

**Discussion Group "Jews and Christians"**  
**Central Committee of German Catholics**

**Jews and Judaism in the New Catechism of the Catholic Church - an Interjection**

A Discussion Paper of January 29, 1996; with Statements from USA of Eugene J. Fisher, James L. Heft, Alan Mittleman, Michael A. Signer

The Catechism of the Catholic Church was published in 1992. In the Central Committee of German Catholics the discussion group "Jews and Christians" examined the Catechism, concentrating specifically on how far the efforts made towards achieving a new view of Judaism have found expression.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is part of a centuries-long tradition of Catechisms in the Church. From time immemorial, Christians have found in the Catechism a short summary of Christian teaching appropriate for their time. Priests and laity have formed their fundamental understanding of Christian life through Catechisms. In local communities, schools and families, Catechisms were of great pastoral significance.

Today, we can see that the treatment of Israel and Judaism in many of the Catechisms which existed before the Second Vatican Council was inadequate. The said Catechisms displayed anti-Jewish tendencies, unjustifiably reproached Jews, presented a distorted portrayal of the Jewish tradition and way of life in the Bible, and declined to take post-biblical Judaism seriously as an entity in its own right. These Catechisms supported the Christian contempt of Judaism which had such disastrous consequences.

In the "Nostra aetate" Declaration of 28.10.1965 by the Second Vatican Council, the Church redefined her relationship to Judaism. She recalled that she is spiritually linked to Judaism. Ever since, the Church is on her way to a better understanding of Judaism and to a renewed definition of her relationship with Judaism. Among the important steps in this process were the "Guidelines for the Implementation of the Council's Nostra Aetate Statement", Article 4, which was published on 1.12.1974 by the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. The "Guidelines for the Correct Portrayal of Jews and Judaism in the Sermons and Catechesis of the Catholic Church", published by the same commission on 26.04.1985, went in the same direction. Pope John Paul II showed a new esteem for Judaism in many addresses and when visiting Jewish communities during his pastoral travels.

The new Catechism of the Catholic Church may be different in content and form, in intention and audience from earlier catechisms. But this Catechism also is intended to be a "sure norm for teaching the faith", as well as a "sure and authentic reference text for teaching catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms" (John Paul II in the introductory Apostolic Constitution). Thus, the significance of the new Catechism of the Catholic Church for the Church of our time is not to be

underestimated. In the ongoing present discussion of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, reference has not only been made to its positive moments but also to weaknesses therein. Our discussion group also wishes to present a multi-faceted critique regarding our topic.

When the Catechism of the Catholic Church explicitly discusses Judaism, it should be noted that it does not return to positions preceding the statements of the Council on Jews and the relationship of the Church towards Judaism. It is clearly stated that Jesus was a Jew and that he held the Torah in honour (423, 577). The Pharisees and Jesus' relationship with them are presented in a nuanced way (579, 595). In the paragraph entitled "The Relationship of the Church to the Jewish People" (839), the Catechism of the Catholic Church explicitly quotes the Council and mentions the irrevocability of the choice of Israel (121, 839). Above all, it is explicitly stated that the Jews are not collectively responsible for the death of Jesus (597). Occasionally, references are made to the significance of present-day Jewish life for a better understanding of the Christian Liturgy (1096). These and other statements are a hopeful indication of the earnestness with which the Church wishes to renew her relationship with Judaism.

However, with regard to certain other important points, the Catechism of the Catholic Church fails to fulfill expectations which are demanded of it today. An appropriate positive picture of Judaism as the older sister of Christianity is lacking. Love of God and of one's neighbour as the center of Jewish existence, regard for the Torah, the hallowing of God's Name and the hallowing of daily life, also in post-biblical Judaism, are not mentioned. Moreover, the Catechism of the Catholic Church fails to indicate the presence of things Jewish within Christianity. If reference is made, however, to a Jewish presence within Christianity, it is done in such a way that the Jewish aspect loses its intrinsic value or appears as merely a preliminary stage of Christianity. The words of Pope John Paul II on his visit to the great synagogue of Rome on 13.4.1986 seem to have been forgotten here: "For us, the Jewish religion is not an external phenomenon but belongs in some way to the internal reality of our religion". Thus, our relationship with Judaism is different to our relationship with any other religion.

The living relationship between the Church and Judaism could have been shown in all four sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Creed, Sacraments, Ethics, Prayer). It is true that central contents of all four sections, although individually in very different ways, are developed from the "Old Testament", the Jewish Bible, as irrefutable foundations of Christian belief and life. But these contents are not presented as common beliefs of Jews and Christians whenever that would be true. Thus, to name just a few examples, in the paragraphs relating to the teaching about God, there is no reference to the fact that faith in the one God (200), who is gracious and merciful (210, 211) is also the faith of present-day Judaism. This emerged in exemplary fashion in the Catholic Catechism for Adults, which was published by the German Bishops' Conference in 1985 (63, 75). One also looks in vain for a reference to Judaism in the statements about the Decalogue and the Commandment of Love (2055). The relationship between the "Our Father" (2765) and the Eucharist, on the one hand, and current Jewish prayers and feasts, on the other, is scarcely hinted at.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church obviously finds it difficult to recognize post-biblical Judaism as an independent entity next to the Church in the history of salvation and, in particular, as the people of the covenant which was never revoked by God. This is less obvious in paragraphs dealing specifically with Judaism than in paragraphs dealing with the Church, where the Catechism speaks as if Judaism did not exist, even though such reference would be necessary from the very nature of things.

