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The Merits of 'Moral Ecumenism': Secularism, Suspicion and Jewish-Christian Relations in Twentieth-Century Britain

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This article uses the history of Jewish-Christian relations in twentieth-century Britain to shed light on the theological and political changes which have shaped inter-faith dialogue, and explore religious responses to the perceived acceleration of secularism. In so doing it questions the centrality of antisemitism and the Holocaust as the key drivers of change in Jewish-Christian relations and highlights the importance of broader shifts in religious belief, and a growing perception of 'common ground' between faiths. While Jewish-Christian relations in Britain are now frequently presented as a model of inter-faith cooperation, this article argues that longstanding theological and political challenges have continued to problematise this role-model status.

In 1936, Jimmy Butterworth, a Methodist minister and youth worker, chanced upon London's Central Synagogue in Great Portland Street. Walking past, his attention was drawn by a banner outside the building exalting the scriptural instruction to 'love thy neighbour as thyself'. Butterworth had developed bonds with Jewish people through

CCJ = Council of Christians and Jews; CMJ = Church's Mission to the Jews; ICCJ = International Council of Christians and Jews; WCC = World Council of Churches; WJC = World Jewish Congress

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his youth work, which had brought him into contact with Basil Henriques, whose Oxford and St George's Jewish Youth Club in the East End had much in common with Butterworth's own South London Clubland. He decided to enter the synagogue, he confided to Henriques, because he 'sincerely want[ed] to pray to your God and my God – for us both and for our lads'.[1] The youth work shared by the men had led previously to positive experiences of bringing Jews and Christians together in prayer. 'The happiest evenings', Henriques told his friend, had 'been when your boys have joined in prayer with mine.'[2]

On entering the synagogue, however, Butterworth found himself afforded a less than friendly reception. Having inadvertently identified himself as a non-Jew by his instinct to remove his hat, he was confronted by a worshipper who told him, 'You are a Christian – what do you want in here – you are not one of us – go out.' Butterworth explained what happened next in a letter to Henriques:

> I said I wanted to pray to God, and reminded him of the text outside. He shouted 'Why did you Christians take a Jew for your God, why not a Scotsman, a German, or an Englishman.' As for the notice, said he 'Love's one thing – religion another'… he made it quite clear that I couldn't pray to his God, and then he said I could come if I turned Jew – he talked a great deal about meat, what part of me would have to be cut off, and so on and so on.[3]

Henriques was clearly appalled by the incident, forwarding Butterworth's letter to the Central's rabbi, Philip Cohen, and informing the United Synagogue's vice-president, Robert Waley Cohen. He reassured his friend that the man in question must have been 'mentally deranged'. A synagogue, he explained, 'whether Orthodox or Progressive, has always been for worship for Jew and Gentile alike'.[4] This explanation, however, said more about the atmosphere which both Henriques and Butterworth aspired to create than it did about reality. For in 1930s Britain, as Butterworth discovered to his detriment, relations between Jews and Christians were frequently strained, and hostility and suspicion far from exceptional.

Between themselves, the Jewish leaders drawn into this incident explained it on a different set of terms. Rabbi Cohen, for example, while admitting that Butterworth's account left him feeling 'loathing' and 'despair', made sense of what had happened in terms of fraught historical relations between Jews and Christians. 'Persecution', he told Henriques, 'seems to have developed a certain kind of religious neurosis, and no

[1] James Butterworth to Basil Henriques, 16 Nov. 1936, papers of Sir Robert Waley Cohen and Sir Bernard Waley Cohen, Hartley Archive, University of Southampton, MS363/A3006/1/3/53. [2] Henriques to Butterworth, 18 Nov. 1936, ibid.
[3] Butterworth to Henriques, 16 Nov. 1936, ibid.
[4] Henriques to Butterworth, 18 Nov. 1936, ibid.

reasoning seems to help, for I have tried all this.' Nor was the rabbi sure that such an event would be a one-off. He would try, he wrote, to avoid a recurrence 'although I do not know how successful I shall be'.[5] Similarly, Waley Cohen thought that Butterworth's abuser was probably not 'mad in the ordinary sense', but instead a victim of 'some of the violence of which we are all too well aware occurs now'. Hence, between the Jewish leaders, the onus was placed on Christians to improve the situation, at least to some extent. Waley Cohen told Henriques:

> I sometimes feel that the non-Jewish churches have not been as active as they might have been in rousing civilisation to a condemnation of all that Nazism and its imitators in this country stand for and mean for the future of the human race. Perhaps if you have further communications with Mr Butterworth you may get a chance of pointing out that moral of this revolting incident.[6]

All in all, Butterworth's synagogue experience encapsulates broader trends in Jewish-Christian relations in twentieth-century Britain. For one thing, his desire to seek out a shared space for prayer with Jewish people highlighted a growing positivity towards Judaism, and the desire to build bridges, among some Christians. Uncertain and inconsistent Jewish responses tell a slightly different story, showing something of the challenge involved in repairing what had historically been a relationship fraught with prejudice and discrimination, especially in the atmosphere of Hitler's Reich. And yet, the overall trend is perhaps best captured by Butterworth's intentions. Through a series of channels, at international, national, local and personal levels, Jews and Christians in Britain frequently tried, as the century progressed, to engage positively with each other, in a way which led a Church of England report in 2019 to speculate that Jewish-Christian bonding might now be seen as 'in some sense paradigmatic for all other inter-faith relations'.[7] But Butterworth's ugly reception also serves to curb the temptation to identify Jewish-Christian relations as an exemplar and extrapolate from them a model of inter-faith cooperation. Obstructing such an analysis, a long history of Christian antisemitism looms large, rendering any kind of positive story one of restitution and repentance punctuated by suspicion and hostility (as Butterworth found out).

As a story of restitution, many scholars and activists have pointed to the impact of the Holocaust in shaping post-war Jewish-Christian relations, and specifically to the Christian guilt and contrition that arose in its wake.[8]

[5] Philip Cohen to Henriques, 19 Nov. 1936, ibid.
[6] R. Waley Cohen to Henriques, 19 Nov. 1936, ibid.
[7] Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England, *God's unfailing word: theological and practical perspectives on Jewish-Christian relations*, London 2019, 42.
[8] See R. Harries, *After the evil: Christianity and Judaism in the shadow of the Holocaust*, Oxford 2003.

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According to the rabbi Lionel Blue, 'the Holocaust and the last war … shattered some bad things too … Religiously, both the hot war between Christians and Jews and the cold war which succeeded it are dying too'.[9] Yet, the changing atmosphere in Jewish-Christian relations in Britain, while undoubtedly catalysed by the Holocaust, preceded both Nazi antisemitism and the resulting genocide. The Holocaust, moreover, was often in any case perceived by Christians in ways which made it an unstable foundation for Jewish-Christian relations. Instead, this article explains the growth of inter-faith endeavour in slightly different terms, as a window into theological shifts and developing religious responses to secularism and devotional change. On these terms a demonstrable difference between Orthodox and Progressive Jewish positions on inter-faith is visible, rooted in Orthodox anxieties about seeking holiness beyond Jewish Scripture and suspicions about the ultimate intentions of increasingly friendly Christian neighbours.

Jewish-Christian relations in early twentieth-century Britain

In 1904 a group of scholars set up the London Society for the Study of Religion 'as a Jewish-Christian scholarly club'.[10] The Society grew from a desire to explore inter-faith commonalities, exemplified by the participation of Claude Montefiore, who would go on to be one of the founders of the new Liberal Jewish synagogue, and author of a number of works which explored Christianity from a Jewish point of view.[11] Montefiore's Liberal Judaism was key to driving these inter-faith discussions. Few Orthodox Jews in this period, or since, could see much merit in studying Christian theological texts, or Jewish texts from fundamentally non-Jewish perspectives. For Liberals, however, whose faith held that Jewish people should 'face the implications of the new theories of Biblical criticism', it made sense to approach religious material in different ways.[12] As Montefiore explained at the outset of his study of the Synoptic Gospels, 'I am anxious to get at the facts and to let them speak for themselves; to look at things as they really are.'[13] In 1924 the Presbyterian

[9] L. Blue, *My affair with Christianity*, London 1998, 153.

