

COMMON GROUND

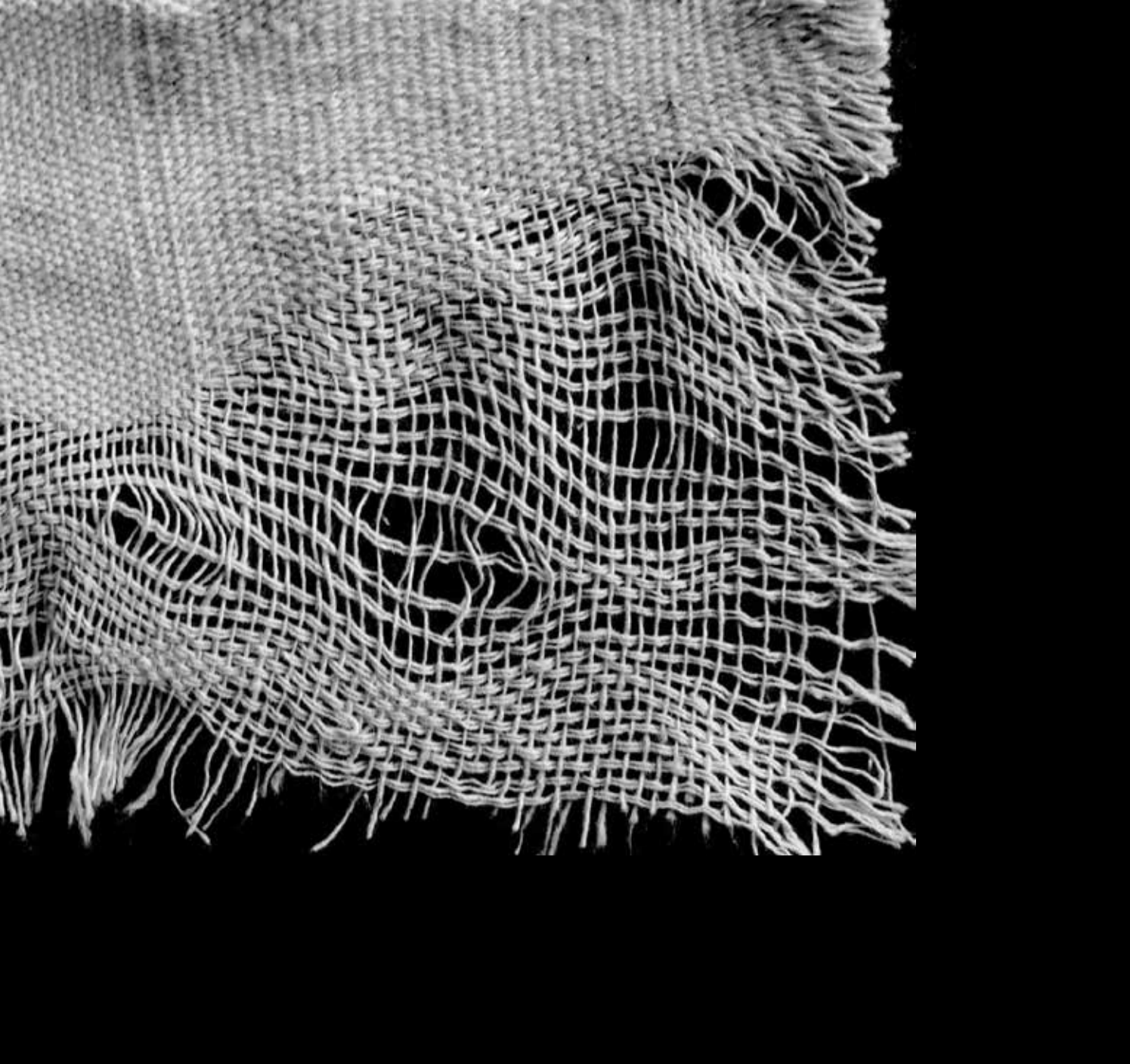
The magazine of **The Council of Christians and Jews** / Spring 2020

**Raise up,
Remember,
Repair**
Dialogue in a new decade

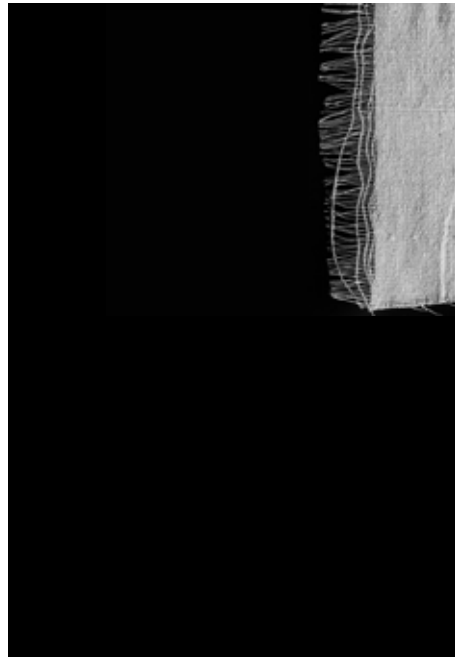
Tony Kushner and Carolyn
Sanzenbacher on CCJ
pioneer James Parkes

Amy-Jill Levine on the
Jewishness of Jesus

Paula Fredriksen on
the Apostle Paul



Lisa Lillibridge
is American and lives in
the northeastern state
of Vermont. Her image
addresses both her concerns
for modern society and her
wholehearted belief that
humanity has the ability to
listen to each other, respond
thoughtfully and mend.
<https://lisalillibridge.com/2019/09/04/are-we-frayed-beyond-repair/>



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Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko

Deputy Director

The Revd Dr Nathan Eddy

Auditors:

Mazars LLP
Times House
Throwley Way
Sutton, Surrey SM1 4JQ

Registered Office:

CCJ, Mary Sumner House
24 Tufton Street
London SW1P 3RB

Bankers:

Unity Trust Bank plc
Nine Brindleyplace
Birmingham
B1 2HB

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Dear Members and Friends,

In this edition of *Common Ground* we reflect deeply on the immense trauma, pain, and destruction of European Jewry, as we mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. We learn about the rebuilding and the healing that took place, against the backdrop of immense sorrow and we proudly remember that the Council of Christians and Jews was born at that moment and not only exists but flourishes until today. We also look forward to a new decade of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Hence our title: *Raise up, Remember, and Repair*.

As we know, at the height of the war two brave men, Archbishop William Temple and Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz, stood up together and publicly wrote in the *Times* about the 'horror beyond what imagination can grasp...to which the records of barbarous ages scarcely provide a parallel', and in 1943 Archbishop Temple, in an impassioned address to the House of Lords implored: 'We at this moment have upon us a tremendous responsibility. We stand at the bar of history, of humanity, and of God'. Yet no less important was the work and bravery of the Revd James Parkes, who devoted his life to challenging anti-Judaism and shed light on the brutal antisemitism that Jewish communities suffered prior to the second world war as well. Professor Tony Kushner and Dr Carolyn Sanzenbacher remind us of the contribution of Parkes to Christian-Jewish relations and Rob Thompson writes a moving account of the bravery and compassion of Christian army chaplains at the liberation of Bergen-Belsen.

When I think of CCJ's role at this time and ensuing positive developments in Christian-Jewish relations, I am reminded of Psalm 126: 'We sow with tears and reap with gladness'. We were part of the re-building of lives, of trust, and of a theology that acknowledges our differences while celebrating our shared values. This edition of *Common Ground* speaks to the ongoing need for this work. CCJ Chair Bishop Michael Ipgrave's address to the International Council of Christians and Jews last year, printed here, expresses precisely this hope; that a 'spirit of friendship and trust' might flourish between Jews and Christians. This spirit is also borne out in the way we read our shared texts, understand the Jewish Jesus, among other complex areas in Christian-Jewish relations. We are honoured to have leading scholars Professors Amy-Jill Levine and Paula Fredriksen, and our own Dr Ann Conway Jones and Revd Dr Nathan Eddy, shed light on this work of repair and dialogue in the scriptural context. We also explore how Christians and Jews can navigate difficult issues such as Israel Palestine, through listening and learning from one another.

The rebuilding and repair continues until today: Our Student Leaders, led by Katharine Crew, are the embodiment of CCJ's present and future. A new generation, with new challenges that are being addressed through inclusion, respect, empathy, and trust; and our essential work to support refugees led by Esther Sills who poignantly reminds us of 'our duty to uphold the rights of those seeking refuge today, lest we forget...'

Underpinning all these programmes is the work and unfailing commitment of you our CCJ members, who have been supporting and re-building since CCJ's inception and continue to do so today.

At this important anniversary, when we reflect deeply on the Shoah I am reminded of the words of Anne Frank: 'How wonderful it is that no one need wait a single moment to start to improve the world.' That is what we are trying to do every day here at CCJ.

My sincere thanks to Revd Dr. Nathan Eddy and Esther Sills for editing this edition of *Common Ground*.

Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko
Director, Council of Christians and Jews



1,500 CCJ members



30 CCJ branches across the UK



80+ people in our Rabbi-Clergy Action Network



90,000+ people reached through our network for Holocaust Memorial Day



250+ alumni of our Yad Vashem Seminar



52 people taken on our Israel Palestine Study Tour



52 Student Leaders and Student Leader Alumni



73 people trained on the ways they can support refugees

PUTTING JAMES PARKES BACK IN THE FRAME

James Parkes was instrumental in establishing the Council of Christians and Jews. Here, Professor Tony Kushner and Dr Carolyn Sanzenbacher tell his story.

No Hitler, no Holocaust', as historians of Nazism such as Ian Kershaw have eloquently argued. It might also be said - in a world not of genocide and man's inhumanity to man but one of respecting difference, fighting racial and religious hatred, and promoting tolerance and mutual respect - 'No James Parkes, no Council of Christians and Jews'.

James Parkes was one of the first in the English-speaking world to recognise fully the threat posed by Nazi racism. What singled Parkes out was his understanding that the so-called 'Jewish problem' was in fact a 'Gentile problem' that had deep roots in Christian attitudes and behaviours towards Jews since the 'parting of the ways'. As a young Anglican clergyman, Parkes' worldview was bound to make him an outsider on critical Christian issues. First was Parkes' insistence from primary sources that the conceptual portrait of Jews drawn in the first three centuries by Church fathers laid the foundation on which a 'superstructure' of anti-Jewish theology, religious coercion, and legalized oppression was sustained through the centuries, making the claims of modern antisemitism 'credible'. Second was his pioneering rejection of the claim that

it was the divinely-mandated duty of Christians to proselytise the Jews. In this respect, Parkes did not have the support of Archbishop William Temple who remained Patron of the Church Mission to the Jews throughout the traumatic years of the Second World War (until his death in 1944). It remained a source of tension between the two great men and isolated Parkes more generally in the Anglican movement.

Parkes was a man of letters – at his death he left over 400 published titles with his name, including scores of books – but he was also a man of action. He wanted to do all he could to make sure that there would be a world where, in his words, it was 'safe for Jews to live as Jews'.

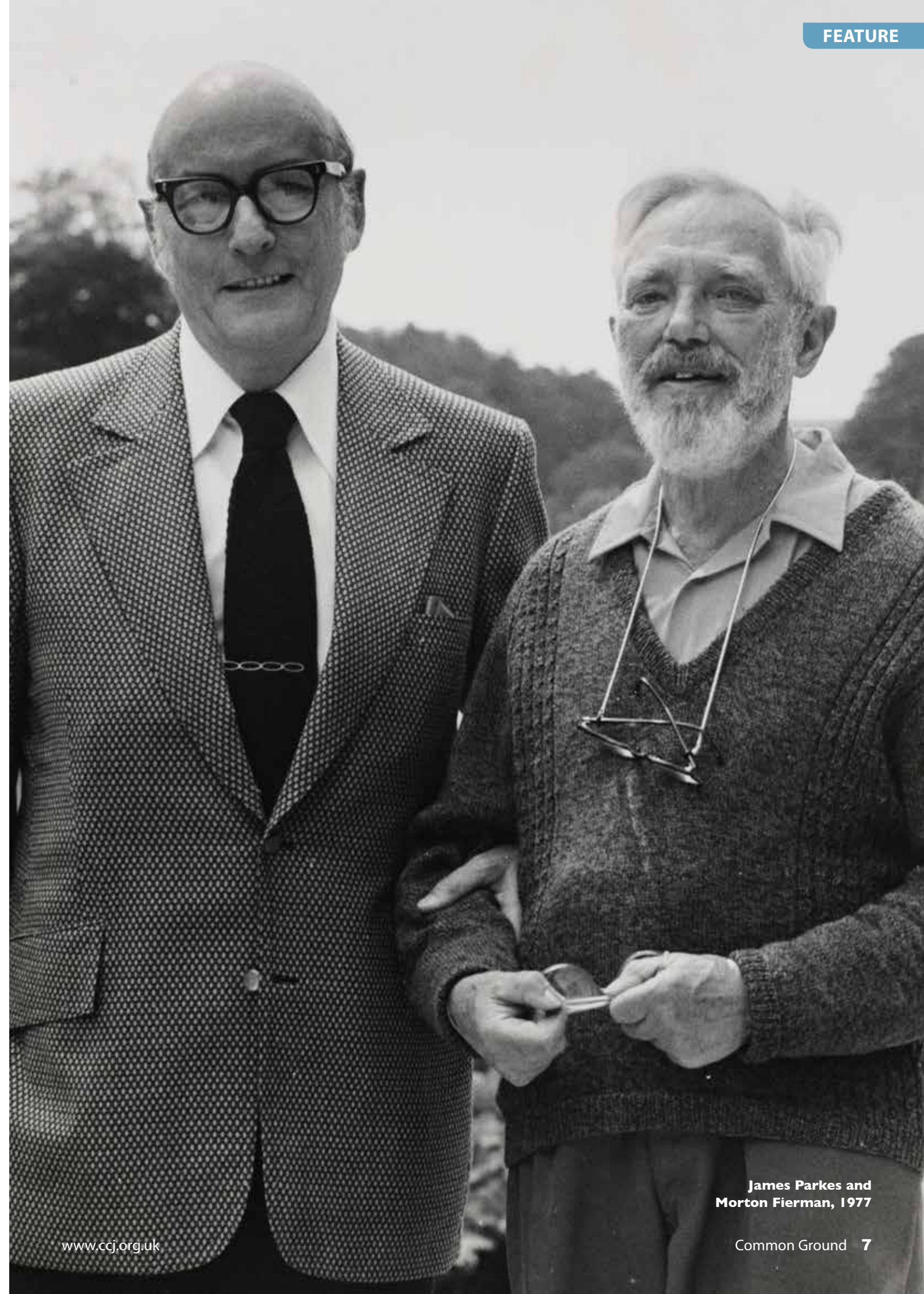
Parkes achieved an enormous amount: rescuing refugees and providing a safe haven in his home at Barley, Cambridgeshire; fighting Nazi and fascist propaganda; providing the intellectual,

James Parkes is not alone. There has been a recent surge of memory work with regard to what have become formalised as 'Britain's heroes of the Holocaust'.

theological, and practical foundation for the body that was to become the Council of Christians and Jews in 1942; and, as we will see, informing both state and public on the fate of European Jewry at the hands of the 'Final Solution', as well as demanding action from the Western Allies to stop it happening. He also argued, beginning in the mid to late 1930s, for a national home for Jews in Palestine, and, after the war, he was the first leading Church figure in Britain to not only accept but welcome the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948 – much to the consternation of some of his fellow Christian members of the CCJ.

So why is James Parkes now largely forgotten?

Forgetting is an active process and is not, as is often mistakenly assumed, the opposite of remembering. To coin a phrase, we have to remember to forget. In this respect, James Parkes is not alone. There has been a recent surge of memory work with regard to what have become formalised as 'Britain's heroes of the Holocaust', a governmental scheme that was inaugurated by then Prime Minister Gordon Brown in 2010. The list of those given this award is as revealing as those who have not been recognised, whether alive or not. Perhaps the most consistent and intensive campaigner for persecuted European Jewry who combined work



James Parkes and Morton Fierman, 1977

inside and outside of parliament, for example, was the MP Eleanor Rathbone, who, in her premature death in 1946, pretty much worked herself to the grave over concern for Jewish refugees. Likewise the publisher Victor Gollancz is largely forgotten in this respect in spite of penning perhaps the most brilliant and influential polemic of Britain's Home Front - *Rescue the Perishing*, ten thousand words of impassioned engagement written on Christmas Day 1942 - the energy of which, coupled with public lectures demanding government measures to save European Jewry, led to a nervous breakdown.

The trio of James Parkes, Eleanor Rathbone and Victor Gollancz have been largely (and sadly) airbrushed from history in terms of Holocaust memory, whereas others have received recognition for work they either failed to do or which was deeply flawed. Examples include Dennis Avey, who fabricated saving Jews in Auschwitz where he was a British prisoner of war, and the Scottish missionary Jane Haining, who died in the same camp and had been matron of a conversionist school for Jewish girls in Budapest.

Britain's postwar confrontation with the Holocaust still remains incomplete and distorted by crude attack and equally distorted apologetica and celebration, and it is within this unsubtle matrix of remembering that the Holocaust activism of James Parkes has been subject to collective forgetting.

James Parkes and Refugees from Nazism

Parkes' work on Jewish matters with the International Student Service (ISS) between 1928 and 1934 dealt directly with the increasing antisemitic nationalism in eastern European universities that was causing Jewish expatriate students to flee antisemitic violence and denial of university education. As part of his innovative and daring initiative to mitigate the student violence, Parkes was directly involved with students caught in the web of escalating antisemitism, not only by bringing Jewish and non-Jewish nationalist students together for mediated discussion but also by travelling extensively to all of the European countries affected by anti-Jewish nationalist aggressions.

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His work on behalf of Jewish student victims of antisemitism is also visible in his May 1933 appointment as head of an autonomous committee charged with the development of an ISS programme for student refugee relief. While he was raising programme funds in Canada the following October, the League of Nations appointed American James McDonald as High Commissioner for Refugees from Germany and, on the same day of the appointment, Parkes was recommended as McDonald's non-Jewish expert. As part of McDonald's initial travelling staff, Parkes sailed from New York in early November, meeting regularly during the passage and then accompanying him to the first informal High Commission meetings at the Hotel du Rhin in Paris. While this association did not result in Parkes' acceptance of a permanent position, the committee that he headed for ISS was officially named as the responsible refugee-student arm of the High Commission; and by March 1934, some 1325 refugee students had successfully benefited from the programme that he created and orchestrated.

After relocating in England in 1935 Parkes' home in Barley became an open door refuge for countless others who were fleeing Hitler's advancing aggressions. As example of the many who found solace there is Alexander Teich, a former Viennese associate from

Parkes' home in Barley became an open door refuge for countless others who were fleeing Hitler's advancing aggressions.

the World Union of Jewish Students and the future grandfather of British actress Rachel Weisz. Parkes' effort on behalf of British entry for Teich began immediately after Hitler's annexation of Austria and it stretched from England to Canada and the United States, wherever Parkes travelled, over the next nine months. It was early January 1939 before Teich was granted entry to Britain and welcomed to Parkes' home in Barley. Teich's Catholic wife and daughter were also there before the outbreak of war, and the three of them remained through the end of the year, during which time Parkes gained a place for their daughter in a Cambridge Catholic school. The family remained with Parkes until he was able to settle them in a small cottage at Barley in January 1940, where they lived for the duration of the war.