When the Catechism of the Catholic Church does speak of the relationship between Judaism/Israel on the one hand and the Church on the other, its language often becomes oscillatory and its theology contradictory. There are passages which come close to the position that was retracted by the Council: that the Church as the "new", authentic people of God has replaced the "old" people of God (674, 761-763). On the one hand, the Catechism claims with the New Testament that Israel's vocation is irrevocable (839), but in other passages it appears that the covenant with Israel has nevertheless been severed and has been replaced by the new and eternal covenant of God in the Church (762). Furthermore, the fact that the Catechism makes the coming of the glorified Messiah to be dependent on the recognition of Jesus by the whole of the now "hard-hearted" (Rom 11,25) Israel, is difficult for Jewish self-understanding to accept, because it makes Jews responsible for the fact that the eschatological times have not yet come (674).

There are three areas in particular where the Catechism of the Catholic Church does not succeed in wholly implementing the will of the Church for renewal. Here deficiencies remain which were already present in earlier Catechisms.

1. The relationship between the two Testaments of the one Christian Bible remains unclear and ambiguous. On the one hand, the value of the revelation of the "Old Testament" as such is repeatedly reinforced (121-123, 129). On the other hand, it is continually relativized. This is due above all to the fact that the Old Testament, with help from a typological method of interpretation contrary to its own intrinsic value (121), appears predominantly as an incomplete early draft ("Typos") which finds its accomplishment only in the New Testament. According to this "typology", what God says in the Old Testament is entirely directed towards the New Testament, and achieves its definitive form only in the New Testament (140). This is clear, for example, in the way certain important themes are presented. Here we can only mention them briefly: the prophetic promises of love have been fulfilled in the new and eternal covenant (2787); the execution of Jesus announces the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem (586); the literal sense of the ancient Jewish Law is the "severe pedagogue" (Gal 3,24) directing Israel towards Jesus (708); the Law is preparation for the Gospel it offers the New Testament "types" to illustrate the new life according to the Spirit (1964); the Jewish Exile stands in the shadow of the cross and the "holy remnant" which returns from Exile is a figure of the Church (710). When Augustin is quoted as saying that "the New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old is revealed in the New", theological reflection on this is lacking (129, 2763). This kind of typology leads necessarily to the view that the Hebrew Bible is an incomplete, preliminary form of the New Testament. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, typology holds the two Testaments together. Therein lies the

danger that the history of biblical Israel and the remembrance of this history, which is constitutive for Judaism, could disappear. Therefore, typology, as it is used here, can be a milder form of the disinheritance of Israel, from which the Church has long taken its leave in other documents.

2. The Church's anti-Judaism is not expressed. Its roots lie in the separation of the early Church from Judaism, and the consequent anti-Jewish polemics that are already present in the New Testament. Through some earlier Catechisms, this anti-Judaism became widespread in the Church. The omission of such an issue is hard to understand today. A Catechism published after the Shoah should have acknowledged the sinful history of previous Catechisms, should have named the effects of this history and should have drawn the necessary consequences from this.

3. The Catechism of the Catholic Church does not make use of the opportunity to present the renewed relationship between Jews and Christians as a sign of hope in the midst of a seemingly unredeemed world, and as a challenge to work, both together and separately, for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

As a summary we may remind the readers of the declaration from 1988 "After 50 years - how can we talk about guilt, suffering, and reconciliation?": "Our wounds can only be healed, if the first steps towards one another can be followed by many steps with one another - steps with one another in the process of working on our sorrow and in the process of atonement, and then, reconciled, steps towards the future. There can only be healing when we can wait together for the Kingdom of God, when we can work for it together and thus can >serve the Lord shoulder to shoulder'." (Zef 3,9)

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## Statements

### 1. Eugene J. Fisher

First, I would emphasize the significance of the Central Committee's statement that the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) "does not retreat from the statements of the Second Vatican Council." The CCC is clearly not a document that could have been produced before the Council. It intends not to move forward the theological agenda in Catholic-Jewish relations (or any other field ) but rather to consolidate Conciliar teaching. Pursuing this goal it relies on and refers to subsequent teachings of the Church, such as the two documents of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (1974, 1985) cited in the statement of the Central Committee, as well as statements of Pope John Paul II. These documents, then, provide in turn an interpretative and I would say normative frame within which to understand the CCC itself.

In this context, it is important to acknowledge that the CCC devotes not simply a paragraph to debunking the ancient canard of collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus, but an entire section developing the catechetical appreciation of Article 4 of the Creed itself " ... suffered under Pontius Pilot, was crucified, died ..." Sections 574-598 provide an extended discussion of why the catechist cannot present "the Jews" as collectively guilty of the death of Jesus, culminating in the citation from the Roman Catechism of the Council of Trent made famous by Jules Isaac in his now classic works on "the teaching of contempt." Theologically, "all sinners were the authors of Christ's Passion", especially we Christians who sin knowing that this is so (598). The collective guilt canard was rightly identified by Professor Isaac and by *Nostra Aetate* as the heart of the collection of invidious pronouncements on Jews and Judaism over the centuries. It is here dismantled at some length and put to rest.

