

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Religious and Philosophical Implications of the Holocaust:
The Impact on Jewish and Christian Relations**

A Thesis Submitted to the

University Honors Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With University Honors

Department of Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts and Sciences

By Janet Szudarski

DeKalb, Illinois

May 12, 2001

University Honors Program

Capstone Approval Page

Capstone Title: (print or type):

Religious and Philosophical Implications
of the Holocaust: The Impact on Jewish
and Christian Relations

Student Name (print or type):

Janet Szudarski

Faculty Supervisor (print or type):

Stephen Franklin

Faculty Approval Signature:

Stephen Frankl

Department of (print or type):

English

Date of Approval (print or type):

5/17/01

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract Submission Form	.....	1
Abstract	.....	2
Holocaust Literature	.....	3
Introduction	.....	4
Pre-Holocaust History	.....	7
The Early Church	.....	7
Anti-Semitism	.....	8
The Holocaust (1933-1945)	.....	10
Hitler, Religion, Holocaust	.....	11
Pope Pius XII	.....	13
Post-Holocaust History	.....	15
Implications	.....	15
Reshaping Values	.....	16
Dialogue	.....	17
Methodology, Interviews	.....	21
Analysis, Interviews	.....	21
Conclusion	.....	35
Bibliography	.....	38

**HONORS THESIS ABSTRACT
THESIS SUBMISSION FORM**

AUTHOR: Janet Szudarski

THESIS TITLE: Religious and Philosophical Implications of the Holocaust: The Impact on Jewish and Christian Relations

ADVISOR: Steve Franklin

ADVISOR'S DEPT: English

DISCIPLINE: Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts and Sciences **YEAR:** 2001

ILLUSTRATED: No

PAGE LENGTH: 37

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Yes

PUBLISHED (YES OR NO): No

LIST PUBLICATION: None

COPIES AVAILABLE: Hard Copy, Diskette

ABSTRACT (100-200 WORDS):

The European Holocaust was a horrific and evil event in human history. The result of a particular historical, social, political, and economic *milieu* in early twentieth century Germany, it was also a result of racism and centuries-old bigotry deeply rooted in the Christian church. It can be argued that the Holocaust, then, shattered not only much of Christianity's traditional moral base, but that of Western Society as well. The Holocaust's impact has rendered problematic the very certainty that underlies all sets of values for both Jews and Christians. It has, in short, forced a reassessment of Christian and Jewish relations. I have examined the impact of the Holocaust on these relations. Analyzing scholarly sources, as well as conducting personal interviews, I have concluded that although the Holocaust is an undeniable historical event that may have shattered many people's religious faith in God and their secular faith in human beings, it has brought about a profound re-evaluation of Jewish and Christian relations.

ABSTRACT

The European Holocaust was a horrific and evil event in human history. The result of a particular historical, social, political, and economic *milieu* in early twentieth century Germany, it was also a result of racism and centuries-old bigotry deeply rooted in the Christian church. It can be argued that the Holocaust, then, shattered not only much of Christianity's traditional moral base, but that of Western Society as well. The Holocaust's impact has rendered problematic the very certainty that underlies all sets of values for both Jews and Christians. It has, in short, forced a reassessment of Christian and Jewish relations. I have examined the impact of the Holocaust on these relations. Analyzing scholarly sources, as well as conducting personal interviews, I have concluded that although the Holocaust is an undeniable historical event that may have shattered many people's religious faith in God and their secular faith in human beings, it has brought about a profound re-evaluation of Jewish and Christian relations.

Smoke

From the crematory flue
A Jew aspires to the Holy One
And when the smoke of him is gone,
His wife and children filter through.
Above us, in the height of sky,
Saintly billows weep and wait.
God, wherever you may be,
There all of us are also not.

By Joseph Glatstein

Night

“Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke
beneath a silent blue sky.

Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned by dreams to dust.

Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.”

By Elie Wiesel

Untitled

“I believe in the sun
even when it is not shining.

I believe in love
even when it is not.

I believe in God
even when he is silent.”

- Inscription on the walls of a cellar in Cologne, Germany, where Jews hid from the Nazis.

INTRODUCTION

Roughly twelve million people died in the Holocaust, of whom about six million were Jews. What is different about the murder of Jews? Why is their murder different from the murder of Gypsies, Russians, Poles, and others who were also in the death factories? The answer is threefold. First, the Nazi plan to destroy the Jews was aimed at Jews as a whole. Simply for being Jews and for no other reason, *all* Jews were to be exterminated. As Elie Wiesel pointed out, “The Jewish problem was to receive a ‘final solution.’” Second, while the Nazis made plans to provide final solutions for other groups, those plans could wait until the war was over. The Jews had to go immediately. Third, the war against the Jews took precedence over the conflict with all other enemies. Killing Jews was more important than winning the war. In these three respects, the Jewish Holocaust was unique (Williamson, 125).

As we reflect upon the religious and philosophical implications of the Holocaust, it is very difficult to understand how and why God could let such an event occur. The answer to Elie Wiesel’s unforgettable question, “Where is God now?” is one we may never comprehend. Perhaps it is so horrible that God does not want us to understand. Still, many people have sought out answers, attempting to explain even the most controversial subjects concerning humankind and God.

History reveals to us that the religious rivalry between Christians and Jews has gone on for centuries. What makes it all a never-ending cycle is that Christianity is carved out of Judaism, and it may appear that the two world religions can never fully accept or reject one another. Spiritually, this may never happen because in the New Testament there was contempt and hatred held for the Jews of Jesus’ day. They were

called degenerate. In 1543, Martin Luther wrote in his book, The Jews and Their Lies, that next to the devil himself, a Christian has “no enemy more cruel, more venomous and violent than a true Jew.” This does not sound very Christian does it?

Nonetheless, there have been several attempts at reconciliation. Prayer books, scriptures, and sermons have been revised to improve Christian images of Jews, and just recently, Pope John Paul II visited the Holocaust Memorial and expressed his heartfelt grief for the Christian persecution of Jews. However, he did not offer an apology for the silence of the Catholic Church during the Holocaust, which the Jewish leaders were hoping for. The question then, is why was the Church silent? The church’s indifference came at a high price. In fact, the Nazis used all of this religious history, including Luther’s writings, to herald their own killings and beliefs.

An essay titled, “The Dean and the Chosen People,” by Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein shares an interesting philosophical viewpoint regarding the “how” of the situation: How could God let this happen? In Germany, 1961 Rubenstein had an enlightening conversation with Heinrich Gruber, Dean of the Evangelical Church of East and West Berlin. The Dean, who was a defender of Jewish rights, had been the only German to testify in Jerusalem against Adolf Eichmann at the trial earlier that summer.

