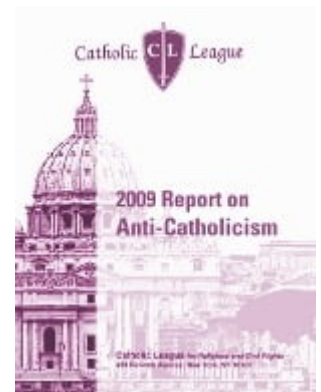


Pope

Pope Bashing



January 30 – February 4 Following Pope Benedict XVI's decision to reach out to the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), a controversy erupted due to the media's distortion of the story. After it was announced that the pope was seeking reconciliation with SSPX, news reports surfaced that the pope had welcomed back a Holocaust-denying bishop, Richard Williamson.

The facts of the matter were that the pope had lifted the excommunication that had been imposed in 1988 on four bishops of SSPX, one of them being Williamson who entertains discredited views on the Holocaust. We noted that none of the four bishops were fully reinstated in the Catholic Church. As accurately reported in the *New York Times*, this was merely "a step toward the men's full restoration to the church, *but their status has yet to be determined.*" (Emphasis added.)

Of the outreach to SSPX, Pope Benedict XVI said, "I hope my gesture is followed by the hoped-for commitment on their part to take the further steps necessary to realize full communion with the Church, thus witnessing true fidelity, and true recognition of the magisterium and the authority of the pope and of the Second Vatican Council."

None of the media distortions of this issue excused how those in the Jewish community lashed out at the pope. And none of the distortions excused the actions of nearly 50 Catholic

Democratic members of Congress; they sent a letter to the Holy Father stating their concerns over Bishop Williamson's comments questioning the Holocaust. In their letter they implored the pope to denounce Williamson's views.

The letter smacked of posturing and hypocrisy, and was factually wrong. They began by saying, "We are writing to express our deep concerns with your decision to reinstate Bishop Richard Williamson to communion with the Catholic Church...." The fact is that the pope did not reinstate the bishop to communion with the Church. In other words, the letter was based on a false premise. For American congressmen to lecture the pope about an event in which he was personally victimized, and which he has long condemned, was nothing short of arrogant.

They begged the pope to "publicly state [his] unequivocal position on this matter so that it is clear where the Church stands...." How ironic, we thought, that most of these very same Catholics fail to speak with clarity about what the Church teaches on abortion. Of the 47 signatories, the majority have a 100 percent NARAL score.

On February 4, we responded to the attacks launched against the pope by the Germans. We said when it came to the flap the pope received over the controversy, "No one has been worse than the Germans." German Chancellor Angela Merkel told the pope that he needed to clarify his views on the Holocaust. Did she forget that the pope, as a young man, was forcibly conscripted into a Nazi group and saw his family suffer economically because he refused to attend Hitler Youth meetings?

While Williamson's views have been discredited, it did not excuse the grand-standing of the Regensburg District Attorney who investigated whether or not the bishop broke German law by denying the Holocaust—even though his comments were made in Sweden. Then there was the German press that completely

exploited the issue: one major story said the pope had previously offended “Muslims, women, native Indians, Poles, gays and scientists.” The most embarrassing was the left-wing Catholic theologian Hermann Haering who implored that the Holy Father quit.

March 17

While flying to Cameroon, Pope Benedict XVI was asked about the Church’s position on fighting AIDS. The Holy Father responded, in part, “One cannot overcome the problem with the distribution of condoms. On the contrary, they increase the problem.” Despite the uproar his statement caused, the pope is supported by the facts.

The following comments were found on the websites of Democratic Underground, Queerty, Towleroad, the Human Rights Campaign and the *Washington Post/Newsweek* blog, “On Faith,” in response to the pope’s comments on condoms. ***All comments appear in their original form:***

Hate Speech

- “Hey, what do you expect from the head of the church that brought us the Inquisition, pedophile priests, and demands for belief in a geocentric university?”
- “Righteous arrogance is always sickening. Benedict XVI is steeped in righteous arrogance. The man who presided over the child of the Inquisition (Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith) knows nothing about the people he lauds or condemns.”
- “I’m a Catholic and I also believe in virtually nothing the Catholic Church teaches. Therefore I’d be all for impeaching the Pope and replacing him with someone who knows what in the hell he – or she – is doing. But why stop there? Nobody is irreplaceable if you know what I mean.”
- “Where do we send the dead bodies of African AIDS victims? To the Vatican...?”