Teich was far from being alone among those rescued and helped by Parkes. It is difficult to recover the full extent of his refugee efforts, however, as he destroyed all of their personal files in the war, fearing it would leave them vulnerable if the Nazis invaded. But amongst the many were Emanuel (Bodo) Weiner, who was living with Parkes at Barley in the summer of 1936 while awaiting funds and permission for passage to Palestine, and Wolfgang Buesing, a non-Aryan pastor who was at Barley soon after the Anschluss and for whom Parkes organized funds from Oxbridge chaplains and theology dons. Colin Richmond, biographer of Parkes, lists also Rabbi Eschelbacher of Duesseldorf, who was the father of his first research secretary, and Irene Harland, about whom little is known. What is known with acuity is that Parkes' refuge in Barley functioned as a temporary safe haven for both refugees and evacuees throughout the years of war, who averaged between five and seven at any one time. Ian Karten, then a refugee student studying engineering, and later the main benefactor of the Parkes Institute, recalled being invited to afternoon tea at Barley just before the war. Both the books stored in every conceivable place that were to become the Parkes Library, and Parkes' generosity and kindness were to remain in Ian's memory for the rest of his life.

Alongside the hard work of getting through the 'Paper Walls' of immigration

James Parkes in his room at Ripon Hall, Oxford, with his flat square for reading, 1923



restriction in the 1930s and providing refuge for those in transit, Parkes continued to work intensively at an international level. In late August 1938 he 'accepted an urgent appeal' for three weeks of lectures and national broadcasts on antisemitism and refugees through University of Toronto for early November, and, as soon as the invitation was accepted, additional lectures began to be scheduled in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and the New York metropolitan area by the New York based League for Fair Play. Before leaving for Canada, Parkes fulfilled a privately scheduled event at Chatham House in late October, which included such influential discussants as Anthony de Rothschild, Sir Neill Malcolm, Sir John Hope Simpson, Sir Edward Peacock, and Sir Frederick Pedler. His increasing concern about the reluctance of nations to open their doors to Jews led him to argue before this group for the 'immense

importance' of a national Jewish home in Palestine, and to do so against the repeated protests of Sir Neill Malcolm that 'what happened in Palestine was comparatively unimportant'. He also argued for the organization of Jews and Christians who could stand as a united collaborative front on behalf of the increasing refugee population. Warning that the refugee problem would only get worse, he urged presciently that 'we must be prepared to see an immense tragedy overtake the Jews'.

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Parkes had just begun his series of Canadian lectures two weeks later when the Kristallnacht pogrom of Nazi violence in Germany and Austria erupted on 9 November, and he was asked to stay in order to 'aid and advise' on the formation of a national Canadian refugee committee. After finishing in Canada, he arrived in New York the second week in December to his series of scheduled lectures in America, spending his first open morning eight days later at the National Coordinating Committee for German Refugees. During all of these weeks of lectures, broadcasts, and consultations in both countries, Parkes still managed to find the time to circulate Alexander Teich's CV in search of funds and sponsors.

Parkes' urging in 1938 for groups of Jews and Christians to stand together was a strong indication of his desire for a body such as the CCJ. His concern



James Parkes,
Cambridge, 1962

about the inadequacy of British Christian responses to refugees was already apparent soon after he accepted Bishop Bell's invitation to be involved in the formation of the Church of England Committee for Non-Aryan Christians in Germany in late 1937. When he and Norman Bentwich were then asked to be keynote speakers for a select conference of seventy in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey on 1 February 1938, one of Parkes' main points had to do with the unacceptable discrepancy between Jewish and Christian relief support. He juxtaposed stories of Jewish generosity that extended even to converted Jews with this stark Christian duality: 'We send missions to convert the Jews' while at the same time 'leav[ing] them to look after refugees who are members of our own faith'. He argued further that the refugee committee offered 'what might be the last opportunity to re-establish the reputation of Christendom in the face of Jewry', urging that actions must be taken which at least suggest that there is 'something real in our practical Christianity, for which we so constantly claim a virtue that others do not possess.'

The Holocaust and the Second World War

With the outbreak of war, Parkes and other activists became increasingly frustrated with the British government's refusal first to allow pre-September 1939 visas to be honoured and second to consider actions that might have led to the rescue or relief of European Jewry. In an essay entitled 'The Fate of the Jews' in 6 December 1939 issue of The Christian News Letter, Parkes penned the first public report to Christendom about Nazi war-atrocities against Jews, with emphasis on the Nazi Jewish Reserve in (Lublin) Poland which was 'not intended to lead to anything but... extermination'. Thereafter he monitored the increasingly dire situation closely and was acutely aware that the Nazis were living up to their promise to exterminate the Jews. In January 1943 Parkes typed a passionate article on 'The Massacre of the Jews: Future Vengeance or Present Help?' Roughly 1,500 words in length and caught in the style and typographical presentation reproduced here, he outlined with remarkable accuracy what had already happened to the Jews (and how):

Hitler was not only threatening but actually carrying out the policy of destroying the whole Jewish population within his power.

Six million human beings, from infants in arms to old men and women, were to be deliberately killed in cold blood. They were sealed into wagons whose floors were covered with unslaked lime. They were taken out in rows and machine gunned. They were used for experiments in the effectiveness of poison gases. They were electrocuted. They were starved by the withholding of all food. Or the agony was prolonged by totally insufficient rations.

Parkes then made the remarkable and memorable statement that all surviving Jews should be brought to Britain if it was feasible to do so:

There is only one answer for men who still believe there is any nobility in the cause for which we are fighting: we will receive them. And if there really be three million of them we will thank god that we have been able to save so many from Hitler's clutches. And if there be a Jewish problem to solve, we will solve it as civilised men and not as murderers.

If Parkes' urging seems idealistic and remote from political reality, the example of Angela Merkel and opening Germany's borders to Syrian and other refugees in 2015 comes to mind. To Merkel, the legacy of her country's murderous past meant that there was no choice. To Parkes, his country in 1943, despite its heroic fight against Nazism, was still letting itself down.

This brilliant, impassioned article was never published – why is not fully clear.

Parkes' ongoing attempts to communicate to the British government the scale of Jewish mass destruction

Nicholas de Lange, the first Parkes Fellow at the University of Southampton, notes that the reason that James Parkes is now rarely cited is 'really a kind of tribute.'

during the years of killing is perhaps best distilled in this somewhat chilling bureaucratic image: each time he wrote a summary for the Foreign Office on the number of Jews murdered, the civil servants removed a zero.

Concluding Thoughts

Nicholas de Lange, the first Parkes Fellow at the University of Southampton, notes that the reason that James Parkes is now rarely cited is 'really a kind of tribute. His work has not been rendered obsolete or cast aside, it has simply been institutionalised to the point that it is taken for granted.' In the area of interfaith dialogue, Christianity's acceptance of its role in the history of antisemitism, and the end of blatant conversionist tendencies, all of this has a large element of truth. But it is perhaps time to combat the amnesia of Parkes' role during the Nazi era and to recognise that he, perhaps more than anyone else in the British Christian world, was a 'righteous among the nations'. Parkes stands as an extraordinary example against the generalized misunderstanding that nothing was known about the Holocaust amongst Western Allies and that there were no practical suggestions on how the Jews might be saved. He fought tirelessly for Jewish rights; he was a key figure in international and national bodies, both secular and religious, which brought out thousands of Jews; he was personally involved in the rescue and relief of many individuals; and he passionately publicized the Jewish fate during the war, not only to save those surviving but to rescue for posterity the moral standing of Western humanity. It is time to put James Parkes back into the frame. He deserves to be remembered in his own right but also as a model for the future in accepting the 'other' as an equal with a valid history of her own. ■

● The images are courtesy of the Special Collections, Hartley Library, University of Southampton, which contains the Parkes Library and Anglo-Jewish Archives. For further information go to <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/archives>

● Professor Tony Kushner and Dr Carolyn Sanzenbacher Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations, University of Southampton



Amy-Jill Levine in 2019 speaks on 'Understanding Jesus Means Understanding Judaism'

THE IMPORTANCE OF JESUS THE JEW

Why is Jesus' Jewish identity important? Leading scholar **Professor Amy-Jill Levine**, who has pioneered Jewish scholarship of the New Testament, makes the case.

Jesus' Jewish identity in terms of ethnicity, practice, and belief is evident from the New Testament. Matthew (1:1-17) and Luke (3:23-38) each present genealogies placing Jesus in the family of Abraham and David. Luke depicts Jesus's circumcision (2:21) and his presentation in the Temple (2:22-39). Jesus bases his teachings on the Torah and the Prophets, which as he states, he "comes not to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). He visits synagogues on the Sabbath, "as was his custom" (Luke 4:16). He debates with fellow Jews about how best to understand and to enact Torah. And he dies as a Jew on a Roman cross, with the titulus reading, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" (Mark 15:26). Paul notes that Jesus was "descended from David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). When describing his own people, his "kindred according to the flesh," Paul insists that "to them belong the adoption, the glory [i.e., the divine presence], the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship [i.e., the sacrificial protocols of the Temple], and the promises; to them belong the

patriarchs; and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah" (Romans 9:4-5).

In December 2019, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* published an article entitled, "Jesus Was Not a Jew! Clueless Remark by Far-right Politician Sparks Outrage in Italy." Fabio Tuiach — a council member in Trieste — remarked concerning comments by Holocaust survivor and now Italian parliamentarian Liliana Segre, "as someone who is deeply Catholic, I was confused and offended because she said Jesus was a Jew — while for me he was the Son of God." This episode shows in multiple ways why Jesus' Jewish identity matters historically, theologically, ethically, and culturally, and how ignorance of that identity is an opening to bigotry.

This episode shows in multiple ways why Jesus' Jewish identity matters historically, theologically, ethically, and culturally



Historically, we cannot understand Jesus unless we understand his Jewish context. As the Roman Catholic Church's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews in their 2015 "The Gifts and the Calling of G-d are Irrevocable (Rom 11:29)" stated, "Jesus was a Jew, was at home in the Jewish tradition of his time, and was decisively shaped by this religious milieu (cf. "Ecclesia in Medio Oriente", 20). His first disciples gathered around him had the same heritage and were defined by the same Jewish tradition in their everyday life."

This context is more than just Jesus' understanding of what became the Tanakh, the Jewish Scriptures; it is also his living in a Jewish environment, according to the rhythms of the culture. In terms of time, Jesus lived in a community that celebrated Sabbaths and festivals, circumcisions and weddings. In terms of place, he recognized the importance of Jerusalem, the "holy city" (Matthew 4:5) and wept over its fate (Matthew 23:37// Luke 13:34). In terms of diet and dress, language and learning, his context was thoroughly Jewish. If we misunderstand the context, we misunderstand Jesus.

And if we misunderstand this context as well as Jesus' place within it, we risk inculcating or reinforcing anti-Jewish stereotypes. Erroneous understandings of robustly diverse Jewish traditions include the claim that Jews equated wealth with righteousness and poverty with sinfulness, whereas Jesus disrupted this connection; they include the assertions that Judaism epitomized misogyny whereas Jesus invented feminism, and that Jews practice retributive justice (an "eye for an eye") when Jesus invents pacifism ("turn the other cheek"). Jews did not equate poverty and sin; if they did, there would be no reason for the commandments to care for the poor, the promotion of *tzedakah* ("charity"), or the condemnation of the rich in Torah, Prophets, Writings, Rabbinic texts, and all the way to present-day teachings for failing to support those who need economic help. Judaism did not epitomize misogyny, as *inter alia*, all the Jewish women in the Gospels demonstrate: their freedom of travel, home ownership, public presence in

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the synagogues and the Temple, and control over their own funds are but a few of the indications that they were not oppressed and repressed by their tradition. The *lex talionis*, or "eye for an eye," is never shown enacted in Jewish sources, and the rabbis make clear that the law sets a legal principle demanding monetary compensation in cases of loss of limb. Jesus, in speaking of turning the other cheek, changes the subject.

When Jesus debates fellow Jews about Torah, he is – contrary to the thinking of some Christians – not rejecting either other Jews or Torah; he is doing what Jews do: discussing how best to live according to the Torah's guidance. Even claims that he was the messiah fit into a first-century Jewish context.

Indeed, understanding Jesus in his Jewish context helps Jews learn something about our own history. Jewish educational programs typically skip over the first centuries BCE and CE, with an occasional nod to Hillel, Jesus' slightly older contemporary. To move from the Maccabees in the mid-second century BCE to the Mishnah in the early third century CE is to miss much of

Theologically, for Christians to ignore or dismiss Jesus' Jewish identity is to engage in "Docetism," the heretical belief that Jesus only appeared human. To yank Jesus out of his Jewish context denies both the incarnation and the resurrection, even as it resists understanding what his words might have meant to the people who first heard them.

Jewish history, and the Gospels preserve much of that history. The first person in literature called "Rabbi" is Jesus of Nazareth (Mark 9:5), and many of his teachings find their grounding in what would become rabbinic methods of argumentation. Jesus is a Jew and so is part of Jewish history; actions taken in his name, for good and for ill, are also part of Jewish history.

Theologically, for Christians to ignore or dismiss Jesus' Jewish identity is to engage in "Docetism," the heretical belief that Jesus only appeared human. To yank Jesus out of his Jewish context denies both the incarnation and the resurrection, even as it resists understanding what his words might have meant to the people who first heard them.

Ethically, recognizing, as the Christian Scholars Group on Jewish-Christian Relations proclaims, "Jesus of Nazareth lived and died as a faithful Jew," serves as a check against Christians holding antisemitic views, the racist bigotry based in the idea that Jews are psychologically and physiologically subhuman. Ethically, recognizing how that context functioned prevents Christian preaching and teaching from setting Jesus over and against that context and then painting the context in noxious colors.

Ethically as well, it would be good for Jews to recognize that even though Christianity and Judaism are quite different branches, we share the same root structure, that of late Second Temple Judaism; to deny this connection is not only historically ignorant, it is ethically vapid. Some Jewish writings from the rabbinic, medieval, and even a few contemporary sources speak of Jesus, and his followers, in insulting terms. Better historical awareness of how Jesus fit within his own Jewish setting coupled with a greater sensitivity to the negative impact of any polemic would be a better Jewish response to Christian theological claims. If we Jews want Christians to respect us as Jews and to respect Judaism, then we owe them the same courtesy. Part of that respect is knowing about these common roots.



Amy-Jill Levine in 2019 speaks on 'Understanding Jesus Means Understanding Judaism'

Finally, culturally Jesus has been a part of the Jewish tradition in literature and art. As Marc Brettler and I pointed out in an article for *Melilah*, "Writers such as Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), Claude Montefiore (1858-1938), Stephen Wise (1874-1949), Martin Buber (1878-1965), and Joseph Klausner (1874-1958) sought to reclaim Jesus for the Jewish tradition." Sholem Asch's 1909 short story "In a carnival nakht" and Uri Zvi Greenberg's 1920 poem "Golgotha," along with Marc Chagall's 1938 "White Crucifixion," Mark Rothko's series on Jesus' crucifixion (1942-43), are just a few of the Jewish retellings of the story of Jesus.

Ethically as well, it would be good for Jews to recognize that even though Christianity and Judaism are quite different branches, we share the same root structure, that of late Second Temple Judaism.

Jews do not need to worship Jesus as Lord or Savior in order to appreciate some of his teachings, even as we may disagree with others. Christians do not need to sacrifice their theological

beliefs in order to recognize the human, Jewish Jesus. Theology is not necessary to appreciate the stories the Gospels tell, or to recognize the harm that select interpretations of them have caused. ■

● Professor Amy-Jill Levine
Vanderbilt University Divinity School

'I MYSELF AM AN ISRAELITE':

PAUL, THE JEWISH APOSTLE TO THE NATIONS

The Apostle Paul is second only to Jesus in importance in the history of Christianity. Why is his Jewish identity significant? **Professor Paula Fredriksen**, a leading scholar of the historical Jesus as well as ancient Judaism and Christianity, explores the issue.

The writings of Paul, his apostle or "emissary," represent the only stratum of evidence that we have from the first generation of this movement. At first glance, the contrasts between Jesus and Paul seem stark. Paul was well-educated and urbane. His vernacular was Greek. His scriptural tradition drew on the Greek translations of sacred texts achieved by Alexandrian Jews several centuries before his lifetime. Paul traveled widely in the Roman Diaspora. And he taught his message of God's coming kingdom not to fellow Jews, but to *ta ethnē*, "the nations" – that is, to ethnic others, "pagans" in later Christian parlance, who worshiped traditional Greco-Roman divinities. Convinced that the messianic age had begun, Paul sought to bring about one of the signs of his new age: the turning of pagans from the worship of their native gods to an exclusive devotion to Israel's God.

Another difference: Jesus's own Jewishness is evident from the gospel stories. He worships in synagogues

and in Jerusalem's temple. He keeps the Jewish festivals. He recites the *Sh'ma* and the Ten Commandments. He prays to the Jewish God. He even wears *tzitzit*, the "fringes"—visible today on the corners of the *tallit*, or Jewish prayer shawl—mandated in Deuteronomy to remind the wearer of God's commandments.

Paul's Jewish social context in the Roman Diaspora, by contrast, is all but invisible. Given his gentile audience, it scarcely seems to impose itself at all. But. But archaeology, inscriptions, the complaints of classical authors and of later bishops and church fathers, all help to fill in a picture provided in the New Testament's Acts of the Apostles, which recounts a story of the first decades

Paul's Jewish context is all but invisible. Given his gentile audience, it scarcely seems to impose itself at all. But...

of the post-resurrection community. Paul moved through a network of Mediterranean diaspora synagogue communities. It was there that he found his pagan audiences.

What were pagans doing in synagogues?

That depended, of course, on the particular pagan. Magicians frequented synagogues, to learn how to access the power of the Jewish god in their spells. The synagogue was the place where such practitioners could hear stories about this god, read aloud in their own Greek vernacular. Other pagans were grand patrons of synagogue communities. Julia Severa, a Roman aristocrat and contemporary of Paul's, built a prayer-house for a Jewish community in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The synagogue inscription makes note of her largesse. Yet another inscription, however, relates that Julia was also a priestess in the cult of the Julian emperors. Another pagan lady, Capitolina, some two centuries later, refurbished a synagogue's interior. Her

The Apostle Paul at his Writing Desk, Rembrandt, c 1657

husband held a life-time appointment as a priest of Zeus. Still other affiliated pagans were solicited by (and, in stone, thanked for) contributions to various Jewish fund drives. And other pagans showed up at synagogue simply to show respect to the Jews' god, without abridging the respect shown to their own gods. (Roman writers sometimes complained about this, seeing it as a slippery slope that could lead to what we call "conversion" to Judaism.)

Acts refers to such pagans as "god-fearers," a phrase that corresponds to the different terms for this population found in inscriptions, in various literary sources, and in later rabbinic texts. Delicately, Acts refrains from stating what all our evidence proclaims: such people were active pagans, worshipping their own gods while introducing the Jewish god into their native pantheons. Diaspora Jews (obviously a minority in whatever pagan city of residence) evidently had no problem with this behavior; nor did they make any demand that their pagan neighbors cease worshipping native deities. Exclusive worship of the God of Israel was a demand that God had made of Israel alone.

This synagogue-going pagan population is the most likely audience for Paul's letters. We have two reasons to think this. The first is that Paul forthrightly acknowledges these people's former worship of other gods, which he condemns as "idolatry" (e.g., 1 Thess 1:9: "You turned to God from idols"; Galatians 4:8 "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods"). The second is that he peppers his letters with terms that would be significant only to a population already familiar with Jewish names and ideas: "Abraham"; "David"; "Adam"; "God's kingdom"; "messiah" (in Greek, "Christos"); "resurrection"; and, not least, *ethnê*, "gentiles," the Jewish term for "everybody else." The pagans of

Christian-Jewish interfaith communities suffered, dwindled, and eventually died in the long dark night of the post-Roman West.

the diaspora synagogue, familiar with these terms, fit both of these criteria. When Paul encountered them, they were worshipping their own gods, and they were listening – in Greek – to traditional Jewish scriptural stories.