In the interview, Rubenstein asked the Dean this difficult question: “Was it God’s will that Hitler destroyed the Jews?” The Dean said that he looked at the Holocaust from a biblical perspective. In the past, the Jews had been smitten by *Nebuchadnezzar* and other “rods of God’s anger.” Hitler was simply another rod. “At different times,” he said, “God uses different people as His whip against His own people, the Jews, but those whom He uses will be punished far worse than the people of the Lord.” In the conclusion

of the conversation, the Dean had asserted that God had been instrumental in the Holocaust, but he had not identified what crime the Jews had committed for which God was supposed to have smitten them (Berenbaum, 284).

This response leads us closer to answering the “why” of the question: “Why did God let the Holocaust happen?” Could it be that the Jews are Christ-killers? Berenbaum puts it best when he says, “In addition, there is in Luther (The Jews and Their Lies) a logic that perpetually tempts the Christian mind: namely, that misfortune’s falling on the Jews is corroborating evidence for the exclusive truth of the Christian faith. When a people rejects God’s Messiah, who is also one of their own, no good can come of it. At the very least, so this reasoning goes, judgment and punishment will follow” (Berenbaum, 285). In 1948, at the German Evangelical Conference, church leaders proclaimed “that the terrible Jewish suffering in the Holocaust was a divine visitation and a call to Jews to cease their rejection and ongoing crucifixion of Christ”(Berenbaum, 309). Indeed, these accusations are powerful but just a speculation, for we shall never fully understand God. We are not meant to. Although certainly not satisfactory or divine, this response is one that is human.

I have no answers to give Elie Wiesel or to the six million victims of the Holocaust. I do, however, intend to uncover a better understanding of the religious circumstances and philosophical theories involved. There is a very appropriate quote I would like to share with you by none other than Elie Wiesel: “If you want difficulties, choose to live with God. Can you compare the tragedy of the believer to that of the nonbeliever? The real tragedy, the real drama is the drama of the believer.”

I. Pre-Holocaust History

The Holocaust did not occur as a result of one set condition, nor one set event, but as a combination of things. It was the combined result of many factors: racism, combined with centuries-old bigotry, a nationalistic fervor which was fueled by Germany's defeat in World War I and its national humiliation following the Treaty of Versailles. This was further exacerbated by worldwide economic hard times, the ineffectiveness of the Weimar Republic, and international indifference, and catalyzed by the political charisma, militaristic inclusiveness, and manipulative propaganda of Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime, which contributed to the eventuality of the Holocaust (Internet: "Anti-Semitism").

Jews have lived in Europe for over two thousand years. Throughout this time they were often subjected to persecutions, expulsions, pogroms (riots aimed at Jews by local residents and frequently encouraged by the authorities) and victimization, which reached its culmination during the Holocaust. As Christianity became the dominant religion of Europe, Jews were forced to the margins of society. Despite these circumstances, Jews continued to make valuable contributions to the welfare of Europe.

The Early Church

Many people believe there is definite Christian link between anti-Semitism and the Holocaust because Christianity was the channel through which anti-Semitism was transmitted to the medieval and modern world. The idea of the Jews as the people of the Devil and predestined to play an evil role in history can be traced back to the Gospels of Matthew and John (see especially Williamson). This ideology was also developed in the writings of the Church Fathers and in the Middle Ages. The question then, is what is it in

Christianity that lends itself to anti-Semitism? Is Christian anti-Semitism the outcome of a misunderstanding of Christian teaching, or is it essential to the teaching itself? Most scholars admit that anti-Semitism is found in the New Testament, and that it arose from the rivalry between Christianity and Judaism (see especially Williamson). In order to cope with Judaism as an independent religion that does not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, it was necessary to degrade Judaism and the Jews.

Jesus of Nazareth was a practicing Jew and so were his disciples. At the heart of Christian hatred was the belief that the Jews had killed Jesus—their one unforgivable crime. That alone justified whatever was done to them. Some Christian members support the traditions concerning the crucifixion. Pilate is viewed as relatively innocent, while “the Jews” are held responsible. Most say that Pontius Pilate wanted to spare Jesus from the cross but a group of powerful Jews wanted him dead. Those who hold the ancient Jews responsible for the crucifixion tend to think that contemporary Jews still are to be blamed (see especially Williamson).

Anti-Semitism

In 1879, German journalist Wilhelm Marr originated the term *anti-Semitism*. Marr was a German anti-Semite who brought racist ideas to a wide audience, introducing the word “anti-Semite.” The term denoted a hatred of Jews, and a hatred of various trends that were associated with Jews. These trends included equal civil rights, constitutional democracy, free trade, socialism, finance capitalism, and pacifism. Marr founded the “League of Anti-Semites” which failed as an organization but was historically important because it was the first to create a popular political movement based on anti-Semitism (Internet: “Anti-Semitism”). However, anti-Semitism was not

unique to Germany. Jews were persecuted over the ages because they made excellent scapegoats.

In medieval times, Jews were blamed for the plague, depicted as having horns and cloven feet, as well as sacrificing Christian babies. During the Crusades, Jews were killed by Christians on their way to “reclaim the Holy Land.” Some Christians felt that Jews were Satanic because they killed Jesus, their Messiah. During the Spanish Inquisition of the 1400’s, the Jews were forced to convert, leave Spain or be burned at the stake.

Jews became increasingly more distant from Christians over the years as a result of their own religious practices, for example, the Saturday Sabbath, circumcision, not eating pork, and reading Hebrew. Medieval Jews were kept out of guilds and forced into the job of money lending. There was a popular myth that Jews killed Christian children to use their blood in Passover cakes (“Shadow on the Cross”).

The Protestant Reform of 1517 did not help the Jewish relations with the Church either. Martin Luther tried to convert Jews to his Church, but upon the decline of his offer of conversion, his failure turned to hatred of Jews and their religion. He declared Jews unfit to live. It wasn’t until recently (1994) that the Lutheran Church re-examined his racist ideology and rejected that portion of it.

Hitler was able to exploit all of these anti-Semitic feelings from the past, and he did this in his book, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). The book was written in 1924, while he was in prison for staging a failed military coup. By 1933, the book had sold over a million copies. Although his ideas seemed ridiculous at the time, he managed to

implement them. Somehow, his leadership was able to ignite problems boiling under the surface of Germany.

Devastated by World War I, Germany was in poor economic shape before the Depression of the 1920s struck. The demand for reparations and a weakened infrastructure eventually led to inflation and unemployment. Furthermore, Germany was alienated by the rest of the world as a result of a guilt clause and land seizures in the Treaty of Versailles. All of this left Germany looking for someone to blame. Hitler and his ideals in *Mein Kampf* made it easy for Germany to say it was someone else's fault.

"Hitler felt that Jews were the evil that was at the root of Germany's problems and must therefore be eliminated. Hitler claimed that Germany never really lost World War I but was stabbed in the back by a Jewish/Communist conspiracy. With the discovery of a scapegoat, all the anger and humiliation that Germany felt could be directed at the Jews. The Germans now had something to work toward eliminating, something upon which to focus all of their negativity. Soon, Nazism became widespread and its oppression of the Jews grew into the genocide that was the Holocaust" (Internet: "Anti-Semitism").