- "The man is head of one of the largest corporate entities in the world. Lets have him do something other than spread guilt and suffering."
- "while we are at it, lets ban all organized religions or put them all in one place so that they can kill each other. They are all corporations. no different than AIG, designed to intimidate and cheat innocent people. They should be all taxed. None of them are the true representaions of what original prophets and God meant them to be."
- "The pope doesn't like condoms because he looses sensations when he has his p****r in little boys bums."
- "As head of the Roman Catholic church the Pope is responsible for providing new membership in his church which is why contraception is forbidden. More babies equals more souls for the church, simple math."
- "This religion is a joke! But beyond that, this particular pope is an evil Nazi and HE MUST GO."
- "The idea of a POPE in the twenty-first century is demeaning to the civilized world. In addition, a man with no real life experience of ordinary people being considered as a leader is just disgusting. This man and his predecessors have caused more misery in this world than all the dictators and tyrants combined. People who worship this man and considered him their spiritual adviser need brain transplants."
- "HIV is a serious problem everywhere.Africa surly doesn't need words of wisdom from a hypocrite.Lets get started Impeach !!!"
- "The Pope is an a**hole."
- "Denial of the Holocaust is illegal in some countries. Perhaps claiming condom use does not protect against HIV/Aids should be regarded as Contraception Denial."

- "This makes it perfectly clear that a celibate male cannot run a church. His mind is warped by his myopic view of the world. He obviously does not care about his congregants, esp. the women. As a man of the cloth, his grasp on reality is gone. He is probably suffering from dementia & his celibate Vatican handlers have kept it from us."
- "Of course, the Pope IS a complete nutter, just as is anyone who bases his/her existence on beliefs in sky-gods, devils, virgin births, praying to dead people, and assorted other craziness."
- "Y'all can argue the finer points of Catholicism all you want; the greater truth is all about control, control of the greater population, but particularly the control of women."
- "Whatta Pope! Once a Nazi, Always Nazi! 'The Final Solution' apparently lives on this Old Youth Nazi."
- "If the Pope is motivated by God, then his God is evil! How dare this evil Pope condemn these suffering people to a hell on earth by his insidious religion!"
- "Yet ANOTHER way in which the Catholic Church has done more harm than good... not a huge surprise from the people who brought you the Spanish Inquisition and Vatican-approved child molestation. Who better than an elderly celibate ex-Hitler Youth to understand the needs of Sub-Saharan Africa, right?"
- "if this p.o.s. is god's representative on earth, then all is lost, and there is no god worth respecting."
- "this pope is a despot and should be not only impeached, but excommunicated for all of his lies and hypocrisies."
- "If the Catholics can't impeach the Pope, let them do away with him as a courtesy to the rest of the society."
- "I AM a Catholic. I do NOT agree with much that the Prada pump wearing prick in Rome says or does. He means NOTHING to

me or to most Catholics in the USA. He is a EVIL man& has been for years he can excommunicate if he has the balls to but I am sure he is too busy playing with the 'boys' to do that."

- "The Catholics have been stupid enough to pay for this man's extracurricular activities; it is their responsibility to deal with him. May be he got HIV after using condom and his experience may be what he is talking about."

- "More immorality, deceit, fraud, torture, abuse, war, destruction, and death has been perpetrated over the Millenia by the Catholic Church than any other organized religion there has ever been." • "I have a picture of Benedict as a Hitler Youth giving the heil hitler salute-hated gays then now he has power-what an evil man."

- "You expect morals from the leader of the largest child molester organization in the world?"

- "While 'f*** the pope' is a phrase that lilts off the tongue so pleasingly, let us not forget that his power derives from many sources, not the least of which are the myriad people like my family, all of whom are varyingly supportive of me and my same-sex husband, and also regularly attend mass, go to confession, receive communion, and 'just love that mumbo-jumbo.'"