[10] A. Summers, 'False start or brave beginning? The society of Jews and Christians, 1924–1944', this JOURNAL lxv (2014), 827–51 at p. 828. See also M. Braybrooke, *Children of one God: a history of the Council of Christians and Jews,* London 1991, 1.

[11] See, for example, C. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, i, ii, London 1927, and *Judaism and St Paul: two essays*, London 1914. For analysis see D. Langton, 'Claude Montefiore in the context of Jewish approaches to Jesus and the Apostle Paul', *Hebrew Union College Annual* lxx (1999), 405–28.

[12] See L. Rigal and R. Rosenberg, *Liberal Judaism: the first hundred years*, London 2004, 13.

[13] Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, p. xx.

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Church of England established a committee to promote Jewish-Christian understanding, while, in the same year, the Social Service Committee of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue convened a conference on 'Religion as an Educational Force' which evolved into a Society of Jews and Christians in 1927.[14] Here, the industry of the Liberal Jewish leader Lily Montagu pricked leadership structures that were almost exclusively male.[15]

Notwithstanding Liberal endeavour, ties between Jews and Christians in the interwar period were built most substantially at institutional level through the efforts of some committed Christian theologians, who, like the Liberals, saw theological value in inter-faith engagement. Most obviously, the Anglican clergyman James Parkes, who went on to play a central role in Jewish-Christian relations for half a century, made his first major foray into the field through the publication of *The Jew and his neighbour* in 1930.[16] In 1933 the Methodist William W. Simpson was awarded a church grant to research 'the state of relations between Christians and Jews', activity which drove him to establish a Youth Council on Jewish-Christian Relations and publish a book on *Youth and anti-semitism*.[17] It was, however, amid the horror of the Second World War that Jewish-Christian relations really took off, through the establishment in 1942 of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ), of which Simpson would serve as general secretary for over thirty years.

The CCJ was formed at the initiative of the archbishop of York, William Temple, reflecting a longstanding personal commitment to ecumenism and inter-faith, which had seen him set the foundations for the World Council of Churches (WCC), seeking to 'bring together the Roman Catholic and non-Roman Catholic worlds in the search for peace and justice'.[18] Temple's push for Jewish-Christian bonding led him to invite a range of Christian faith leaders and the Chief Rabbi to lunch in 1941 after extensive lobbying by Parkes and Simpson,[19] action which drove the first formal meeting of the CCJ in March 1942.[20] Set up in the

[14] Braybrooke, *Children of one God*, 1–3.

[15] Summers has pointed out that 'The official hierarchies of Jewish and Christian congregations during this period were, of course, overwhelmingly masculine': *Christian and Jewish women in Britain, 1880–1940*, Basingstoke 2017, 150.

[16] J. Parkes, *The Jew and his neighbour: a study of the causes of anti-semitism*, London 1930. For analysis of Parkes's career see C. Richmond, *Campaigner against anti-semitism: the Reverend James Parkes, 1896–1981*, London 2005, and H. Chertock, *He also spoke as a Jew: the life of James Parkes*, London 2006.

[17] W. Simpson, *Youth and anti-semitism*, London 1938.

[18] D. Kirby, 'William Temple, Pius XII, ecumenism, natural law, and the post-war peace', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* xxxvi (1999), 318–39.

[19] T. Kushner, 'The beginnings of the Council of Christians and Jews', *Common Ground: The Journal of the Council of Christians and Jews* iii–iv (1992), 6–10.

[20] For analysis of the beginnings of the Council see Braybrooke, *Children of one God*, 10–17.

shadow of the Holocaust, the aims of the Council were not specifically focused on antisemitism, but rather established a broader remit to 'check and combat religious and racial intolerance' and 'promote mutual understanding and goodwill'.[21] This reflected a growing ecumenical and inter-faith instinct in the context of a Christian comprehension of Nazism which saw the persecution of Jews as 'symptomatic of an even deeper evil and crisis'.[22] Specifically, Church leaders saw in Nazi attacks on dissenting German churchmen a risk to their own faiths, so that, in the words of Summers, they considered that 'the sufferings of Jews and Christians in Germany were inextricably interconnected'.[23] Thus, empathy with Jews grew from Christian feelings of vulnerability, anxiety which helped Parkes and Simpson to push the new organisation forward in Christian quarters.[24] The Chief Rabbi, the archbishop, and soon Cardinal Hinsley became joint presidents of the Council, alongside the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland.

Efforts towards an International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) began after the American and British Councils convened a meeting in Oxford in 1946 on the theme of 'Freedom, Justice and Responsibility'. Here, also, antisemitism did not take centre stage as the group focused on 'the relevance of the fundamental moral and ethical principles of Judaism and Christianity to the problems of the post-war world', a subject which spoke to shared anxieties about Communism in the new Cold War climate.[25] Again, however, revulsion against Nazism in the thinking of organisers and delegates was highly significant. After all, as Wigoder has pointed out, three delegates at the first conference were themselves survivors of Nazi concentration camps.[26] In its wake, two further gatherings swiftly followed (at Seelisburg and Fribourg) and while the establishment of a formal organisation did not immediately result (delayed by the American Council's decision to focus on a broader 'World Brotherhood') an international consultative committee was formed in 1961, evolving into an International Council in 1974.[27]

[21] Ibid. 14; Kushner, 'The beginnings of the Council', 6.
[22] Braybrooke, *Children of one God*, 11.
[23] Summers, 'False start or brave beginning?', 827–51.
[24] Ibid. 851; Kushner, 'The beginnings of the Council', 6.
[25] W. Simpson, 'Oxford 1946 to Jerusalem 1976: significance and realities', papers of the Chief Rabbi, London Metropolitan Archives, ACC/2805/7/16/1.
[26] G. Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian relations since the Second World War*, New York 1988, 3.
[27] Simpson, 'Oxford 1946 to Jerusalem 1976'.

The decision not to foreground the fight against antisemitism in both the CCJ and the ICCJ was revealing. To Cardinal Heenan in 1972, the goal of fighting antisemitism had been so central to the establishment of these groups that it seemed perverse not to name it. CCJ 'was not founded', Heenan argued, 'to protect the Christians from the Jews. And nobody thinks it was. It was founded to protect the Jews from the Christians'.[28] And yet, thirty years after its establishment, Heenan's claim caused consternation within the CCJ, deviating as it did from original aims that were focused at their core on the theological and social value of inter-faith discussion. It was, Simpson reprimanded Heenan, 'too negative in its implications and … tended to bore people when "it is always the Jews that we are standing up for"'.[29] Faced with the reality of Jewish marginality and Christian dominance, Jews were to be the recipients of help, but it was unseemly to say so, and risked undermining the nascent atmosphere of inter-faith brotherhood. Far better to point out, as Chief Rabbi Hertz had done, that the Nazi challenge posed a broader threat to the whole nation in terms of the 'utter repudiation of the sacredness of human life'.[30] This position, in any case, resonated with the worldview of the Church of England, which, according to Lawson, cast Nazism as the antithesis of civilisation and Christianity more than as the destroyer of European Jewry.[31] On these terms, the desire to fight Nazism, while undoubtedly connected to supporting Jews, also told a different story, of religious groups coming together to face the threats posed by ungodly forces.

And yet there can be little doubt that Christian desire to repent of antisemitism supported the growth of inter-faith relations in post-war Europe and North America in line with the increasing value placed on ecumenical and inter-faith discussion. As the news of the Nazi genocide spread into the UK, James Parkes was quick to point out the Church's responsibility for what was happening. 'The scourge', he told the Youth Council on Jewish-Christian relations in 1942, 'has a quite definite historical origin.' Not mincing his words, Parkes pointed the finger directly at Christianity. Hitler's antisemitism, he explained, was 'of precisely the character of that of the early Christian Church'.[32] Parkes's introspection did not

[28] Speech by Cardinal Heenan on the thirtieth anniversary of the CCJ, 5 July 1972, papers of the Chief Rabbi, ACC/2805/7/16/1.