II. The Holocaust (1933-1945)

With the Nazi rise to power in 1933, the party ordered anti-Jewish boycotts, staged numerous book burnings, and enacted anti-Jewish legislation. In 1935, the Nuremberg laws defined Jews by blood and ordered the total separation of "Aryans" and "non-Aryans." This was the Nazi master plan for world domination. This plan was detailed with fine precision how other nations would serve the Aryan Master Race. For some, Jews, Gypsies, blacks, and most Slavs, there was no place in this new world order.

The rest of the people in society were to be slaves or obedient servants (see especially Simon).

Hitler, Religion, and the Holocaust

The theory of the Master Race had been in existence in other countries long before Hitler became chancellor of Germany in 1933. There were scientists and teachers educating others about the superiority of certain races (Simon, 27). They believed that the Master Race, composed of white, blue-eyed, blond-haired individuals, had the right to rule over inferior, slave races. For generations, the Germans had been taught the legends of the ancient Germanic gods and heroes, which praised stories of war and conquest. Especially after World War I, the Germans were desperate to believe such stories. The Allies humiliated Germany, and the country was experiencing a terrible economic depression. Hitler promised the German people that he would restore power, pride, and unite the “real” Germans. However, what the Germans did not realize was what this kind of unity really meant. It meant that Hitler was to be followed blindly, without question. It also meant that anyone who was different or posed a threat to Nazi unity was to be eliminated (see especially Simon).

Was Hitler a Christian? And more importantly, did religion have anything to do with the Holocaust? Hitler was baptized a Catholic and attended Catholic schools and churches in Austria. In 1941, Hitler told his army adjutant General Gerhard Engel, “I shall remain a Catholic forever.”

When the final decision was made to exterminate the Jews, Hitler specified that they should be killed humanely but without a twinge of conscience. He was, after all, a member in good standing in the Church of Rome and carried within him its teaching that

the Jews were the killer of Christ: “So I believe that I act in the spirit of the Almighty God: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.”

Furthermore, in his May 1923 speech at the Krone Circus in Munich, Hitler cried out: “The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but not human. They cannot be human in the sense of being an image of God, the Eternal. The Jews are the image of the Devil.” And in 1926 he told a Munich audience, “The task which Christ began but did not finish, I will complete.” These very Nazi ideologies were shaped from similar Christian ideologies (Internet: “Religion and the Holocaust”).

The Holocaust refers to the systematic, bureaucratic, and intentional annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II. It took place throughout Nazi-occupied Europe and Africa: Poland, the Soviet Union, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Lithuania, Holland, France, Latvia, Greece, Austria, Yugoslavia, Belgium, Italy, Estonia, Norway, Luxembourg, Libya, Albania, Denmark, and Finland. The Holocaust was the result of the Nazis’ so-called “Final Solution,” the deliberate policy to destroy all traces of Jewish life and culture in Europe. As many as two million Jews were confined in ghettos, where they died by slow starvation or disease, or they were taken to be shot at mass-murder sites near where they lived. The remaining four million Jews were forced from their homes and taken by train to distant concentration camps, where they were murdered by being worked to death, starved to death, beaten to death, shot, or gassed (see especially Berenbaum).

In addition to the murder of the Jews, the Nazis and their collaborators murdered about 500,000 Romani and Sinti (Gypsies) and at least 250,000 handicapped people. Millions of other innocent people also were persecuted and murdered: Soviet prisoners of

war were killed because of their nationality; Poles and other Slavs were used as slave labor; homosexuals and other so-called “anti-social” types were persecuted and murdered. In addition, thousands of political and religious dissidents such as communists, socialists, trade unionists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs. All in all, almost 12 million people died as a result of the Holocaust, including two-thirds of the Jews in Europe (see especially Berenbaum).

Pope Pius XII and the Silence of the Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church believed the 1933 concordat between Hitler and the Vatican protected it. The concordat granted the freedom of practice to the Catholic Church in Germany, provided that the Church did not interfere in the politics of Germany. Papal Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli, the former papal nuncio in Berlin, and the future Pope Pius XII, negotiated the concordat. This agreement was considered a diplomatic victory for Hitler, who did not uphold his part of the bargain. Ultimately, the agreement weakened the influence of the Catholic center party and Catholic labor unions in Germany (Berenbaum, 40).

Pope Pius XII was informed about the Nazi’s war against the Jews. Many appeals given by Western and Jewish leaders to intervene were ignored. They wanted the Pontiff to take a public stand condemning the exterminations of the Jew or threatening the Nazi leaders with excommunication. Even when the Jews of Rome were being taken for deportation on October 16-17, 1943, the Vatican did nothing. The pontiff appeared to be more concerned with preserving his own institution. The Pope refused to break his silence, as he did not want to say anything that the German people might consider an act of hostility during a terrible war. Nevertheless, hundreds of priests and nuns, bishops,

and other people of the clergy did come to the aid of the Jews with the Pope's knowledge and approval. Priests hid more than 4,000 Jews in Rome's churches; monks and nuns opened monasteries and convents to them (Braham, 30).

There have been several attempts to explain the Pope's silence during the Holocaust. Some say he failed to speak out because of his fondness for Germany and its people, of which more than 20 million were Catholic. Furthermore, his twelve years of service in Germany as papal nuncio formed a fond appreciation for German culture. Also, it was thought that the Pope was fearful of Bolshevism and liberalism. The Vatican was already known for its abhorrence of Bolshevism, and the Pope, according to one of his secretaries, "always looked upon Russian Bolshevism as more dangerous than German National Socialism" (Braham, 31). The Vatican leaders, much like other conservatives, had believed that the dangers of Bolshevism to Christian civilization were far greater, and that reconciliation between Nazi Germany and the Western Allies against the USSR would be in the best interest of the world. Other defenders of the Pope felt that he could not condemn the massacre of the Jews without condemning the mass killing of other groups, or single out the Germans without condemning the Soviets (Braham, 32). In the past, the members of the clergy also fell victim to the Nazis. Pope Pius XI subtly condemned racism on Passion Sunday 1937, by reading this statement: "Anti-Semitism is unacceptable. Spiritually, we are all Semites." Following the reading of this letter in German churches, many attacks and sanctions against members of the clergy were carried out. Perhaps Pope Pius XII was also defending his own people.

III. Post-Holocaust History

As a historical fact, the Holocaust threatened to sever the bonds tying the Jewish community with the rest of mankind, their own people, and God. And yet, Jews have felt driven to renew the threefold covenant with mankind, their own community, and God. As a result of the Holocaust, many Jews have felt compelled to remain faithful to their God. They believe that Judaism enhances one's life and affirms its worth. Thus, clinging to Judaism is like clinging to life. The source of values and meaning within life all comes from God. This is why many believers feel compelled to accept God even with the horrible question raised by Auschwitz, rather than to reject Him. To reject God would be to reject the basis for value within life itself.