- "Any man that sets thier self up as God or say that they are a spokesman for God has a mental problem."

- "Hmmm, and it was the 'divine responsibility' of Popes to murder thousands of men, women, and children over the years to support the superstition of the 'church'."

- "He, himself, is a closeted gay. Believe it or not, the fierce opponent of gays, usually they are gays in denial."

- "I've long suspected that the ultimate destruction of the Catholic Church was his secret goal. It would be a good thing,

I only wish it weren't taking so damn long – and I hate the fact that so many people will have to die in such a horrible way before this institution of inhumanity is rendered null and void. On the other hand, I agree with His A**holiness that 'a responsible and moral attitude toward sex would help fight the disease'. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church's attitude toward sex is neither responsible nor moral."

- "Yep, handcuff him and make him attend sex education classes like all the rest of the teen population."
- "I thought the Popes had to have some kind of intelligence to get the position...? This guy is a f***ing idiot. I've said it before and I'll say it again: F*** THE POPE!!!"
- "He's just bringing the Final Solution into the 21st century, focused on all those darkies in Africa and DC."
- "will somebody drop an acme anvil on this d*****bag already?"
- "Should we all be surprised to hear Nazi spouting hate coming from a former member of the Nazi Party"
- "I think the Pope and the arch Conservative Catholic Church are guilty in the deaths of millions across the globe. They spend hundreds of millions of dollars on medical care for AIDS treatment, but refuse to lift the ban of a 25 cent piece of plastic."
- "NAZI BASTARD. He needs to hook up with Ted Haggard"
- "Why does the Church persist in such a manifestly immoral doctrine? One SUSPECTS that it must be the usual twisted thinking about sex and women."
- "As a christian this guy embarrasses me he is a moron and he is creepy looking. Pope John Paul was such a sweet looking old man."

- “Organized religion has done nothing but cause strife in humanity. Wars, discrimination, hatred in the name of ‘our father’ and pure ignorance. People need to start thinking for themselves. Throw organized religion to the curb.”
- “The popes comments represent nothing more than criminal stupidity.”

April 4

The following is part of atheist author Susan Jacoby’s answer to a question asked by the *Washington Post/Newsweek* blog, “On Faith”:

Question: *“Pope Benedict XVI has offered a number of apologies recently, for clergy sex abuse, for promoting a Holocaust denier, for statements about Islam. What does it mean that a Pope has started doing that? Should those apologies be accepted? Should more religious leaders do that?”*

Jacoby: “When the Pope apologizes for anything, his statement generally signifies nothing more than an attempt at damage control in the wake of an unanticipated public relations disaster created by his church and his church’s actions...Religious authorities ought to burn in hell, if there were a hell, for hypocritical apologies composed of words rather than deeds. There could surely be no better place for church leaders who believe in forcing a nine-year-old to bear the children of her rapist.”

May 11 – 15

As expected, Pope Benedict XVI’s trip to the Holy Land did not run as smoothly as we would have hoped. The Holy Father was criticized for his past—albeit forced—membership in the Hitler Youth. Also, his moving and heartfelt speech at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial was criticized for being too soft.

The English and French news services, Reuters and AFP, flatly said that the pope “was a member of the Hitler Youth.” The U.K.’s TimesOnline wrote that he “was in the Hitler Youth and

enlisted with the Wehrmacht," noting that "he had the excuse that this was standard practice for young German men at the time." *Israel Today* magazine said many Israelis interpreted the pope's visit to the Holocaust Memorial "as a stunt to cover up his past as a member of the Hitler Youth movement during World War II." The Associated Press mentioned that, "Benedict says he was coerced." Similarly, CBS reported that "Benedict has said he was coerced."

