

Below are notes I've made to myself as I'm reading the dissertation. I've also copy/pasted quotes from it that have struck me. Parts in blue are some nuggets that jumped out even more or are some of my own reflections to the statement or thought. - Rachel

Syzmon = Aleks
Allen = Kevin
Linda = Caroline
Samuel = Dan
Ashley = Rachel
Tomek = Przemek
Miriam = ??
Dawn = Straffordshire student
Leah = Marla
Maury = Glen
Rabbi Zimmer = Ellis?
Rabbi Baum = Shudrich?
Elizabeth =
Martha = Sarah N
Faith = Elaine
Kathy = Jo
Cheryl = Caylee
Elijah = Markuszow participant - David?

The Nazis strategically adopted Poland as their surrogate for “their gigantic laboratory for mass murder,” solely for the reason that Poland was the home to the most significant European Jewish population (Zimmerman, 2003, p. 3). Although the Poles did not conceive the Shoah, Zimmerman specifies that 14 what the Nazis propagated in Poland “had **tainted Polish soil forever**” (p. 13-14)

According to Zimmerman (2003), the Shoah “is the tragedy of the Poles” (p. 7) because, just as their Jewish neighbors, **Poles had no choice** (pg 14)

How should Christians respond today to the Shoah? Kapren argues for the need for “**an ethic of remembering**” and maintains that there needs to be “a way to place memory [of the Shoah] closer to the heart of Christianity” (pg 22)

Start up on page 29

With so few direct [Jewish] heirs remaining, the physical and spiritual legacy of centuries of . . . coexistence had to be bequeathed upon the society as a whole” (pg 30) - **We ALL have the duty to remember... no matter nationality, ethnicity, or age.**

Since the Shoah decimated 3.5 million Polish Jews, approximately 200,000 survivors remained (32) [Never knew how many Jews remained. That hit me personally and reinforced how much my brain things about what was lost and very little about what remained. And THAT is what we need to remember and honor... just as much as those who died.](#)

(Hypothesis) remembering, repairing the world, and bringing the memory closer to Christians by working together with Jews (36)

This study should help TMF—my friends and co-laborers understand intellectually, philosophically, and compassionately the importance and meaning of our work, and its contributions to Jewish-Christian dialogue and reconciliation. This study should illuminate our pathway and provide insights and principles to guide us further in our efforts to pursue dialogue and reconciliation with Jews. This study should confirm that dialogue is possible in our work, and describe for us a model to guide us further along the path as we continue to pursue Jewish-Christian dialogue in our work with TMF. (42)

Healing for him cannot occur unless remembering the Shoah occurs. Within this framework, remembering leads to action and should give birth to restoration and healing.(45) [It's near impossible to have any relationship with a Jewish friend without the Shoah being a part of the conversation. If it doesn't, then how deep is that friendship between a Christian and a Jew?](#) “Why are Christians, the presumed agents of peace, at best impotent in the face of their people’s conflicts and at worst perpetrators of the most heinous crimes” (72) [Dang.](#)

In a sense, the slow pace of the Jewish-Christian dialogue has been due to the reluctance and inability of most Christians to recognize and understand the devastating extent of the rupture the Shoah created in the Christian faith. Christianity following the Shoah, even in Germany, attempted to pick up and continue as though no rupture had occurred and no transformation was required. (74). [Dang. Again.](#)

Six major themes have emerged from the interviews that I conducted for my case study of the work of TMF. These major themes are relationships, reconciliation, remembering, restoration, caring, and dialogue. (156)

Most frequently, the relational bonds encountered in this case study may be viewed through friendship and trust. Many people said that TMF builds relational bridges and crosses cultural, linguistic, and religious barriers to establish relationships within the Polish and Jewish communities of Poland and elsewhere. People used these terms, or phrases to characterize what I do in my work, or what TMF does in its work: building bridges, building relationships, or bridging culture. (158)

Miriam, a Jewish woman, remarkably reflects this understanding and states, I’ve obviously grown as a person as a result of knowing you, and to me, that’s part of friendships. You didn’t ask me outright, but the relationship asked me to open my ears differently, open my mind, open my way of seeing things. (159)

Why would non-Jews, Christians, want to help Jews take care of Jewish cemeteries in Poland? Szymon explains, So for me, it was difficult to understand why. But over the years, I did understand. I mean, I did grasp it. I think it's about also sharing this connection with history. And I know that for you as [a] Baptist, it's important to get, . . . [to] the bottom of things, [like] the Old Testament, the Jewish law, who are Jews, and the whole Polish problem, the war problem, [and] the cemetery problem. And, it took a while to understand why, sort of, 'these people,' not us, not Jews, but 'others' want to help. But as we spoke about it, it's not a Jewish thing, and it's not a Baptist thing. I think we sort of fit, you know? (168)