Implications of the Holocaust for the Christian Church

During the week of April 11, people of all ages, nationalities, races and creeds throughout America observe *Yom Ha Shoah*—Holocaust Remembrance. This annual observance offers Christians an opportunity to mourn the loss of human life and also reflects on the Holocaust as both a Jewish and Christian tragedy. To call the Holocaust a Jewish tragedy requires little explanation, as Jews were the primary targets of Nazi persecution. But to call the Holocaust a Christian tragedy requires honesty and openness. The reason why the Christian church bears such guilt for the Holocaust is because many of those who sought refuge and hope in Adolf Hitler were practicing Christians.

As a Christian tragedy, the Holocaust challenges the church to confront its mistake—for failing to speak out against the Holocaust during World War II. A Holocaust survivor wrote, "The world still is not free of the disease that led to Auschwitz and Treblinka"(Kramer, 214). For Christianity, the symbol of suffering is Jesus on the

cross. It is tragic that this symbol should have become a symbol of division between Jews and Christians because the reality to which it points is a Jewish reality as well, the reality of suffering and martyrdom.

Reshaping Values After the Holocaust

Both Christianity and Judaism are religions of redemption. They both believe in a loving, caring God and the preciousness of the human in the image of God. The Holocaust is a total attack on this. The absolute worthlessness of Jewish life as demonstrated in the Holocaust shows the lack of value in human life. What happened during the Holocaust is a challenge to human beings, and perhaps this is why so many deny it ever happened. We must remember the “religious” people who carried out the Holocaust. There were killers and murderers who continued to practice organized religions, including Christianity, but saw no need to stand-up or resist the Nazis.

During the Holocaust, the line between being a perpetrator of evil and being a bystander fades every day. People do not hold themselves accountable for their actions. As seen in the Holocaust, the “banality” of evil consumed Eastern Europe (see especially Hannah Arendt). The immense number of dead and morally shattered is the very essence of absurdity and radical evil, the continuing statement of human worthlessness and meaninglessness. The value of human life diminished as people became more immune to violence. Instead of focusing on the core values of religion and restoring the image of God to the world, the Holocaust showed us that “all is permitted.” It showed that one could literally get away with murder. Although some killers were punished, many were not. Therefore, the Holocaust calls on all of the religions of the world to do all they can to restore the image of God to the world, by making it more precious and unique (Peck, 16).

Dialogue Between Judaism and Christianity: The Road to Reconciliation

Rabbi Richard Rubenstein has written: “We learned in the crisis that we could expect neither support nor succor from God nor from our fellow creatures. Therefore, the world will remain forever a place of pain, suffering, alienation, and ultimate defeat.” The history of relations between Jews and Christians is a tormented one (Berenbaum, 318).

The Second Vatican Council took the very first step in 1965, under the leadership of Pope John Paul XIII, when they issued the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*. This document is better known as *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Age) and summarizes the Church’s position on all major religions, particularly devoting a lengthier section to its relationships with Jews. “Under its provisions, the Church:

- Recognized the common heritage of Christians and Jews—the Church’s spiritual and temporal-historical relatedness to Judaism
- Recommended that in light of this heritage, biblical and theological studies and brotherly dialogues be taken to foster mutual understanding and respect
- Admitted that the death of Christ cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today, rejecting the commonly held and widely propagated view that the Jews as a people were eternally guilty for the crime of deicide and
- Deplored the hatred, persecutions, and display of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source” (Braham, 13).

Despite its good intention, the document still retained two negative references to Jews. One was that a large number of Jews not only failed to accept but also opposed the spreading of the gospel, and the other was that the Jewish authorities and their followers had insisted on the death of Christ. The inadequacy of this document to address the wrongs of the past is counterbalanced by the positive outlook it has on the future. This declaration has forever changed Jewish-Christian relations for the better and has been followed by other important documents, which reinterpreted parts of the New Testament and abolished many anti-Jewish references in Catholic textbooks, teachings, and liturgy (Braham, 14).

On March 16, 1998, the Vatican issued its long-awaited statement on the Holocaust and Christian-Jewish relations. This document, entitled *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, is viewed as the result of a progression of positive steps the Vatican has taken since the mid 1960s toward improving Christian-Jewish relations in general and fighting racism and anti-Semitism.

Pope John Paul II has initiated most of the changes leading to the further improvement of Christian-Jewish relations. Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope, was born in Southern Poland. It was there that he saw first hand the brutal oppression of his country by the Nazis and the killing of the Jews, including many of his friends and acquaintances. More than any other Pope in history, he has talked openly about—and asked forgiveness for—the sins, crimes, and errors that were committed in the name of the Church (Braham, 15).

The “We Remember” document matches itself with the same ideas and doctrinal positions of Pope John Paul II. The document calls for penitence, an abolishment of

racism and anti-Semitism, and an expression of regret over the Holocaust. Jews and Christians alike have praised the document for:

- “The forthrightness with which the Pope, in his cover letter, identified the Shoah as “an indelible stain on the history of the century” and “an unspeakable iniquity”
- Expressing the need to remember the Shoah and the inhumanity with which the Jews were persecuted and massacred
- Acknowledging the impact of the “erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people”
- Deeply regretting the silence of Christians who had witnessed the Holocaust, identifying it as a heavy burden of conscience that called for penitence
- Unequivocally reaffirming the *Nostra Aetate* declaration by stating that the Church “deplored the hatred, persecutions, and display of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and from any source”
- Committing the Church to preventing “the spoiled seeds of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism” from ever again “taking root in any human heart” (Braham, 16).

Although *We Remember* is clearly one of the most important landmarks in Catholic-Jewish relations, it failed to receive general and unequivocal approval. Many of its critics assert that instead of offering an apology, the document is in fact an apologia of the Catholic Church. By far the most critical comments relate to the perceived attempt by the leaders of the Vatican to absolve the Church of any responsibility for the Holocaust; differentiate between Christian anti-Judaism and Nazi anti-Semitism; reflect the wartime

attitude of the Christians in a positive light; emphasize the alleged anti-Nazi position of the German Catholic Church leaders; and highlight Pope Pius XII's positive role during the Nazi era." (Braham, 17).

On March 23, 2000, Pope John Paul II traveled to the Holy Land to visit the Holocaust Memorial. At the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial's "Hall of Remembrance" the Pope bowed his head after laying a wreath to honor the six million Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II. "I assure the Jewish people that the Catholic Church...is deeply saddened by the hatred, acts of persecution and displays of anti-Semitism directed against Jews by the Christians at any time and in any place," the Pope said (Internet: "Remembering the Victims). Many Israelis had sought an apology from the Pope on behalf of the silence of the Catholic Church—but the Pope stopped short. The Pope did not assign any blame to the Catholic Church hierarchy, and he did not mention Pope Pius XII, who was accused by many Jews of staying silent during the Holocaust.