All of this was a despicable smear. The *New York Times* got it right when it said that the pope "was forced into the Hitler Youth and the German Army in World War II." Bloomberg.com also got it right when it noted "the German pope's obligatory membership as a 14-year-old in Hitler Youth"; it said further that he "didn't attend meetings and he later deserted when he was drafted into the German army." Moreover, his failure to attend Hitler Youth meetings brought economic hardship to his family: it meant no discounts for school tuition. None of this was a stunt. Furthermore, no one can deny that he was coerced into doing what the Nazis demanded of young men at the time.

We noted that even Bill Maher apologized when we blasted him for accusing the pope of being a Nazi and said that the guilty media should do likewise and correct the record.

After the Holy Father spoke at Yad Vashem, the chairman of the Directorate, Avner Shalev, said that while the pope's visit was "important," he regretted that the pope never mentioned anti-Semitism or the Nazis. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, chairman of the Yad Vashem Council and Tel Aviv's chief rabbi, said the pope's speech was "devoid of any compassion, any regret." Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin accused the pope of not asking for "forgiveness," noting that the pope's (coerced) membership in the Hitler Youth means he carries "baggage."

During his speech, the Holy Father said he had come "to stand in silence before this monument, erected to honor the memory of the millions of Jews killed in the horrific tragedy of the

Shoah.” He also said, “May the names of these victims never perish! May their suffering never be denied, belittled or forgotten!” Unfortunately those words fell on deaf ears.

Following the pope’s visit to Yad Vashem, Palestinian leader Sheik Taysir Tamimi forced his way to the pulpit at an interreligious event asking the pope to fight for “a just peace for a Palestinian state and for Israel to stop killing women and children and destroying mosques as she did in Gaza”; he asked the pope to “pressure the Israeli government to stop its aggression against the Palestinian people.”

The Vatican quickly condemned Sheik Tamimi’s hate speech, as it should have. Where were all the Muslim leaders condemning it? There is a time and a place for everything—and this was wrong on both counts. To exploit the pope’s journey for peace by beckoning him to bash Jews shows how utterly futile it is to have an interreligious meeting with some people.

July 7

Cathy Lynn Grossman of *USA Today* wrote an article on Pope Benedict XVI’s call for a God-centered global economy. We thought the pope’s comments would be embraced by every reasonable person, regardless of faith. We were wrong. Here is a sample of the vitriol that was unleashed against the pope in the “Comments” section following Grossman’s article. ***All selections are exactly as they appeared:***

Hate Speech

- “If the Catholic right is against the redistribution of wealth, they’re against the pope.”
- “Let the Pope be the first to follow his own advice. The Catholic Church is one of the wealthiest entities on the planet. How about the Church giving its tithe from all its members and redistributing it to the poor instead of filling its coffers. How about the Vatican selling off its billions of dollars worth of art to feed the masses. The Pope should set

the example.”

- “There is NO God, the bible is fake, the church is a scam.”
- “Bennie Baby, you want to help the world, tell all your third world followers (i.e. Mexico) to quit breeding like rabbits. It sure would help out here in California.”
- “Nazi pope still spreading lies huh?”
- “It is time for the Catholic church to put birth control and condoms in the back of every Catholic church. That is a good start for a ‘God centered’ global economy.”
- “The catholic church, wow, what a track record they have. They killed and tortured what they considered non-believers. They were implicit in the plan on exterminating Jews, they’ve been abusing children for centuries, even covering up for priests involved in such heinous acts and so now they want sensible people to take their advice on money:-)! What a bunch of nutters!”
- “Why is the Pope addressing humankind? Doesn’t he have a direct line to God? If he doesn’t, why does he think anyone should listen to what he has to say?”
- “This Pope was a friend of the Nazis.”
- “Christianity is like 2,000 year sold and this nutter acts like humans were lost for the thousands of years and generations until the catholic church came along with their raping of the local economy and holy wars, LOL!”
- “God centered. OMG!!! That’s rich, senior pope. Sure just have all paychecks directly deposited into the vaticans bank account, and they will cut a separate check to you depending on actual need. I’d pay just to shut this fool up for a year or two.”
- “Note to pope: Mind your own business and stay out of

politics. If you want to help the world, start by quitting the collections during mass, sell your gold chalices and sell your massive display of power—your cathedral—and use the proceeds to help developing countries. Finally, ask for forgiveness for the brutal Crusades, and several inquisitions where you murdered thousands of people.”