Second, a number of the Central Committee's criticisms of the CCC cluster around its use of typology and fulfillment theology with regard to the relationship between the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. It is quite true that an opportunity was lost here to tackle head on a set of theological difficulties that the 1985 Notes of the Holy See aptly called "the sign of a problem unresolved." But while the CCC does not resolve the problem, in my opinion, neither should it be seen as inhibiting in any way the creative work of so many leading Christian and Jewish theologians who are at present grappling with it. Typology and fulfillment, in and of themselves, are not the problem. One can find typology in Jewish tradition and even within the Hebrew Bible. And "fulfillment" is a necessary theological statement in the New Testament and in Christian liturgy.

The problem, as I understand it, is the presumption that a typological or fulfillment understanding of the Hebrew Scripture will necessarily preclude other understandings, such as the biblical critical, rabbinic, or even mystical understandings. The CCC, following the 1985 Notes and *Dei Verbum* clearly says it does not. The fact that the CCC does not embody this principle in its own uses of Scripture does not lessen the validity of the principle itself. We as Christians can and must learn to "profit discerningly", in the words of the 1985 Notes from Jewish

traditional and contemporary understandings of their Bible. It would be a mistake, in my view, to read the CCC as in any way closing the door on this crucial work of the dialogue, and the effort to integrate the results of the dialogue into the "mainstream" of Catholic education at all levels.

I would quibble, therefore, with some of the phrasings in the Central Committee statement such as the charge that because the CCC sees in biblical Judaism prefigurings of the events of the New Testament, therefore, "Judaism loses its unique value or becomes simply a prefiguration of Christianity." Or again: "Necessarily this kind of typology must result in depicting the Hebrew Bible as imperfect predecessor of the New Testament." This, of course, could happen if the only resource available to catechists were the CCC. But it is not. The statements of Pope John Paul II, the Holy See and Bishops' Conferences around the world exist and remain official Church teaching. The CCC did not intend to replace the normative teaching of the Church, but rather to augment it and in a sense "package" it in a way exportable to many different cultures. It is not properly understood as a sort of doctrinal Code of Canon Law or even a modern Summa Theologica.

I would urge readers of this report also to consider the possibility of opening up the category of "fulfillment" to new understandings that will preserve what the kerygma of the gospels authentically mean to teach while at the same time avoiding the danger that we know all too well from history of reducing fulfillment to supersessionism. The CCC, as the Central Committee acknowledges, clearly condemns supersessionism and honors the "irrevocable" nature of God's call to the Jewish People as God's own People. How is this to be articulated theologically and taught catechetically? While the CCC does not provide the answers to these great questions of our age, neither does it inhibit ongoing efforts by theologians and biblical scholars to resolve them.

One small example may here suffice. The statement of the Central Committee twice refers critically to paragraph 674 of the CCC, arguing that it "makes Jews bear responsibility for the beginning and the delay of eschatological time." Frankly, I found this paragraph to be rather more enigmatic. For while its initial reference to Romans 11:20-26 does appear to do just that, its concluding reference to Romans 11:12-25 does just the opposite. Following Paul, it places the responsibility not on the Jews but on the Gentiles: "The '>full inclusion' of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of the '>full number of Gentiles' will enable the People of God to achieve '>the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ', when '>God may be all in all.'" How one interprets this passage, then, depends on how one understands Romans. For that, the catechist will need to resolve the eschatological conundrum posed by Paul.

Finally, I would put on the record for readers of this report my own listing of what I see as the key catechetical principles to be derived from the CCC. It is important, I feel, to contemplate not only what might have been in our proverbial half-empty glass but also what is indeed in it.

*Basic Catechitical Principles of the CCC with Regard to the Presentation of Jews and Judaism*

It seems clear that the Catechism, very explicitly intends to break with the major elements of the ancient "teaching of contempt" that envisioned God cursing and punishing "the Jews" for the alleged collective guilt in killing Jesus "deicide" and hurled incessant polemics against Jewish faith and, indeed, against God's Word in the Hebrew Scriptures (the "old Law") itself. One can see this explicit intention to break with the denigrations of the past in the strong statements and fresh phrasings that the Catechism uses throughout the text. These provide the frame for understanding its approach.

1. The Church's understanding of God's People, the Jews, is stated in the present tense not the past tense. "Israel is the priestly people of God, >called by the name of the LORD,' (Dt 28:10) and >the first to hear the word of God," the people of >elder brethren' in the faith of Abraham" (63).

2. Whatever the historical involvement of individuals, Jews as such are not collectively responsible for Jesus' death (597). The Catechism's insistence on this principle and its numerous implications for classroom presentation of the New Testament is driven home by its extensive treatment under article 4 of the Creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified ..." (571-630). It is under this overarching rubric rejecting the very essence of the old teaching of contempt that the Catechism organizes its major discussion of Jesus' relationship to the faith of his people (Israel, Law & Temple: 574-586), to which we shall return below.