But Paul made a demand of these pagans that the synagogue had never made, and would never make. If they were followers of Jesus, he insisted, they had to leave their old gods behind. These non-Jews, in other words, had to become ex-pagans. But Paul insisted with equal force that male ex-pagan pagans were not to "become" Jews by receiving circumcision – in our terms, by "converting." They had to remain non-Jews. Paul also demanded that they live according to the first two of the Ten Commandments: No other gods, and no idols. In his letter to the Romans, Paul additionally listed the commandments of the Law's "second table": No adultery. No murder. No theft. No coveting (Rom 13:9). Despite his reputation as the apostle of the "Law-free" gospel, Paul expected – indeed, insisted upon – an unprecedented degree of gentile obedience to Torah, to Jewish law. Why?

The answer is two-fold. First, on the basis of his experience of Jesus' resurrection, Paul inferred that the hour of God's kingdom—thus, of the general resurrection—was at hand. Second, Paul framed this belief within Jewish prophetic traditions about gentile inclusion in Israel's redemption at the End of the Age. When God's kingdom came, sang these traditions, pagans would destroy their idols and turn with

Israel to worship the one true God. The positive response that Paul received from his ex-pagan gentile assemblies confirmed him in his conviction that he knew the time on God's clock.

Time, however, continued to continue. The movement that Paul so energetically sponsored went on to flourish in vigorous variety. We know from diverse second-century gentile Christian figures that gospels and apostolic letters were read and interpreted in a multitude of very different contexts. Political events also imposed new meanings. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 CE and, some six decades after that, the Jews' defeat in the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135 CE) served to inculcate Jews and to exculpate Rome for Jesus' crucifixion. Some gentile churches became virulently anti-Jewish.

And yet—intriguingly; counter-intuitively; surprisingly—Mediterranean mixing continued in diaspora synagogues. Gentiles whether pagan or Christian, for centuries after Constantine declared his allegiance to Christianity, continued to frequent Jewish assemblies, to participate in Jewish fasts and feasts, to take oaths before Torah scrolls, to listen to Bible stories in their vernacular, to ask rabbis to bless their fields. We know about this because Church Fathers criticize such behavior in their polemics, bishops complain about it in their sermons, and Church councils continued to legislate against it. Christians even enlisted imperial law to enforce separation. But ecclesiastical ideology prevailed only slowly, during the long centuries of the post-Roman Middle Ages. In Paul's day, by contrast—and long before; and for long after – non-Jews (again, whether pagan or, eventually, Christian) were drawn to Jewish celebrations of the God of Israel.

Foot traffic went both ways. Jews also frequented pagan and Christian spaces. Theatrical productions, gladiatorial

combats, urban festivals, the virtuoso rhetorical performances of Roman bishops: Jews, too, were there. The toxic rhetoric of separation, whether episcopal or rabbinical, reveals precisely what it repudiates: the comfortable "interfaith" matrix of the Roman city.

Modern interfaith initiatives, I think, should draw strength from these historical facts. In antiquity, Jews and non-Jews interacted intimately. During its early years, the Jesus movement was able to spread in the Diaspora, and so to readily incorporate gentiles, precisely because of this urban social webbing. Had things been otherwise, how could the message have spread? And despite later imperial muscle and episcopal and rabbinic resistance, urban religious populations continued to mix and mingle for centuries after Constantine.

Christian-Jewish interfaith communities suffered, dwindled, and eventually died in the long dark night of the post-Roman West. Reconfigured through pseudo-scientific racism, Christian anti-Judaism in the 20th century propelled the mass murder of European Jews. The current repudiation of such hateful behaviors, then, is more than a step toward *tikkun*, repair of the world. It actually harks back, socially and morally, to the foundational generations of this messianic movement, when universal redemption—"the fullness of the gentiles, and all Israel," as Paul proclaimed (Rom 11:25-26)—described eschatological hope. Paul may not, after all, have known what time it was on God's clock. But he did have the measure of his god's moral compass: it embraced all humanity. Paul's god – Isaiah's god; Jesus' god; Israel's god—throws no one away. Those made in this divine image should strive for no less. ■

● Professor Paula Fredriksen
The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

HOW DO CHRISTIANS SEE THEMSELVES IN THEIR NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH JEWS?

Bishop Michael Ipgrave, Chair of the Council of Christians and Jews, delivered this keynote address at the Annual Meeting of the International Council of Christians and Jews in 2019. In his address, Bishop Michael offered his reflections on the Church of England's report *God's Unfailing Word*, which was published in November 2019.

will focus in this presentation on Christian self-perception in light of our new relationship with Jews, and not on the self-perception of Jewish people; nor will I spend time mapping what that new relationship in fact looks like. While I have the honour of chairing the Council of Christians and Jews, I will be speaking as a bishop in the Church of England – that is to say, from a specifically Christian (and Anglican) perspective, rather than from the perspective of Christian-Jewish relations as such.

We all recognise that very different answers to this question would be given by different Christians, both because Christian-Jewish relationships are in fact very different in different places and also because they are interpreted very differently by different Christians. This is a really important point for Anglicans, who are notoriously diverse or discordant.

I want to refer particularly to the Church of England, where we have been recently working on a document expressing

where we stand on a range of issues in Christian-Jewish relations; while many such documents exist in the ecumenical world today, this is the first time that the Church of England as such has sought to gather up its thinking and practice in this area. The report is set to be published later this year by our Faith and Order Commission. It finds its starting point in the following principle, the first of five which underpin the report:

The Christian-Jewish relationship is a gift of God to the church, which is to be received with care, respect and gratitude, so that we may learn more fully about God's purposes for us and all the world.

In other words, this specific relationship is generative for Christian identity. I will say more later about its particularity.

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The Church of England has a very wide range of experiences and views; we are often, and rightly, described as a 'messy church'. The methodology of the report reflects that diversity. It can be quite difficult to discern the Anglican position on some issues, so at times we map out a number of positions held with integrity by Anglicans; we also identify an outer limit on some questions, beyond which views not acceptable; and at times we point to a core position on which we can all agree. So another of our principles (the fourth) states:

Careful discernment is needed as to where Christians should be able to agree on clear affirmations ... where a range of positions that can be held with integrity can be identified, and where there is a responsibility to challenge views expressed by some within the church.

We also recognise that there is enormous diversity in the Jewish community, and that a conversation needs to go on between us about this – in the words of another principle, the fifth:

Christians have a responsibility to ensure that whatever they may say about Judaism is informed by continuing dialogue with Jewish people. It is important to listen carefully and discernment to the range of voices of Jewish people themselves.

The structure of the report falls into two parts: (1) theological frameworks; (2) critical issues. Four of the latter in particular are treated: (i) mission and evangelism; (ii) teaching and preaching; (iii) the Land of Israel; (iv) ethical discernment and common action.

I do not intend this morning to go through all of the ground covered by report in detail. In keeping with the question I have been assigned, I want to focus on the question of Christian self-understanding. On the basis of the approach taken by our report, I have myself three reflections on Christian self-understanding in light of our new relationship with Jewish people. It seems to me that Christianity is: (1) indubitably dangerous; (2) irreducibly particular; and (3) irreversibly missional.

1 Indubitably dangerous

By this I mean that Christianity has the potential to cause great damage to Jewish people. We know that this is the case because historically it has caused such damage, as the third principle in our report states:

Christians have been guilty of promoting and fostering negative stereotypes of Jewish people that have contributed to grave suffering and injustice. They therefore have a duty to be alert to the continuation of such stereotyping and to resist it.

The historical evidence is overwhelming and well-known to ICCJ members. The long and virulent tradition of the enseignement du mépris means that as Christians we need to acknowledge and repent of 'ecclesial complicity in the evils of antisemitism'.

Yet more than repentance is also needed; we are called to 'walk in newness



Bishop Michael Ipgrave speaking at The Rabbi-Clergy Conference 2018

of life; recognising that there is another way. Another of our principles affirms that Christianity has also the potential to be an antidote to antisemitism, without being any less Christian; indeed, through being more authentically Christian, as the second principle states:

Truthful thinking and right acting with regard to Christian-Jewish relations follow from 'the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness'. They do not undermine or dilute it.

This history undoubtedly makes us see ourselves in new light – or perhaps it would be better to say, in a new shadow. Anti-Judaism in the Christian tradition has never been attractive, but it is particularly damaging when viewed retrospectively from the effects of the modern antisemitism which it helped to prepare, and which culminated in the Shoah. The precise relationship between Christian anti-Judaism and secular antisemitism is much discussed, but there can be no doubt that such a relationship exists.

This affects the way in which we see both our history and our present reality. It is painful for us to recognise the shadow side of the teachings of great Christians of the past – such as St John Chrysostom, Martin Luther, or St Bernard of Clairvaux, to name but three whose spiritual influence has been important for me personally. How are we to cope with this realisation of a shadow side? And does this reach back into our scriptures, into the New Testament itself? That is a tangled and painful question; whatever answer we give, we cannot approach our scriptures, and still less our church's tradition, unaware of the need for caution, vigilance, and humility. We have lost our innocence, so that we can no longer read Christian history just as hagiography. And we need in turn to reflect on our present ways of teaching, preaching, worshipping. I am glad to say that CCJ is producing a resource on anti-Judaism and antisemitism for churches; there is much work to be done here.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has referred to antisemitism as a 'virus', which is constantly mutating into different

We cannot understand the church's identity except in relationship with Judaism. In fact, our contemporary church often devalues this particularity.

forms. We still see it in its original form in some places, but this virus can change and attach itself to new hosts. Particularly today, we see the virus re-emerging in some of language used around the conflict in Israel-Palestine, including some of the language used within the churches. This is a complex and contested area, and the most difficult chapter in the report to write was Chapter 5, on 'The Land of Israel'. Undoubtedly, when people feel passionately about this matter, they can sometimes reach down into anti-Judaic and antisemitic tropes. The College of Bishops of the Church of England have adopted International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism, with its list of examples (they have more recently been followed in this by the bishops of the Church in Wales), and this provides a benchmark to refer to. One dimension which makes this a particularly complex area is the continuing presence of the historic Christian community in Israel and in Palestine. Indeed, Israel itself provides a new context for Christian self-understanding, very different from the historic Christian-Jewish dynamic of Western Europe

2 Irreducibly particular

Christianity is rooted in its relationship with the people of Israel. Over the last fifty years or so, the rediscovery of the Jewishness of Jesus, and a renewed emphasis on the Jewish origins of Christianity, remind us that this is for us a relationship like no other, as the report explains:

Jesus of Nazareth, whom Christians believe to be Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world, lived and died as a Jew in faithful service to 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'. The Scriptures which informed and guided the life of Jesus were the books the church now refers to as the Old Testament, having resisted at a formative stage attempts to remove them from its canon of Scripture or relegate

them to an inferior status. Although there are significant differences between Christianity and Judaism in their reading of these common texts, both receive them as inspired by God, enabling the people of God to hear the word of God today ... The relationship between Christianity and Judaism is characterised by both kinship and divergence.

We need to think carefully what we mean when speak of Christianity as a 'universal' religion. This cannot simply mean something which is better than a more limited view; an account like that could easily lead (and has easily led) to triumphalism, and to the obliteration of difference. We must become aware of this danger, especially when 'universal' is really used just as a cloak for the values of modern western consumer capitalism. I feel that Western churches may come to have a clearer perspective on this as we become more marginal in our societies, and learn to appreciate more deeply the diaspora Jewish experience of distinctive living as a minority.

For us, universality must always and irreducibly be rooted in the particularism of the historical story which begins with the God of Abraham choosing and delivering a people; the story of Jesus only makes sense within that story, and cannot be detached from it. Nostra Aetate in Chapter 4 develops this theme when it states:

As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

We cannot understand the church's identity except in relationship with Judaism. In fact, our contemporary church often devalues this particularity, as evidenced by the widespread disparagement or disregard of Hebrew Scriptures in church life. There is often a functional Marcionism in Western church life; and sometimes the claim in other cultures that the story of Israel is not definitive for them. In fact, though, this is a story which resonates across world. The report urges a rediscovery of the Jewish groundedness of Christianity in our own internal life as church.

The particularity of Christianity's



Bishop Michael Ipgrave at the Bridge Award 2019

relationship with Judaism also has implications for Christian involvement in all inter faith relations : if this is our 'significant other' from the beginning, then the way in which we respond to or engage with other faiths will always be imprinted with this first relationship. In treating of this, the report takes up the evocative language of a 'sacrament of otherness' coined by Walter Cardinal Kaspar:

Judaism is as a sacrament of every otherness that as such the Church must learn to discern, recognise and celebrate.

I believe that this gives Jewish-Christian relations, within the overall inter faith scene, a paradigmatic (as distinct from an exceptional) distinctiveness, in this sense: that in every encounter with a religious other, we are taken back to the encounter with Israel which is formative for the Christian story.

3 Irreversibly missional

'Mission' is often seen as a difficult or embarrassing area in Christian-Jewish relations, and it is not difficult to see why: aggressive proselytism, forced conversions, and fear of the destruction of Jewish identity are all part of the history. We need to be very sensitive to the charge of theological aggression, particularly after the Shoah, and to recognise that much Christian evangelism has been coercive, manipulative, and disrespectful of Jewish identity.

However, mission is not just a contested issue between Christians and Jews; it is fundamental to Christian self-understanding. It seems to me that we cannot simply say 'Christians are Christians' as a matter of defined

identity in the way that you can say 'Jews are Jews'. Christianity is not primarily the reception of an inheritance but an alignment with a story, and stories want to be shared with others. Thus the mission impulse in Christianity is deep-seated and constitutive of who we are.

Yet this deep-seated impulse does not need to be directed solely, or even principally, or maybe even at all, to Jewish people. We are now in a different place to where we were in previous periods of our interacting history. In medieval Europe, for example, Jewish people were the only distinctive group within homogeneously catholic society (apart from heretics, with whom they were sometimes grouped), and mission was usually an attempt to enforce uniformity. In the patristic period, Jews and Christians struggled with one another in their self-definitions, and mission could not be separated from polemical argument. Now, by contrast, as Jews and Christians alike we find ourselves in a religiously diverse and secularising world, where our values can be shared with a society drifting from God.

So our report recognises mission as one of those areas where 'differences of perspective on the place of evangelism are to be expected' among Christians, but also argues that mission is not just, or mainly, about seeking to convert people from one faith to another. Rather, there is a sense in which it is something that can be shared. As the document *The Way of*

How far is it realistic for Christians and Jews to speak the language of mission together?

Dialogue, presented to the 1988 Lambeth Conference of Bishops put it:

Jews, Muslims and Christians have a common mission. They share a mission to the world that God's name may be honoured: 'Hallowed be your name.'

How far is it realistic for Christians and Jews to speak the language of mission together? It is not surprising that 'missional' language is central to Christianity in a way that it is not in Judaism, where its historical associations are still negative. There is, for example, a striking ambivalence of usage within one paragraph of the 2015 document of Orthodox Jewish appreciation of Christianity, *To do the Will of our Father in Heaven*. Paragraph 3 states:

'We Jews can acknowledge the ongoing constructive validity of Christianity as our partner in world redemption, without any fear that this will be exploited for missionary purposes –'

here 'missionary' clearly has negative connotation; but then the same paragraph concludes:

'Neither of us can achieve G-d's mission in the world alone –'

the use of 'mission' here is broadly aligned to the contemporary Christian view of mission as *Missio Dei*, a joining in with the ongoing work of God in rebuilding his world. And so Paragraph 4 of *To do the Will of our Father in Heaven* goes on to say:

'Both Jews and Christians have a common covenantal mission to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty.'

If this is right, then surely our relationship with Jewish people can help awaken us as Christians to our fundamentally missional identity. To work this out in practice is a conversation between Christians and Jews which is only just beginning; but we know now that that conversation can be conducted in a spirit of friendship and trust which our precursors did not enjoy. ■

● Bishop Michael Ipgrave
Chair of CCJ

'WHAT I HAVE SEEN I SHALL NEVER FORGET'

CCJ Senior Programme Manager **Rob Thompson** explores the liberation of Bergen-Belsen through the story of army chaplain, the Revd T. J. Stretch.

In April 1945, a week or so after the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp by British and Canadian forces, a Church of England priest was interviewed at the camp. His clerical collar peered through his army uniform, his hands buried into two great pockets, and he looked out from his glasses beyond a microphone to a film camera from Movietone News. He was stood in front of a vast hole in the ground. 'This morning', the priest said, 'we buried over 5,000 bodies. We don't know who they are. Behind me you can see a pit which will contain another 5,000. There are two others like it in preparation.'

The priest was the Revd T. J. Stretch, an army chaplain from Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire. He had, by the time he was filmed, spent eight days at Belsen, burying the dead, caring for the survivors, observing, listening, and

Stretch 'worked like ten men, distributing clothing, helping to feed the sick, spreading comfort, and holding services with his colleagues at the mass graves.'

writing. We cannot know how many survivors of Bergen-Belsen were met by T. J. Stretch in those days following Belsen's liberation. But the evidence of his experience remains in the short surviving clip from his interview and in a three-page document, a report written by Stretch from within Belsen in the days after his arrival, and which is now held by the Imperial War Museum.

Stretch was one of—at least—over thirty Christian army chaplains who ministered at Belsen in the weeks after

its liberation. Their story has largely been lost from the historical record. Two of the handful of Jewish chaplains were well-known in the Anglo-Jewish community after the Second World War. The Revds Leslie Hardman and Isaac Levy, rabbis of Hendon and Hampstead United Synagogues respectively, were both active in the Council of Christians and Jews for many decades. But the Christian chaplains returned to their parishes after the war and the memory of their contribution has not been studied until now.

The stories of Christian army chaplains are a unique example of how some Christians responded to the evidence of the attempted destruction of the Jewish peoples of Europe by the Nazis and their collaborators. Reflecting on T. J. Stretch's experience of—and response to—Belsen, there are three things of significance.

Firstly, we can learn what a Christian chaplain did at Belsen. In the typhus-ridden environment of newly-liberated Belsen one of the first priorities was the burial of the dead and, as he indicated when he was interviewed by Movietone News, T. J. Stretch joined his Jewish chaplain colleagues in saying prayers over mass graves of thousands of victims. But after the dead were buried, Stretch turned his attention to the living and helped those he met to begin to regain their strength for the future. Paul Wyand, the Movietone newsman who interviewed T. J. Stretch in front of the burials, remembered that Stretch 'worked like ten men, distributing clothing, helping to feed the sick,



Memorial stele in Bergen-Belsen



Army chaplain, the Revd T. J. Stretch

spreading comfort, and holding services with his colleagues at the mass graves.'

Stretch himself reported working in partnership with the medical teams in the early days after the liberation, helping them to assess conditions in the camp. He wrote in his report: 'I went round the camp with a Doctor who commands a Hygiene Section. We estimated that there were over 2,000 bodies lying on the ground—there will be more tomorrow.' In carrying out these assessments, Stretch demonstrated his own sensitivity to the welfare and wellbeing of survivors. 'This morning', he reported, 'a girl limped painfully towards me with hands entreatingly outstretched. She muttered something in the Hungarian tongue. I found out that she wanted something to drink so I spoke to a girl who was with her and suggested that we got some water.' Despite the desperate situations of many of the people he engaged with, Stretch tried to help. He spoke of his particular attention to the survivors' health and wellbeing. He did not just bury the dead but he intimately engaged with the living, placing himself alongside them at the very beginning of their long journey of care and recuperation.

In engaging in this pastoral care as an army chaplain, the Revd Stretch was able to get to know survivors, not as

anonymised masses of victims, but as individuals with their own stories. In doing so, as a Christian minister he was uniquely placed to consider the Jewishness of Belsen, the specifically anti-Jewish nature of Nazi policy, and in this way his account provides an interesting case of a Christian response to the Holocaust. This is the second aspect we can learn from Stretch's story.