- “The Catholic church has so much money they could probably fund an end to at least half the world’s hunger tomorrow (ever been to the Vatican?) Rome has a lot to answer for after decades of shaming people into not using birth control despite the fact that they are too poor to feed their babies and despite the resulting spread of HIV in places like Africa. I certainly hope the Pope’s ‘redistribution of wealth’ includes liquidation of some of the church’s assets to be distributed to the poverty stricken.”

- “Lets start a new inquisition and if your not a christian we throw you to the lions.”

- “What is this crackpot trying to do. I guess religion and in the name of god has not killed enough people already. You would think that by learning from the past these idiots would just keep thier mouths shut.”

- “This pope is disgusting and sickening.. He is a celebrite and he is not religious. I dont understand the catholic. No offense to catholic people but you have a right to know why Catholic is a FALSE religious. Read about 10 commandment being broken. They break GOD LAW!!!!!!! THEY DID!!!! ...”

- “Catholic is DISGUSTING.. Oh yeah.. the bible book never mention about Catholic or any religious.. The bible itsel fis just a GOD and the Word.. what religious am I, you ask ? No, none..”

December 24

During a procession before Mass on Christmas Eve, a woman jumped over a barrier and attacked Pope Benedict XVI, knocking

him over during her charge. Fortunately, the Holy Father wasn't injured. Following the attack, the Huffington Post ran a story on the event which was fair. The comments made by the readers, which followed the story, were hateful to say the least. For these people—most of whom wear their supposed goodwill on their sleeves—to say such things about an attack on the elderly pope is disgusting. The following quotes were taken directly from the Huffington Post;***all quotes appear as they originally were:***

Hate Speech

- “as a practicing Catholic I have to ask, Does anyone like this Pope? I Don't.”
- “Women have a lot to be angry at this pope for, so, my guess is that it is a case of an overzealous political activist more than just an ‘unstable woman’.”
- “I regret that you're too blind to see the church indeed is a bastion of homophobia, misogyny, and sexual backwardness (I don't believe they're holocaust deniers though). Their sanctimonious meddling in American politics is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to their obsolete thinking and brazen hypocrisy.”
- “I have great disrespect for the _Catholic church and it's shameful actions both recently and in the distant past.”
- “I hope the gold cross or the gold chalice didn't get chipped. The Vatican owns much art, gold, & real estate. If they sold items & used the money to feed children who are starving to death, I'd have more sympathy.”
- “It is amazing someone who used to be a Nazi and who accepts holocaust deniers into positions of authority into his church with open arms is so beloved by people.”
- “I think the Church has failed it's mission and God's

judgement is at hand exposing all. Every eye shall see and every knee shall bow. There shall be a weeping and nashing of teeth. I Am coming burning like an oven and all shall be made stubble. The Messianic age is over. All mankind is the Chosen People."

- "if the pope were a real christian he would sell the vatican, feed the poor and diminish human suffering."
- "Ironical, isn't it? The very symbol of wealth and power – the Vatican- is the home of the religious leaders who implore all of us to abandon all of OUR wealth and power to help the poor, and give \$\$ to this church, of course! I don't think so!"
- "That's what you get when you invent fake hierarchical positions of so-called 'authority' (like 'pope') to create artificial power discrepancies and lord over the people: you make yourself a target."
- "mocking them is one way of letting others know that their religions is foolish, childlike, DANGEROUS AND DESTRUCTIVE."
- "I am Catholic and I will say that if the Pope would stop harboring ped o phile priests maybe he would stop being mocked."
- "I wonder if he scuffed his Prada slippers?"
- "No, but his outfit works tirelessly behind the scenes to make that sane sex laws and women's reproductive rights are stifled and reversed."
- "Perhaps she was one of the bazillion rape victims of Catholic Priests and just trying to strike back."
- "Benedikt is a very controversial figure. He reversed many great achievement that JohnII made. I do not like the direction that he choses for the catholic church."
- "The pope is just a MAN nothing more! his silly outfits are

just that! Religion is the best tool ever invented for the con artist!"

