding Nazis after the war as the most damning condemnation of the Church. However, post-WWII saw a rapid shift to fighting communism in Europe. The State Department in the United States also shifted to helping Nazis since Communism was considered the major enemy. At that time the destruction of European Jewry was low on Pope Pius's list of priorities, as it was low for Roosevelt, Patton, Churchill, and most of the Allies.

More damning is what happened before the war. In considering this I turn again to the theological. I rely, as well, on the research of Elias Fullenbach.<sup>13</sup> A 1938 Memorandum by Karl Thieme, John Oesterreicher and others included the statement that Christians are spiritual Semites. It also insisted that there needed to be service to the Jews who were being discriminated against in Nazi Germany. More importantly, they encouraged the writing of a papal encyclical against antisemitism. Such an encyclical was drafted under Pope Pius XI, but it did not appear when Pius XII became Pope. After the war Pope Pius XII did not support efforts for dialogue. When asked to change the Good Friday prayer, he refused. Pope John XXIII, however, understanding the issue changed the Good Friday prayer even prior to Vatican Council II.

Another example of slow change is that of Romano Guardini who, in 1919, wrote the influential *Spirit of the Liturgy*. He was anti-Jewish before WWII, but in May 1952 he wrote an essay stating that the German people need to accept responsibility for Auschwitz and seek reconciliation with the Jewish people. *We Remember* did this but it took the Vatican over forty more years.

I now turn to Madigan's coda on Pope Benedict. I disagree with his perception that Pope Benedict is harmful. Pope Benedict's prime concerns are pastoral and theological. He "gets" the meaning of the Holocaust. The problem is that he does not "get" the Jewish memory of the Holo-

<sup>10</sup> On this point, see *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, Kevin P. Spicer, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> See Elias Fullenbach, "Shock, renewal, Crisis: Catholic reflections on the Shoah," in *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, 20, 236.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



caust. Pope Benedict has been to Israel at least five different times, while Pope John Paul II visited only once. Pope Benedict has visited a synagogue on three occasions, while Pope John Paul II visited a synagogue only once. Pope Benedict has visited Auschwitz three different times, but he never delivered a great speech. He does understand the Holocaust, he wants to eradicate antisemitism, and he sincerely wants reconciliation with Judaism. He is deeply committed to this. But publicly he is not always an effective politician. He mainly acts as a theologian, which gives him a tin ear for the needs of the moment. For example, when he visited Auschwitz in 2006, he began the prayer service which he led with the words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Israel is raised to God through suffering—They tried to kill the God of Abraham." The Jewish audience was not very responsive to this prayer which used the Psalm uttered by Jesus on the Cross, which made suffering redemptive, and which spoke of Judaism as Abrahamic.

In continuity with John Paul II, Benedict XVI accords to the Holocaust of the Jews a special status that is not to be linked to the other causalities of WWII. He understands the special nature of the Holocaust of the Jews. But his contextualization of the Holocaust is the problem. Most of the time Pope Benedict's Holocaust messages are either theologically Christian or universal. His approach to reconciliation is based on the Christian theological perspective of an Abrahamic covenant and the eternal problem of evil. He does not consider the post-Holocaust need of the hour.<sup>14</sup>

However, in February 2009 after the Williamson fiasco he did get it right in his speech to the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. He stated clearly, using words his Jewish audience could receive: "It is beyond question that the Holocaust cannot be denied or minimized." He quoted John Paul II's note placed in the Western Wall apologizing for antisemitism and seeking forgiveness.

*God of our fathers,  
You chose Abraham and his descendants  
to bring your Name to the Nations:  
we are deeply saddened  
by the behavior of those  
who in the course of history  
have caused these children of yours to suffer,  
and asking your forgiveness  
we wish to commit ourselves  
to genuine brotherhood  
with the people of the Covenant.*

At that meeting he even went on to say that the 2000 years of history of the relationship between Christians and Jews have seen many different phases, some too painful to recall. At that moment he understood antisemitism. I would recommend that he give this speech whenever he is called on to speak to a Jewish audience about the Holocaust. Furthermore, if the healing work is to start between the Church and Jews, the antisemitism prior to the Holocaust that Pope Benedict found too painful to recall needs to be faithfully held in memory.