Szymon also reasons that those people, who are involved in our work, must not focus on the differences and shortcomings existing in their midst. Instead, he indicates 169 that they should "just go into it [the work], trust [each other], do the work, [and] help others, I think it's very inspiring; it should be inspiring for everyone. And that's the most important part." (168-9)

she described the Jewish cemeteries of Poland as being "largely unvisited, untended, and devoid of the usual physical markers that would otherwise identify them as cemeteries, such as signage, fencing, and matzevot." She considers that because such "outward clues" are absent, the world around these Jewish cemeteries fails "to recognize their Jewish past and significance." (181)

Accordingly, he (Szymon) states, You came to me, but you are not a Jew. You don't have to care about these cemeteries, about these graves—these are not your people, but you do treat them like yours. And, that is your idea—that was your proposal, so it's not balanced. I have never cleaned up a Baptist cemetery. (193)

By giving Jews "an opportunity" to be a part of Jewish cemetery restoration projects in Poland, Miriam maintains that TMF provides the Jewish community "a chance to learn the lessons that I did . . . otherwise, they're not going to get it." She contends that if Jews "just go to the death camps," it will only reinforce "our victimization." Moreover, she continues, "I think that we thrive on the victimization, and we'd like to think that we're always the victims." Thus, she is convinced that TMF projects offer "an opportunity for people [Jews] to grow, change, and rethink their, their preconceptions about Christians, Poles in Poland." Concluding her thought, she asserts, "I suppose, and obviously, if there can be better understanding and a sharing of values and see that there are Christians, who share our values, that [scenario] could have life." She asks rhetorically, "Who knows what changes could happen in one's life, and in the community, and the world?" (202)

Certainly, one of the things that has changed is seeing the power of an enabler. Seeing the power of someone who comes and gets things done. If just a bunch of Jews had gone and done the work, they would have said, of course, it's about time. By having a disinterested third party come in and do something, then it can be recognized that it had to be done. That work like this should continue. And if, well, if these volunteers from America can come and do it, then the city is like, well, we can continue it at least. It makes sense.(221)

Judith Lewis Herman - "Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order (223)

In a parallel fashion, Rabbi Baum views preserving the memory of Jews in Poland, not only as service but as a debt, an obligation to serve "those who came before us." He asserts, They provided us with such an amazing world. They did so much. They laid the foundations of who we are now. The world we live in now. And our part in this bargain, our part is to maintain their memory. (229)

The purpose of this study was to describe the process of how acts of lovingkindness (mercy), as demonstrated and encountered through the work of The Matzevah Foundation (TMF), in caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland, have influenced dialogue (or lack thereof) among Jews and Christians. (331)

Metz (1978) argues, "We Christians will never get back behind Auschwitz and, seen accurately, beyond Auschwitz only, no longer alone, but only with the victims" (para. 5). Compassion means suffering together. Metz challenges Christians to seek to understand the fracture produced through the Shoah by being compassionate, i.e., to be "with the victims" in their suffering. (339)

Recommendations for TMF Board (starting pg 363)

It is recommended that the Board of Directors of TMF should consider...

1. TMF should collectively continue to make inroads into the Jewish and Christian communities and better develop and build relationships within its sphere of influence.
2. TMF should strengthen its resolve and continue to pursue dialogue and reconciliation among Jews and Christians through its work.
3. TMF should work toward building a sense of community among participants in each Jewish cemetery project that it conducts.
4. TMF should consider what is negotiable and what they may leave behind in their cultural framework as Christians. This step will lead to their discovery and understanding of "the other" by becoming more cross-culturally sensitive in their work with Jews and other groups of people.
5. TMF should seek to be trained in navigating emotions, counseling, and development in their understanding of human relations, and conflict mediation.
6. TMF should develop a broader understanding of Polish-Jewish history prior to, during, and following the Shoah. It is recommended that board members enroll in a course for credit or certification regarding the Shoah.

7. TMF should consider how it may continue to speak truthfully about matters of faith while engaging Jews, Christians, and non-religious people in dialogue within the framework of their work.
8. TMF should consider in what ways they may practically advocate their work and actively engage individual Christians and churches in caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries in Poland.
9. TMF should consider how it may refine its Shoah educational efforts and produce seminars through which it may introduce its work to churches and synagogues and subsequently involve them in its work.
10. TMF should continue to develop and explore the cultural stewardship model of linking Jewish descendants with local Polish communities in the long-term care of Jewish cemeteries.