[29] W. Simpson to Cardinal Heenan, 10 July 1972, ibid.

[30] Chief Rabbi Hertz cited in Braybrooke, *Children of one God*, 12.

[31] T. Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust: Christianity, memory and Nazism*, London 2006, 177.

[32] Parkes, 'Jews, Christians and God', Aug. 1942, papers of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, London Metropolitan Archives, ACC/3121/C15/3/17.

reflect church responses more broadly, but after the Holocaust more Churches and Christian organisations did speak out in opposition to anti-semitism and repent of the Church's historical role in shaping it.[33] For example, the First Assembly of the WCC, meeting in Amsterdam in 1948, issued a statement which recognised the role of Christianity in contributing to the hatred of Jews, and unequivocally laid out a clear stance: 'We call upon all the churches we represent to denounce anti-Semitism, no matter what its origin, as absolutely irreconcilable with the profession and practice of the Christian faith. Anti-semitism is a sin against God and man.'[34]

Speaking at a CCJ event in 1988 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of 'Kristallnacht', the archbishop of Canterbury highlighted the extent to which the Anglican Church had now internalised a significant degree of responsibility for the horrors of antisemitism. 'Kristallnacht has its origin deep in the history of Christian Europe. Without centuries of Christian anti-semitism, Hitler's passionate hatred would never have been so fervently echoed.'[35] Most significantly, this kind of introspection contributed to a new position on Jewish-Christian relations from the Catholic Church in 1965, supporting the development of a statement which, more than any other, reset Christian attitudes to Jews and Judaism. In what Cardinal Heenan would go on to articulate as a 'reparation to the Jewish people', *Nostra aetate* laid out clearly Catholic opposition to 'hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone'.[36] Like the WCC and the CCJ, however, *Nostra aetate* had roots beyond anxieties about antisemitism, and was underwritten by complex theological shifts towards ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, which helped to set the tone of Church responses to the Holocaust. Ben-Johanan has cited in this context Pius XII's encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu* in 1942, as opening 'the door for the participation of Catholic theologians in Bible Studies', a move which would ultimately support the writing of *Nostra aetate* and the improved Catholic-Jewish relations that followed.[37]

[33] Lawson has gone so far as to argue that Parkes's position fell on 'deaf ears': *The Church of England and the Holocaust*, 171.

[34] World Council of Churches, 'Amsterdam assembly 1948, extracts from report of committee IV, concerns of the Churches, III: The Christian approach to the Jews', at https://archived.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/1948-amsterdam/concerns-of-the-churches-the-christian-approach-to-the-jews.html. For analysis see D. Marshall, 'The World Council of Churches and the theology of Christian-Jewish relations', *Ecumenical Review* lxxii (2020), 861–94.

[35] Pamphlet, 'Kristallnacht memorial meeting, 9 Nov. 1988', papers of the Chief Rabbi, ACC/2805/7/16/28.

[36] 'The Jews and ecumenism: Archbishop Heenan's unity octave sermon', *The Tablet*, 30 Jan. 1965.

[37] Karma Ben-Johanan, *Jacob's younger brother: Christian-Jewish relations after Vatican II*, Cambridge, MA 2022, 23.

This evolving Catholic position incorporated a slowly growing awareness that Nazi antisemitism had its roots, as Parkes had earlier pointed out, in theological interpretations of early Christian texts, specifically the allegation of deicide, and the betrayal and rejection of Jesus more broadly. When John XXIII was elected pope in 1958 he 'deleted' offensive statements about Jewish culpability from the Good Friday prayer, giving a flavour of what would later come in *Nostra aetate*.[38] *Nostra aetate*, while still maintaining that the 'Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ', argued that 'what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today'. This limited statement was a giant leap for the Church and allowed for an international reconsideration of the passion of Christ and the Jewish role within it. Within CCJ circles, what was seen as needed, from the Christian side, was a comprehensive effort of theological re-education, to help Christians understand that Jews had not been, as Simpson put it in a letter in 1954, 'the villains of the piece'.[39]

In the post-war period, Christian engagement with Jews could entail promoting this kind of reinterpretation, pressing Churches not to demonise the Jewish historical past in a way which might provoke contemporary hostility. This action should be understood in terms of meeting a Jewish demand that if inter-faith dialogue meant anything at all, it meant Christian policing of their own flock. One case taken up by CCJ in 1974 involved remonstrating with a minister in Surrey who had banned in his church certain readings from the Old Testament, telling the press that they were 'horrible stuff', wherein the Israelites were instructed 'by their repulsive war God to massacre innocent people'.[40] The minister, who went on to describe Zionism as 'the present scourge of the Middle East' and the Passover story as 'revolting and unhistorical', was swiftly challenged by Christian leaders in CCJ. Writing to him personally, Simpson criticised the scriptural analysis as 'unnecessarily offensive' and reflecting 'little understanding of the nature of both Jewish and Christian belief'.[41] Perhaps, he counselled, 'instead of pretending that the behaviour of Jews in the Old Testament was worse than the behaviour of non-Jews nowadays', it might be more productive to reflect on the text as 'a picture of how man does, in fact, behave as well as how he should'.

[38] Ibid. 27.

[39] Simpson to the editor of the *British Weekly*, 18 May 1954, Board of Deputies papers, ACC/3121/C15/3/28/2.

[40] 'Rector Bans "Offensive" Testament', *Manchester Evening News*, 25 Jan. 1974.

[41] Simpson to John Waterson, 30 Jan. 1974, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/1.

This challenge reflected a pattern of CCJ action, whereby Christian leaders used their authority to stand up on behalf of Jewish people. In many post-war cases, the issues at hand went beyond theology. CCJ activists spoke out, for example, against antisemitic characterisation in children's books, they petitioned foreign governments about their treatment of Jewish communities, and even challenged BBC Radio 4 over its decision to invite the widow of Oswald Mosley onto *Desert Island Discs*.[42] When the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) called for the banning of Kosher animal slaughter (*shechita*), CCJ's Christian leaders visited abattoirs to witness the practice so that they could advocate for it as ethical and humane.[43] For Jewish members, these actions were hugely significant. Writing to Chief Rabbi Jakobovits in 1980, the joint chief executive officer of the CCJ, Leonard Goss, argued, 'That there are Christians ready to take up at least verbal and written cudgels on behalf of Jewry in many regards is important; what they say and write has more effect upon non-Jews than anything similar said by Jews.'[44]

Theological shifts

Although much of the urgency surrounding the new Jewish-Christian relations epitomised by CCJ and *Nostra aetate* was political, change was significantly underwritten by evolving theological positions concerning the history, role and destiny of Judaism as perceived by Christians, as well as by evolving Christian thinking about the relationship between the spiritual and physical world. These changes served a dual function, allowing Christians to see Judaism in a more positive light but also enabling more Jews to feel that they could take part in dialogue without compromising core values. Specifically, it was a theological shift which allowed for the Christian comprehension of Judaism as an alternative path to God. In this way, as the Anglican Church put it in an inter-faith document in 1988, Jews were not to be seen as 'a living fossil, simply superseded by

[42] AIbert Polack to Sidney Salomon, 25 Nov., 7 Dec. 1953, Board of Deputies papers, ACC/3121/C15/3/28/1. Polack explained that CCJ representations had led to changes in Dent's latest edition of *Grimms' fairy tales* relating to the story of *The Jew in the bush* and to a series of publications of *Mother Goose*. The executive committee of CCJ wrote to the *The Times* on 26 January 1969, in protest at the hanging of Jews in Iraq: Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/027. For Diana Mosley see Jim Richardson to the *Radio Times*, 29 Aug. 1989, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/1/28.

[43] In defence of the practice D. Wallace Bell (CCJ Secretary) wrote 'What is Shechita?': Board of Deputies papers, ACC/3121/C15/3/28/1. See also Braybrooke, *Children of one God*, 26.