- "Actually, the mentally unstable ones are the Pope, his entourage and all those who believe that he is god's earthly representative."
- "she was just playing Whack-a-Pope"
- "She was just upset that he showed up wearing the same dress she had on."
- "what's crazy is actually believing the man is anything other than a normal human being with a crazy hat..."
- "She doesn't seem unstable to me – perfectly reasonable thing to do to a phony, if you ask me."
- "I sorry I had to laugh when i saw the video.. the Pope has been complicit in sexual crimes committed against children.. so maybe this take down was just karma because of his bad deeds..."
- "don't get mad because I am telling the honest truth.. i guess a kicked dog will bark everytime.. the catholic church have been covering up deviant sexual molestations on children for years..."
- "Maybe she was just paying him back for all the priests he let slide for so long."
- "Not one bit, eh? Can't speak for the others, but I'd say it might have to do with the total hypocrisy and overriding moral bankruptcy the Catholic Church has consistently displayed in protecting and ensuring the continual sexual abuse of the children entrusted to its care."
- "There is no Biblical basis for a pope, or cardinals, or a papacy. or nuns, or the vatican, or celibacy, or Mary worship, or the mass. This is a false religion that preaches 'another

gospel.'”

- “He’s just another businessman and politician.”
- “Yeah. How many people are starving right now while he parades around like that? In the building?”
- “Anyone who deems themselves infallible is nuts.”
- “Gee, I wonder what anyone would have against the Catholic Church? Oh! Oh! I know. They looked the other way when priests violated innocent children? And made it official policy to cover it up?”
- “Well, let me ask you this. Half of Africa is infected with HIV, and the Pope recently stated that using condoms is worse than contracting HIV. Now, AIDS is a death sentence, particularly in parts of the world with no access to ARV drugs. The Pope has effectively condemned several million to die.”
- “How about giving up all that stolen gold for the hungry and homeless?”
- “The trillion dollar coffers of the catholic church sure could go a loooong way in ending world hunger, indeed. Of course, then who would pay for the pope’s elaborate wardrobe and prada shoes?”
- “What kind of religion teaches that it’s okay to use the homeless as pawns in political games intended to strip the citizens of a country your leadership has no jurisdiction over’s civil rights? Monsters, all of them”
- “The news report stated that someone was mentally unstable? Which one were they referring to, anyone know? Stay tuned at eleven.”
- “The decisions the Catholic Popes have made on behalf of women in the last century are such that women should bowl

the [bastard](#) over every day.”

- “They think the woman was mentally unstable for knocking down the pope? After centuries of the Catholic Church minimizing the rights of women, can you blame her? She’s fighting back for a change.”
- “Who made him the dictator of women?”
- “I think this was a woman who’s son was probably _molested by one of _Ratzy’s _priests and he just swept it under the rug, like they always do. And, Mr. Deutsche Pope, _Jesus was _Jewish.”
- “Didn’t this pope just shuffle the pedophile priests to another diocese after they were outed for molesting altar boys just like the last pope did? Unbelievable, eh?”
- “‘The woman appeared to me mentally unstable.’ Ha! What about all those men in the medieval outfits?”
- “A symbolic act – a thank you for all the pope has done for womankind through the years...”
- “Shoving them in abusive orphanages and convents (in Ireland, esp. heinous), denying birth control so that AIDS kept spreading in Africa; kicking nuns out of their manse so it could be sold to pay the legal fees of a pedophile priest....”
- “Mentally unstable? Sounds to me that she had her wits about her.”

JEWS DIVIDED ON POPE’S OUTREACH TO SSPX

In response to the reaction to the Bishop Williamson controversy, on February 2, Rabbi Irwin Kula wrote the following article, “Jewish Reaction to Pope Disproportionate.” Rabbi Kula is president of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. The following is his article. (See

below for a sample of the hate-filled responses to this piece.)