His host, Prime Minister Ehud Barak, whose grandparents were killed by the Nazis at Treblinka death camp, hailed the Pope's landmark visit as a climax to a historic journey of healing between the Roman Catholic Church and Jews. "You have done more than anyone else to bring about the historic change in the attitude of the Church towards the Jewish people...and to dress the gaping wounds that festered over many bitter centuries," Barak told the Pope (Internet: "Remembering the Victims).

Furthermore, the Jewish people wished to go on working with Christians "to eliminate the scourge of racism and anti-Semitism" (Internet: "Remembering the Victims). However, there is still a long way to go. "The wounds of the past are not

going to heal very quickly,” Barak said. “No Jew will ever remain helpless or be stripped of the last shred of their dignity” (Internet: “Remembering the Victims”).

Methodology of Personal Interviews

I conducted five personal interviews with Jewish and Christian religious and community leaders to represent these issues from a variety of viewpoints and to gain a contemporary assessment of the religious and philosophical implications of the Holocaust. I interviewed a daughter of a survivor, a historian, a Roman Catholic Priest, a Jewish Rabbi, and a child survivor. During each interview session, I asked a series of questions that remained essentially unchanged throughout the entire interviewing process.

Analysis of Results of Interviews

The first person I interviewed was Lillian Paulis-Gerstener, the executive director of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois for the past ten years. Lillian is also the daughter of Holocaust survivors, a commonly referred to “second generation” survivor. When asked of her thoughts regarding the religious and philosophical implications of the Holocaust she said, “ It is important for one to differentiate between a deity-directed universe and a universe directed by man and the actions of mankind. If one believes that God directs everything in our lives, then one should question, “where was God during the Holocaust”, and “why refer to him after the Holocaust?” But if one’s philosophy maintains that God created man and gave man free will, then one need not question where was God during the Holocaust, and rather question where was man. Then one can continue to believe in God pre-Holocaust, during the Holocaust, and post-Holocaust.” Lillian does not believe that God was silent during the Holocaust and, therefore, her faith has not been diminished.

When asked what Christianity contributed to make the Holocaust possible, Lillian answered, "Hitler did not invent anti-Jewish sentiment. Anti-Jewish sentiment had a centuries old tradition and that tradition was rooted in the teachings of the Church, which first and foremost identified Jews as outsiders and as the killers of Christ. With that in mind, Christianity's primary contribution to the viability of the Holocaust was that Christianity provided a fertile foundation for anti-Jewish sentiment, which Hitler and those who followed him merely worked with.

In response to Rabbi Rubenstein's observation, "We learned in the crisis that we could expect neither support nor succor from God nor from our fellow creatures. Therefore, the world will remain forever a place of pain, suffering, alienation, and ultimate defeat," she said, "The person who said this has such a pessimistic viewpoint, that I fail to understand how he can drag himself out of bed in the morning! The magnitude and scope of the Holocaust, particularly in terms of those who were immersed in its feeling of abandonment, was immense. I could understand why those who experienced it first hand might have questioned the existence of God during the Holocaust. However, I don't know this particular Rabbi and if he experienced it first hand. To attempt to fathom the degree of man's inhumanity to man as demonstrated in the Holocaust does make one question one's faith and one's belief in God. Perhaps if none of the intended victims had survived and had Hitler been successful, then perhaps he could say that. But the fact is that some did survive. They survived to flourish, to rebuild their lives, and to start families. I think he has a very negative outlook."

When asked about how the Holocaust has altered the relationship between Christians and Jews, she said, "Yes, for some adherence to Christianity, the Holocaust

was an affirmation of beliefs that they already held—that Jews deserve to be punished. For other Christians, it was a test of their own faith. For Christians who believe in the Golden Rule--do unto others as you would have done to you--to see this kind of horrendous tragedy may have tested their own faith and may have caused them to act a certain way at the time. Post-Holocaust times may have moved them to a greater degree of sympathy toward those of other religions. From the Jewish side, there were Jews who were involved in the Holocaust and failed to see Gentiles coming to their aid and took that as an affirmation of their belief that there could never be good will between two brother religions. There were Jews who benefited from the kindness of Gentiles during the Holocaust and took that as the beginning of a new hope that better relations could take place. But generally speaking, the leaders of the various faiths recognized that the Holocaust could not have happened without the indifference of Christianity. That is what has produced a wonderful movement toward better relationships between Christians and Jews. I've had the opportunity and privilege to become acquainted with a number of members of the clergy and have benefited from their reaching out to the Jewish community. Specifically, I've been involved with Holocaust education within their church system and also into the Jewish educational system as well."

When asked if she was optimistic as well, she said, "There will always be those who hate, and there is nothing you can do to change that. But generally speaking, I am more optimistic than pessimistic." When asked what obstacles are present for dialogue between the two religions, she said, "It is difficult to make a blanket generalization because the atmosphere for dialogue, which exists for instance, in the United States, differs tremendously from the atmosphere that exists for dialogue in Poland. In Poland

there is still rampant anti-Semitism. The Church is still very strong having been suppressed for many years while under the Soviet Regime and then with the break up of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of Poland as an independent country once again. The Church has ascended once more to a very dominant position. Despite the fact that there is just a minute Jewish population in Poland, there are still frequent outbreaks of anti-Jewish action. And one has to question whether or not the Church is helping to foster that. Conversely, here in the United States, whenever there happens to be something that is clearly seen to be anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish in nature, what you find more often than not is immediate cooperation and immediate coming forward of leaders in the Christian community banding together with leaders of the Jewish community to try to get to the heart of the hate and to deal with it properly.”