[44] Leonard Goss to Immanuel Jakobovits, 6 July 1980, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/7.

Christianity'.[45] Instead, it was increasingly accepted among Christians that the ancient covenant between Jews and God held firm, notwithstanding the Jewish rejection of Christ. As *Nostra aetate* explained, 'God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues.'

Speaking at the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of 'Kristallnacht', Cardinal Hume called for 'unequivocal recognition of the fact that God chose in a unique way the Jewish people as a channel for the revelation of Himself and of His saving plan for mankind'.[46] According to this kind of Christian thinking, as the Anglican David L. Edwards explained, 'the division between Judaism and Christianity has split the word of God'.[47] Parkes, unsurprisingly, had long held this position, arguing that the Early Church had not fully comprehended the revelation of Jesus: 'they grasped the significance of the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. They missed the significance of His religion'.[48] The reality, in Parkes's thinking, was of a 'different kind of religion stemming from the same divine origin'.[49] Here, Jewish people had their own covenant, their own relationship with God, and their own path to salvation. As draft guidelines on Christian-Jewish relations issued by the WCC outlined in 1978: 'We maintain that as a separate and specific people the Jews are an instrument of God with a particular divinely appointed task, and as such a sign of God's faithfulness to all people on the way toward ultimate redemption.'[50]

This evolving Christian position was no mere matter of theological niceties or semantics. What it offered was the prospect that Jewish people might not need to be saved by Christians or Christianity, and instead suggested that the theological approach towards Jewish people should be one of respect, equality and dialogue. This mattered firstly because it offered a path away from church antisemitism, which was often rooted in the idea that in their rejection of Christ Jewish people had voided their covenant with God and destined themselves to cursed lives of rejection (wherein persecution and discrimination could easily be seen as divine punishment). But it mattered more still because 'Two Covenant' theology, the idea that the path to God for Jewish people was equally legitimate yet

[45] Church of England, 'Jews, Christians and Muslims: the way of dialogue', 1988, at https://www.jcrelations.net/statements/statement/jews-christians-and-muslims-the-way-of-dialogue.html.

[46] 'Kristallnacht memorial meeting'.

[47] D. L. Edwards lecture to the Rainbow Group, 'The peoples of the Book', 1 Dec. 1975, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/2.

[48] J. Parkes, Lecture to the youth council on Jewish-Christian relations, 'Jews, Christians … and God', Aug. 1942, Board of Deputies papers, ACC/3121/C15/3/17,

[49] Idem, 'The covenant relationship', *Common Ground* xxi/3 (1967), 6.

[50] WCC, 'Guidelines for Christian-Jewish relations (a collection of proposals): a study document', Mar. 1978, summary by P. Jennings at p. 37, University of Birmingham library.

different, had the potential to remove, or at least significantly reduce, the justification for Christian missioning to Jews. And, without a doubt, the fear of Christian proselytising was (from the Jewish side) the key stumbling block in the way of Jewish-Christian dialogue.[51] How, after all, could Jews engage with Christians, and build relationships with them, if they knew there was an underlying Christian hunger to convert them away from their faith? Only when, as Parkes expressed it, a Jew was afforded by his Christian neighbour 'a square deal to be a Jew' could there be any firm foundations for Jewish-Christian relations.[52] The CCJ itself had made clear from the outset that it would afford no opportunity to missionary activities. Its first executive meeting, in 1942, recorded that 'neither conversionist activities or hopes' would be entertained within its scope, a principle which gave it a basis from which to operate with Jewish people, although Jewish fears about Christian missionary activity would continue to simmer. For the representatives of Britain's Jewish community, any equivocation in this matter was highly problematic. What Jewish religious leaders wanted was a clear promise from all Christian Churches that Jewish people would never again be seen as subjects for conversion. Unfortunately, for many Christians, this was not a simple commitment to give, even when Judaism was increasingly understood as a separate covenant.

The problem was (and is) that for many Christians, abandoning the idea of spreading the Good News, for however noble a cause, compromises a core religious principle.[53] Although the 'Two Covenants' approach epitomised by Parkes offered a path to do so, there remained for many a deep theological uncertainty, which tended to fudge the issue, and enabled only partial assurances to be offered to Jewish friends. *Nostra aetate*, for example, did not create a landscape in which the Catholic Church gave up on proselytising to Jews but instead left the issue 'wide open on the theoretical level', after earlier drafts (which vocalised the hope of Jewish conversion) caused consternation in Jewish communities.[54] In Britain, the CCJ could promise that there would be no missionary activity within its own administration and under its own auspices. It could not promise, however, that this would be the case within British Christian communities writ large. Such assurances did not cut the mustard, at least for some Jewish people.

For the leaders of British Christians, and Christian inter-faith activists, some practices were easier to rule out than others. Faced with allegations

[51] See D. Polish, 'A Jewish perspective on the work of the World Council of Churches in Jewish-Christian relations', *Ecumenical Review* lxxiii (2021), 786–94, and Summers, *Christian and Jewish women*, 11.

[52] Braybrooke, *Children of one God*, 5.

[53] On the extent to which the issue of mission remains a challenge from the Christian perspective see M. Braybrooke, *Christians and Jews building bridges*, London 2012, 83–101.

[54] Ben-Johanan, *Jacob's younger brother*, 37.

that organisations, such as the US-imported 'Jews for Jesus', were targeting vulnerable people and deceiving Jews into Christian life, it was simple enough to say that such practices were beyond the pale, as well as to argue that no specific community should be targeted by missionaries. The CCJ's Marcus Braybrooke, for example, attempted in 1986 to assure Chief Rabbi Jakobovits that the organisation 'repudiate[s] most strongly any form of deception in evangelisation or the selection of any particular groups for special missionary activity'.[55] For Parkes, and thinkers like him, the approach taken was that Jewish people should be left to their own covenant and that the rest could be deferred to God. Even this, however, was no denial of an ultimate belief in unification through Christ, only a recognition that it was not yet prudent to attempt this reconciliation. In Parkes's parlance, the reunification of Jews and Christians would come by God's will, but this would occur 'at some point in the future' and was 'beyond [his] planning'.[56] Here, Parkes and others could follow Paul's insistence that the salvation of Israel would precede the Second Coming.[57] In this way, as Wigoder has explained, even amid the ostensible abandonment of 'active mission', the hope for Jewish acceptance of Jesus as part of God's destiny for the world remained 'built into Christian eschatology', a 'useful theological cop-out'.[58] Jewish separation could be seen in this way as a window into, and barometer of, messianic return. The WCC report into 'The Church and Jewish People' explained the view of some Christians that 'God has linked the final hope of the world to the salvation of the Jews, in the day when he will heal the broken body of his one people, Israel and the Church.'[59]

In the meantime, Christians, instead of aiming to persuade Jews of the messianic authenticity of Jesus, sometimes rearticulated their responsibilities in terms of serving as witnesses to Christ in their interactions with Jews (and everyone else). The idea here, the former Anglican archbishop of Jerusalem, George Appleton, explained, was to allow Jewish people to see 'Jesus in the lives of those who claim to be his disciples', without feeling that they were being got at.[60] In this way, Jews might begin to see Christ not as the 'symbol of accusing or persecuting Christians' but as a

[55] M. Braybrooke to Jakobovits, 12 Jan. 1986, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/16/41.

[56] Parkes, 'Jews, Christians … and God', Aug. 1942.

[57] Faith and Order Commission, *God's unfailing word*, 6.

[58] Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian relations*, 67.

[59] WCC, 'Revised report of the consultation on The Church and the Jewish People', (second draft), 26–30 Sept. 1966, University of Birmingham library.

[60] Bishop George Appleton, 'Letter to a Jewish Friend', *Ends and Odds: a newsletter of theology and dialogue spotlighting the life and work of the Church in inter-faith relations* xx (1978), 1–4.