As I was editing this presentation Pope Benedict offered his reflections on the year, which included his confrontation with the Holocaust during his visit to Yad Vashem. This visit entailed a disturbing encounter with the cruelty of human sin, with the hatred of a blind ideology that, with-

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<sup>14</sup> On John Paul II, see Robert Wistrich, "John Paul II on Jews and Judaism," *Partisan Review* (Winter 2000): 100-111; idem, "The Vatican and the Shoah" *Modern Judaism* 21.2 (2001) 83-107.

out any justification, sentenced millions of human persons to death—and this, in the final analysis, also strove to drive God out of the world, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God of Jesus Christ. So Yad Vashem, this commemorative monument against hatred, is first of all a heartrending call to purification, to forgiveness, and to love. Once again Pope Benedict both universalized the tragedy and made it theological. He is sensitive to the importance of the Holocaust and wants to honor Holocaust memory by condemning hatred. Yet he lacks a sense of the Jewish memory of the tragedy and the message was another lost opportunity to convey a sense of personal remorse.<sup>15</sup>

That same day Pope Benedict declared Pope Pius XII venerable. Benedict lauds Pius for his piety, his fight against Godless relativism, and for maintaining the institution of the Church despite the politics around him. When Benedict honors someone for their piety and leadership over an almost twenty-year reign as Pope, he looks almost entirely to his theology and his activities internal to the Church, not to his Holocaust record. As noted above, Pope Pius XII's wartime record was neither that of hero nor antisemite. Pope Benedict is naming a saint for his piety not for his rescue of Jews. This act may not reveal a sensitivity to Jewish pain; however one should not declare it hostile to Jews, as whitewashing the past, or as undoing the Church's moral reckoning over the past several decades.

Finally, (and for some this may seem beside the point), in his theology Pope Benedict conceptualizes the Holocaust using the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, especially that of Theodore Adorno and Jürgen Habermas. He speaks to the *Historikerstreit*, occurring in the 1980s which debated the role of the Holocaust in history. He sides with Adorno and Habermas against Nolte and Fest. But this discussion does not in any way respond to Jewish memory. Neither does his discussion of the Holocaust in *Spe Salvi* (In Hope We Are Saved) which asserts that the horrible injustices of history should not have the final word. There must finally be true justice. But that, in the words the Pope quotes from Adorno, would require a world "where not only present suffering would be wiped out, but also that which is irrevocably past would be undone." This would mean the resurrection of the dead (no. 42). God now reveals his true face in the figure of the sufferer who shares man's God-forsaken condition by taking it upon himself. This innocent sufferer has attained the certitude of hope: there is a God, and God can create justice in a way that we cannot conceive, yet we can begin to grasp it through faith. Yes, there is a resurrection of the flesh. (42-43)

In Benedict's theological works on the Christian meaning of modernity, especially as typified by the Holocaust, his goal is to provide salvific hope before a rampant loss of values. Jewish memory of the Holocaust is not addressed. When Pope Benedict considers the theological issues of the Holocaust he thinks of Adorno's question and the pastoral answer of crucifixion and resurrection. He does not think of recent Jewish Holocaust theologians. In this, Pope Benedict is similar to many Orthodox Jewish theologians, who are not interested in historicity or Holocaust theology, and are more concerned with either the eternal values of the *halakhah* or the pastoral need to spread Judaism. They hear a commanding voice from Sinai and Zion and not from Auschwitz. Thus, it would be unfair to ask Benedict to adopt specific positions in Holocaust theology or to place the Jewish-Christian relationship at the center of his theology. He is a pastoral leader for Catholics, and he has a vision for their doctrinal, liturgical, and institutional needs. It is fair, however, to expect him to address the specific Jewish memory of the Holocaust

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<sup>15</sup> See Sandro Magister, "I think that the Church should also open today a court of the gentiles" *Chiesa* (Dec. 21, 2009) <http://www.chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1341494?eng=y> (accessed Jan 4, 2009).

when he is speaking to a Jewish audience at a Jewish sponsored event, such as at Yad Vashem.

I now want to turn for a moment to the Jewish side. In doing so I draw on Levinas who writes, "If you live only in a world of memory, you live in a world of anger and hate. Jews are not done with their mourning over the Holocaust." They have not attained a distance from the facts, an acceptance without denial.