3. God's Covenant with the Jewish People is "irrevocable" (839-840, 2173). The New Covenant has neither abrogated nor superseded "the First Covenant" (522). The Catechism is quite explicit: "The Old Covenant has never been revoked" (121). This is a reference to Pope John Paul II's framing of the issue in his extraordinary address to the Jewish community of Mainz, Germany, where he boldly likened the contemporary dialogue between the Church and the Jewish People to the relationship between the Sacred Scriptures themselves: "The first dimension of this dialogue, that is the meeting between the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God (Romans 11:29) is at the same time a dialogue within our Church, that is to say between the first and second parts of her Bible" (November 17, 1980).

4. The Hebrew Scriptures are to be presented "as the true Word of God" with their own permanent integrity and dignity. As the Catechism states, "the Church has always vigorously opposed the idea of rejecting the Old Testament under the pretext that the New Testament has rendered it void (Marcionism)" (123). Thus, there should be an emphasis on "the unity of the divine plan" (140). As the 1974 Vatican Guidelines for Implementing *Nostra Aetate* fleshed out this principle: The Hebrew Bible and the Jewish tradition founded on it must not be set against the New Testament in such a way that the former seems to constitute a religion of only retributive justice, fear, and legalism, with no appeal to love of God and neighbor (Dt 6,5; Lev 19,18; Hos 11, Mt 22).

5. While Christians validly see in the Hebrew Scriptures "prefigurations of what God accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son" (128), typology and fulfillment are not the only valid approaches to interpreting the Hebrew Bible. "Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament, but it must not make us forget that the Old Testament retains its own intrinsic values as revelation reaffirmed by Our Lord Himself (129). This paragraph of the Catechism reflects Section I of the Holy See's 1985 Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching and Catechesis, which deals at length with "the relations between the Testaments." The Notes urge catechists to "profit discerningly from the traditions of Jewish reading" of the Bible from ancient to modern times. This task of drawing the fruits of dialogue with Jews into the classroom has, even in our own country, only just begun. Likewise, the Catechism follows tradition in distinguishing the various "senses" of Scripture: "literal" (governed by critical exegesis) and "spiritual" (allegorical, moral and analogical) with the latter three "based on" the former (115-119).

6. The Catechism in two paragraphs (839-840) distills what it considers essential to an understanding of "the relationship of the Church with the Jewish People." The first echoes the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate*, the Pope's 1986 address at the Rome Synagogue and the prayer "for the Jewish people" from the reformed Good Friday liturgy of the Roman Missal: "When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People, >the first to hear the Word of God.' The Jewish Faith unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant," citing then Romans 9:4-5 and 11:29, as did the Council. One will note here the distinctive intimacy of what the Council called the Church's ongoing "spiritual bond" with Jews and Judaism and why the Pope called the Jews our "elder brothers" in the faith in the present tense and not as a past event exhausted in New Testament times (see also 63). The validity not only of the "first covenant" but of present-day Jewish belief and practice as a faithful "response to God's revelation" is affirmed.

7. Catechists need to look beyond past and present in speaking of "fulfillment" and imbue their teaching with eschatological urgency. "When one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah." Acknowledging frankly the very real differences in Messianic beliefs between Jews and Christians (and, one might add, among both Jews and Christians, this framing allows the fulfillment theology of the Catechism to be freeing and challenging rather than exclusivist or supersessionist. As the Section of the 1985 Notes of the Holy See, on which the Catechism here relies, states: "Attentive to the same God who has spoken, hanging on the same word, we Jews and Christians have to witness to one same memory and one common hope in God who is the master of history. We must accept our responsibility to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah by working together for social justice ... and international reconciliation. To this we are driven, Jews and Christians, by the command to love our neighbor, by a common hope for God's Reign and by the great heritage of the Prophets." These sentiments of the Holy See's Commission, in turn, echo numerous similar statements of the Pope over the years.

8. Reiterating the words of Pope John Paul II to representatives of Bishops' Conferences in Rome (March 6, 1982) and the emphasis in the 1985 Vatican Notes which followed from the Pope's words, the Catechism declares that "a better knowledge of the Jewish people's faith and religious life as professed and lived even now can help our better understanding of certain aspects of Christian liturgy" (1096). This Section goes on to spell out the Jewish roots of Christian liturgical practices such as the proclamation of Sacred Scripture, response of praise and intercession for the living and dead, the structure and lectionary cycle of the Liturgy of the Word and of the Hours, central prayers such as the Lord's Prayer, the great feasts of the Church and the liturgical cycle itself, especially the Passover, which "both celebrate." "For Jews it is the Passover of history, tending toward the future; for Christians it is the Passover fulfilled in the death and Resurrection of Christ, though always in expectation of its definite consummation." Again, the eschatological caveat ("already here/not yet here") calls Jews and Christians into a dialogue of mutual reconciliation, expectation and working together to prepare the world for God's Reign, a task Jews call *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). Again, if religious educators are to tap the spiritual richness of Jewish liturgical tradition as a resource for deepening understanding not only of Jesus but of subsequent Christian liturgical development, solid studies of Jewish sources and practices over the centuries will need to be undertaken in Catholic schools at all levels.