'gracious figure'.[61] By bearing witness to Jesus, Christians could shed his light without preaching or ostensibly proselytising, enabling them to stay true to their faith without upsetting Jewish people, with whom they wanted to engage. As the CCJ's executive director, Jim Richardson put it, 'I might be selective about active evangelism, but I am always witnessing.'[62] This position reflected a broader change in Christian theological perceptions of, and engagement with, other faiths. As Marshall has explained, 'there has been a steady tendency over the decades away from an emphasis on converting non-Christians to Christianity and toward other ways of defining and practising mission and evangelism in the modern world'.[63] Underpinning this change was an evolving understanding of God's presence on earth, aligned with Two Covenant theology, which accepted that no faith had the monopoly on divine truth, and considered instead that 'theologies and spiritualities are but windows onto a transcendent reality which is more all-embracing than we once imagined'.[64]

Because Progressive Jews did not consider all Scripture to be the direct word of God it was easier for them to engage with this kind of thinking. As the Reform rabbi Ignaz Maybaum put it in 1973, Islam, Christianity and Judaism all had to meet the same challenge, as their texts were 'reduced to relics by the scientific criticism of the historian'.[65] In this mind-frame, in the same way that some Christians increasingly felt able to pursue God's wisdom beyond their faith, some Jews too began to wonder whether their practice could be strengthened in 'deep conviction', as the Reform rabbi Tony Bayfield put it, 'of God's presence within the various religious traditions of mankind'.[66] No one epitomised this willingness to cross faith borders more than Lionel Blue, whose epiphanic religious experience came while attending a Quaker service. To Blue, 'The claustrophobia of creeds and codes always felt like a straightjacket', so that he openly explored other faiths in his search for God.[67] Yet this enthusiasm for theology beyond borders was very much concentrated among Progressive Jewish thinkers, and did not generally leak into an Orthodox world which saw Jewish law as emanating directly from God, and any deviance from such thinking at best as a diversion and at worst as a heresy. In such communities, Wigoder's argument that Jews 'were well contented to be left alone and not bothered with alien theological challenge' holds as

[61] Ibid. For analysis of the theological roots of this position see Harries, *After the evil*, 135.
[62] Jim Richardson, 'Many witnesses', *Yorkshire Post*, 5 Nov. 1988.
[63] Marshall, 'The World Council of Churches', 887.
[64] Alan Race, 'Rethinking revelation, exclusivity, dialogue and mission', in Tony Bayfield (ed.), *Deep calls to deep: transforming conversations between Christians and Jews*, London 2017, 175–88 at p. 187.
[65] I. Maybaum, *Trialogue between Jew, Christian and Muslim*, London 1973, 56.
[66] T. Bayfield and M. Braybrooke, *Dialogue with a difference: the Manor House Group experience*, London 1992, 11.
[67] Blue, *My affair with Christianity*, 11.

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good in many ways for the post-war period as the pre-enlightenment one he describes.[68]

The Jewish fear of evangelism

There were two main reasons why many Jewish people remained uncertain about evolving Christian thinking on evangelism. Firstly, while theological change may have been substantial from a Christian point of view, many Jews remained wary of the ultimate underlying message of Christianity and were still inclined to hear calls that they should turn to Christ, even when they were expressed in *sotto voce*. After all, the idea that Christ would ultimately bring the world together as one (albeit at a future point) did not much recede in most Christian thinking, and thus continued what was perceived by many Jews to be an age-old Christian threat to the integrity of Jewish faith. The other problem, of course, was that some Christians, even within mainstream Churches, could not accept the sidestepping or softening of evangelism, seeing it as a core part of their faith and duty. This was recognised as a valid point of view by the leadership of the Anglican Church who would not (and still will not) exclude or proscribe those who see the conversion of Jews as desirable and necessary. Thus, the Anglican paper on Jewish, Christian and Muslim relations in 1988 expressed the idea that Jews did not require conversion as 'one possible opinion rather than as official policy'.[69] In the same year, correspondence between the CCJ's Jim Richardson and the bishop of Taunton, Nigel McCulloch, about the Church's 'Decade of Evangelism', neatly illustrated this problem.[70]

Richardson asked McCulloch, who was Chair of the 'Decade of Evangelism' steering group, to recognise that mission was 'a word that sends shivers of fear and resentment down the spines of many who have come to God by a different route than Christianity, and who do not see in the Gospel and church history any "good news" at all'.[71] McCulloch replied:

> whilst agreeing that 'mission' may send shivers down the spines of those who have come to God by a different route than Christianity, I do not want the Church of England, or the other denominations involved alongside us, to shy away from the clear call to mission and evangelism and proclaiming the Good News which is at the very heart of the Christian Gospel.[72]

[68] Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian relations*, 48.
[69] Clifford Longley, 'Special bonds with Jews affirmed', *The Times*, 4 Aug. 1988.
[70] McCulloch went on to be a chairperson of CCJ between 2008 and 2015.
[71] J. Richardson to N. McCulloch, 7 Sept. 1989, Chief Rabbi papers, CC/2805/7/16/28.
[72] McCulloch to Richardson, 10 Sept. 1989, ibid.

Richardson, for his part, accepted that the Church was indeed 'called upon to proclaim its message and all … entitled to hear it'. Here was the dilemma of the post-war Church as regards proselytising to Jews. Having proclaimed, as many Church statements did in this period, that Jews were 'a living and visible sign of God's faithfulness to men' and having confirmed that God continued to use them 'as an instrument', the WCC, in 1966, went on to state, as McCulloch had done, the fundamental tenet of Christian faith as regards spreading the Good News: 'no one [could] be excluded from her message of forgiveness and reconciliation' because this would entail 'disobedience to the Lord of the Church'.[73] On these terms, how the Church engaged Jewish people about Christ remained a complicated matter. It was a problem that had been present from the outset in the CCJ. When Temple became archbishop of Canterbury in 1942, Parkes urged him to decline to act (as was traditional) as the patron of the Church's Mission to the Jews (CMJ). In response, Temple argued that he would do no such thing:

> I do not think I could interpret my interest in promoting Christian-Jewish friendship as in any way precluding an equal interest in attempting to convert Jews, because that does appear to me to be a Christian obligation; and if I had to choose it would take precedence of the other.[74]

While numerous Christian theologians worked incredibly hard to render Christianity more palatable, and less threatening, to Jewish communities, many (especially Orthodox) Jewish leaders and activists continued to hear proselytising undertones in a way that risked undermining inter-faith cooperation. As a result, the idea that spiritual enrichment could be achieved through inter-faith engagement with Christians only really took off on the Jewish side within some Progressive Jewish thinking.

Ongoing tensions were amply demonstrated in correspondence between Simpson and Jakobovits in 1971. Simpson wrote to the Chief Rabbi in response to Jakobovits's claim that there was a 'fundamental divergence' between Jews and Christians on the issue of the correct path to God, and the Christian commitment to evangelise to Jews. Trying to bridge the gap, Simpson admitted the 'tragic consequences of the misguided and misapplied zeal of some Christians' but questioned whether there was not 'a very real sense in which both our faiths are outward looking and impose upon their adherents the responsibility of witness to a world which either fails to recognise the importance of our profession, or is even hostile to it'.[75] In response,

[73] WCC, 'Revised report of the consultation on The Church and the Jewish People', (second draft), 26–30 Sept. 1966.

[74] Archbishop Temple to J. Parkes cited in Kushner, 'The beginnings of the Council', 7.

[75] Simpson to Jakobovits, 24 June 1971, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/1.