Stretch made a real effort to try to understand who the victims of Belsen were. '[W]ho are these people who have suffered so much?' he asked and then answered himself: 'We don't know; nobody knows.' Stretch listed some of the 'crimes' which the survivors had apparently been interned for: listening to anti-Nazi broadcasts, speaking out 'against the state or against Hitler', or 'underground workers in occupied countries'. Others, he emphasised, 'belonged to different races and creeds; they were Poles or Jews—that was their only crime.' Here, Stretch demonstrated that in the midst of his work at Belsen

Despite the desperate situations of many of the people he engaged with, Stretch tried to help. He spoke of his particular attention to the survivors' health and wellbeing.

he was reflecting on who the victims were and why they were at Belsen. He acknowledged that, for many of Belsen's victims, it was their Jewishness which had singled them out for persecution.

Thirdly and finally, Padre Stretch reflected on how, and whether, he ought to tell others of the experience:

'I don't know whether I ought to write this. Something seemed to tell me that many may say it is a flight of my imagination [...] But for all that, I feel it ought to be done [...] This is so ghastly a story that the whole world should know about it.'

Though they would find it difficult, it was in writing that chaplains first felt able to articulate their response to Belsen. When T. J. Stretch wrote his report, he signed and dated it 'T. J. Stretch C. F., Belsen Camp, April 22nd 1945' in a real effort to claim the authenticity of his account. Just days after the camp was liberated Stretch was eager to state the truth of what he had witnessed.

His effort to respond to Belsen by telling the truth was enforced by what he did with the report. Stretch wrote for a wide audience. The report was dictated to his batman and several copies were made. One was sent to Stretch's superior, the Assistant Chaplain General, the Revd J. W. G. Steele, who, recognising the importance of Stretch's account, sent it on 2 May, along with a report by the Revd Isaac Levy, to all senior chaplains. In this way, Stretch's response was circulated, read, and absorbed by other Christian clergy serving in the British armed forces. At least one such chaplain, the Revd Bryan Isaac, kept his copy of Stretch's report for the rest of his life. Even more than this, Stretch's report reached a still larger audience because it was sent to The Church Times and quickly published in this mainstream Christian newspaper later in May 1945. Part of Stretch's intention was therefore not just to tell the truth but to ensure that the Church at large—and Christians—would know what he had witnessed.

Why is it important to tell Stretch's story now? 75 years since the liberation

'This is so ghastly a story that the whole world should know about it.'

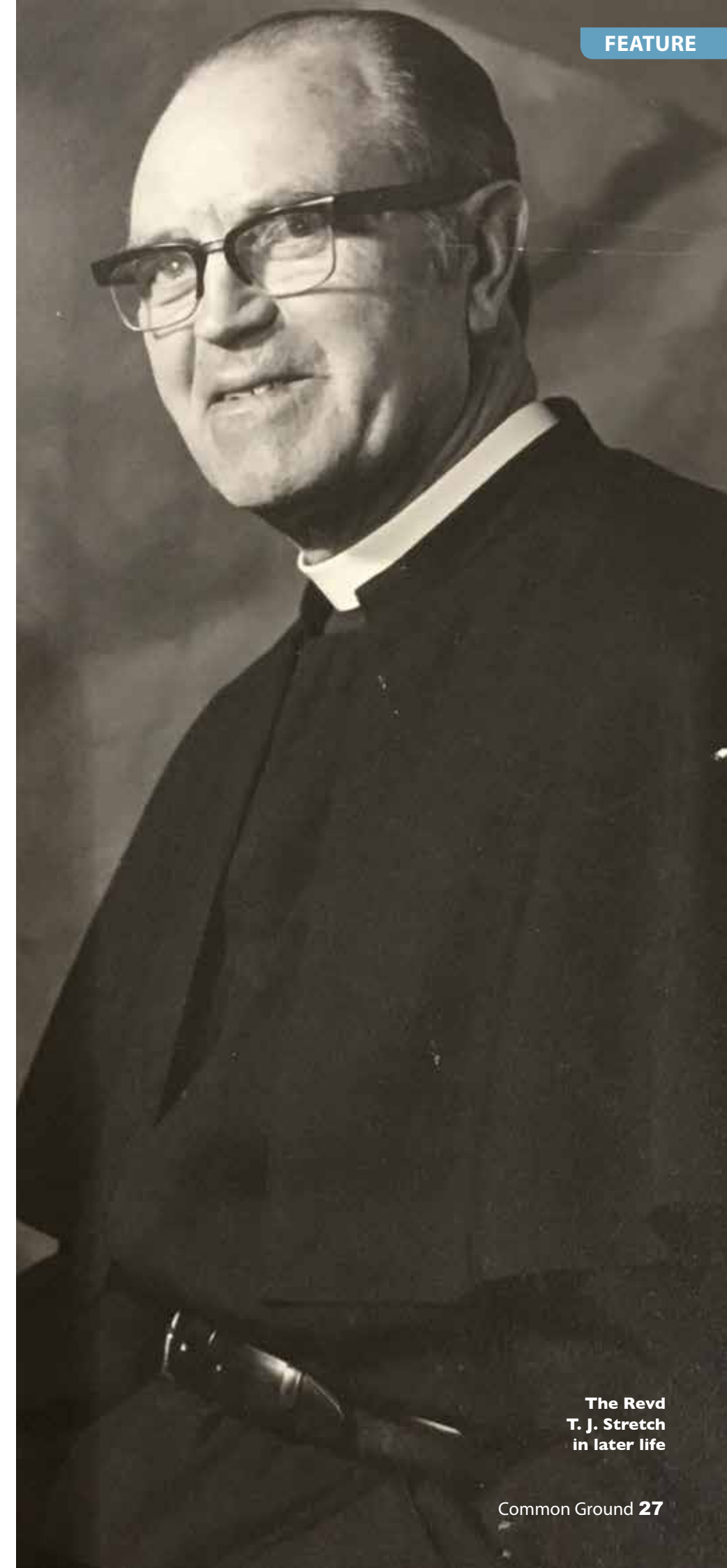
of Belsen, we are still learning new things about the Holocaust. Understanding of the Shoah is still affected by distortion and misremembering of the historical record. Research by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education shows that only 15% of 11-18 year-olds are able to associate the word 'Belsen' with the Holocaust. Where people do know of Belsen, their understanding has often been shaped through a British-narrated story of liberation and not one told through the voices of Jews who experienced and survived the camp. And even historians of the Holocaust have passed over the accounts of these particular witnesses to Belsen's liberation: the Christian army chaplains.

But their story—and the contribution of chaplains like T. J. Stretch—deserve to be known. Stretch demonstrated a special kind of pastoral care for survivors, he understood something of the Jewishness of the survivors of the Holocaust, and, most importantly, he recognised the imperative of telling the truth of what he witnessed. In this way, I think, his work at Belsen was also conducted out of Stretch's deep Christian faith. For what else is memory, remembering, and truth—in a world so often plagued by the hatred behind deliberate falsity—but a radically defiant act of love?

When he concluded his report of Belsen, Stretch wondered whether it would be believed by his readers. His response was that 'all I have written about I have seen. And what I have seen, I shall never forget. Never.'

In remembering Stretch's experience and the lives of those he ministered to at Belsen, we too may commit to never forget the truth of the Holocaust. ■

● *Rob Thompson*
CCJ Senior Programme Manager
This article is based on Rob's research for his recently completed MA in Jewish History and Culture from the University of Southampton.



**The Revd
T. J. Stretch
in later life**



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CCJ Programme Manager Esther Sills has experience in refugee issues both through her studies of Asylum and Immigration Law and her practical work supporting families in asylum accommodation. In this article, she reflects on how societies must start recognising those seeking refuge today as people, and promote an ethos of compassion and understanding in which their human rights are upheld.

Deut 10:19 You shall love the stranger for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.



'REFUGEES: THE JOURNEY OF HEALING AND BECOMING HUMAN AGAIN'

The notion of refuge can be understood to have deeply engrained within it the prospect of hope. Hope of a better future. A safer future. A future in which old wounds can heal and the status of being human can be reclaimed by those who have yet been treated as such. Where one can escape callous acts of injustice and seek protection. And, where if that protection is indeed granted, can liberate that individual from the oppression of the social evils which have forced them to flee. Enabling the recognition of these people as people at a time where the place they called home has failed to do so.

Today violence, persecution, conflict and human rights violations are ruthlessly preying upon individuals and

minority groups. Renouncing their right to human dignity and brutally projecting them into a life of despair and hurt. Scarred and scared, and in the desperate pursuit of sanctuary, these people are being driven into exile; forced to leave their home and all that they know behind. Hoping, longing, to find a place where their suffering can cease, and their safety can be secured. A place of new beginnings, where the possibility of rebuild can be made possible. A place which, at a time when it is needed most, can provide, in salvation, refuge.

But finding such a place is scarce. And for many of those embarking on their own journey away from home and towards a life of becoming human, and healing, this concept of obtaining refuge remains to be intangible and alien. Their dreams of finding sanctuary

continuing to be nothing more than just that: dreams. Because the plight of those seeking refuge today is so much more nuanced than the ostensible need for relocation. And the assumption that refuge is found simply at the crossing of a border ... utopian and premature. Oppression and hardships are exceeding the parameters of the countries which these people are having to flee and thus resettlement in silos cannot be recognised to serve as the panacea to their suffering, or as a sufficient provision of refuge.

A border crossed. But a life left behind.

Having escaped the abuses of their homelands, which are so plagued with cruel social, economic and political regimes, these people are labelled the 'lucky' ones. The liberated. The

Deut 1:17 You shall not show favouritism in judgement, small and great alike shall you hear.

obtainers of refuge. But, in reality, the path of uncertainty that lies ahead propels many of these people into a life of turmoil, trapping them in limbo, and inflicting upon them a new form of adversity. Signalling the emergence of additional barriers in their journey to finding refuge. Surviving both the atrocities faced at home and the perils of escape only to be confronted with a system so morally inept and antithetical to justice that it methodically obstructs their process of healing and becoming human again. Dehumanised and demonised. Overlooked and undermined. Listened to but never heard. These people are being forced to defend their presence by disclosing their lived experience, as though it is a mere story, only to be judged with culpability, disbelief and scepticism. Arriving with so little, homeless, helpless, hungry, desperately calling upon the mercy of humanity, only to have their destitution perpetuated by spiteful policy frameworks. Firmly immersed in a legal structure so obsolete, complex and unfavourable that they are destined to fail, only to be abandoned in their need and left to aimlessly navigate their way through alone. Hope fades fast when you are treated like you are not a person and the promise of finding refuge drifts further and farther away. The prospect of repair and rebuild so violently jeopardised by this brutal exchange of identity, and status as human, for a category of political status. The category of 'the refugee'.

The refugee. Unwelcome and unwanted. Undeserving and unworthy. Viciously surveilled and punitively gazed upon. We have cultivated a phantomic

Isa 1:17 Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed

narrative so ethically twisted and toxic in its construction of the refugee as a subhuman group that our treatment towards these people as chattels, for whom a subsidiary and substandard form of justice has been deemed acceptable, has come to suffice. We have catalysed divide, deliberately thrusting the refugee into the realms of the 'other', fuelling a moral panic demonising these people and propagating a rhetoric of threat and fear. Selfishly breeding this culture of xenophobia in aid of our own strategic attempt to dismiss our social responsibility and condone our foul actions. Passing the baton of responsibility and firmly placing accountability at the feet of the displaced, instead of reflecting on the very social deficits and mechanisms which have forced them to embark on their journey to refuge. Our solidarity desisted and our empathy run dry. Our neoliberal expectations deeply oxymoronic and our efforts of justification engulfed with ethical hypocrisy. How is it that someone can feel as though they belong when they are systematically estranged and polarised? How is it that someone can be expected to heal when the suffering and pain continues to be imposed? How is it that someone can feel human when

they live in a society which fails to respect their basic human rights? We all bleed the same. This darkness is deep. And this hate fractures lives.

For refuge to be found, for wounds to heal, for human dignity to be reinstalled the principles of hatred and spite must erode, and the ethos of compassion and tolerance must be constructed. Space must not be left for harmful fictions, which dehumanise those seeking refuge today, to fabricate, and the framework of a unified and common humanity must be reinstalled. Only through such active nurturing of the collective good of humanity can the journey of healing and becoming human again progress, not only for the person facing the struggles and trepidation of exile today, but also for the wider repair and moralisation of the society in which we all live. ■

● *Esther Sills*
CCJ Programme Manager

Lev 19:33 When a stranger dwells among you in your land do not mistreat them.



Lord Alf Dubs addresses participants at CCJ's Interfaith Refugee Workshop 2019

Stories of Welcome: Two Rabbis With Open Arms

During my family's ongoing connection with the charity Refugees at Home we have been hosting asylum seekers and refugees in Manchester. From a young female doctor from Afghanistan to a couple from Sudan, the experiences we have had have been varied and powerful. The doctor who stayed with us was due to stay for a month initially to help her find her feet whilst she began her re-training here under the British medical system. In that month it was clear, firstly, how strong she was, and how unsettled her life had been for so long. As a family we decided to offer her as long

● *Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen*
Manchester Reform Synagogue

'Refused, rejected.' E. came slowly down the stairs. She'd been in the UK for twelve years, had permission to remain, was training in accountancy, but had nowhere to live. Her request for housing had once again been turned down. 'But', she continued, 'My faith keeps me going'.

E. like other refugees who have stayed with us through Refugees at Home, was a devout Christian with a vital, sustaining faith.

Faith is something refugees need: - faith that they will be granted

● *Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg*
Senior Rabbi, Masorti Judaism, and President of CCJ

as she needed to find accommodation and complete the first part of her second set of medical qualifications. I had never appreciated until then the power and privilege of a safe home. She told us that she had never experienced safety and shelter until she had lived with us. The healing found through the simple and vital provision of a safe home was extraordinary for us all. After such hardship in her journey she remains part of our family and often says that our relationships across continents and religions has taught her that there is good in the world after all. And we feel exactly the same.

leave to remain, that they will find somewhere better to sleep than in doorways or on busses, that they will be able to build a better future, that they will one day see their beloved children again.

But it is the most basic faith – that they will be heard, that someone will listen to their story not with cultivated scepticism and not with a hostile mind but with a human heart, - that we can each help to prove vindicated.



JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP

Jewish perspectives on New Testament scholarship have revolutionized the field in recent decades. **Dr Ann Conway-Jones**, Chair of the Birmingham CCJ Branch, looks back over the changes.

The past forty years or so have seen a sea change in New Testament scholarship, in that the participation of Jewish scholars is now mainstream. This is exemplified by The Jewish Annotated New Testament, republished in a second edition after only six years, now with eighty contributors. Such scholars are performing the vital task of correcting longstanding Christian misunderstandings, distortions, stereotypes, and calumnies, in order to establish nuanced understandings of the various Jewish contexts of Jesus, Paul, and the early Christian movement. This is a welcome development in the painful history of Jewish-Christian relations. In this article, I introduce some of these scholars and their insights; then reflect, from my own perspective as a Christian, on the complex hybrid nature of the New Testament, and the challenges this poses for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Jewish scholarly interest in the New Testament is nothing new. An early pioneer was Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), who envisaged Jesus as 'a Pharisee who walked in the way of Hillel', albeit one whose teachings were corrupted by Galilean apocalyptic fantasies. Geiger's work was widely discussed, and criticised, but, as a Jew, he was refused publication in Christian theological journals. The understanding of Jesus as a Pharisaic teacher was later championed

by Hyam Maccoby, who wrote that Jesus' 'emphasis on repentance, forgiveness of sinners and on the coming kingdom of God is very similar to that of Pharisaism, although his sense of urgency and belief that the kingdom was imminent is more reminiscent of the apocalyptic sects'. Geza Vermes, however, who launched the late twentieth century Jewish involvement in New Testament scholarship with his book *Jesus the Jew* in 1973, saw Jesus as 'a popular teacher, healer and exorcist', who represented 'the charismatic Judaism of wonder-working holy men'. Yet another slightly different Jesus is put forward by Paula Fredriksen, who presents him as an apocalyptic prophet – he 'is not primarily a social reformer with a revolutionary message; nor is he a religious innovator radically redefining the traditional ideas and practices of his native religion. His urgent message had not the present so much as the near future in view'. Amy-Jill Levine, an ardent campaigner for Jesus to be understood in the light of his first century Jewish context, writes,

Today Jesus' words are too familiar, too domesticated. Only when heard through first-century Jewish ears can their original edginess and urgency be recovered.

Today Jesus' words are too familiar, too domesticated, too stripped of their initial edginess and urgency. Only when heard through first-century Jewish ears can their original edginess and urgency be recovered. Consequently, to understand the man from Nazareth, it is necessary to understand Judaism. More, it is necessary to see Jesus firmly within Judaism rather than as standing apart from it, and it is essential that the picture of Judaism not be distorted through the filter of centuries of Christian stereotypes; a distorted picture of first-century Judaism inevitably leads up to a distorted picture of Jesus.

The goal of establishing an undistorted picture of Jesus is one on which Jewish and Christian scholars can agree. However, first century Judaism was characterised by variety, and determining exactly where Jesus fitted in – what kind of Jew he was – is not so easy, as the different views of Jewish commentators illustrate.

The earliest New Testament books are not the Gospels, but Paul's letters. The Apostle Paul has often been seen in Jewish circles as the real founder of Christianity, and hence responsible for centuries of Christian brutality towards Jews. There is currently, however, a wave of Jewish scholarship proposing a 'Radical New Perspective' on Paul. This challenges both the traditional Christian Augustinian-Lutheran opposition of 'law'

and 'grace', and the 'New Perspective' (of such Christian scholars as E.P. Sanders, James Dunn and N.T. Wright), which characterises Paul as having overcome Judaism's ethnic nationalism. Scholars like Paula Fredriksen, Pamela Eisenbaum and Mark Nanos insist that Paul remained a Torah-observant Jew all his life, and that he counselled his Gentile converts not to become Jewish (i.e. not to be circumcised) because he believed that the ancient prophecies (e.g. Is 2:2-4) of the nations streaming to Jerusalem at the end of time were about to be fulfilled. All would soon be worshipping Israel's God together – Jews as Jews, and Gentiles as Gentiles. But the end never came, and by telling these pagans to give up their native gods, in effect to cut off family ties and neglect civic duties, but without becoming Jewish, Paul led them into no-man's land, which only stored up trouble for later.

For information about the historical Jesus, we turn to the Gospels. But these are not straightforward biographies: they reflect the views of his early devotees, who were convinced that his life and death were of cosmic significance. Daniel Boyarin emphasises that not only was Jesus Jewish, but so too, at least to start with, were the categories with which his significance was elaborated, the prime example being 'messiah' (in Greek, 'christ'). Boyarin writes, 'There is no essentially Christian (drawn from the cross) versus Jewish (triumphalist) notion of the Messiah, but only one complex and contested messianic idea, shared by Mark and Jesus with the full community of the Jews'. He argues that 'the sometimes puzzling and shocking statements made by Jesus about his authority can be derived from close reading of the Daniel passages about the Son of Man'. The early followers of Jesus, refusing to admit that his death signalled failure, scrutinised the Jewish scriptures for clues, to make sense of their experience. This enterprise, says Boyarin, 'was entirely within the spirit and hermeneutical method of ancient Judaism, and not a scandalous departure from it'.

Although the Gospels tell of Jesus, an Aramaic-speaking Galilean Jew, who died around 30 C.E., they were written

When we discuss Jesus and Paul, can we set them within, not in opposition to, their Jewish contexts?

in Greek, at least forty years later, after the Jerusalem temple had been destroyed. And they were addressed to communities spread around the Mediterranean, whose membership was probably majority Gentile. This change in context complicates the interpretation of all the Gospels – what originates with Jesus, and what represents later beliefs? – but the difficulties are sharpest when it comes to John's Gospel. Despite foregrounding the Jewish festivals, this obscures Jesus' Jewishness by consistently labelling his opponents as 'the Jews'. And in John's scheme of cosmic dualisms – light/darkness, life/death, truth/lies – 'the Jews' are on the dark side. Adele Reinhartz, in *Befriending the Beloved Disciple*, experiments with four ways of reading the Gospel: 'compliant' – accepting the view of the world presented in the text; 'resistant' – adopting the point of view of those who are vilified by the text; 'sympathetic' – taking into account the particular circumstances within which the gospel was written; and 'engaged'. She writes, 'As an engaged reader, I finally sat across the table from the Beloved Disciple. I stared directly at him and also allowed myself to see my own reflection in his eyes. The gaze was disconcerting, for it forced me to acknowledge, finally, that some of the differences between us will never be overcome'.