## 2. James L. Heft

I am a Catholic theologian, for the last seven years provost of a Catholic university, and have been very interested in the Jewish-Catholic dialogue for the past two decades. I have been personally involved in this dialogue and have published a few articles about it. My purpose is twofold: first, to reflect on the German Bishops' statement; and second, to do so as someone who is an American.

Before I do either of these things, allow me to make some general comments about the publication of the Catechism in the United States and its reception here. As many may know, the Catechism was written originally in French and approved by the Pope in June of 1992, and then quickly translated into Italian and Spanish. After a good deal of controversy, mainly over inclusive language, a problem particular to English-speaking countries, and then especially among university people, the approved English version was released in the Fall of 1994.

Many comments published by theologians in the United States on earlier drafts of the Catechism were frequently negative. An entire issue (March 3, 1990) of the Jesuit weekly, *America*, contained essays by five theologians and a bishop. At least two book-length collections of essays on the Catechism were also published.

Once the approved version appeared, there was widespread criticism in the press about the lack of inclusive language. Eventually, however, more positive and substantial evaluations began to appear. Thousands of copies of the Catechism were sold. Universities held symposia on it and dioceses throughout the country organized programs for their religion teachers to learn about its contents. Some on the Left remained critical; some on the Right wanted it used as a textbook for teaching high school and college students. Most, however, have come to see it as it was intended to be seen: as a compendium, a point of reference for official Catholic teaching.

I am impressed with the thoughtful and nuanced statement of the German discussion group on how Jews and Judaism are treated in the Catechism. The literature on this subject in the United States covers nearly all the same points, but not as succinctly. Typically, the positive points of the Catechism's treatment are noted by us as well: the Catechism does not back away from the statements of Vatican II, clearly speaks of the irrevocable nature of the covenant between God and the Jews, speaks positively of Jesus' identity as a Jew, of the Pharisees, and flatly rejects the notion of any collective responsibility of the Jews for the death of Jesus. Moreover, the general consensus, if I can speak of such, is that the Catechism tries to include, besides the teachings of Vatican II on the Jews, the 1974 and 1985 documents of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, without, however, going beyond them, and without trying to resolve some of the difficulties that remain. Dr. Eugene Fisher, the Director of Catholic-Jewish Relations for the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has published several articles that summarize the "centrist" reception of the Catechism's teaching on the Jews.

The German statement points out many of the weaknesses of the Catechism's treatment of the Jews, including especially the way in which "typology" can leave one with the impression that Israel should cease to exist now that the "new Israel", the Church, has arrived.

We speak of this in English as the theory of "supersessionism"; that is, any teaching that would suggest that Judaism has no legitimate reason to continue to exist once Jesus has appeared. The critics of the Catechism see supersessionism implied in such statements as "the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament" and "the Church replaces the Jews as God's people."

Without question, there is a negative interpretative side to the "typological" approach to Scripture. The Fathers of the early Church frequently employed such typology, and in fact, historically, such usage fueled the flames of the "teaching of contempt", which erupted in various fatal fires for Jews throughout the history of Christianity, culminating in the massive conflagration of the Shoah. And the roots of such supersessionism can be traced back even further, as the German Bishops observe when referring to "ecclesiastical anti-Judaism", to the very statements of the New Testament about "the Jews", especially in the Gospel of John.

The situation created by such use of typology would be partially corrected by focusing on those things which Christians and Jews still hold in common: the belief in one God, a God who is merciful and compassionate, a God who forgives his people. Moreover, a positive portrait of contemporary Judaism, one which recognizes that Judaism continues to be a living religious tradition, would also help blunt the negative potential of typology. Finally, a thoughtful statement of why the Church continues to have a special relationship with Judaism, one without which it could not understand itself, would make it clearer that Judaism has not been and should not be superseded.

Two final comments that come to me as I read the German statement. Both of these comments refer to the very last of three deficiencies that remain in the new Catechism. I agree that the Catechism could have made a very positive impact by pointing out that Jews and Christians, especially today and especially in the West, face a common challenge both within their own affluent communities, and in facing a world of unbelief. It was put in a striking manner by the Chief Rabbi of England, Jonathan Sacks. Speaking in London in September 1995 on the first night of Selichot, the penitential spell that precedes the Jewish New Year, Dr. Sacks argued that the return to the land brought about by Zionism has been followed by a crisis of belief: "A hundred years ago we had the faith but not the land. Today we have the land, but what has happened to the faith?" He continued, "We understand why in 15th century Spain, or in 19th century Germany and Russia, Jews left the community. They were in fear for their lives. Today, Jews are free and accepted and successful and above all we have a home. It is possible that the greatest danger to Jewish survival will turn out to be, God forbid, not Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia, but our own indifference?" Dr. Sacks went on to deplore "the loss of Jewish meaning in our lives", and the "split developing between the religious minority and the secular majority, each growing yearly more extreme". The answer, he said, was for the entire Jewish people "to come to God" (in *The Tablet*, 23 September 1995).

The same could be said of most Catholics in the West. Never before in history have so many Catholics been so affluent. And never before has the danger of a loss of genuine faith been greater. In view of this, Catholics and Jews face a deep common problem: genuine faith in the face of a world that is, in large part, indifferent to matters of religious faith. The Catechism could have made such an observation. Had it done so, both Catholics and Jews would be seen to face a similar challenge.