The next person I interviewed was Gene Walsh, the curator of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois who provided a historical view of the situation regarding the religious and philosophical implications of the Holocaust. When asked about the role in which Christianity played in the Holocaust, he answered, “The thing about the Holocaust is that in a sense, it’s the impossible that happened. There was no real way to predict it could happen, but there was a whole series of things that caused it. The setting, however, was put into place by the historical fact of the church’s practicing and reinforcing of anti-Semitic attitudes. You would hope that in a civilized community, if there has been some kind of violence against one ethnic group, the moral authorities of the community would speak up against it. This is not what happened during the Holocaust. Throughout Eastern Europe and Germany, too, you have the pogroms. In Germany, you have Luther’s writings, which were anti-Semitic. There is both a very

strong pro-Semitic and anti-Semitic mix. In Germany, the Jews were integrated. Jews made significant contributions particularly to the modernization of the world. For instance, Time magazine picked Albert Einstein as the “Man of the Century.” Well, he’s an Austrian-Jew. If philosophers had named the best philosopher, they would pick Wittgenstein. If psychologists had named the best psychologist, it would have been Freud. The list goes on, but all of these men were bringing radically new ideas into the consciousness of people, and people were worried about that. The fathers of Communism, Marx and Engels, were Jewish. Among conservative and powerful interest groups there was a hatred of and suspicion toward Jewish intellectuals as being the harbingers of a different type of society. They wanted to maintain their power. The churches were also scared by “godless communism.” A lot of Jews who were active politically, I don’t think were practicing religious Jews at all. They didn’t consider themselves culturally to be Jewish. Nevertheless, these were fears that people had and the powers that were in these circumstances, instead of trying to change that, instead reinforced it. It is very easy with hindsight, however, to say that Pope Pius should have condemned Hitler—he should have, but if he had done so, the argument is that in Austria the majority of the people were Catholic. In Germany this is not true, but in Austria it is. There were priests and nuns in Germany and Austria, and if the Pope had denounced Hitler, they might have been one of those colors on the charts. They would’ve been arrested and sent to their deaths. I’m sure the Catholic Church felt it needed to assure itself that the Church doctrine would continue. Plus, where was the Vatican at this time? It was a little island in the midst fascist Italy. It didn’t have an army. The Vatican itself could’ve been seized. If Pius didn’t speak out, there may be at some level some

justification. It does not make him a saint; it doesn't make him a hero or a major villain either. Certainly he did not condemn it.

When asked about Christian and Jewish relations, he commented, "In recent years under the current Pope, who is Polish, there has been an effort to admit culpability and the crime of silence. This is a step forward. I do not see this same movement happening in the Lutheran Church. Individually, yes, they address these issues with a proper attitude but as a church body, I don't think that happens. In this country, the Lutheran Church does not see it as a problem."

I conducted the third interview with Father Addison Hart, a Roman Catholic priest. Fr. Hart is the associate pastor at the Newman Center at Northern Illinois University. When I asked what his thoughts were regarding the religious implications of the Holocaust, this is what he had to say: "I am what is theologically called an Augustinian. I am not surprised at the extent of evil that human beings are able to perpetrate on others. I believe the human race is still good underneath the passions and all the sinfulness. It is still in God's image and is still worth saving or else God wouldn't have bore with us as long as he has. Christianity believes there is something called the mystery of iniquity or the mystery of sin. It resides in every individual to a greater or lesser extent. It is shocking to see the amount of evil present in the Holocaust, especially in the Western world where we thought such barbarity was well behind us. But to see it without paying as much heed to the ongoing amount of violence and brutality that has attended the human race down through the centuries, is to isolate it from a larger pattern of behavior. We don't want to do that because then we are not really dealing with anything. We can't ask the questions, "how could this happen?" or "what does this say

about God?” if we don’t recognize that the sickness we are talking about is far more extensive than any individual historical manifestation of it. The issue is the same age-old problem of sin that Christians have been dealing with, and Jews as well, down through the centuries. To deny that it exists is one way of dealing with it, but not a helpful one. To overlay the idea that everything has changed because of one particular manifestation of evil, no matter how traumatic it is, is to ignore the fact that it could happen again. The Holocaust in the twentieth century is certainly not utterly unique. Hitler used the holocaust of the Armenians by the Turks earlier in the century, as a model or a basis for the holocaust against the Jews. That was just as much as an utter ethnic cleansing. We also don’t want to let others off the hook too easily. Stalin, for example, killed far more than Hitler did. We don’t want to forget that as we speak today, there are areas in the world in which absolutely horrendous forms of persecutions and barbarities still exist. This is something that goes on and on. So, the religious implications are these: that the human race is a lot less lovely than we would like to pretend and that evil things do happen. God redeems us even out of the midst of that. So, I don’t blame God at all for what happened. However, the evil of the human heart we do look at and have to take seriously. Ultimately, this is what happens when we live at a distance from God.”

When asked what Christianity contributed to make the Holocaust possible, Fr. Hart responded, “First off, I think Pope Pius XII was not silent. His was the only voice that spoke up at the time. The chief Rabbi of Israel at the time after the war publicly praised him for being the lone voice in Europe that spoke up. The hatchet job that has been done on Pius XII in the last three or four years is unconscionable. It is to ignore a lot of facts that people just want to pass over. Yes, there is some culpability here and

there, but the situation was far more complicated than just simply, “he should have spoken up”. For one thing, he knew far too well what the result would be for Catholics inside of Nazi occupied territories, which was already happening. Entire convents and priests were being sent to Auschwitz and other places. There was a pipeline that was engineered, and the Vatican took a big part in this, quietly getting Jews hidden in monasteries and out of danger. So, simply to say that the church was silent during the Holocaust is a gross exaggeration at best, and a lie at worst. Did Christianity contribute? No, Christianity in itself does not, but Christians did. Certainly, if you go back to the New Testament and look at the language being used in John’s Gospel. Where it talks about the Jews, the word *Jews* in Greek can mean something as simple as the Judeans, those in the south as oppose to those in the north. It is not at all clear that the language of John, who is a Jew, in John’s gospel says, “salvation is of the Jews” is necessarily attacking his own people. Another example is St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, Chapters 9 through 11. He makes a strong case by wanting all of his people to be converted to the belief that the fulfillment of Judaism is found in Jesus, the Messiah. Regardless of whether people believe that to be true, he still says all of Israel will be saved and warns the church (the Gentiles) not to get too high and mighty. “It is the root of Israel that supports you”, “you are the wild olive branches” and God can pull you right off again. In other words, for Paul and the whole new Testament understanding of Christianity, is that it is still Judaism. The harshness of language is quite scandalous to us now but that was how you argued back then. It hardly would’ve made a ripple in that time period. Where the issue gets more difficult is in the Middle Ages, and there you do begin to see what emerges as being outbound anti-Semitism. Jews really are “evil”, they are “Christ

killers” and this kind of intemperate language exists. At the same time, we’ve got major defenders of Jewish people. Somewhere in Salzburg, Germany in the first half 11th century, a pogrom was about to take place. St. Bernard of Clairvo, the great doctor of the church, stood up and almost single-handedly stopped it from happening. He reminded people that Christ was a Jew, and they are God’s people. So, there were some Christians that defended them. What went on against the Jews was horrendous. And to the extent to which Christians sinned against the Jews, certainly it is right for us to repent of that and to take a serious look at how Christians contributed to what became an escalated evil over time.”