The official Jewish response to Pope Benedict XVI's recent decision to reach out to the St. Pius X Society and to revoke the excommunication (though not yet determining the status) of four bishops says a great deal about the psycho-social state of American Jewish leadership or at least the leadership that claims to speak for American Jews.

The admittedly unnerving if not hurtful Holocaust denying views of one of those bishops, British born Richard Williamson, an obscure, irrelevant, cranky old man, offered on Swedish television, evoked the wrath of many Jewish organizations. This will have "serious implications for Catholic-Jewish relations" and there will be a "political cost for the Vatican" they threatened. And from Israel, the Chief Rabbinate in Israel, one of the most corrupt religious establishments in Western democracies, entered the fray calling into doubt the pope's impending visit to Israel.

As an eighth generation rabbi and someone who lost much family in the Holocaust, it could just be me, but this official Jewish response seems outrageously over the top. Do millions of American Jews sufficiently care that the pope revoked the excommunication of this unheard of bishop such that major Jewish organizations should devote so much energy and attention to this and turn it into a cause célèbre worthy of front page attention? And is this the way we speak to each other after decades of successful interfaith work on improving our relationship?

How is it that the view of some cranky bishop who has no power evokes calls of a crisis in Catholic-Jewish relations despite the revolutionary changes in Church teachings regarding Jews since Vatican II? Where is the "proportionality," where is the giving the benefit of the doubt—a central religious and spiritual imperative—in response to something that is

admittedly upsetting but in the scheme of things is less than trivial especially given this pope's historic visit to Auschwitz in which he unambiguously recognized the evil perpetrated upon Jews in the Holocaust and in his way "repented" for any contribution distorted Church teachings made to create the ground for such evil to erupt.

Something is off-kilter here. Is it possible that the leadership of Jewish defense agencies, people with the best of motivation who have historically done critical work in fighting anti-Semitism, have become so possessed by their roles as monitors of anti-Semitism, so haunted by unresolved fears, guilt, and even shame regarding the Holocaust, and perhaps so unconsciously driven by how these issues literally keep their institutions afloat, that they have become incapable of distinguishing between a bishop's ridiculous, loopy, discredited views about the Holocaust and a Church from the Pope down which has clearly and repeatedly recognized the evil done to Jews in the Holocaust and called for that evil to never be forgotten?

Perhaps, this called for a little understanding of what it must be like to actually run a 1.2 billion person spiritual community (one with which I disagree on many issues) and to be trying to create some sense of unity from right to left, from extreme liberalism to extreme traditionalism. How about cutting a pope, who we know, along with the previous pope, is probably amongst the most historically sensitive popes to the issues of anti-Semitism, Holocaust, and the relationship to Judaism and Jews, a little slack, given how he is trying to heal his own community. And is it possible that the pope's desire/hope/need to reintegrate the Church (he has also reached out to Liberal theologian Hans Kung) may be of more importance both to the Church and actually to religion on this planet than whether we Jews are upset about the lifting of excommunication of one irrelevant bishop?

Would we Jews like to be judged by the crankiest, most

outlandish, hurtful, and stupid thing any rabbi in the world said about Catholics or Christians? We Jews are no longer organized to excommunicate and a rabbi can't be defrocked the way the Church does with its clergy but surely there are individual rabbis who say things so abhorrent about the "other" that though we still call the person rabbi we would not want to be taken to task for doing so.

Finally, when the pope as well as key Vatican officials said within a day that Williamson's views are "absolutely indefensible," where was a little humility in response? Wouldn't it have been interesting, yet alone ethically compelling, for those who initially lashed out to have acknowledged that perhaps they did overreact and that they do know that the Church and specifically this pope are very sensitive to these issues? But that we ask the pope and church hierarchy to please understand that, whether fully justified or not, we are still very very raw and very vulnerable regarding the Holocaust and so we are sorry if we did overreact and we are deeply grateful for the pope's unambiguous reiteration of that which we do know is his view and is contemporary Catholic teachings.