Jakobovits was clear that to his mind it was not simply a matter of behaviour on the part of over-enthusiastic Christians but a 'theological attitude in principle'. 'On this', he argued, the divergence was indeed 'fundamental'.[76]

For some Jewish leaders and activists, this divergence problematised the desirability of growing contacts between the faiths. For example, Rabbi Shmuel Arkush, who in the 1980s led a campaign named 'Operation Judaism' to protect Jewish people (especially students and vulnerable groups) from indoctrination by missionaries, alienated local and national CCJ supporters when he admitted that he felt uncertain when Christian people attempted to befriend him, and believed that an underlying commitment to mission was fundamental to Christian doctrine. Any Christian, Arkush argued, 'who says he doesn't believe in missionary activities is a hypocrite or ignorant, or a fool'. Mission, he felt, was so central to the faith, that 'In a way, if a Christian says, "Let's be friends", I find it sticks in the gullet.'[77]

Arkush's remarks drew a flurry of criticism from the CCJ and beyond, as they were seemingly flying in the face of the efforts that had been made over the previous forty years to bring the communities together. Lord Coggan, CCJ's president, told the press that it would be 'very sad if this kind of attitude threw up more barriers between Christians and Jews'. A CCJ statement asserted that views of this kind 'could undermine the work we are doing, just as much as the missionary bodies'.[78] Within parts of the Jewish community, Arkush's comments similarly did not land well. The president of Birmingham's Singers Hill Orthodox Synagogue, Roland Diamond, told the Chief Rabbi that he had been 'somewhat appalled' by what Arkush had said, and had 'felt it necessary to write to Lord Coggan disassociating the Congregation from these views'.[79] In his letter to Coggan, Diamond explained that Singers Hill had given 'full approval' for its retired Rabbi, Sidney Gold, to be a founder member of Birmingham's CCJ branch.[80] 'It has always been the policy of this congregation', Diamond asserted, 'to maintain friendly contact and relations with Christians in this city, so that they understand us and we understand them.' For his part, the Chief Rabbi's office replied to Diamond that Jakobovits had written to Coggan personally 'on similar lines'.[81]

Rabbi Arkush felt that his remarks had been taken out of context. He explained to the chairman of the council of Singers Hill that his opinions

[76] Jakobovits to Simpson, 2 July 1971, ibid.

[77] Keren David and Jenni Frazer, 'How vulnerable are our students?', *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 Aug. 1985.

[78] Jenni Frazer, 'Rabbis attack worries Coggan', *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 Sept. 1985.

[79] Roland Diamond, president of Birmingham Hebrew Congregation, to Jakobovits, 11 Sept. 1985, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/16/41.

[80] Diamond to Lord Coggan, 11 Sept. 1985, ibid.

[81] Secretary of the Chief Rabbi to Diamond, 13 Sept. 1985, ibid.

as quoted were 'a very narrow characterisation of myself …. leaving out the vast mass of information I had given them', and told Coggan that his comments were 'no attack on the Council of Christians and Jews'.[82] None the less, Arkush's position perhaps better represented much more of Jewish thinking than he, or the leaders who disassociated themselves from his remarks, cared to admit. Arkush himself went on to argue some years later that 'all those organisations which are set up to break down barriers between Jew and Gentile: all they have done is to soften up the ground for the missionaries … Whether or not one gets involved in inter-faith work', he contested, was a question for Rabbinic ruling, and he drew attention to 'Rabbi Soloveitchik's teshuva [answer] on this subject', where the conclusion had been 'basically no'.[83]

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, to whom Arkush referred, had supported the generation of guidelines on inter-faith relations developed by the (Orthodox) Rabbinical Council of America, which concluded that discussions between faith communities should only take place where they excluded theological matters.[84] This was generally speaking also the stance taken by Chief Rabbi Jakobovits, who told Parkes that inter-faith discussion needed to 'stop short of questioning and criticising the religious commitments of another faith, let alone of telling its exponents what these commitments mean, or should mean'.[85] Reporting Jakobovits's stance on inter-faith, *The Tablet* explained that the Chief Rabbi only accepted the validity of inter-faith discussion where 'the theology of one faith affects other faiths', otherwise 'no other type of theological discussion is acceptable to him … inter-faith services and real theological dialogue he rejects'.[86] Indeed, this Orthodox Jewish stance had shaped the evolution of the CCJ from the beginning. The organisation could not directly evolve from the earlier Society of Jews and Christians because the then Chief Rabbi Hertz 'had strongly criticised any form of "religious fraternisation"' and had threatened to resign from CCJ at the outset in 1942 when he feared it might involve sharing theological education and become something of 'a society for spiritual intermarriage'.[87] The earlier Society had

[82] Shmuel Arkush to chairman of the council of Singers Hill, 10 Sept. 1985, and Arkush to Coggan, 8 Sept. 1985, ibid.

[83] 'Operation Judaism!': Rabbi Arkush talks to the editor of *HaMaor* (*c.* 1990), ibid. ACC/2805/7/16/25.

[84] See Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian relations*, 62. For analysis of Soloveitchik's position see D. Goodman, 'From confrontation to cooperation: the philosophical foundations of the Joseph B. Soloveitchik–Irving Greenberg schism on Jewish-Christian dialogue', *Harvard Theological Review* cxiv (2021), 536–60 at pp. 537–8.

[85] Jakobovits to Parkes, 15 Jan. 1975, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/2.

[86] J. Wilkins, 'Meeting the Chief Rabbi', *The Tablet*, 14 Jan. 1978.

[87] Kushner, 'The beginnings of the Council', 7; Summers, 'False start', 847.

been a focal point of inter-faith dialogue for the Liberal Jews at its heart, but the Orthodox majority were far from convinced of its merits.

Jews were not the only party wary of blurring integral boundaries between the faiths. Such concerns reflected broader uncertainties amid the rise of ecumenical efforts within Christianity. While some voices in the post-war Catholic Church were supportive of greater dialogue with other Christian groups and non-Christian faiths, many Catholic scholars and activists were unsure. In the context of advice from Rome, Cardinal Hinsley had shared the Chief Rabbi's anxieties at CCJ's birth and Cardinal Griffin led the Catholic group out of the organisation in 1954 citing concerns about 'indifferentism', only for them to return a decade later amid a different papal atmosphere. This was of course the atmosphere that would produce *Nostra aetate* and seek to strengthen Catholic ties with Jewish people. It did not, however, end discussion about the desirability of tighter bonds in theological terms. In fact, as Karma Ben-Yohanan has noted, the Catholic Church increasingly came to fudge such questions, especially under Pope John Paul II, who seems to have felt that bonding in and of itself should be prioritised over difficult doctrinal debate. Illustrating this position, Ben-Yohanan highlights a Catholic approach in which it was seen as 'better to stick a note in the cracks of the Western Wall than to poke around the unpleasant question of whether the Jews can be saved without converting to Christianity'.[88]

The merits of moral ecumenism

In the end, Jews and Christians bonded in the postwar period over their shared perceptions of marginality, in a world where European religious leaders and institutions felt increasingly side-lined. For Jews, of course, social and political marginalisation had been the norm over centuries, but for Christians it posed new challenges, and opened paths to new alliances. In an attempt to show themselves 'as modern, up to date and, above all, relevant', Churches, Grace Davie has argued, responded to change in the 1960s with 'a variety of attempts at greater ecclesiastical collaboration'.[89] In this atmosphere, Jews became something of an example, 'a source of ecclesiastic inspiration for a church that now found itself in "exile" within the very territory that had once been its home'.[90]

From a Jewish perspective, there were good reasons to form moral coalitions with other faith groups. Aside from seeking protection for their

[88] Ben-Yohanan, *Jacob's younger brother*, 277. For analysis of the Catholic departure from CCJ see Braybrooke, *Children of one God*, 33–4.
[89] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: a persistent paradox* (1994), London 2015, 31.
[90] Ben-Yohanan, *Jacob's younger brother*, 276.

community, Jewish theologians across the religious spectrum could entirely share the trepidation and alarm felt by other religious people when faced with the permissive, secular turn that society seemed to be taking from the 1960s.[91] Such problems, Sam Brewitt-Taylor has argued, were at least partly constructed within faith communities as church leaders created something of a self-fulfilling prophecy in their angst about rising secularism.[92] Unarguably, though, over a long period in Britain, traditional religious practice had been in decline, and this was a worry that Jews and Christians could and did share together.[93] As Philip Longworth put it, 'it is against this background that the call has come for ecumenism in the Christian world – a quest for resilience through unity'.[94] Amid this quest for unity, reaching out to similarly concerned faith groups beyond Christianity made obvious sense, a desire for coalition epitomised by the proclamation of 'the Global Ethic' by the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993.[95]