For Jewish scholars – because they are Jews, but just as importantly, because they are scholars – the New Testament books are interesting first century documents, to be studied alongside other first century literature, such as the writings of Philo and Josephus, and the treasure trove of Dead Sea Scrolls. For Christians, the New Testament is scripture, which is another thing entirely. People read scripture as an ongoing source of inspiration for themselves and their communities, or, to put it more strongly, as divine speech. Just as Jews traditionally read

Written Torah in the light of Oral Torah – centuries of rabbinic commentary – so Christians read the New Testament through the lens of later developments in Christian doctrine. The Jesus they encounter in its pages is not simply a first century Jew, but God incarnate – a walking 'holy of holies'. This makes it almost impossible for Christian preachers to say, 'Maybe in this dispute the Pharisees had a point!' – even though, for example, many of us take a pragmatic Pharisaic view of divorce and remarriage, as against Jesus' idealism (see Mark 10:2-12). Ever since the rise of biblical scholarship, it has been a challenge for Christians to hold the historical and the theological together. Jewish New Testament scholarship adds a new dimension to this challenge, requiring greater self-awareness from Christians.

When we discuss Jesus and Paul, can we set them within, not in opposition to, their Jewish contexts? But more than that, can we take a clear-eyed view of New Testament rhetoric? The early Christian movement defined itself over against the majority of the Jewish community, and in the process vilified its opponents. What to Jews was simple indifference over a failed messiah, Christians interpreted as rejection of the chosen one of God, taking the disagreement to a whole new level. Can we now establish a different kind of relationship? A key tenet of contemporary interfaith dialogue is that people be allowed to speak for themselves. It is a positive move to recognise the Jewishness of Jesus and Paul, but the real challenge is how we as Christians treat Jews who did/do not accept messianic claims about Jesus, be they first century Pharisees or Sadducees, the Jews of John's Gospel, or members of the synagogue down the road. Do we give them a fair hearing, or do we talk about them in stereotyped categories they themselves would never recognise, in order to advance our own cause? Unlike the writers of the New Testament, are we willing to let others speak for themselves, and respectfully acknowledge difference? ■

● Dr Ann Conway-Jones
Honorary Research Fellow
University of Birmingham

PSALMS AS POETRY? JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES AND PROSPECTS

Revd. Dr Nathan Eddy, Deputy Director of CCJ, reviews the rise of literary perspectives on Psalms and considers their bearing on Jewish-Christian dialogue.

In the way of Your decrees I rejoice as if over great wealth. On Your commandments I meditate, and I gaze on your ways. In Your laws I delight. I will not forget Your word! (Ps 119:14-16)

How can one not appreciate the poetry of these verses, the yearning of the poet, and the psalm's character-forming effect on readers? Yet literary appreciation of Ps 119, and others like it, has been a long time coming in biblical scholarship. The change is due in part to the rise of Jewish academic biblical scholarship in the last 75 years, and rehearsing these changes offers a snapshot of the state of dialogue between Christians and Jews in the academic study of the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament.

Let's start with 20th century approaches to Psalms, and then circle back to a medieval Jewish approach at the end. Psalms scholarship is still

heavily influenced by two scholars: Herman Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel. These two scholars were influential because of their ideas about Psalms, but also about the ways they said Psalms study should proceed. Early in the last century, Gunkel proposed that psalms can be classified according to different genres: categories like laments and hymns, for example. Laments differ from hymns both in terms of their poetic form but also in the ways they were used in society. Laments might have been used at home, on the sick bed, whereas hymns were typically used in cultic worship. It wasn't really possible to know when a psalm was written, but you could study its form and genre.

Building on the Gunkel's genres, Mowinckel stressed the role and vitality of Ancient Israel's cultic worship in the

Sigmund Mowinckel saw ritual positively and recognised the world-creating power of temple worship, thus beginning to overturn long-held prejudices in scholarship against ritual and temple.

formation of psalms. Influenced in part by the high-church Oxford Movement, Mowinckel saw ritual positively and recognised the world-creating power of temple worship, thus beginning to overturn long-held (Christian) prejudices in biblical scholarship against ritual and temple. But Mowinckel's passion for ancient worship had a downside. He was blind to the literary value of psalms – their value as texts for meditation – and this restricted his appreciation of psalms like Ps 1, Ps 19, or Ps 119, which have no clear worship background. Because of their focus on God's Torah, these psalms are sometimes called Torah Psalms; they might have been written for meditation, rather than worship. Mowinckel dismissed them as artificial; Ps 119 was for him an 'uncertain and styleless' mixture (*Psalms in Israel's Worship*, Vol II, 139). For Mowinckel, worship was the real deal, and devotional reading distinctly secondary: mere imitation.

Mowinckel's cultic approach began to be challenged in the 1960s. While the idea of different kinds of psalms was undoubtedly helpful, scholars realised it was a dead end to try to assign every psalm to a genre. Psalms are like children: each one is unique, even if there are profound similarities between some. Moreover scholars

questioned whether it was really so simple to separate devotional reading from temple worship. Is it fair to call worship 'real' and meditative reading mere 'imitation'? Scholars also began to be drawn to the rhetoric of psalms: their imagery, their flow of words, and their connections to one another. Rather than being knock-offs of the real deal, Torah Psalms suddenly took on greater importance. Ps 1 opens the whole Psalter with a portrait of a reader who 'delights' in the Torah (vs 2). Rather than a mere imitation of worship, Ps 1 seems to offer guidance for reading the Book of Psalms as a whole. It is a collection to be read and prayed; a Torah to be recited and studied.

In retrospect, the blind spot for Torah Psalms amongst Mowinckel and his contemporaries is a defect in their scholarship, and is tinged with anti-Judaism. In his commentary from the 1950, Arthur Weiser discussed Ps 119 in only 1 ½ pages, suggesting it was the 'artificial product of religious poetry' and was 'bound to end in the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes' (*The Psalms*, pages 739 and 741). Weiser, that is, traced a direct line from Ps 119 to the negative picture he held of some parties in first-century Judaism. In 2008, John Goldingay, by contrast, spent 69 pages exploring the same psalm in his commentary. In other words, changes were afoot. No longer imitative or artificial, Torah Psalms, and all psalms, began to be studied in literary perspective, with attention both to worship and to literary artistry and rhetoric.

In my view, these trends towards the experience of Psalms readers culminate in the recent idea that the Book of Psalms is a 'verbal temple' in which readers petition God, and God might answer and be present in power. Psalms have integrity not just as liturgy but as literature – literature that preserves a 'ritual aura' and carries on temple tradition even in devotional reading. For Mowinckel, proposed worship contexts were all-important, and literary psalms were derivative. This new wave of scholarship reverses this priority: Torah Psalms give shape to the book

Psalms have integrity not just as liturgy but as literature – literature that preserves a 'ritual aura' and carries on temple tradition even in devotional reading.

that is Psalms. They provide a key to the way the ancients imagined the Book of Psalms might be read. Through the Psalms' titles, many of which connect psalms to events in David's life, David of the Psalms appears to act like a liturgical leader in this verbal temple, modelling prayer and inviting readers to petition, lament, and praise in their own lives. German scholars Erich Zenger and Bernd Janowski and American scholars Beth Laneel Tanner and Rolf Jacobson in particular have been pioneers in this new wave of Psalms study.

This shift to literary perspectives in Psalms study reflects the influence of literary criticism in general on the field. But it also reflects the influence of Jewish scholars in biblical studies in the last 75 years. Scholars like Adele Berlin, Robert Alter, James Kugel, Michael Fishbane, Jon Levenson, Benjamin Sommer, Daniel Boyarin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and many more have decisively broadened the field of Psalms study and put literary perspectives at its centre. They have not turned their back on historical approaches, but have shown how historical approaches alone miss the manifold richness of the Bible.

These trends suggest that the dialogue between Jews and Christians on Psalms will continue, and that literary study of the Psalms will continue apace. But dialogue does not mean convergence, and Christians and Jews will read Psalms in ways that are shared as well as ways that are different. To put this differently, Psalms as verbal temple does not mean that we enter it as readers who are stripped of their Jewish or Christian identities, families, traditions, and contexts. For example, there are voices in Jewish tradition which would seek to connect the temple in Psalms to Jerusalem and the

Jewish people in a unique way. The important medieval thinker Saadia Gaon (882/892 CE – 942 CE) argued forcefully *against* psalms being prayers, in part because their 'ritual aura', which for him was almost physiological, was only ever to be related to the temple's specific place, performance, ritual, and instrumentation. Psalms as verbal temple, for him, was 'non-transferable'; instead, psalms after the destruction of the Second Temple were to be read as instruction, admonition, and commandment: a kind of Torah (Uriel Simon discusses this in *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadia Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991, pages 31-32). Saadia's perspective was not followed by later Jewish scholars, but his argument is important for Christian scholars to hear. Like the Hebrew Bible as a whole, Psalms remain a literature connected to the God of Israel and the people of Israel. The Book of Psalms as 'verbal temple' is not suddenly 'spiritualised' and loosed from its moorings in the story of the Jewish people; it retains a connection to the Second Temple and to the traumas of destruction and dislocation of the 1st century. That's not to say Christians can't find a place to pray in this temple; it just means that they must not do so by displacing Jews and Judaism.

In sum, there have been huge shifts in the study of Psalms in the last 75 years; in particular, there is now a renewed appreciation of the Psalms' literary character. Psalms have a vital, never-to-be-forgotten link to temple worship, but they are also a unique poetic, spiritual literature, and can be studied as such.

Despite differences between Jewish and Christian approaches to praying the Psalms, there is common ground in this verbal temple to be explored. I sense that this is easier for me to say as a Christian. But let's hope that as scholarship continues, the different temple spaces and approaches to Psalms are mutually respected, and the common ground is, too. ■

● Revd Dr Nathan Eddy
Deputy Director, CCJ

LISTENING AND LEARNING: JERUSALEM, WHOSE IS IT?

A new study guide produced by CCJ seeks to shape the way Israel Palestine dialogue in the UK can proceed. In this excerpt, introduced by **CCJ Director Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko, Rabbi David Mason and Revd Jessica Foster** offer their perspectives on Jerusalem, the City of Peace.

The Holy Land is so dear to both our communities, theologically, historically and in a myriad of other ways. Through a new resource, excerpts from which are on the following pages, you will learn more about why Christians and Jews care so passionately about this issue, about the people who live in the region, and how we can meaningfully convey that passion to one another without negating or dismissing the 'other'.

Too often, conflict in the Middle East causes further conflict between our communities here in the UK. Through

CCJ's annual study tours for Jewish and Christian leaders and a wider group of leaders who meet back in the UK for dialogue around key issues, CCJ demonstrates our model of 'listening and learning' from one other. We acknowledge that in any conflict there is always more than one narrative that needs to be heard in order to build better communication between communities.

Thanks to a grant from the Methodist Church, CCJ is now able to pass on this model of dialogue to a wider constituency. This includes a short film that can be shared to encourage dialogue; additional events and dialogue

sessions, both for previous participants in the seminars and for the communities they represent; and a written resource.

This resource, now available to members and stakeholders, is designed to showcase the model of dialogue, by illustrating, side by side, very different reflections on important issues that have previously been discussed in CCJ dialogues led by alumni of the study tours relating to Israel Palestine. We hope these introductions to difficult topics will serve as a guide to approaching dialogue in other communities.

The resource will be distributed

through a wide range of Christian and Jewish denominations and stakeholders and will therefore, we hope, be able to have a real and lasting impact on Jewish and Christian conversations around Israel Palestine through encouraging rather than shying away from this topic.

We are most grateful to all the contributors who made the resource possible, both from the UK and elsewhere. We thank you for your honesty and openness and for trusting us on this journey together to better understanding.

● Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko
Director, CCJ





Study Tour Participants 2017



Participants visit the City of David archaeological site



Members of CCJ's study tour visit St George's Cathedral, Jerusalem with its Dean Hosam Naoum

Why is the issue of Jerusalem so difficult to solve in any possible and potential agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority? The following poem by the late and great Israeli poet and writer Yehuda Amichai may shed some light on this problem: In his poem Jerusalem he writes:

*Why is Jerusalem always in twos, one of Above
And the other Below
And I want to live in a Jerusalem of the middle
Without turning my head above and without
Wounding my legs below.
And why is Jerusalem in the language of pairs, like hands
And legs,
I only want to be in one Jerusalem
Because I am only one, there are no more.*

Jerusalem is a place of spiritual wonderment and ecstasy. And yet, Jerusalem is a place that has seen much conflict in past ages and in the modern age of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

In fact, the idea of two Jerusalems—one supernal and one earthly—is not new and not Amichai's original idea. It comes from the Talmud which refers to a Higher and Lower Jerusalem and then states as if speaking for God:

'I will not enter the Jerusalem above, until I have entered the Jerusalem below'

Now the Talmud has no problem with this dual understanding of Jerusalem. What it does wonder about is where we learn about the concept of a 'lower Jerusalem'. To this we are quoted a verse in Psalm 122: 'The built up city is like a city that is united together'. And for many politicians and indeed Israeli citizens, this verse is marshalled to support the idea of a united Jerusalem, East and West. This surely is what the Psalmist meant when he described Jerusalem as 'united together'.

There is of course more to this verse and this idea. But the idea being put forward by the Talmud, and developed by Amichai is key to understanding the place Jerusalem plays in the conflict. For Jewish people, Jerusalem is not solely a place of local government, a regular city. It is not just a place of historic importance. It is rather a place of holiness and holds a deeply special part in the hearts of so many Jewish people. Of course it is not only built on holiness. It has to function as other cities do. But these two Jerusalems, the one of holiness and the one of secularity, find it extremely difficult to be separate from one another. And so any attempt to solve

Jerusalem is a place of holiness and holds a deeply special place in the hearts of so many Jewish people. Of course it is not only built on holiness. It has to function as other cities do.

the issue of Jerusalem, which of course holds a special place for other religions, must take that into account.

The duality of Jerusalem is so important to understand, and yet as Amichai hints to, it is part of the conflict. We cannot create a 'middle' Jerusalem; rather we are left with the one to which we look up; and the one whose feet are on the earth.

There is a difficult and complicated corollary to all this. Many Jewish people understand that a relationship to Jerusalem, as part of a Jewish state, requires sovereignty over Jerusalem. David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, agreed to Jerusalem being an international city with a heavy heart. The victory of the 1967 Six Day War and the resultant conquest of larger parts of Jerusalem was heralded with joy across Israel. And so the closer one is to the Old City of Jerusalem or even what is named the 'Holy Basin', sharing becomes nearly impossible for many who hold it to be so special. In some ways, conflict resolution has to consider the importance of the holy. It has to come up with ways that we can share what is holy, a multiple sense of sovereignty that allows all access to places of specific religious importance. Jewish people of all levels of engagement with the religion look at Jerusalem as a uniting factor of our people. Our prayer is that it can be a beacon of unity for humanity as well.

● Rabbi David Mason
Honorary Secretary, CCJ

'Jerusalem is ours' – this is the wi-fi code at a bookshop in East Jerusalem where I often stop for tea and cake. It was the place we chose to recover after a fraught and stressful day. We were a group of Jews, Muslims, and Christians from Birmingham, visiting the Holy Lands together in order to learn about peace, experience each other's holy sites and hear one another's stories.

Ruth, one of the Jewish members of the group, had had a tough day. As I told her the password for the wi-fi she shrugged and grinned in a slightly resigned manner. We understood somehow that the three possessive words, Jerusalem is ours, expressed hope rather than violence, aspiration rather than destructiveness and captured the spirit of sumud, steadfast resistance, also displayed in the books and other materials for sale.

I am always wary of exporting the conflict so it has taken me a while to answer this potentially divisive question. I fear the question almost asks for a proxy conflict with the British Jewish voice answering for the Israelis and the Christian representing Palestinians. I am also reluctant to state forthright opinions given I have barely spent a fortnight of my life in Jerusalem and have always been a visitor. Each time I have visited I have learnt something new, which reminds me how little I know and how unimportant my opinion is.

On a recent visit to the Holy Lands, I asked a few people, Israelis

and Palestinians, whose Jerusalem they thought it was. No one replied 'Jerusalem is ours'. In fact, everyone replied that Jerusalem belongs to God. Most people felt that all places belong to God and countries, cities, villages and nature does not belong to anyone – we belong to them quite possibly.

That's certainly how I feel about my home city of Birmingham. But Jerusalem is not Birmingham or even London. It's an iconic city and unique in many ways. Its one of the few places that is holy to more than one faith and for Christians it is a symbol of heaven, the bride of God, God's dwelling place, the place where there will be no more tears, no more pain, no more mourning, no more death.

For me, over the last few years, the phrase, 'on earth as it is in heaven' from the prayer we call the Lord's prayer (in Matt 6:10 and parallels) has resonated with me deeply. It guides my activity, my hopes, my dreams and my theology. In the writings I have read from some of the Palestinian Christian theologians I see the dream that Jerusalem could be now what

For Christians Jerusalem is a symbol of heaven, the bride of God, God's dwelling place; the place where there will be no more tears, no more pain, no more mourning, no more death.

it will be when heaven touches earth.

I also see this dream articulated in different ways by friends on both 'sides' of this conversation. Jerusalem belongs to God and people of the three Abrahamic faiths feel deeply that they belong to Jerusalem. Some feel it because they live there, some feel it because they have lived there, some feel it because their scriptures tell them they should live and pray there. From the days of high priest and king Melchizedek, politics and religion have been intertwined in Jerusalem. I think somehow the politics will have to reflect the religious truth of this holy city and the shared holiness that makes it unique – so rather than being a city for one faith, or a divided city, Jerusalem can be a city which looks like heaven on earth, a place of freedom, love, justice and joy, a place that is genuinely shared in a deep and trusting sense.

It may seem a pipe dream and naïve optimism. But throughout history Jerusalem has welcomed and embraced those who have visited and dwelt there. Jerusalem has at least three children – and, in the words of Isaiah: 'Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?' (Is 49:15) How it is shared I would not venture to suggest. That it must be shared, I have no doubt. ■

● Revd Jessica Foster
Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham

STANDING TOGETHER IN PRAYER ON HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

For Holocaust Memorial Day 2020, the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the Christian Presidents of CCJ wrote a special prayer of remembrance and recommitment. We encouraged churches around the UK to join in the use of this prayer on the Sunday closest to Holocaust Memorial Day.

I t was launched at a special reception in the House of Lords, hosted by our Vice-Chair Lord Farmer. The keynote speaker was the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Rt Revd Colin Sinclair, and the prayer (below) was read by the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Sarah Mullally (photographed below). Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, President of CCJ and Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism, also wrote and read his own prayer (right). 75 years on from the Holocaust, the Presidents' prayer provided a profound moment whereby Christians could—in the words of the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day—'stand together' in prayer to remember the victims of the Holocaust and recommit to a changed and better future.



God of the past, present, and future,
We remember today, 75 years since the liberation
of Auschwitz, the six million Jews murdered in the
Holocaust, the millions of other victims of Nazi
persecution, and all those who have been targeted and
killed in subsequent genocides.

We remember those who, having survived genocide,
share their stories with us:

**We give thanks to You for the lessons of human
stories, both in their suffering and in their joy.**

We remember those who stood up against injustice and
saved lives:

We give thanks to You for their example.