When asked if as a Christian, he felt the Holocaust was a spiritual challenge of the highest order, he replied, “No, not entirely. It is a spiritual challenge of the highest order only in the aspect of it being one of the most graphic manifestations in living memory of just how evil the human condition can be for no other reason than just sheer evil. In that sense, anyone that doubts that there is real, palpable evil has got to deal with the Holocaust. Secondly, it is of the highest order where relations with Jews are concerned because what Christians have got to go back and rediscover is not the mindset of earlier periods, which simply want to pin on the Jews the killing of the Christian Messiah. The New Testament is very clear, the Jews were involved with killing Him and so were the Romans, everybody is involved, culpable, and implicated. This is the basic Christian mindset. By quoting Paul and the Romans earlier, we’ve got to go back as a Christian church and say the Jews are still God’s people; the Church did not replace Judaism. Our relations with them has got to be keeping in mind what happens when you stray from what Christ would have us do, which is to love even those that we disagree with. By the

same token though, is Christianity to be blamed for the Holocaust? Christianity is not to be blamed for that. Nazism was an intentional departure from Christianity. Christian history may have contributed to that, but to say that Christianity is somehow responsible for Nazi ideology about the Jews is an irresponsible way of understanding something far more complex. Regarding Martin Luther, he said a lot of intemperate things about a lot of different people. After the Reformation took place, he was very certain that Jewish people would line up in droves to join the Church because the errors of Catholicism had been removed. Now, the Jews would recognize the Messiah, and of course, that did not happen. This led to an even greater intemperance towards them. Being a man of the 16th century, the government was also involved in keeping Jews in their place. Hitler, of course, made use of his writings to form the basis of Nazi ideology. And with Luther, they found a treasure trove because he was the man who basically shaped the German language through his bible.”

When asked if God was silent during the Holocaust, Fr. Hart answered, “No, I do not feel that God was silent at all. He was no more silent than he is at any other time in history. God is usually silent seemingly in the face of human evil because God’s judgment on us is always to let us do as we will (Romans Chapter 1). He gave us up to do as we would. I don’t believe that God was silent on the other side of death either. To see physical death as gruesome as it could be, as the last word, is typical. The perspective that Christians have is first, that Christ has overcome death by his resurrection. Second, this momentary suffering is just that—momentary. However, we believe this is just a very small, small drop in the bucket of eternity. Because things are so nasty on this side because of human sin, we have God on the other side who is holy, just, good, merciful,

and forgiving. We can trust ourselves to a faithful creator. So, I wouldn't expect this world to be a paradise, it is not intended to be at this point."

When asked how the Holocaust altered the relationship between Christians and Jews, Fr. Hart explained, "If there's alterations that have taken place it has certainly been that any intelligent, sensible Christian cannot talk in terms of God replacing Judaism with the Church or that we are the new Israel. If our savior is Jewish, and we look at the crucifixion, and then we look at the Holocaust, we see something that is similar. We see the unjust murder of an innocent person. It's done legally, and it's done with the intention of simply doing away with a problem. What we see is something, at the very least, on a miniature scale of what we see magnified in the Holocaust. The real sin here is that supposedly, a Christianized culture is responsible for doing it."

When asked if he was optimistic or pessimistic he said, "I am optimistic because I believe that the New Testament is God's word and, therefore, what St. Paul prophesized in Romans Chapter 9 through 11 will come about and that all of Israel will be saved. Am I optimistic that things any time in the near future will be so easy going that we all get along? No, I don't think that will happen. We can certainly try though. The first step is for us to act more like Jesus, and that is to love even those that don't love us. We find despite all of the ugliness of some of the historical things that happened, very often, there is a lot of commonality. We are not so different as we seem. Judaism has definitely influenced Christianity despite the evils that happened. Nazism was more of an extension of white racism, and that is something far more European than Christian. One of the great Pagan elements is still lingering in that time period to a great extent. One of the things Hitler did say was one of the reasons he wanted to purge the church of its Judaism

was because it had contaminated the German religious sensibilities. Nominally, Hitler was raised a Catholic, but certainly he was not a practicing Catholic. He was a Bohemian, a dreamer, and an artist. Hitler himself gets into a lot of strange beliefs in the occult, and he rediscovers German pagan belief, which influences him. It is very important never to underestimate that what happened after World War I had a traumatic effect on him. Something like a Hitler was almost inevitable at that time.”

When I asked him to explain what obstacles exist with dialogue between the two religions, he said, “One of the obstacles is that Christians are not certainly going to cease to be Christians, meaning their belief that Jesus is God. In other words, all the elements that may still offend practitioners of Judaism would no longer be true. We are still going to be followers of Christ. Jesus is still God in the human flesh. He did rise from the dead. He did suffer for the salvation of the entire human race, including the Jewish people. He is the way, the truth, and the life. These things are not negotiable for Christians because if we compromise on that, then we are no different than Jewish people. For us it would be as much of a betrayal of the covenant to do that, as it would be for them to see it differently as they do. However, because of that we can at least begin to understand where each of us stands. What’s the obstacle? Perhaps we are not going to see eye to eye on this side of eternity. But we can stand together and say that we do worship the same God, and we are still worshipping Him through a covenant that we regard as being absolutely binding. Those who at least recognize in our differences those things that hold us together, can at least be mutually supportive instead of mutually destructive.”

The fourth interview was done with Rabbi Wolf, an ordained Rabbi, and also the Dean of the Hebrew Day School in Skokie, Illinois. Rabbi Wolf is also the child of survivors of the Holocaust. When I asked Rabbi Wolf what the religious implications of the Holocaust were he said that he too sought answers for this question from his mentor, Rabbi Mechem M. Schneerson, who is world renown for his work with the Jewish Outreach Program. He said that the ones who don't believe have no right to question God. Those that do believe in God, however, do have the right to question God. It is beyond our intelligence to understand God though. We should question God, but not if we expect to understand Him because it is beyond us. He also said that the Holocaust has stirred a reawakening or revival in the Jewish community to return to tradition, religious commitment, and Torah study.

In response to the question of God being silent, Rabbi Wolf said that indeed, God was silent during the Holocaust. He also said, "There is no question—God allowed this to happen." But to ask why He remained silent is something that we are not permitted to understand. When we talked about the challenges to Christianity and what it contributed to make the Holocaust possible, he said, "We should lay blame where blame should be placed. Catholics deliberately allowed the persecution of Jews worldwide by the local population. They have caused the grief, death, and rape to millions of Jews all over the world. Although there were some heroes, there is no doubt that the Vatican, Pope Pius XII, and the Christian community had a blind eye to the situation."

In response to the question regarding how the Holocaust has altered the relationship between Christians and Jews, Rabbi Wolf said the Holocaust has unbelievably changed the relationship. Overall, he thinks that the world is more sensitive

to anti-Semitism and as a result, more political consideration has been given to the Jewish community. Personally though, he has not seen any increase in sensitivity to Jews.

In conclusion, Rabbi Wolf said that the Holocaust has taught us that regardless of how advanced a society becomes it can still lower itself to the level of Nazi Germany. Before the 1930's, Germany was considered one of the most culturally advanced societies in the world, and yet they clearly lacked moral values. The Holocaust forces us to look at what can happen, and these lessons need to be taught to all of mankind.