The second observation has to do with the difficulty of speaking about "guilt, pain and reconciliation". The Jewish-Christian dialogue in the United States deals less with that existential angst rooted in the German Christian soul, especially since the last six decades. Here, the discussion is often dominated on the Catholic side by various theological issues, and on the Jewish side by various political and religious issues. While our responses to the Catechism's treatment of the Jews have been quite similar, the existential relationship between Jews and Christians in the United States remains less marked by the events of the last 60 years. In fact, in the late 1920's in the United States, when the campaign of the Catholic Al Smith for the presidency of our country met with strong anti-Catholicism, Catholics and Jews came together to form an organization to fight racial and religious prejudice: the National conference of Christians and Jews, now called The National Conference. This organization remains a vital witness and force throughout the country.

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Another thoughtful participant in the Jewish-Catholic dialogue is Fr. John Pawlikowski, a professor of Social Ethics at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He recently wrote about three phases that the Jewish-Catholic dialogue have gone through in the United States. The first phase he describes as the "cleansing" phase. Based on the teachings about the Jews at Vatican II, this phase examined educational texts used in the Catholic Church and removed from them those themes that were clearly "supersessionist". The second phase, which in some ways reaches back before Vatican II, has to do with the way in which Christian scholars are recognizing the value of the Hebrew Scriptures (the "Old Testament") in ways that allow it to stand on its own right. This movement among scholars has allowed Christians to appreciate as never before the Jewishness of Jesus, and the Judaism of the time of Jesus. The third phase, continues Pawlikowski, is only now beginning. It is the effort to rethink the relationship of the Church to the Jews in fundamentally new ways. Progress in this third phase will help us, I assume, to find ways to make use of "typology" without running the risk of "supersessionism", to recognize, as Christians, Jesus as the "fulfillment" of the utterances of the Hebrew prophets, without at the same time suggesting that as a consequence these prophecies no longer have a unique role for the Jewish people, and to profess Jesus as the "Savior of the world" and still affirm a continuing validity and necessity for the existence of the great living tradition of Judaism.

### 3. Alan Mittleman

The intervention of the dialogue group, Jews and Christians, accurately analyzes the failure of the 1992 Catechism to develop a coherent, positive approach to Judaism and the Jewish people. The Jewish reader of the Catechism cannot fail to note its conflicting tendencies. It clearly wants to continue, as the relevant predecessor documents did, what one might call a moral affirmation of Jews and Judaism. That is to say, the Catechism wants to eschew antisemitism, undo prejudice, nurture an appreciation of the richness of Judaism and of its relatedness to the Church. It wants Catholics to recognize Jews as persons of faith. On the other hand, the Catechism falls short of generating a theology that really sustains these sorts of moral affirmation. Its moral and theological impulses are in discord.

In this regard, the Catechism is a slightly less generous version of the 1985 Guidelines. Many Jewish critics of that document, including this writer, noted at the time that the reliance of the Guidelines on a typological hermeneutic undercuts a credible affirmation of Judaism and supports supercessionism, qualified and nuanced though it might be. If the inherent, divinely intended trajectory of the Hebrew Bible is the New Testament, as both the Guidelines and the Catechism (e.g. 140) teach, then rabbinic interpretation of Torah - the very heart of Judaism! - is necessarily off the mark. At this point, moralistic intention of the document to restore a prejudice-free reputation to the pharisees is subverted by a theology which consigns their Judaism to the realm of illusion and confusion.

The Catholic scholar, Hans Hermann Henrix, writing on the 1985 *Hinweise* remarked that they contain a "christologische Dialektik von Ja und Nein zu Israel" (christological dialectics between Yes and No regarding Israel). Henrix takes the incoherence which I have pointed to and elevates it to an interpretative principle, that is, the Church's response to Israel must necessarily be dialectical. On the most optimistic reading, "so wird man vielleicht doch von einem Ja sprechen koennen, welches das Nein umgreift; es ist ein Ja nicht ohne das Nein, aber das Nein bleibt im Ja integriert" (thus one can speak of a Yes which encompasses the No, it is a Yes not without the No, but the No remains an integral part of the Yes). These remarks seem to me entirely germane to the Catechism as well.

But if it is true that incoherence, dialectic and ambivalence are structural rather than contingent features of the Church's theology, then on what basis do the authors of the Interjection criticize the Catechism? Even if it can go further on certain key points, how far can it ultimately go? Can (should) the Church see the Jews as the Jews want to see themselves? Is that the ideal which theology should posit? Or must the Church hold on to its dialectic of yes and no to Israel in order to remain Church? These are the hard questions which "netzakh yisrael!" the eternity of Israel poses but which the Catechism only dimly grasps.

#### 4. Michael A. Signer

It is with some hesitation that, as a Jew, I write (at the invitation of Professor Hanspeter Heinz) about the Central Committee's reflection on the presentation of Judaism in the New Catechism. The Catechism is a Catholic document for Catholics. According to the preface written by Pope John Paul II, the Catechism is to serve as the foundation for all local churches in their catechesis. How can a Rabbi offer critical comment on a document which is promoted by such high authority?