Together we acknowledge the sacrifice of those that stood together with those
who suffered during the Holocaust and other genocides.

And we affirm that every life is loved by You and sacred.

Yet, during the Holocaust too many failed to stand together with their neighbours.
Oppression stains Your world and contradicts Your love.

So we pray that You will inspire us now as we stand together on this day in the love
that we know of God in Christ Jesus.

Let us commit to remembering:

And glorify God in our words and actions.

We make these prayers in the name of Christ Jesus who through His life, death, and
resurrection, journeys with us into the eternal hope of Your truth and light.

Amen.

T here inhabits over Birkenau seventy-five years afterwards, over the remains of electrified
fences, over the wooden huts, shacks which testify to cold, disease, starvation and dying, over the
cracked concrete floors and broken-down ceilings of the gas chambers;

There inhabits not just the enduring, ineradicable haunting of the slaughter of hundreds of thousands,
Jewish people, Russian prisoners of war, Sinti Roma people, disabled people, courageous enemies of Nazi
ruthlessness and hate;

There inhabit in that space full of spirits the thoughts, longings, dreams of teenagers, grandmothers,
human beings, who had families, neighbours, friends, made music, prayed, worked, loved and blessed
each other, like Gerda whose Papa put his hands on her head in benediction when they were forced to
part:

His hands trembled. We were both weeping. 'My child,' he managed. It was a question and a promise. I
understood. I gave him my most sacred vow: 'Yes, Papa.'¹

In the quiet, which extends into the flat fields and birch trees past where relatives of survivors, pilgrims,
visitors wander bewildered; in the silence which spreads over the marshes where the ashes were poured,
there inhabit the disembodied voices of the murdered, calling without words, in languages only the heart
can interpret, calling to God, calling to the presence of God within us:

Are you there? Do kindness, love, humanity exist?

Where are you now, in a world once again hate-filled, full of refugees, replete with disregard?

Is God there?

E'l De'ot, God who knows,

God who says Immo anochi betzarah, 'I am with you in your troubles';

Be with us, instruct us, guide us.

Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart to care.

Discomfort our conscience, dispel indifference.

Demand of us the determination to name and call out hatred, in ourselves, our society, the world,
anywhere, everywhere.

Prevent us from despairing of the power of goodness, compassion, courage and faith.

Imbue us with loving kindness to cure the wounds which can be healed and tend with gentle
understanding those beyond our repair.

Open our hearts to the intricate, destructible wonder and fragile privilege of life.

1 From Gerda Weissman-Klein: All But MY Life, A Memoir

REMEMBERING THE FRAGILITY OF NORMALITY

Every year since 2007 CCJ has partnered with the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem for a ten-day seminar, unique in Europe. As the world marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, programme alumni **Revd Dr Rhona Knight** and **Richard Reddie** share their experiences.

Recently CCJ enabled a group of clergy and church leaders to participate in its annual seminar at Yad Vashem. We journeyed together over ten days covering a wide-ranging programme to enable us to understand more deeply the background to, the events of, and the impact of the Holocaust, and what it means for us today as the body of Christ. Sessions led by experts in different areas and by two Holocaust survivors created an environment which enabled us to learn. The seminar was held together by Yiftach Meiri from the International School of Holocaust Studies and Rob Thompson from CCJ. As an educationalist I found that the seminar was an exceptionally well-run adult learning programme which was a privilege to be part of. We, the learners, were guided through a difficult, challenging, enlightening, encouraging, and transformative programme of study.

The fragility of normality was a phrase that emerged from our reflections on experiencing an interactive session on 'The Jewish Street in Poland'. Here we were

enabled to realise more deeply how, as well as the deaths of six million Jewish people, the Holocaust also decimated and destroyed a way of life and a culture. This, for me, was the phrase that captured much of the experience and learning of the seminar and brought into sharp focus the dangers of newer models of antisemitism, for example Holocaust inversion and Holocaust denial.

The seminar has significantly impacted on my own current ministry which is researching how to enable ministers to minister in times of trauma. Most books on trauma, trauma theology, and pastoral responses to trauma of necessity include the Holocaust. The Holocaust was a unique and devastating traumatic event. Understanding in more detail how the aftershocks of this trauma impact on not only the victims, perpetrators and bystanders at the time, but also on their descendants, has had a profound impact on me and on my teaching and wider ministry. This was demonstrated powerfully by Dr Jakub Weksler in his testimony as a child of the Holocaust. In a widely available

video blog, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks describes Leonard Cohen's last song, *You Want it Darker*, containing many allusions to the Holocaust, as being his most Jewish song. The lyrics include words from the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead and, in a way that conjures up the Children's Memorial at the Yad Vashem, talks of 'a million candles burning for the help that never came'. For Cohen there is a place for lament, 'a lullaby for suffering'. But Sacks notes that for Cohen this was not the end of the story. While there is brokenness in the world, a crack in everything, this is how the light gets in. Sacks therefore challenges us, in the shadow of the Holocaust, to see and be this light: 'Even in the midst of darkness there is light. Even in the midst of death there is life. Even in the midst of hate there is love. And even with our dying breath we can still sing hallelujah. That is the power of love to redeem the brokenness of the world.'

● **Revd Dr Rhona Knight**
Diocese of Lincoln

As the Director of Justice and Inclusion for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, my work involves encouraging churches to tackle racism, asylum/immigration matters, and serious youth violence. I am also working with Christian mission agencies on 'reparations' connected to their involvement in the Transatlantic Traffic in enslaved Africans. I was keen to attend CCJ's Yad Vashem Seminar as I wanted to be fully conversant with all facets of the Shoah and ensure that my work better addressed the rising levels of antisemitism in society.

I am cognizant that what is often regarded as the history of a specific group invariably belongs to us all. This is the situation with the Shoah, which took place in Europe and involved the Jewish community, but had a world-transforming impact due, to among other issues, its magnitude, singular barbarity, and ideological ramifications.

Yad Vashem is an impressive establishment whose facilities, resource materials, and academics befit the importance of this subject. In terms of the seminars, I was particularly impressed with its 'pre', 'during' and 'post' methodology of chronicling the Holocaust, and was captivated by the myriad narratives of Jewish life prior to the dreadful events. I also welcomed the institution's skillful usage of individual narratives, which are told dispassionately, and enable listeners to move beyond the appalling 'statistics', which are usually linked to the Holocaust, and personalize the tragedy that was to befall ordinary people.

Additionally, it was explained that the



#RememberTheChildren

"Has the like of this ever happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, and let your children tell theirs, and their children the next generation!" Joel 1:2-3

JOIN THE CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF YAD VASHEM

IN REMEMBERING THE PAST AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

YAD VASHEM
THE WORLD HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE CENTER

Sara (Sari) Granitz
Director, Christian Friends of Yad Vashem
International Relations Div.
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Israel
Tel. +972-2-6443289
christian.friends@yadvashem.org.il

Reverend Mark Jenkins
US Representative, Christian Friends of Yad Vashem
8701 Ridge Rd.
Richmond, VA 23229 USA
Tel. 1-833-239-8872
mark@cfyv.us

WWW.YADVASHEM.ORG

f t y i p

Shoah did not take place in a vacuum, but was the culmination of almost two millennia's worth of antisemitism, much of it connected to the Christian Church in Europe.

Equally, we had the opportunity to explore modern-day antisemitism, and the way past theories and ideas have been updated to propagate bigotry against Jewish folks. While it would be comforting to think that the events of the past will remain there, the massive spike in religious and race-related hate crime since Britain decided to leave the EU, echo the warning signs that were never heeded in the early 1930s.

My sojourn at Yad Vashem also highlighted the inadequacies of how history is taught and remembered in Britain, as there were sizeable gaps in our group's

collective learning. Although Britons never stop talking about the Second World War, what was arguably the defining event of this conflict is invariably downplayed when that history is recounted.

It is impossible not to be moved by what you experience at Yad Vashem, and my stay was a rollercoaster-ride of revulsion, anger, and sorrow. However, I also experienced a real sense of hope that was linked to those who survived, which spoke of the triumph of the human spirit. Since returning from Israel, I am even more convinced that the British churches with whom I liaise must tackle antisemitism alongside their commitments to address other forms of racism and Islamophobia. ■

● **Richard Reddie**
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

A NEW AND POSITIVE CHAPTER

Student Leaders reflect on interfaith at universities across the UK

Since its formation CCJ has responded to the key issues of the day, and CCJ's Student Leaders share this approach. Young people are aware of the big issues at university and beyond, and look to respond to them in a meaningful way which fits their context. For this edition of Common Ground some of our Student Leaders have reflected on the current situation of university interfaith and the events they have set up to meet the needs of their campus.

Increasingly these events are being designed with an understanding that interfaith must recognise the diversity of people within a religion. Events which allow a variety of people to share their individual experience of their faith are therefore common. There is also a desire to look at the intersection of identities which a person of faith may hold, for instance what it is like to be a woman and religious. Such events counter stereotypes about faith and show a genuine interest to learn from one another. In this approach young people are leading the way and show that the future of interfaith engagement is positive.

● Katharine Crew
Campus Leadership Manager

Even with the improvements made in Christian-Jewish relations over the past decades, I have experienced a lack of Christian-Jewish interfaith dialogue at university. Despite the shared history of our faiths, there is not as much dialogue on campus as one might expect.

I think that this is caused mostly by a lack of engagement. On my campus, it seems that people tend to be more passive and less interested in Christian-Jewish dialogue than in dialogue with other faiths. Perhaps it is because the Christian and Jewish traditions share so much. This leads to the feeling that interfaith dialogue with other faiths – that we know less about or that are more different to ours – is more important and valuable. This also leads to students of each faith believing they have enough knowledge and understanding of the other, making Christian-Jewish interfaith dialogue less of a priority.

We need to put such preconceptions aside. Regardless of the similarities between our two faiths, we have much



Student Leadership Training

to learn from each other. We need to acknowledge how much the other faith can teach us. We need to admit to ourselves that we don't know as much about the other faith as we think we do. We need to recognise that Christian-Jewish relations have not always been as strong and positive as they are now and

we need to see the value in maintaining and developing them. It is only then that we can continue improving Christian-Jewish interfaith relations, contributing to a new and positive chapter to the relationship between our faiths.

● Shoshana Cohen
Bristol Student Leader



Student Leaders 2019/2020



Interfaith Iftar at Cambridge

In my experience, there has been a lot of enthusiasm for Christian-Jewish dialogue among students. At a university with a variety of faiths, we have included Christian-Jewish engagement within wider interfaith dialogue.

Students appreciate the opportunity to talk about our faiths with one another, comparing and contrasting our traditions, our theology and in particular our differing attitudes to the same pieces of scripture. Since students of faith are nowadays a minority, the very fact that we belong to, and participate in, a faith tradition of some kind can be something we have in common.

● Florence Butterfield
Oxford Student Leader



'Interfaith Question Time' at Cardiff University

Cardiff University hosted 'Interfaith Question Time'; an opportunity for people to ask a student panel questions concerning faith. Questions encompassed a range of different issues, including how to reconcile the existence of evil with a good God, reactions and perceptions of the environmental crisis, and how we understand transgender identity.

The evening highlighted common ground between

us; that we all believe in a benevolent God and that we should all strive for good in our society. Despite our differences in creed, tradition and opinion, the respect given to and shared among the panellists was commendable; we were able to stand and say together as a diverse people of faith, that we can make this world a better place through our common goal of love.

● **Olly Hearn,**
Cardiff Student Leader



'Women of Faith' at Cambridge University



We hosted a relaxed social evening to celebrate the contribution and friendship of women of faith in Cambridge. It was wonderful to be able to create a friendly atmosphere where students were able to come together, share their experiences, and ask each other questions about their beliefs and practices.

It was the first time for several students to attend such an event, and one such student remarked how rare it

was to find such an inclusive, welcoming group of people, especially in a university-setting where religious students are often labelled and live parallel lives from each other.

Our Women's Interfaith Evening left us feeling inspired, encouraged and empowered by the many incredible women living out their faith so boldly here in Cambridge.

● **Anna Whitehead**
Cambridge Student Leader

'Faith In Challenging Times' at the University of Birmingham

There is a rich and diverse culture of faith societies at the University of Birmingham but we tend to keep to ourselves. In the spirit of countering this we hosted a panel discussion. While our faiths are different and follow different traditions and practices, we all have in common that in a post-modern world religious belief is declining. Our place in this society can therefore seem confused.

The 160 people attending our event challenged the idea that people are not interested in religion. The panel spoke of the common language of faith in the way in which we thought about what our faith calls us to do. It was a fantastic event and a great way for people to get to know each other and we look forward to doing more work together.

● **Josh Harris**
Birmingham Student Leader



COMING TOGETHER TO CREATE A FUTURE OF HOPE

Branch Reflections by **Steve Griffiths** and **Revd Bruce Thompson** from Lincoln Branch, **James Leek** and **Revd Andrew Williams** from South West London & Dittons Branch, **Revd Canon Steve Williams** from Manchester Branch

The Power of a Cup of Tea: The Story of CCJ Manchester

Never underestimate the power of a cup of tea. That's how the Manchester branch of CCJ began in 1943. This December marks the Yahrzeit of the last person alive to witness it - and who kept us faithful to our vision for the whole span of her life. Barbara Aubrey, who died a year ago at the age of 103, was one of those at Manchester's Midland Hotel in 1943 invited by Rabbi Percy Selvin Goldberg to take part in this new experiment. In 2012, she was part of the team that welcomed the International Council of Christians and Jews to Manchester for their annual conference. She had seen, in her lifetime, how a cup of tea in a Manchester hotel would carry the seed of an organisation that now has roots in 39 countries. Without the basic courtesies of hospitality, we are nothing.

Through study, dialogue, speaking, music (and a particularly delicious brand of cheesecake), Manchester CCJ has been finding ways of promoting good relationships between our communities to help us engage respectfully and openly in a way that helps us to build trust in one another.

Last year, we invited the Church of England's first female bishop, the Rt Revd Libby Lane (then Bishop of Stockport, now of Derby), and Manchester's first female rabbi, Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen, to dialogue in public with one another to mark the centenary of women's right to vote and to stand for public office. This led to a profound



theological reflection on how together we read scripture and how power may be understood through a vulnerable and compassionate leadership.

This year, our annual Holocaust Study Day at Menorah Synagogue attracted 100 clergy, leaders and educators to reflect afresh on survivors' testimonies. The aim of this day, held each year since 2000 in November on or near the anniversary of Kristallnacht, is to equip churches, schools and local authorities to develop their own events for Holocaust Memorial Day in January.

This November, we have just discovered afresh the power of music to bring our communities together. We marked the beginning of our 77th year by inviting Menorah Synagogue Choir (from South Manchester) and Accord

Inspirational Gospel Choir (from North Manchester) to share the bill at Shaarei Shalom Synagogue: "Songs In The Key of Peace". We heard unexpected musical links between Hebrew liturgy and the deep roots of Gospel music from the American south - and there was plenty of dancing by the end of the evening

Said one newcomer to our dialogue: "Why isn't it always as easy as this?" And the cheesecake? It is served up each year in our Friendship Coffee Morning with the League of Jewish Women - a powerhouse of voluntary community-service, and with first-rate guest speakers. This year, we heard the testimony of the son of a Holocaust survivor who adopted an orphan from the Rwandan genocide. Hospitality is no soft option - but leads to the heart of what we are about.

From Persecution to Dialogue: Repairing Jewish Christian Relations in Lincoln

Brief History of Jews in Lincoln

Jews did not settle in England in any numbers or organised communities until after the Norman Conquest of 1066. Initially they were centred in London. In the early 12th century King Henry I issued a Royal Charter that permitted Jews to travel and settle freely throughout the land. As a consequence a Jewish community gradually established itself in Lincoln not least because Lincoln was one of the main centres of the medieval wool trade and the Jewish financiers proved invaluable in underpinning this trade. Perhaps the most famous financier was Aaron of Lincoln (1125-1186), who not only supported the wool trade but also helped finance many ecclesiastical buildings and the needs of landowners and aristocracy in running their estates. Jews were also 'owned' by the King and featured in two clauses of the Magna Carta associated with the repayment of debts to Jews.

Lincoln's Jewish community was the centre of a notorious blood libel in 1255 when a Christian child called Hugh was found dead and the Jews were accused of murdering him to use his blood in the Passover festival. Following the false accusations, 92 Jews were imprisoned in the Tower of London and 18 were hanged for a crime they did not commit. The child's body was buried in Lincoln Cathedral and he became known as Little St Hugh despite never having been canonised. Today, thankfully, the church has accepted both the falsehood of the libel and its guilt in perpetuating the myth throughout the following centuries. Reference is now made to Little Hugh when speaking of this story.

Throughout the 13th century, the Jewish influence and value as financiers declined as they were impoverished by punitive taxation. Lincoln's Jews suffered no less than Jews elsewhere and all were expelled by King Edward I in 1290. Jews returned to the UK some 400 years later following permission given by Oliver Cromwell, but Jews never again settled in Lincoln in any significant numbers. There are two main reasons for this: first, the



wool trade had long since declined and with it Lincoln's importance as a centre for trade or business that would have encouraged Jewish involvement; second, there was believed to be a cherem (religious prohibition) placed over Lincoln forbidding Jews to live in the city.

Jews in Lincoln Today

Jewish members of the armed forces temporarily increased the numbers of Jews in Lincoln during the two World Wars. Apart from that, the Jewish population has been very small. Today, there are two communities – The Lincolnshire Jewish Community and the Lincoln Independent Jewish Minyan. Between them they number less than 50 souls.

CCJ in Lincoln

Despite the low numbers of Jews in the area, a CCJ branch was founded in the mid-1990s thanks to the unrelenting efforts of the then CCJ Chair David Mendel. The branch has always been small, numbering never more than about 60 members, but it has always punched well above its weight. From the outset, it decided to mirror the national organisation of the period by appointing two Jewish and two Christian Joint Presidents. Of the latter, one has always been the Bishop of Lincoln and the other the Chair of the Methodist District. Over the years the branch has organised many speakers, seminars, visits, social events, 'Bible and Bagels' study sessions,

dialogue meetings and has commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) annually ever since its inception.

For those of both Jewish and Christian communities in Lincoln the impact of CCJ activities to Christian-Jewish relationships has been very positive. For example, there is a very close and supportive relationship with the cathedral that led to a complete rewording of the plaque next to Little Hugh's tomb. The message now states clearly how the blood libel was a falsehood and calls for tolerance and a better understanding between people of different faiths. Of equal importance, despite the Methodist Church Conference Report 'Justice for Palestine & Israel (2010)'; CCJ Lincoln has maintained the closest and most positive of relationships between Jews and Methodists in the area. The positive value of CCJ's work in Lincolnshire is no less than anywhere else in the country.

CCJ Lincoln and HMD 2020

In 2020, Lincoln CCJ is organising its HMD commemoration in partnership with the Lincoln City Council. The focus will naturally be on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, but the branch is well aware of the need to include subsequent genocides in its programme of speakers, blessings and prayers. Revd Bruce Thompson, Chair of the Methodist District will be the keynote speaker.

Rebirth and Growth: CCJ Southwest London and Dittons

South West London & Dittons

The South West London & Dittons Branch of CCJ was renamed as such in 2016 following the merger of the Wimbledon & District Branch with the Dittons Branch.

The Wimbledon & District Branch

Records do not show when the branch started but we are fortunate to still have people who have been members for over 40 years and, in particular, Alan Tyler, a young 95-year-old who has donated us his amazing memorabilia of files from the late 1960s and was previously Chair of Wimbledon. In the 1970s there were about 50 members on a mailing list of 110 people. A distinguishing feature in those days was that the branches had more younger members, but also a more serious structure than today – with Presidents, Vice- Presidents and all sorts of local worthies.