Rabbi Kula's article triggered a hate-filled reaction. Here is a sample. All comments appear in their original form:

Hate Speech

- "Your article is MOST curious. You, being a 'man of the cloth' of the Jewish religion (8th generation rabbi, no less), and having personally lost family members to the Holocaust, should, of ALL people, be expected to be at least a LITTLE empathetic towards the similar feelings of others."
- "Instead of preaching down at others YOU 'think' are overreacting, since you DON'T understand the Roman Catholic community as much as you think you do, why don't you stick to promoting tolerance in a less INSULTING, DEROGATORY, and

snotty little attitude that certainly does not fit your position, nor your heritage.”

- “Nothing of what you say, btw, justifies the ongoing racism against and persecution of Jews by Christians. NOTHING.”

- “The root of the problem is the trial of Jesus. Historically it did not happen. Jesus got a bit carried away at the Jewish temple. The Roman soldiers reacted in their moral fashion in dealing with agitators, they summarily crucified him. No questions asked and definitely no trial.”

- “I AM NOT GOING TO DISCUSS THIS WITH YOU UNTIL YOU DISCOVER SOMETHING ABOUT THE GAY PEOPLE PERSECUTED AND KILLED DURING THE HOLOCAUST. YOU WERE GIVEN AN EXTENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY.”

- “I’m a pagan. I have nothing to ‘confess’ about either. If I weren’t Pagan, I wouldn’t have been going up against serious odds to get Christians off Jewish kids all my life, and being thanked for it by occasional grudging not mentioning how ‘unclean’ I am supposed to be.”

- “Will the Anti-Defamation League step up to the moral plate when the Vatican goes on another one of it’s rants about homosexuals or feminists?”

- “The VATiCAN should be defrocked or Abolished or Not Recognised by the ‘NEW-[Apocalyptic]United Nations’!”

- “Jesus was Jewish, yes, but he was not the son of any god. He was apparently the illegitimate son (mamzer as per Professor Bruce Chilton) of Joseph and Mary. He trained under The Baptizer and made a good sermon although he was not literate. He got a bit carried away in the Jewish Temple, got arrested and summarily crucified by Roman troops who were ordered to deal with agitators quickly and without a trial.”

- “Believe it, Rabbi. Just scroll down. Catholics are not the best friends of Jews. Take it from an insider.”

- “According to Rabbi Irwin Kula Williamson is an ‘an obscure, irrelevant, cranky old man’ and he goes on to say ‘with no power’...Well... Rabbi Irwin Kula please carefully note this fact: so was Hitler, backed by Pope Pious XII. And in this case – as with Hitler – It is the Pope himself who is giving this obscure, irrelevant, cranky old man all the power-and relevance-he needs. This is precisely the point. Rabbi Irwin Kula, regrettably, missed it completely.”
- “The German Shepard is rounding up his stray sheep, and with some urgency.”
- “this Pope’s historic visit to Auschwitz in which he unambiguously recognized the evil perpetrated upon Jews in the Holocaust and in his way “repented” for any contribution distorted Church teachings made to create the ground for such evil to erupt.”
- “One visit to a camp is repentance for centuries of persecution (which directly led, aided or overlooked) by the Catholic Church? This one visit by one pope – without any distinct acknowledgment of what exactly he is repenting for – or acknowledging any Nazi/catholic church collusion – this is what you call repentance?”
- “Rabbi Kula misses the point. It is not the mere rantings of a single crackpot that are at concern here, but a pattern of dismissiveness by the current Pontiff, including his reintroduction of the Prayer to Convert the Jews into the Catholic Mass.”
- “Rabbi Kula seems to ignore the rising tide of anti-semitism and anti-Jewish violence in the United States, Europe, and Turkey. Reinstating a an avowed anti-semite into a position of significant authority in the Catholic Church sends a powerful message of disrespect, if not hatred to our people. Wake up Rabbi.”
- “If I were Jewish this Pope would scare me out of my mind.”

- “The new Pope is by far more sectarian than the previous. His own views on the Holocaust are hardly more encouraging than outright Holocaust deniers. His denial that Christian sectarianism was a major factor in the Holocaust makes it hard to believe that he takes the dangers of his increased sectarianism seriously.”
- “This is time to be afraid, very very afraid.”