The idea of shared moral responsibility between faiths was paramount in the thinking of Immanuel Jakobovits. Jakobovits had little time for theological engagement with Christianity, but saw high value in united faith communities in the social and political spheres. Faith communities, he argued in 1968, should work together to secure 'agreement on those broad moral issues which challenge our society today and upon which we collectively … are to represent the religious conscience'.[96] The contemporary world, he thought, needed religious leaders to unite in order to address 'the evils and immorality rampant in our society'.[97] According to Jakobovits's thinking, the priority was to 'establish, if not a religious ecumenism, at least a moral ecumenism'.[98] On these terms the Chief Rabbi laid out the specific challenges at a meeting with church leaders in 1977, suggesting that Jewish and Christian faith leaders should speak with 'one voice' and 'back one another up publicly' on a range of social issues, including racism, human rights, education, parliamentary legislation on 'abortion, divorce, sexual reform, transplant surgery and the use of

[91] As Lionel Blue put it, 'after the last war, we are all faced with the same problems and are giving more or less the same answers': *My affair with Christianity*, 135.

[92] Sam Brewitt-Taylor, 'The invention of a "secular society"? Christianity and the sudden appearance of secularization discourses in the British national media, 1961–4', *Twentieth Century British History* xxiv (2013), 327–50.

[93] See C. Field, *Secularization in the long 1960s: numerating religion in Britain*, Oxford 2017, 229, and S. Bruce, *British gods: religion in modern Britain*, Oxford 2020, 271.

[94] P. Longworth (ed.), *Confrontations with Judaism*, London 1967, 8.

[95] Braybrooke, *Christians and Jews building bridges*, 14.

[96] 'The Middle East situation and its impact upon relations between Christians and Jews in this country', 1968, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/25.

[97] I. Jakobovits, 'An instrument of amity', *Common Ground* xxi (1967), 9–13.

[98] 'The Middle East situation', 1968.

human tissue' and the 'erosion' of 'religious loyalties' and 'moral values'.[99] Such cooperation also allowed for the protection of religious interests. In 1975 and 1976, Jewish and Christian religious leaders sent joint delegations to the prime minister to protest against land and charity tax reform which was set to have a negative impact on congregational coffers.[100]

For Jewish leaders, the case for taking a moral and ethical stance alongside Christians on political and social issues was compelling. Explaining the importance of CCJ in this context in 1950, Robert Waley Cohen (by now president of the United Synagogue) highlighted the shared battleground facing the two faiths, against 'the increasingly widespread rejection of the spiritual and moral values common to Christianity and Judaism, on which the democratic way of life is founded and on which its ultimate success depends'.[101]

This model of engagement, then, provided a framework for Jewish-Christian relations to develop, although it was not, of course, a relationship between equals. Jews had to accept a greater amount of theological discussion than was comfortable for some in return for this broader set of benefits. As Wigoder has put it, 'Jews were forced to talk religion where they meant social betterment'.[102] To sweeten the pill, Jewish-Christian relations became one of a few areas of prosperous cooperation between Orthodox and Progressive Jews. Through a consultative committee, Jewish religious leaders managed to come together to support this work in ways they found difficult in other areas.[103] This was precisely because the matters arising from Jewish-Christian relations were largely non-theological from the Orthodox Jewish point of view, and also, perhaps more cynically, because Orthodox Jews could see sense in allowing their Progressive brethren to get their hands dirty when inter-faith theology could not entirely be avoided. Inviting Rabbi Nahum Rabinovitch (the Principal of Jews College) to join the consultative committee, Moshe Davis, from the Chief Rabbi's office, explained how the group had indeed '"defused" some situations between ourselves and the progressives'. This was, he confided, 'one of the unspoken reasons for its formation'.[104]

[99] *Aide-memoire* from Lambeth Palace, 5 Dec. 1977, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/5.

[100] A joint delegation visited the prime minister in April 1975 and again in October 1976: ibid. ACC/2805/7/16/2, 3.

[101] Document from R. Waley Cohen seeking funds from the Ford Foundation, 28 Sept. 1950, Board of Deputies papers, ACC/3121/C15/3/28/1.

[102] Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian relations*, 51.

[103] The Chief Rabbi's office proposed the establishment of the Consultative Committee on Jewish-Christian Relations in 1973.

[104] M. Davis to Rabinovitch, 13 June 1978, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/4.

The challenge of Israel/Palestine

Inter-faith work, at least to a significant extent, was thus valuable to Jewish leaders as well as Christian, although the issue of mission continued to irritate. But even on the agreed set of terms (beyond theology), problems could and did occur, nowhere more so than regarding the appropriate response to conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Here, the limits of Jewish-Christian moral unity were tested, exposing longstanding ethnic and religious rivalries, unequal power and a rising Christian concern that concessions within inter-faith engagement were largely one-sided.

While the desirability of a Jewish state in Palestine had historically divided Jewish Britons, after the establishment of Israel in 1948 the Jewish community was overwhelmingly supportive.[105] British Jews did not generally give up their homes to move to the new state (although some 30,000 did) but they instead became advocates for it, raising money, building ties and defending it against critics.[106] To many British Jews, after the Holocaust, Israel offered an essential sanctuary to Jewish people fleeing oppression. It also became a new source of Jewish pride and self-confidence, especially after the Arab-Israeli (Six-Day) War of 1967.[107] All in all, Israel and Zionism came to assume a big part of the identity of many Jewish Britons, who thus expected, from new Christian friends, support and understanding both for their position and for the Israeli people.

Some Christian leaders well understood this Jewish hunger for support. For example, the WCC's discussion of the 'Church and Jewish People' in 1966 acknowledged that Israel was 'of tremendous importance for the great majority of Jews', having provided 'a new feeling of self-assurance and security which the Gentile world had failed to give them'.[108] CCJ leaders, unsurprisingly, were particularly sensitive to the need to be supportive, believing that 'helping Christians to appreciate the importance of Israel in Jewish self-understanding' was 'part of its task'.[109] Writing in

[105] See S. Wendehorst, *British Jewry, Zionism, and the Jewish state, 1936–56*, Oxford 2012; S. Levenberg, *The Board and Zion: an historical survey*, Hull 1985; and S. Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews: the communal politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1895–1920*, Princeton 1982.

[106] For British-Jewish immigration to Israel see L. D. Staetsky, M. Sheps and J. Boyd, 'Immigration from the United Kingdom to Israel' (Institute for Jewish Policy Research, Oct. 2013), 5.

[107] B. Kosmin, A. Lerman and J. Goldberg, *The attachment of British Jews to Israel* (Institute for Jewish Policy Research Report, 1997), 21. For analysis see also J. Omer-Jackaman, *The impact of Zionism and Israel on Anglo-Jewry's identity, 1948–1982*, London 2019, 113–48.

[108] WCC, 'Revised report of the consultation on The Church and Jewish People' (second draft), 26–30 Sept. 1966.

[109] Braybrooke, *Children of one God*, 136.