The old Wimbledon Branch certainly punched above its weight - including an 'Any Questions' Panel in 1971 with MP Stanley Clinton Davis and our ever youthful Revd Malcolm Weisman (still involved with CCJ and smaller Jewish Communities some 50 years later); In 1995 the Swedish Ambassador gave a talk on Raoul Wallenberg, and in 1997 the branch was honoured with an address by Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster on "Religion in our Society."

The old branch had a quieter time during the last 10 years and became somewhat inactive despite the charismatic chairmanship of the much missed Revd Andrew Wakefield.

Re-birth of the Branch

In 2014 James Leek & Judy Weleminsky became aware that some local Christian groups were visiting Israel and getting a somewhat one-sided view of the complex situation. A discussion with Dr Jane Clements, the then director of CCJ, persuasively pointed out the virtues of CCJ for promoting constructive dialogue and celebrating diversity – and a highly successful meeting to re-launch the branch was held in February 2015 with some 80 people, addressed by Dr Jane Clements and the Revd Mary Bide of St

Mary's Church, Wimbledon. We were on our way again! A brilliant lecture followed in July 2015 on how the Crucifixion had been represented in Jewish Art, and then a tutored Israeli wine tasting in December (including a comparison between Christian Communion wine and Jewish Kiddush wine!)

The Dittons

The Dittons, covering the area from Esher through to Surbiton plus some outlying points, was formed in the

decided to merge with the Wimbledon Branch.

South West London & Dittons

Since the merger, the new committee, with members from local Churches and Synagogues, has organized a number of very successful events and has an email list of some 200 interested persons (GDPR compliant!) including 40 CCJ members. The focus of our events has not been over-theological but rather to focus on our differing traditions, current



1980s by Rabbi Danny Rich of Kingston Liberal Synagogue, and was Chair until 2010.

The launch meeting was very well attended and addressed by Rabbi Julia Neuberger. The branch grew under Rabbi Rich's enthusiastic guidance and there were successful meetings at many churches and at both the Liberal and Orthodox synagogues with the purpose, as he stressed, of "dialogue, understanding and sharing". Every other year there was a fish and chip quiz supper to raise funds for the branch and many churches and the synagogues raised teams to compete.

After the departure of Rabbi Rich the branch became less pro-active and found it hard to attract new members. For a time the branch became moribund. The situation was reviewed in 2016 under Chair Revd Andrew Williams and it was

social action projects (supporting refugees, tackling hate speech on campus), and tutored small group visits. Outings have including a visit to The Wiener Library, The Czech Scrolls, and tea with the Papal Nuncio in Wimbledon. Three summer garden parties have also encouraged a more light-hearted social interchange and friendship.

In 2018 we celebrated the 75th anniversary of CCJ with a concert of soul-stirring Christian and Jewish music, and in January 2020 we marked Holocaust Memorial Day by supporting an interfaith service at Richmond Synagogue.

In 2019 our theme was diversity within the 3 Abrahamic faiths, with three separate talks on Islam, Judaism and Christianity. We hope we are emerging as a better informed and more understanding local community. ■

Sabbath: The Hidden Heartbeat of our Lives

Nicola Slee



Darton, Longman & Todds, 2019
ISBN: 9780232533996

the impact of Sabbath observance on the working week and on the individual Sabbath observer, framed around the Sabbath poetry of Wendell Berry. Slee organises her book into chapters which describe the Sabbath as leaving behind ‘human enterprise, commerce and labour’ through rest, conversation, self-recognition, recovery and restoration. She concludes by arguing that ultimately the Sabbath is transformative and we emerge renewed and refreshed. Each of the seven chapters focuses on a section of Berry’s poem *This Day: 7 (Sabbaths 1, 1979)*; and ends with excerpts from Slee’s personal journal and questions for reflection.

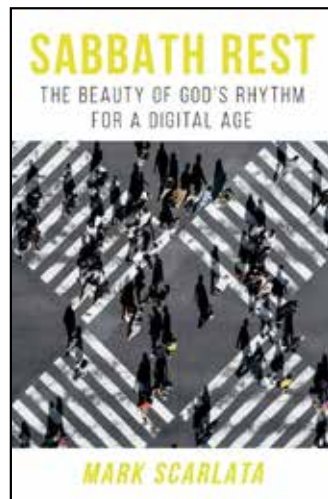
Although the layout initially feels somewhat clunky, I found her personal journal extracts related well to the topic of the chapter. For example, when Slee proposes that the ‘Sabbath makes a space in which we may recall and reclaim what we are endlessly prone to forget: that we are not the product of our labours or the sum of our accomplishments’ (p.156), she goes on to share a personal dimension of how difficult this can be to achieve: ‘I want to put down all the lists, burn them. But I don’t know how to live without them. I don’t know how to find the shape of things if I’m not driven by some outward compulsion’ (p.142) — an uncomfortable truth that may resonate deeply within us. It is through Sabbath rest, she proposes, that we have the time and reflective commitment to recognise our own worth and celebrate our contribution to the world, ‘healed by our Sabbath rest, we return renewed and refreshed, reminded of who we are and of our vocation to sing our own unique song’ (p.20).

Indeed, Slee’s emphasis on the impact of Sabbath observance to our daily life renewed and refreshed, had most impact on me as an Orthodox Jew. I had not considered enough the way in which rhythmic weekly rest, its contemplation and its community celebration, reverberates on my entire working week. She brought to my attention that although we ‘come back to ordinariness, to dailiness, to the rhythm of things’, we have been transformed (p.167). Slee’s is a heavier read, but it is beautifully crafted — and also introduced me to Berry’s poetry (1979) and Brueggemann’s *Sabbath as Resistance* (2017).

On the other hand, Scarlata argues that a ‘Sabbath-keeping community is one that seeks to influence every aspect of society by resisting the relentless demands of consumerism, liberating and protecting those caught in bondage and embracing our role as God’s appointed caretakers within creation’ (p.83), by exploring the context of the Sabbath in the Bible. Firstly, he examines how it commemorates God’s rest within the Creation story, suggesting that when people cease their daily tasks, they recognise and distance themselves from over-consumerism. Secondly, he utilises the Sabbath’s close textual relationship with the liberation of the Jews from Egyptian slavery, imploring us to become active protestors against modern slavery. And, lastly, he argues that the Sabbatical year in which the Land of Israel lies fallow from agricultural toil, is a message to all people to develop respect for the earth as sustainer of life, in order that we reduce the current trend of resource depletion, and attend to global warming and climate change. Each of the five chapters is dedicated to one (or more) of these themes and each concludes with a few short questions for reflection.

Sabbath Rest: The Beauty of God’s Rhythm for a Digital Age

Mark Scarlata



SCM Press, 2019
ISBN: 978-0334058069

These two recently published books ostensibly deal with similar issues about the non-stop culture and material consumerism of modern society, examining the way in which the Christian community’s observance of the Sabbath might be an antidote to these contemporary ills. Each attempts to offer deeper insight into Sabbath observance, for individuals and communities, and the resulting impact on the productive working week. Yet Scarlata and Slee’s books are very different reads.

Slee’s Sabbath is a well-structured book with several practical suggestions for Sabbath observance, connecting them to her interpretation of its religious significance. It highlights

This attention to Sabbath motifs in biblical literature is a useful framework; yet although Scarlata explains why his readers ought to observe Sabbath rest, he does not move on to how they should observe it. He dismisses the need to be bound by Old Testament Law — the strict Sabbath observance practiced by Orthodox Jews, commenting that ‘Jesus understood that our experience of rest in God’s kingdom was not about rigid legalism or strict obedience to a set of rules’ (p.50), whilst also claiming that these very laws were ‘not... to be a burden on his people, but commands that, if kept would lead to their flourishing’ (p.2). Although he concludes by suggesting that ‘we are reminded that Sabbath rest in Christ is not about legalism, but is about obedience to holy rest’ (p.55), he does not go on to explain what he means by ‘holy rest’ or how to achieve it. Given that the book is entitled Sabbath Rest, I had hoped that Scarlata would emphasise what that rest means, how it functions in the ‘digital age’, and that he would make clear and specific suggestions for its observance. Furthermore, although he is at pains to promote community gathering (p.99), he also states that there is ‘no one... particular time to practise the Sabbath’ (p.54) making the communal aspects of Sabbath rest high impossible.

Most frustratingly, Scarlata’s book is peppered with unclear definitions and some inaccuracies; for example, he describes a ‘shofar’ as ‘an odd looking horn’ (p.5) — a rather unhelpful clarification — rather than stating that it is a ram’s horn which is blown as a call to repentance on the Jewish New Year (Rosh HaShanah).

Initially I looked forward to Scarlata’s assessment of Sabbath practice through the Biblical framework, but I found his arguments tenuous at times and muddled at others. Nevertheless, I wholeheartedly agreed with his underlying premise, which he quotes from Abraham Joshua Heschel’s *The Sabbath* (1951, p.89), that ‘all our life should be a pilgrimage to the seventh day’.

● Dr Lindsay Simmonds

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JEWISH BOOK WEEK

Antisemitism: What It Is. What It Isn’t. Why It Matters

Julia Neuberger



Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2019
ISBN: 978-1-4746-1240-1

Why does the world’s longest hatred need another book, and why is this one so timely? We live in rapidly changing times where antisemitism, like a football, is kicked around between the travails of the UK Labour party and the challenges of the far right in parts of Europe. As Rabbi Julia Neuberger explains, when she was a party to the Runnymede Trust Report on Antisemitism in 1994 (*A Very Light Sleeper: The Persistence and Dangers of Antisemitism*), there was more concern at that time about Islamophobia. But the publication in 2017 of the joint CST and Institute for Jewish Policy Research Report found in the UK a “hard core” antisemite population capped at 5% , but “a further 25% who feel negatively about Jews or held viewpoints that most Jews would consider anti-Semitic”. So, in the author’s words, “the music has changed.....and in addition there is also general bewilderment as to what antisemitism really is and confusion over whether criticism of Israel is itself antisemitic”

In some 180 pages, this little paperback is easily accessible for both the lay reader and the theologian, providing helpful history and guidance for both, including a fascinating bibliography covering both historical and current articles on antisemitism. We can see the whole timeline from historical roots (Antiochus Epiphanes around 70 BCE, and the early Christian church from 140 CE to the Confessions of St. Augustine in 430 CE) - the latter now covered of course in much greater depth in the significant new Church of England Report ‘God’s Unfailing Word’ - right up to current anti-Israel sentiment. The sweep of the book enables understanding of the significance and sensitivity of Jews to these manifestations. An index would have made this an even more valuable reference work, but nonetheless the book more than lives up to its promise in the title.

Those who want to read about antisemitism are spoilt for choice – legions of books appear on any internet search - but

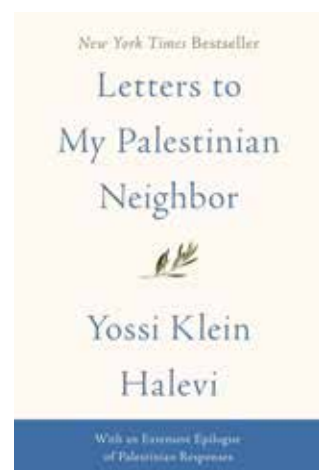
this one deals in a practical and very current way with what the author frequently refers to as “the canary singing in the mine”. That same internet search will reveal, amongst reviews of this book on the nation’s favourite online bookshop, a long anti-Israel rant which in one go justifies the whole existence of this book and why you should read it. And, helpfully, to understand why anti-Zionism is morphing into antisemitism, it also includes the full text of the Times letter of November 2017 from authors Simon Schama, Simon Sebag-Montefiore and Howard Jacobson.

Rabbi Julia mentions her family heritage and the impact of Nazism upon it. Coupled with her role as a practising Rabbi, member of the House of Lords and association with a wide number of charities and public causes, she has excellent grounds on which to base her analysis of antisemitism in the UK today.

● James Leek

Letters to My Palestinian Neighbour

Yossi Klein Halevi



HarperCollins, 2018
ISBN: 978-0062844910

Some years ago, Halevi’s book *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden* captivated my imagination at a time when I was thinking more deeply about interfaith relations in general and the Abrahamic faiths in particular. Hauntingly beautiful, achingly honest, and inspiringly hopeful, it’s the story of Halevi’s travels in the Holy Land, and of his search for kinship with his Christian and Muslim neighbours: he himself is an Israeli Jew, born in the United States, who made Aliyah in 1982. His writings have detailed his continued and cumulative efforts over decades to foster richer friendships across divisions of religion and politics in the area. *At the Entrance* described journeys to meet sheikhs and nuns, to participate in Sufi mystical dancing and Christian contemplation, and into areas thought dangerous to him as an Israeli but which he entered, intent on forging understanding.

Letters to My Palestinian Neighbour starts in the very different landscape of 2019. No longer legally permitted to visit the

Palestinian territories, Halevi sits on his porch listening to the call to prayer just over the separation barrier and laments for the reality of division and conflict which at present makes the pilgrimages described in his earlier work impossible. Out of that sorrow, he constructs a new appeal, no less beautiful, or heartfelt, or achingly vulnerable, but aimed directly and longingly in the direction of his unseen, unknown neighbour. Although he can barely imagine the life of this nameless addressee, he nevertheless seeks his understanding and engagement, recognising that they are bound together by a deep connection to a land they share, albeit in vastly different circumstances, and by a common history, albeit one which they understand and interpret in vastly different ways.

It is at once a book of great openness, and of real honesty, even toughness. One of Halevi’s aims is to give his neighbour – and readers – great clarity about the ways in which Israelis think of both history and the land, and their connection to and claims upon each. He is uncompromising about this, even though he is willing to acknowledge the frailty and failure of his own side. Indeed one of this book’s greatest strengths is its brief, stirring and memorable summations of some key elements of Zionist self-understanding and Israeli history. It’s one of the features that make it essential reading, however one reacts to his work.

Halevi, indeed, is seeking reaction, both positive and negative. The book is the first word in what he hopes will become a longer, fuller, discourse with his Palestinian neighbours. The early responses to his letters are found already at the book’s conclusion, in some equally honest and stirring replies. Further responses will be published online. This is a worthy successor to Halevi’s earlier books, and is an honest attempt to begin a new conversation which combines compassion with clarity. One can only hope that it will elicit the kinds of robust engagement and response for which he hopes, and a richer, more productive dialogue.

● Revd Dr Jonathan Dean

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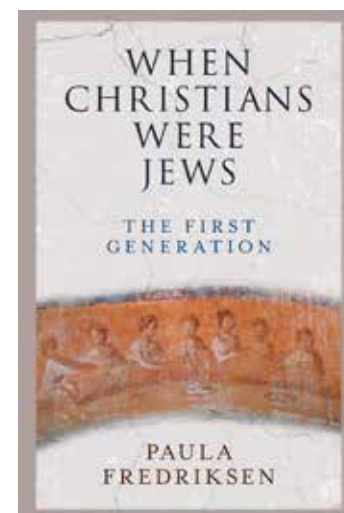
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When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation

Paula Fredriksen



Yale University Press, 2018
ISBN: 978-0-300-19051-9

As a working preacher and theological educator, who spends his time teaching political theology and church related community development, reading a book on Christian origins was a surprisingly enjoyable experience.

Paula Fredriksen is a prominent and prolific American Bible scholar. At one level she is outlining the ‘process that Jesus became “Christ”’. Here for anyone acquainted with the history of various quests for the historical Jesus, there was not too much new – but she writes very clearly, sitting lightly on strong and impressive scholarship. As a preacher and teacher I particularly liked being to take away from the book a number of quotable quotes: the shift of the resurrection from a ‘time indicator’ to a ‘status indicator’, speaking of some of the early Christians as ‘ex-pagan pagans’ and the Christian communities transitioning from ‘agitated vigil to active outreach’.

For me though what was driven home to me in a new and fresh way was the complete rootedness of the Christ followers in a much more amenable and adaptable Jewish monotheism than I had ever considered possible. Fredriksen stresses, rightly I think, how many of the texts which are seen as ‘antagonistic to Jews and Judaism’ are only interpreted in this way because of ‘the long shadow of later Christian anti-Judaism, cast backward.’ Quite simply, because we begin with the idea of Christianity and Judaism as ‘two incompatible traditions’ we read this split back into the Bible itself.

Ever since I was a teenage Christian I have had a difficult relationship with the Apostle Paul – it has been mostly one of me liking Jesus and disliking Paul. Though Fredriksen is not just writing on Paul (she has another book on him which I intend to read now) I found her portrait of him throughout the work to be particularly persuasive. For her, ‘The Paul of history stands entirely within Judaism.’ The historical work she does and explanation she gives for his ‘divinization of Christ’

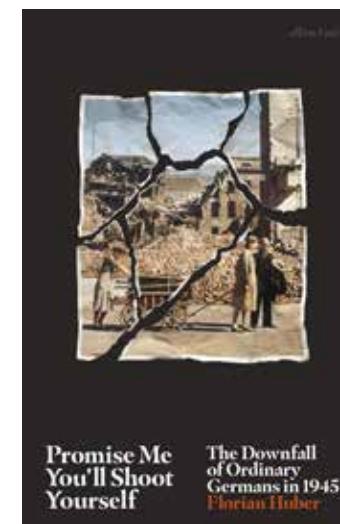
within a Jewish context is something I have not come across before and alone was worth the price of the book.

Finally, better read and educated folk than me may know this already, but I certainly let out a gasp when she says on her penultimate page: ‘It is useful to ponder the fact that, by Augustine’s period, James, Peter, and Paul would all have been condemned as heretics.’ I have known how the goalposts of heresy have moved over the centuries, in a number of areas, but I had not made the connection with how ‘Jews who combined Torah observance with belief in Christ – eventually became the measure of heresy.’ The strength of this closely argued book is that I have been pondering these things in my heart ever since – and indeed they deserve to be considered much more widely within Christian churches.

● Noel Irwin

Promise Me You’ll Shoot Yourself: The Downfall of Ordinary Germans in 1945

Florian Huber



Allen Lane, 2019
ISBN: 978-0241399248

Many shocking narratives have come out of the moral corruption and horror of Nazi Germany. One that has recently begun to be told is that of mass suicides by German civilians in the last days of World War II, as the Nazi regime imploded and allied forces entered German lands. Germans found themselves victims of their failed hopes in the Third Reich and of sustained Nazi propaganda regarding the threat from the East (the reality was often equal to the propaganda, but the propaganda had caused fear and dread to have deep roots). The consequence, beginning in East Prussia but then spreading across the country, was a suicide epidemic, tens of thousands of suicides.

Florian Huber’s *Promise me you’ll shoot yourself* tells the story – first of events in the town of Demmin where some 1000 people killed themselves over a period of four days, and

then of communities across Germany. He draws from diaries, letters and other contemporary accounts, and evokes the chaos and despair to sometimes overwhelming effect.

This is not a cheering read! I wept. But it is a compelling read, and a stunning account of a society that has been detached from moral roots.

Huber explores in detail the pre-war experience of Germans. It is here that the book perhaps most recommends itself to readers of *Common Ground*. Continuing to draw from contemporary accounts he traces the emotional journey of many different people in all sorts of circumstances as they responded to what many saw as the attractions of Nazism and in how many dealt with feelings of disapproval and guilt and disappointment and betrayal as they saw promises of security, progress and well-being betrayed by corruption, brutality, by war and eventually defeat.

What is telling is how, for many, – at least in the stories told here – disillusionment and ambivalence set in early, even if they quietened the inner voice, in hope that whatever compromises are made now, whatever evils are tolerated now, better will follow. In various ways people struggled with how light was now dark, and dark light; what was good, bad, and right, wrong. Some made noble decisions, others were ‘lost’ in a moral morass.