An initial response would be that the new Catechism seems to have evoked intense discussion and argument among Catholics both during its composition and after its publication. Many publications have appeared in America which offer comment on the Catechism. They have offered serious analysis of its method and its content. One might, in fact, offer the positive argument that the new Catechism has stirred up a very serious discussion about the most central ideas in Catholicism and will ultimately lead to a new flowering of theological literature. One American scholar indicated that the new Catechism will encourage the laity to become more "literate" or "learned" in their faith. As a Jew, I am encouraged by any document which promotes serious discussion about religious ideas that will encourage people to take them into their own lives.

It also seems to me that the Central Committee's analysis of the treatment of Judaism and the Jewish people within the new Catechism furthers the Jewish-Catholic dialogue which has entered into an entirely new period since II Vatican's schema *Nostra Aetate*. This new period, now only thirty years old, permits Jews and Catholics to speak as partners who share a family relationship - something which could not be imagined prior to 1965. It has been a source of considerable pain to me that these most fruitful discussions have occurred long after the creative interchange in Germany between protestant Christianity and Judaism. How would Rabbi Leo Baeck, Franz Rosenzweig or Martin Buber have responded to the post-Shoah changes in the Catholic Church? From reading their literary inheritance, I would think that they would very much endorse the report of the Central Committee of German Catholics. I know that my beloved teacher, Rabbi Jakob Petuchowski, would feel that his years teaching in Germany and his intense contacts with German Catholic theologians had been well spent.

The Central Committee acknowledges that the Catechism maintains the most significant theological development of II Vatican: Jews are not guilty for all time of the death of Christ. Par. 597 both in its rubric and its explication makes this point with great emphasis. Equally important from a Jewish perspective is Par. 598 which makes the constructive theological claim that Christians by their own sins contribute to the death of Christ. This paragraph is important because it leaves no ambiguity about the significance of sin in Christ's crucifixion and removes Judaism and the Jewish people entirely from the theology of the Cross.

Another positive development in the Catechism is the presentation of the life of Jesus within the context of Judaism (574-576). The Catechism emphasizes the uniqueness of Jesus within the Judaism of his time. This leads to an interesting

dialectical tension of positive and negative evaluation of Judaism at the time of Jesus: Par. 577-582 indicates a negative perspective on Jewish law at the time of Jesus, and at the same time, Par. 583-586 reveals a positive evaluation of the Jerusalem Temple.

One would certainly expect the Church to present the uniqueness of Jesus with regard to other religious groups of his life time. However, it is somewhat surprising in light of the very sophisticated writings of Jewish and Christian biblical scholars to have Torah and Jewish observance of Torah presented in such a negative light. This will make it more difficult for Christians to come to understand Judaism as "the way of Torah". Rabbi Leon Klenicki has drawn particular attention to the use of the term "Law" in the Catechism which he stresses should have been understood according to the Hebrew term "Halakha" which means a "pathway to God".

The spirit of II Vatican's message about Judaism may also be found in Par. 839 which repeats the initial sentence of *Nostra Aetate* 4. The next sentence is original to the Catechism and strengthens the positive evaluation of Judaism among non-Christian religions, "The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant." Judaism, as Pope John Paul II has emphasized in many speeches, occupies a unique place among non-Christian religions: it is part of the covenanted community with God. The Catechism concludes Par. 839 with two citations from Romans (9:4-5, 11:29) that emphasize the unique position of Judaism.

These positive statements are seriously subverted by Par. 840 which adds an eschatological dimension to the previous paragraph:

And when one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tends towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God; the other awaits the coming of a Messiah, whose features remain hidden till the end of time; and the latter waiting is accompanied by the drama of not knowing or of misunderstanding Jesus Christ.

Two elements in this paragraph require careful attention because they place Judaism in a pre II Vatican position. First is the term "God's people of the Old Covenant" to describe Jews, and "new People of God" to describe Christians. Some theologians would claim that "God's people of the Old Covenant" is a positive expression of the Church's esteem for the Old Covenant which has never been revoked. However, when this expression is placed in the context of "the new People of God" it acquires a more negative tone, as if the "new" takes over the "old". The second disturbing part of this paragraph is the final phrase which describes the Jewish people in its eschatological expectation of the Messiah. As a Jew, I think that the Catechism correctly describes the classical Jewish expectation of the Messiah: "his features remain hidden until the end of time". However, the last phrase describing Jewish waiting for the eschaton as "accompanied by the drama of not knowing or of misunderstanding Jesus Christ" sounds quite offensive. The positive evaluation of Judaism is betrayed by describing them as they currently live in the world less than complete. How different is this from the medieval

understanding of the Jews as perfidi which means "incomplete"? The statement by the Central Committee also emphasizes the oscillating and contradictory theology of the eschaton in the Catechism when it calls attention to Par. 762 which gives the impression that the covenant with Israel was actually broken and replaced by the Church, or that the Jews bear the responsibility for the beginning and the delay of eschatological time in Par. 674.