Jewish Holocaust theologians themselves are not great historians and they find a uniqueness that transcends history. Therefore, for them historical accuracy is not the primary concern. Jews say that the Holocaust cannot be compared to any other event in history, or even to another genocide. Their sense of *tremendum* is not history but theology. The theologian and essayist Arthur A. Cohen, in his book on the impact of the Holocaust, poignantly notes how before 1939 one could read the sad litany of pogroms, riots, and massacres and find it unremarkable and predictable. One could account for the events sociologically, historically, and psychologically and thereby provide context. Cohen argues that after the death camps the past became illuminated by the present image of the mass killings. Now, it is as if the small medieval riots naturally culminated in the *tremendum* of the Holocaust. There now is a sense that the killing of six Jews in an obscure medieval blood libel led to the Holocaust.<sup>16</sup>

Jonathan Safran Foer, in *Everything is Illuminated*, states that Jews have a sixth sense, which is memory. He does not mean academic history, but the *tremendum* of historical memory. Jews have not internalized the changes of Vatican II which are part of recent history. Much of Jewish memory still sees the Pope and the Catholic Church entirely through the lens of centuries of anti-Judaism and the Holocaust. The Jewish sense of *tremendum* implicates anyone who was a bystander to the Holocaust as morally guilty.

I know Jewish academics who are still waiting for the Church to reveal its true colors and return to its medieval teaching of contempt. This lack of internalization of the changes exists even among Jewish academics who have doctorates and who may even engage in interfaith dialogue. Think of how little the ordinary Jew has absorbed! There is an urgent need for Jews to move beyond their paralyzing fears. Unfortunately, Holocaust theology is not helpful in overcoming this fear; it can foster a binary sense of all good or all bad, a tendency to treat bystanders as perpetrators, and greater concern for Jewish solidarity than for history.<sup>17</sup>

Recently I discovered a new phenomenon in which Israelis blame the Holocaust on the Vatican and the Church's 2000 years of antisemitism. The Israeli rabbinate has even issued a pamphlet that paints the Vatican as training Hezbollah. This pamphlet was and is still being distributed to soldiers. It even goes as far as to say that the Vatican is taking Hezbollah members to Auschwitz for training in genocide. (I found this expressed in a synagogue handout this past summer and then was able to acquire the full pamphlet.) Some Jews are not letting go of the past, inhibiting their ability to look to the future.

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<sup>16</sup> Arthur A. Cohen, *The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

<sup>17</sup> Alan Brill, *Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): Chapter. 10.



If we want to move things forward we need to truly evaluate the role of the Church in the medieval ages and its legacy of antisemitism. Blood libels, badges, ghettos, conversionary sermons, and the violence caused by passion plays need to be explicitly discussed. However, our discussion must also include the historical moments when the Church was not anti-Jewish. We need to point out the protections that were offered by the Church. We have forgotten both past and present periods of tranquility and instead have internalized a story of a millennium of persecution and a need to be fearful. There are new scholars today, working from archives, who show that many of the medieval incidents were local urban ethnic disputes. Many periods and lands had bishops, priests, and peasants who did not express anti-Jewish views. We need to see both sides to gain accurate knowledge of the medieval period in the hope of gaining perspective.

A few concluding observations:

(1) There is a sincere attempt by the Vatican for reconciliation, and reconciliation is indeed the goal.

(2) There is also a sincere attempt by the Vatican for moral reckoning of antisemitism; however, they also have other forefront concerns, including the pastoral, liturgical, and doctrinal life of the Church.

(3) I completely agree with Professor Madigan's conclusions to the question about historic reckoning. Nevertheless, issues should not be conceptualized only in the present.

(4) However, the understanding of Jewish Holocaust memory is intermittent. Most of the time the Holocaust is understood as a Jewish tragedy, though Vatican speeches may not reveal this understanding. When going to a Holocaust memorial to show respect to the Jewish people while accompanied by a group of Jews, Church representatives need to understand that the Holocaust is not the "30 million people killed by the fascists" nor is it a "universal problem of inhumanity and evil in the world." For Jews, it is a war against six million Jews as Jews, with the Jews singled out for extermination. At a minimum this is demanded by diplomacy and propriety; at best it requires empathy for Jewish memory. There is a noticeable lack of a personal empathy and empathetic regret.

(5) Is there an understanding by the Church of the Jewish sense of the *Tremendum*? Do they "get" the Jewish silence, bereft of theological answers? Do they "get" the rupturing of Jewish faith, leaving a sense of Jewish brokenness? The answer is no. Few Jews evoke the eternal covenants as a comfort.

(6) Finally, current Church statements made in light of the Holocaust, are not addressing the past 2000 years of Christian anti-Judaism. Fr. Edward Flannery's observation in the Introduction to his book *The Anguish of the Jews* still holds true: Christians have torn from their history books the pages that Jews have memorized.

Jules Isaac's writing on the history of antisemitism in *The Teaching of Contempt* helped inform proceedings at Vatican Council II and helped motivate the writing of *We Remember*. However, it served only as a ladder. The point now is not to move beyond the book, but to return to pages of painful history in order to help heal the past.