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the wake of the Arab-Israeli (Yom Kippur) War of 1973, Bill Simpson and others expressed deep concern about the dangers faced by Israel and urged greater government support. 'The Jewish state', they argued, 'built on the ashes of Nazi genocide, must not be asked to face that danger again.'[110]

Speaking up for Israel, however, was not entirely easy for some Christian leaders and was seen as increasingly undesirable by others. For one thing, many Christian leaders felt a need to represent and defend their Arab Christian brethren in Israel, constituencies that were often hostile to, and marginalised by, the Israeli state. Outlining the challenge faced in the wake of the Six Day War, the archdeacon of Oxford, Carlyle Witton Davies, explained:

> I can only say how difficult it has been to explain satisfactorily to some of our Jewish members the near impossibility of making any statement as a Council that would not be embarrassing to most of our Christian members. It should be obvious that it is by no means as easy for Christians to comment on the Holy Land situation as it is for Jews. Anglicans, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants – to give them their usual labels – have long had and continue to have interests on both sides of the line that used to divide the Holy Land before last June, or if you prefer it in completely contemporary terms, in the Arab states as well as in Israel.[111]

To some Jews, this kind of equivocation was exasperating. Writing after the Yom Kippur War, the Director of the World Zionist Organisation railed even against the sympathetic CCJ position on Israel. As far as he was concerned, the CCJ was showing 'no sensitivity whatsoever to Jewish life and fate' and was 'an "alibi" for inaction and indifference'.[112] This Jewish anger was underpinned by a feeling that Christians did not understand the essence of Jewishness as an ethnicity as well as a religion (which made Israel part of the package for most Jews). As Rabbi Tony Bayfield put it, regarding his own identity, 'If in dialogue we seek acceptance at some level, then it is not enough to accept Tony Bayfield, lover of Essex/Suffolk border villages, since Tony Bayfield, Zionist, is inseparable from his other persona.'[113] Within the CCJ, Jewish leaders protested about Church publications which they perceived to be insufficiently sympathetic to Israel, especially those emanating from the British Council of Churches, and the CCJ produced its own material offering more supportive readings of the Jewish state.[114]

[110] Statement by Simpson and others, 11 Dec. 1974, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/1.

[111] 'The Middle East Situation', 1968.

[112] B. Jaffe, Director of the World Zionist Organisation, to Davis, 19 Nov. 1973, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/1.

[113] Bayfield and Braybrooke, *Dialogue with a difference*, 11.

[114] Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/1. See, for example, Davis's review of 'The conflict in the Middle East and religious faith', in which he described the BCC

Yet, many Christians found taking a pro-Israel stance extremely challenging, even as they knew that such was needed if they were to build bridges with many Jewish people. Having recognised Israel's importance to Jews, the WCC, for example, admitted that they struggled to take a firm position on Israel/Palestine in recognition that the State had 'brought suffering and injustice to other people'.[115] Recognising the suffering of Palestinians, Christian leaders, moreover, sometimes resented Jewish insistence that they toe a particular line instead of seeking out their own position, even within CCJ. In 1980, for example, Peter Jennings (then the general secretary of CCJ) expressed his irritation that the group was 'just being used as an instrument of the Board and WJC'.[116] In general, however, the CCJ worked hard to maintain a defensive stance on Israel in support of Jewish Britons. This stance left the CCJ exposed to conflict with other church bodies who felt that it was offering 'uncritical support to the Israeli government'.[117] For the CCJ, though having worked so hard to build bridges with British Jewry, maintaining a sympathetic stance towards Israel seems to have been seen as part and parcel of its role.

Jewish insistence on Christian support for Israel, and Jewish criticism when such support was perceived to be lacking, illuminates the priorities and principles of Jewish engagement with inter-faith work in postwar Britain. For many Jewish leaders and activists, if inter-faith activity was to be worth the effort and compromise, it needed (on their terms) to support the wellbeing of Jews at home and abroad, making them safer and more secure in Christian societies. This stance added up to something rather less than an inter-faith brotherhood, more perhaps a marriage of convenience, at least outside of Progressive Jewish communities. The Christian side too had its own agendas and drivers. The survival of Jews and Judaism after the Holocaust, alongside the subsequent rise of Israel, was harnessed by some Christians as a symbol of God's commitment to his covenant in line with Christian traditions. Judaism, while no longer considered 'fossilised', symbolised a mystic and ancient holiness from which Jesus was born, the continuation of its people serving as living proof of divine grace and an inspiration in an age where the Church increasingly found itself without power or influence.

All in all, inter-faith activity was not so much a spiritual coming together as a mutually agreeable sharing of benefits. At a high level, British religious

report as a 'gravely disturbing document'. On CCJ documents on the subject see, for example, P. Schneider's *Israel actual and mysterious*, London 1976.

[115] WCC, 'Revised report of the consultation on The Church and Jewish People' (second draft), 26–30 Sept. 1966.

[116] L. Goss to Davis, 16 July 1980, Chief Rabbi papers, ACC/2805/7/16/7.

[117] J. Richardson report to the executive committee on a letter received from the British Council of Churches, 20 Sept. 1989, ibid. ACC/2805/7/16/28.

bodies were corporate entities which, to Lionel Blue's mind, 'regarded each other like modern multinationals, beadily and calculatedly, competing not for consumers but for souls'.[118] On these terms, Shmuel Arkush's cynicism regarding Jewish-Christian friendships, while embarrassing and inconvenient for those active in inter-faith work at the time, perhaps reflected something of a reality that both sides were keen to ignore. Christians were primarily interested in Jews as figures that might strengthen their own faith and absolve guilt about past transgressions, and Jews were frequently not interested in Christians at all, except insofar as they might need them for political and social protection. Ultimately, Wigoder's description of pre-war Jewish-Christian discussion as 'not dialogue' but 'double monologue' speaks compellingly for the post-war period too.[119] At the heart of the problem remained the issue of mission, soothed by postwar theological shifts, but ultimately unresolved.

This matter has indeed continued to be sufficiently controversial so as even to muddy the waters of *God's unfailing word* in 2019. Here, despite an overall tone of positivity and good neighbourliness, Chief Rabbi Mirvis used his afterword to rail against the Anglican Church for failing to take a firm line on missioning, arguing that such behaviour could altogether destroy Jewish-Christian dialogue and cooperation. Noting that there remained some in the Church who apparently still saw Jewish people as a 'quarry to be pursued and converted', Mirvis complained:

> The enduring existence within the Anglican Church of a theological approach that is permissive of this behaviour does considerable damage to the relationship between our faith traditions, and, consequently, pursuing a comprehensive new Christian-Jewish paradigm in this context is exceptionally challenging. It is as though we are jointly building an essential new structure, while simultaneously a small part of the construction team is deliberately destabilizing the building's very foundations, thereby undermining confidence in the structural integrity of the whole edifice.[120]

Amid Christian theological uncertainty and Jewish suspicion, the issue of Christian evangelism did not disappear in the post-Holocaust world. Yet, beyond this challenge, where inter-faith relations did make ground in the post-war period, and offer mutual benefit, was in the political sphere. Jews and Christians, in Britain, could recognise each other as fellow-travellers *vis à vis* secularism and permissiveness, an alliance built up by Immanuel Jakobovits perhaps more than anyone else. While at an institutional and communal level such relations could still be tense, at a personal and local level a greater warmth and community was slowly being achieved,

[118] Blue, *My affair with Christianity*, 92.
[119] Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian relations*, 51.
[120] Faith and Order Commission, *God's unfailing word*, 103–4.

a reality exposed by Summer's examination of Christian and Jewish women (who frequently operated in spaces aside from formal institutional structures).[121] Under pressure from those who desired the removal of traditional moral strictures from British society, Jews and Christians indeed frequently had common ground to defend.

Those who sought deeper inter-faith theological dialogue, however, walked a tight-rope, exposed to allegations of indifferentism, amid a lingering concern that the core principles of each faith could be eroded by contact with the other. As Blue put it, 'The no-man's land[s] which separate all faiths are not pleasant places … and the most desolate of them all was the no-man's land which separated Judaism and Christianity.'[122] Then and now, inter-faith relations made progress by limiting contact in this no-man's land, as both sides, institutionally at least, generally maintained a dignified distance. If Jewish-Christian relations offer a model of inter-faith it is on these terms, as each party recognised that good fences made good neighbours, and that the quest for unity between Judaism and Christianity indeed remained, as Parkes had put it, beyond the planning of man.

[121] Alan Race has argued that 'friendship cuts through the religious posing and theological treacle' in 'Rethinking revelation, exclusivity, dialogue and mission' in Bayfield, *Deep calls to deep*, 187. See Summers, *Christian and Jewish women*, 201.

[122] Blue, *My affair with Christianity*, 92.

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