It is this sense of disappointment that is captured so eloquently by the Central Committee's evaluation of the Catechism as "falling beneath expectations that must be put forward nowadays." I strongly support the critical comments by the Central Committee that a positive presentation of Judaism is missing in the Catechism. There is no attempt to reveal the beliefs about God which are common to Judaism and Christianity. One searches throughout the Catechism in vain to find some positive reference to the post-Biblical Judaism of the Rabbis which is truly the religion of Jews since the time of the origin of the Church. Fr. Gerard Sloyan, an American Biblical scholar, has argued that "the Christian community in effect declares the Jews a non-people by attending to them anciently but not modernly". It would seem that the authors of the Catechism failed to take into account the many positive statements by the Popes from John XXIII to John Paul II, as well as the statements written by the Vatican Commission on Relations with the Jews - especially the 1985 Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church. Theologians like Eugene Fisher and Sr. Mary Boys have noted the Catechism's failure to mention the 1985 Notes. Sr. Boys points out the irony that "an earlier ecclesial document (the 1985 Notes) might be read as questioning the Catechism." I find it curious that the Catechism does not mention any of the positive statements made about Judaism by local Synods of Bishops in the United States, Europe or Latin America. How sad that thirty years of productive collaboration between Christians and Jews have produced so little influence on the Catechism.

The Central Committee's evaluation emphasizes another significant criticism of the Catechism: the treatment of the relationship between the two Testaments in the Christian Bible. While the value of the Old Testament is confirmed (Par. 121-123) it is described as "perfected" only by the New Testament. This is the hermeneutical process of the entire Catechism as we learn from Par. 1963, "According to the Christian tradition the law is holy spiritual and God, yet imperfect." An alternative formulation of the same idea is Par. 1967, "The law of the Gospel fulfills, completes, surpasses and perfects the old law." Ultimately the law is a "pedagogue" to lead people towards Christ (Par. 708). This statement is, of course, based on Gal. 3:24 but it would be difficult to teach Christians or to convince Jews that the Catholic Church holds Judaism in high esteem when the foundations of Jewish revelation are described as less than complete. While this may have been a perfectly reasonable historical description of the ways Christians have understood the Law as part of God's revelation, I wonder why it remains necessary for the Catechism to maintain such a strong apologetic and defensive theme.

From the critique of the relationship between the two testaments of the Christian Bible arise serious questions by the Central Committee and American theologians about the use of typology as a teaching device in the Catechism. Many Jewish theologians became concerned about typological interpretation after the 1986

Notes appeared. Christian theologians also expressed some doubts about the 1985 Notes' presentation of typologies. The Catechism would confirm their initial impressions.

If the Old Testament is '>imperfect' then it serves only as a shadow of the reality established in the New Testament. This typological formula appears in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in Apostolic Writings such as the Epistle to Barnabas, the Didache, and Apostolic Constitutions. The darker side of typological interpretation in the early Church is revealed in Melito of Sardis' Homily on Passover. The positive statements about Judaism in the Catechism provide a defense against a negative image of the Old Testament. However, uncritical readers of the Catechism are most likely to quickly pass over the lessons of the Hebrew Bible into the Church. The danger of Marcionism is, therefore, always present in reading those portions of the Catechism which focus on the sacraments and life of the Church.

How unfortunate that readers of the Catechism will not approach typology with the more sophisticated ideas expressed in the Pontifical Biblical Commission's statement of 1994:

The Church reads the Old Testament in light of the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who brings a radical newness and sovereign authority, and gives a meaning to Scripture that is decisive and definitive (cf. *Dei Verbum* 4). This new determination of meaning has become an integral element of the Christian faith. It ought not, however, mean doing away with all attempts to be consistent with that earlier canonical interpretation which preceded the Christian Passover. One must respect each stage of the history of salvation. To empty the Old Testament of its own prophetic meaning would be to deprive the New Testament of its roots in history.

As a Jew it would never be my expectation for Christians not to emphasize their own reading of the Hebrew Bible in light of the kerygma of their faith. However, as the Pontifical Biblical Commission has stated "One must respect each stage of the history of salvation." When the Catechism uses simple correspondences between events in the Christian Bible as its typological foundation, it empties the Christian tradition of part of its rich heritage. As Mary Boys has argued "The Catechism uses typology which is a liturgical and poetic method and transforms it into prose and proposition". When poetry is turned into prose it loses its power to transform the human spirit.

When I think about the new Catechism, I trust that it will be well interpreted by my Catholic colleagues in Europe, North America and Latin America who have worked so intensively in the dialogue. They have sought out Jews who have helped them to a better understanding of Judaism, of the Jews as a people living God's word in the world. My concern is for those Catholics whose sole guide to Judaism will be the Catechism. In the remote corners of Africa and Asia where there are many Catholics who will never meet a living Jew, how will their attitudes toward Judaism develop? Will they learn from Catholics who have experienced Judaism? Or will they simply read the Catechism with all of the tensions and contradictions which the report of the Central Committee has uncovered?

My hope is that the Church of Africa and Asia will learn from the experiences of those who have participated together with Jews in dialogue. I pray that those Catholics who have learned from the actions and speeches of the Pope, the synods of Bishops and the writings of theologians, about Jews and Judaism will transmit those teachings *verbo et exemplo*. If the Church of the Third Millennium is not to repeat the sins of the Second Millennium, the world depends upon them.