The fifth person that I interviewed was Aaron Elster, a child survivor of the Holocaust. Aaron lived in Poland and was ten years old at the time he went into hiding. The Polish family that also took in his older sister hid him in their attic for over three years. Sadly, both of Aaron's parents perished in the Holocaust. As a victim of the Holocaust, Aaron came to the United States in 1947 after living in the Displaced Persons Camp in Germany.

When I asked Aaron to share his thoughts regarding the religious implications of the Holocaust, he said that he once asked a religious rabbi how God could let this happen. The rabbi told him that it was God's will, and we are not important enough to Him. Aaron walked away and has struggled with that ever since. Later, he asked the question again, but this time to a reformed rabbi, who answered that the Holocaust was not God's will, but was man's will. Aaron still felt that he needed to rationalize God's will in order to go on with his life and be at peace. He said he has found peace with God after many years, for a normal existence at least. He still is not totally comfortable with his relationship with God nor does he like to talk about it very much.

In September of 1942, he recalls a very difficult time, one so profound that it has still remained with him after 60 years. “It was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, and the German soldiers had found us hiding behind the double wall. We were chased out to the marketplace. The sun was shining, and it was such a beautiful day. I was so afraid because I knew they were going to kill us. And I remember thinking, why would God save me?”

When I asked what Christianity contributed to make the Holocaust possible, he said that unfortunately, it was the centuries-old tradition of anti-Semitism within the Christian church that made it possible. Regarding the relationship between Christians and Jews, Aaron says that it is definitely becoming more positive, as discussion and dialogue have opened up. He says it is important to remember that you and I are not all that different and that both religions could not live without each other. He feels very optimistic about the relationship and sees examples of such dialogue on a daily basis, when he speaks to youngsters in school about the Holocaust. He says it is his mission.

IV. Conclusion

The realization is emerging that the Holocaust was not just an example of horrific human brutality. Rather, it marked the coming together of many of the major forces shaping contemporary Western society: bureaucracy, technology, and the loss of morality. The Holocaust has shattered not only much of Christianity’s traditional moral base, but that of Western society as well. It has truly marked the beginning of a new era in human history.

There are several lessons we must learn from the Holocaust. First, we must acknowledge that the Holocaust is an undeniable historical event that has shattered many

people's religious faith in God and their secular faith in human beings. As Michael Berenbaum has noted,

The central theme of the story of the Holocaust is not regeneration and rebirth, goodness or resistance, liberation of justice, but death and destruction, dehumanization and devastation, and, above all, loss.

Behind each loss was a person whose life was ended tragically and prematurely. And for those who survived there were the burdens of memory, haunting memories, nonheroic memories of worlds shattered and destroyed, of defeat, and of life in its aftermath.

The killers were civilized men and women of an advanced culture. They were both ordinary and extraordinary, a cross section of the men and women of Germany, its allies, and their collaborators as well as the best and the brightest. Their deeds were a paradigmatic manifestation of human evil intensified by the power of the state, fueled by technological and scientific achievement, and unchecked by moral, social, religious, or political constraints.

To live authentically in the aftermath of the Holocaust, we must be aware of the reality of the reality of radical evil and its startling triumphs, and fight against that evil and that triumph. The Holocaust cannot be allowed to numb us to evil, but it must sensitize us and alarm us. It must sharpen our insights into the importance of human rights and human dignity everywhere.

The Holocaust, as terrible and evil as it was, has forced a reassessment of Christian and Jewish relations. The Church's relationship with Jewish people is unlike any other. However, it is not only a question of recalling the past. The common future of Jews and Christians demands that we remember, for "remembrance is the secret of redemption" (see especially Baal Shem Tov). On the Christian side, there will have to be a rethinking in behavior, church life, mission, and teaching. Most especially they will ask their Jewish friends to hear them with open hearts. A new beginning will only be made when those who committed this hideous wrong and those who were wronged learn to speak to each other in love. From now on, real dialogue must be established. We need, then, to move into the future by learning to work together by re-examining the past, the present, and the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “Anti-Semitism.” Internet. 10 Apr. 2001.
Available www.ushmm.org
- Berenbaum, Michael. After Tragedy and Triumph: Essays in Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Berenbaum, Michael. The Vision of the Void: Theological Reflections on the Works of Elie Wiesel. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987.
- Berenbaum, Michael. The World Must Know. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993.
- Braham, Randolph L. The Vatican and the Holocaust: The Catholic Church and the Jews During the Nazi Era. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Cargas, Harry James. When God and Man Failed: Non-Jewish Views of the Holocaust. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1981.
- “Five Million Forgotten.” Internet. 2 Apr. 2000.
Available www.holocaustforgotten.com/index.htm
- Haynes, Stephen R. and John K. Roth. The Death of God Movement and the Holocaust: Radical Theology Encounters the Shoah. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Haynes, Stephen R. Holocaust Education and the Church-Related College: Restoring Ruptured Traditions. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- “The Holocaust—Where was God?” Internet. 1 Apr. 2001.
Available www.benisrael.org/shoah/shoah.html
- “Judaism After the Holocaust.” Internet. 8 Apr. 2001.
Available www.jcrelations.net/article1/marmur3.htm
- Kramer, Naomi and Ronald Headland. The Fallacy of Race and the Shoah. Ontario: University of Ottawa Press, 1998.
- Maduro, Otto. Judaism, Christianity, and Liberation: An Agenda for Dialogue. New York: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Marmur, Dow. The Star of Return: Judaism After the Holocaust. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.

- Morgan, Michael L. A Holocaust Reader: Responses to the Nazi Extermination. New-York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Peck, Abraham J. Jews and Christians After the Holocaust. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.
- Petuchowski, Jakob J. When Jews and Christians Meet. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.
- “Religion and the Holocaust.” Internet. 8 Apr. 2001.
Available www.ffrf.org/fttoday/march97/holocaust.html
- “Remembering the Victims.” Internet. 3 Apr. 2000.
Available
www.abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/popejerusalem000323.html
- Rittner, Carol and John K. Roth. From the Unthinkable to the Unavoidable: American Christian and Jewish Scholars Encounter the Holocaust. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- Rosenfield, Alvin H. and Irving Greenberg. Confronting the Holocaust: The Impact of Elie Wiesel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- Roth, John K. and Michael Berenbaum. Religious and Philosophical Implications of the Holocaust. New York: Paragon Press, 1989.
- Scrase, David and Wolfgang Mieder. The Holocaust: Introductory Essays. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- “Shadow on the Cross.” Video. 1978.
- Simon, Jules. History, Religion, and Meaning: American Reflections on the Holocaust and Israel. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000.
- Walker, Graham B. Elie Wiesel: A Challenge to Theology. Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 1988.
- Williamson, Clark M. Has God Rejected His People? Anti-Judaism in the Christian Church. Nashville: Abingdon, 1982.