One Melita Maschmann wrote, following Kristallnacht: ‘I pushed the memory from my mind as fast as I could. As time went by, I got better and better at switching off quickly like this. It was the only sure way of keeping more doubts at bay. I suppose that, somewhere below waking consciousness, I knew that any serious doubts would have swept away the foundations of my life’ (p 199).

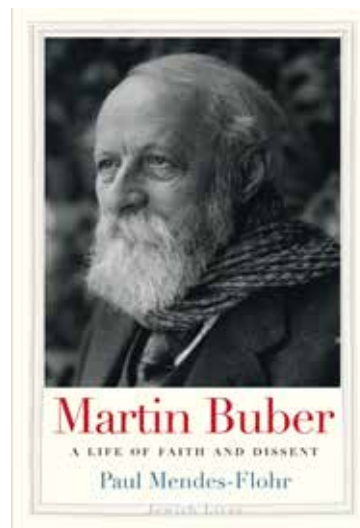
Today, again, many find ‘light’ in aggressive nationalism, even, again, in fascism. When people are so lost that they choose darkness over light, it helps to be reminded that what they say and even do is not necessarily all that is in their hearts. Even oft-time ignored or repressed doubt and insecurity offers us a potential way in to the human heart and soul, and offers a way back to decency, truth, God.

It is not enough to angrily challenge the (false) foundations of their opinions and lives. That may simply increase their fear and insecurity and cause them to cling more desperately yet to falsehood. Truth needs speaking in ways that re-establish its hold over the human heart, of winning people back to virtue, to genuine and lasting security. Moses said to the people: ‘I set before you today life and death. Choose life.’ (Deut 30:19) Sometimes people need a lot of help if they are to choose life, and have the courage to turn their back on death, including their own death!

● Fr Allen Morris

Martin Buber: A Life of Faith and Dissent

Paul Mendes-Flohr, Martin Buber



Yale University Press, 2019
ISBN: 978-0300153040

Buber was a contested figure; Mendes-Flohr acknowledges in his introduction, before quoting Buber’s lifelong friend, Shmuel Yosef Agnon: ‘There are people about whom you must once decide whether you love or hate them. I decided to love Buber’. Mendes-Flohr shares this love, though with his eyes open to his subject’s weaknesses and faults.

As editor-in-chief of his collected works, and co-editor of the remarkable compendium *Contemporary Jewish Thought*, Mendes-Flohr is well placed to write Buber’s biography.

He connects the trauma of his subject’s early life, when Martin was abandoned by his mother at the age of three, with Buber’s profound concern with relationship: life contains not only genuine connections but is also ‘filled with mismeetings and the failure of I-Thou encounters to take place.’ Martin’s meeting aged eighteen with Paula, a vivacious young woman with ‘bohemian, exotic flair,’ brought a lifetime of emotional, intellectual and spiritual companionship.

Mendes-Flohr shows a profound knowledge of the context in which the successive developments in Buber’s thought take place. An increasingly successful writer and editor, Buber founded the monthly *Der Jude* in 1916. He was initially shocked when his friend Gustav Landauer, the ill-fated anarchist assassinated in the aftermath of Germany’s defeat, refused to contribute, severely critical of Buber’s initial patriotic fervour. Yet he came to understand Landauer’s position, writing that he had ‘overcome nationalism’ and now saw that ‘a nation and a state are at best relative ideals, legitimate only to the extent that they foster the birth of a new humanity.’

In 1924 Buber devoted a whole edition of *Der Jude* to the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Deeply

invested in this encounter and eager to seek common ground, he was pained by the lack of understanding by his partners in dialogue of the Hebrew Bible and of Judaism as a living faith on its own terms. He saw the neo-Marcian denigration of the world of creation, the practical plain on which the love of one’s neighbour had to be made real, as helping pave the way for National Socialist anti-Semitism.

Central to Buber’s work in the twenties was his relationship with Franz Rosenzweig, especially their joint project to translate the Bible into a German closely reflecting the subtlety and vitality of the original language. A fascinating exchange of letters illustrates their differing views of revelation, Buber insisting that God is never a law-giver and that he can accept only ‘what I think is being spoken to me.’

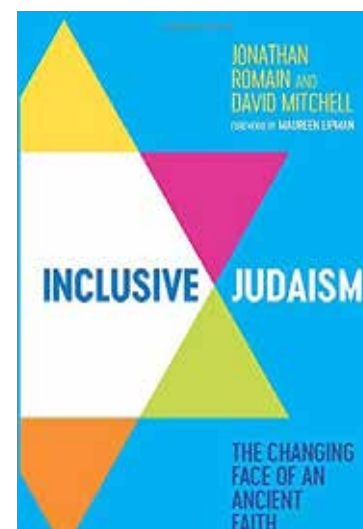
Though a committed Zionist, fleeing Nazism and making Aliyah in 1938, Buber sought to build connections with the Palestinian population, reflecting an ambivalent approach to statehood per se, and regarding spiritual rather than solely political renewal as fundamental to the future of Judaism. Mendes-Flohr aptly titles his final chapter ‘Not to Belong.’

Buber’s position on the margins was not always popular. But it makes him an essential figure in reflecting on the value and importance of dialogue.

● Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg

Inclusive Judaism: The Changing Face of An Ancient Faith

Jonathan Romain and David Mitchell



Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2020
ISBN: 978-1785925443

When I first became rabbi of a congregation, I asked my class of twelve year olds if they thought it was important that their life partner should be another Jew. Fewer than 20% of them attached

any importance to it. Over the following years, I would repeat the question, and the numbers would drop further. It was obvious to me that the demographics of the Anglo-Jewish community could be quite different in twenty years. And so it has turned out to be. As a Reform rabbi I was committed to both tradition and modernity, even though it sometimes felt like trying to look in opposite directions at the same time. In the 1990s and through into the present century, we did not officiate at the weddings of mixed faith couples, and there was no acceptance that you could get Jewish status through your father alone. When challenged on this, I would often say ‘I’m sure the way we do this is going to change, but not yet.’ Eventually, however, the time did arrive and it has been a privilege to be part of the change.

This book is about proudly proclaiming that change, ‘getting the word out there’, as Maureen Lipman puts it in her moving foreword. If you are a Jew with status issues, or an atheist Jew, or have discovered your Jewish heritage as an adult, or have only one Jewish parent, or a Jewish woman who has felt unequal, or you are in a mixed heritage relationship, or Jewish and LGBT+, or gender transitioning, or a Jewish single parent or divorcee, or simply wanting to become Jewish, this is the book for you. Written in a highly accessible and racy style, the book proclaims a very simple message—go to your local Reform synagogue, the door will be opened, and you will be welcomed. In a lovely touch, the book contains quotations from people who have been through one of the above scenarios and found such a welcome. The chapter on ‘Atheist Jews’ gives two complementary approaches—perhaps from our two different authors. The first suggests that atheist Jews are more than welcome to be fully part of the community through secular and cultural activities, while the second approach boldly suggests that the prayer services themselves can be adapted. A wonderful example is given of an ‘atheist bar mitzvah’ where the mother celebrated by reading Torah, and the son addressed the congregation, a great example of inclusive Judaism.

As with any book, one can find quibbles. There is too much ‘Orthodox bashing’ here—Orthodox Jews are not a monolithic unchanging group, and it is wrong to treat them all as intransigent and unhelpful. And I feel there is too much here about historic differences between British Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism, some of which may feel quite arcane and complicated to the readers the book was written for. But these blemishes do not spoil a really useful book. Where there is openness and willingness, a way can be found through the quagmire of inherited texts and practices to a Judaism which embraces and celebrates the world in which we live today.

● Rabbi Dr. Michael Hilton

Dr Lionel Kopelowitz

by Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko

This year saw the passing of one of the most loved and iconic figures in Anglo Jewry of this generation, Dr Lionel Kopelowitz. Much has been written about the commitment Lionel demonstrated throughout his life to Jewish communal service. Born in Newcastle, he practiced as a doctor and moved to London where he became President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews from 1985-1991. After Lionel stepped down as President he was always fondly referred to as 'the Father' of the Jewish community. I was privileged to know Lionel, first in my role as Public Affairs Director at the Board of Deputies of British Jews and later in my current role as Director of CCJ.

Little however has been written about Lionel's strong commitment to interfaith

work and particularly to Christian-Jewish relations through his work at the Council of Christians and Jews where he served for close to two decades as a Vice President. In 2015 he was awarded a well-deserved MBE for his contribution to interfaith relations.

In my current role, I came to rely on Lionel for good advice, support and humour. He was always there at the end of the phone no matter how many other issues he was involved in. He never missed a CCJ event even in his latter years. It is no exaggeration to say that there is a big hole in CCJ that was formerly filled by Lionel's commitment to our work. He is sorely missed.

*Dr Lionel Kopelowitz:
9 December 1926 – 27 July 2019*



Rabbi Harry Jacobi

by Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi

Rabbi Harry Jacobi, who has died at the age of 93, twice escaped the Nazis and went on to be a much-loved Liberal rabbi, one of the last of a generation who came to Britain as refugees. A Vice President of Liberal Judaism, he was active in the movement for seventy years and an outspoken advocate as well as touching many lives through his gentleness and compassion. Always conscious of his refugee background, he campaigned on behalf of child refugees and spoke to hundreds of school children about his experience.

Born in Berlin on 19th October 1925, as Heinz Martin Hirschberg, his early childhood was spent in Auerbach, until the Nazis refused him access to the grammar school. Returning to Berlin, attending the Theodor Herzl Schule made him a lifelong, though not uncritical, Zionist. His Bar Mitzvah was held at the Friedenstempel in October 1938, just before Kristallnacht, after which he forfeited his 64 Marks of Bar Mitzvah money as part of the reparations demanded by the Nazis.

The following January, he was sent by his parents to his uncle in Amsterdam and, after surviving diphtheria in a camp, stayed in the Burgerweeshuis Orphanage. As Nazi troops invaded Holland, he was among 74 children and several adults rescued from there by Truus Wijsmuller-Meijer. He contributed to a film about this remarkable woman, designated a Righteous Gentile by Yad VaShem, which is being released this year.

Coming to England, he stayed in a Hostel for refugees in Manchester. Called up in May 1945, he served for three years mainly with the Jewish Brigade. After demobilisation, and having changed his name to Harry Martin Jacobi – his mother's maiden name – he returned to Amsterdam to work with his uncle, who was helping to rebuild the Liberal congregation there. He was contemplating Aliyah, but his life took a different course when he attended the conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in 1949 and was

inspired by Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck to become a rabbi. This meant completing his education, interrupted at the age of 13, and studying part time for a degree. Mentored by Lily Montagu, he went to Aberdeen to work as a lay minister whilst studying Hebrew, with Prof. David Daube amongst others. Through the World Union for Progressive Judaism, he was introduced to a pen pal in Bombay, Rose Solomon, who was to become his wife.

Moving back to London, he continued his studies at University College London and began his rabbinic career at Southgate Progressive Synagogue. He married Rose in 1957 and their first child, Margaret, was born soon after, with Richard and David following. Rose and Harry were a formidable and inseparable pairing, and Harry was a real romantic, with a love of surprises and a sense of fun. Despite his family and congregational commitments, Harry obtained a degree and was ordained Reverend by John Rayner and Lily Montagu in 1961 and then given Semichah as rabbi by Leo Baeck College in 1971.

Harry was an innovative pioneer of interfaith relations and co-founded with Dr. Michael Essex-Lopresti and others the Southgate branch of CCJ. Harry served for a time on the Executive Council of



CCJ. Harry and Rose always invited a non-Jewish guest to their Passover Seder: guests included Edward Carpenter, Dean of St. Paul's and Fr. Dom Jones.

In 1975, Harry moved to Wembley Liberal Synagogue and then in 1982 to Zurich, Switzerland, which again saw a period of growth under his leadership. Following his official retirement in 1990 he became part-time rabbi of the South Bucks Liberal Jewish community and Chair of the Liberal Bet Din.

In 2016, Harry made a visit with Lord Alf Dubs to the Calais refugee camp to meet some of the boy refugees, which moved him deeply. He joined the campaign for child refugees to enter this country, saying, 'There shouldn't be any restrictions at all to saving lives when you can save lives.' He made a short video for UNICEF, 'Harry and Ahmed', comparing his experiences with those of a young Syrian boy. He spoke frequently at schools, touching the students with his story, and also at Holocaust Memorial events. He was proud to participate in the annual AJEX (Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen) remembrance ceremony, being the last surviving rabbi who had served in the Second World War.

Harry was awarded the MBE in 2006 for services to the Jewish community. He was proud that two of his children followed him as rabbis but equally proud of his son David, a chemical engineer and amateur cellist, who died in 2016. He also delighted in his grandchildren and great grandchildren. Harry's resilience and optimism, especially in caring for Rose and David before their deaths in 2014 and 2016, was inspirational to all who encountered him.

He is survived by his children, Margaret and Richard, grandchildren Joshua, Abigail, Hannah, Yoni and Tali and great grandchildren Zachary and Harry. His wife Rose and his son David predeceased him.

*Rabbi Harry Martin Jacobi, MBE:
19 October 1925 - 24 April 2019*

Paul Winner

by Zaki Cooper

When CCJ was looking for somebody to spearhead its 60th anniversary celebrations in 2002, Paul Winner was the obvious choice. Flamboyant and charismatic with a successful career in public relations, the task was perfect for Paul. In the end, the celebrations encompassed 60 musical events with Music Choice Europe, a reception at St James Palace attended by the Queen, and another at Downing Street attended by then-PM Tony Blair.

Paul was involved with CCJ for well over two decades, including a spell on its Advisory Board. Close to the prolific inter-faith leader Sir Sigmund Sternberg, he helped him with the launch and development of the Three Faiths Forum. Paul believed in the importance of CCJ and other inter-faith bodies to promote better understanding and community relations.

When we met for a catch up, often at one of his clubs, he invariably would bring a sketch pad with him, and would draw during the conversation. The end results were invariably very impressive, nor did the artwork have any obvious detrimental effect on his concentration during the meeting. Paul liked to recount the occasion when he presented Pope John Paul II with some sketches, when he visited the Vatican as part of an inter-faith delegation in 1994. The Pontiff responded: “Mr Winner these are wonderful works, but we do have other artists here in the Vatican”!

His artistic talent led him to being appointed artist in residence at the World Congress of Religion and Peace and as the Home Office’s “Artist at Large” for Holocaust Memorial Day.

Paul forged a very successful career in public relations. His eponymous firm,

founded in 1967, became one of the UK’s top independent PR agencies.

Paul was a supporter of the Liberal Party, standing as a parliamentary candidate. He narrowly lost out in 1983 to the incumbent Tory MP in Windsor, successfully canvassing support from staff in the Royal Household and at Eton College.

Paul was a bon viveur, whose presence lit up a room, and who always left you feeling uplifted by his presence, interest and enthusiasm.

He is survived by his wife Mary, whom he married in 1963, and their two children, Sonya and Daniel, along with four grandchildren.

Paul Winner:
7 July 1934 - 21 May 2019



Fr Tom Creagh Fuller

by Robert Weaver

Tom was that renaissance figure, l’uomo universal. He died in November 2019, mourned by many for his benign influence and his guiding of the South East London Branch from its initial years to his recent elevation as a father figure to us as Honorary joint President.

A North Londoner, Tom qualified at the Royal Academy of Music and took a post as conductor of the Tel Aviv Opera House where he found himself immersed in Israeli culture and which gave him a lifelong interest in and commitment to interfaith issues, valuable experience which he shared willingly in his wise insights with all he met in CCJ and in ecumenical work generally. He first came into contact with the embryo branch of SE London, upon his return to London, as liaison man for his Roman Catholic parish, St Edmund’s Beckenham which had lent its hall to us for meetings.

Tom discerned a vocation in his

forties towards ordination and was deemed suitable for training in Rome at the Gregorian University while residing at the English College, the seminary for potentially elite catholic clergy back home. Fours years’ study was nearly cut short with a brain tumour but he was priested and returned to full time ministry in the London and Kent area, renewing contact with CCJ SE, attending the meetings within his busy schedule not only as parish priest but as diocesan expert in a number of international catholic committees. We used to tease him on the exotic locations of some conferences he was sent to: (Valetta, Venice, Rome, Goa) to which he would reply, ‘ Well, someone’s got to do it’.

Despite the challenges of ill health in his latter years, Fr Tom rarely mentioned himself and will be remembered as a wise counsellor, a stalwart defender of Jewish and Christian communities and their work together, whose unassuming genial personality informed by a trenchant

wit made him a one-off type of personality. Much loved and respected for all he was and did, he will be greatly missed within the Council and beyond.

Fr Tom Creagh Fuller.





The Council of Christians and Jews

The Leading Nationwide Forum For Christian-Jewish Engagement

Notice of this year's Annual General Meeting

To be held on **November 9th 2020**

Venue: London, location to be announced

Members meeting: 11am
AGM: 1pm

A light kosher lunch will be provided

Guest speaker: TBC

To register your interest please email the office on Cjrelations@ccj.org.uk or by calling 020 3515 3003

Meet the staff

Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko
Director

Elizabeth, Director of CCJ, has broad experience of working across faiths. She served previously as a Director of an interfaith and social justice organisation in Jerusalem, and as Public Affairs Director at the Board of Deputies of British Jews. She is also a trustee of the Abraham Fund Initiatives, which promotes the rights of Arab citizens of Israel. She holds a B.A. in English and Philosophy, an MA in Contemporary Jewry and an MSc in Charity Management. In her spare time she enjoys studying Talmud.

Jay Serrao
Financial Controller

Jay is Financial Controller at CCJ and has over 15 years of experience. He is a member of the IMA, holds a Masters in International Business and a Bachelors in Business Management. Outside of work, Jay produces music and videos with a deep appreciation of Classic Rock.

Rob Thompson
Senior Programme Manager

Rob is Senior Programme Manager, leading on CCJ's Holocaust Education for which he has been recognised with a 21for21 Award. He has an MA in Jewish History and Culture and is a Local Preacher in the Methodist Church. In his spare time Rob enjoys reading, walking, and wildlife photography.

Robert Wadsworth
Office and Events Manager

Robert is the Office and Events Manager for CCJ. His main role is ensuring the CCJ office, events, and memberships run smoothly. In his spare time he enjoys listening to history podcasts, watching football, and camping (when weather permits!).

Esther Sills
Programme Manager

Esther is a Programme Manager at CCJ where she leads Social Action Projects. Esther has a BA in Social Policy and Law and has experience supporting refugees and families in asylum accommodation. Esther enjoys spending her spare time going on outdoor adventures exploring the countryside.

Nathan Eddy
Deputy Director

Nathan is Deputy Director of CCJ. He holds a PhD in Hebrew Bible from Northern College, University of Manchester, and has worked as a university chaplain and minister in the United Reformed Church. From 2014 until this year he edited the Bible devotional *Fresh from the Word: The Bible for a Change* (Lion Hudson), and has taught Hebrew and Bible in a variety of settings. Nathan lives with his wife Clare, an Anglican vicar, on the Lisson Green estate in London with two kids, two apple trees, and eight chickens.

Katharine Crew
Campus Leadership Manager

Katharine is CCJ's Campus Leadership Manager, and has been running the Campus Leadership Programme since its inception in 2016. She has won a 21for21 Award in recognition of her university interfaith work and is training as a Local Preacher in the Methodist Church. In her spare time she can be found dancing, acting and singing in various amateur theatre groups.



The Council of Christians and Jews is the leading nationwide forum for Christian-Jewish engagement.

CCJ exists:

To promote religious and cultural understanding between Christian and Jewish communities primarily within the United Kingdom.

To advance the elimination of religious and racial prejudice, hatred and discrimination with particular reference to antisemitism.

To promote religious and racial harmony primarily within the United Kingdom on the basis of the ethical and social teachings common to Judaism and Christianity.

The Council of Christians and Jews

Mary Sumner House
24 Tufton Street
Westminster
London SW1P 3RB

0203 515 3003

www.ccj.org.uk

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