

Jesus, justice, and Judaism¹

My lecture tonight is entitled Jesus, Justice and Judaism, good alliteration, although a huge topic for a fifty-minute address. Such a topic would take twelve weeks of three hours a week and a great deal of reading at Victoria, but here goes.

I want to begin by thanking Gavin Drew and the Bible College of New Zealand, Wellington, for the honour of giving the 2004 Clyde Vautier Memorial Lecture. I like to think that Clyde Vautier would have approved of the lecture. The topic of my presentation is a difficult one – and if you came out tonight for an evening of gentle comforting and confirmation, please leave now – exploring the vexed historical relations between past Jewish and Christian communities and the realistic hopes that we might have for dialogue and positive relations in the future. The scope of the address entails a rather rapid traverse across the terrain but we will, I understand, have the opportunity of returning to issues at the questions following the lecture. Firstly, I want to note that given the twenty centuries of the parallel existence of Jewish and Christian communities it is still a great rarity for a Jew to address a Christian audience. The relationship between Jews and Christians is still a newsworthy topic, as witnessed by the furore over Mel Gibson's awful film *The Passion of the Christ*. Every attempt to discuss or depict the origins of Christianity necessarily entails a portrayal of this relationship; usually of a fantastic nature as in Grollenberg, or Wright, or what might be called the new anti-Judaism of the Jesus Seminar.

Communities of Difference

The first century is almost certainly the most studied of all centuries in terms of the number of books,

academic papers, and popular works and I have little new to add to this corpus. I want to do something rather different in support of my considered view. My thesis is that Jews and Christians share very little, very little indeed. We are distinct communities whose histories have been murderously intertwined and negatively entangled and while we share these historical encounters, albeit differentially, there is not much beside that that is common to us both. We need to clearly differentiate our communities and traditions in order to even begin to talk together. We speak and use different languages, have different sacred texts and different historical communal experiences. I will illustrate this in a moment by reference to two specific texts but we need to start with a model of our difference. There are two sorts of religious communities: Primal communities related by lineage, and secondary communities that find common purpose as the basis of their communal life. The first type I call communities of descent. The second I refer to as communities of assent, or agreement. The first is a family, the second more like a club. Communities of descent are physically and actually related to each other and practise physical dietary and purity laws. They tend to be non-hierarchical and pluralistic as identity is largely a feature of birth. If identity is given by birth then there is great latitude in belief and practice for identity is not dependent on the latter. Communities of descent are largely non-missionary but as we shall see, this is always a possibility by what I call "fictive biology". These primal communities conflate culture and religion and have the strongest attachment to their primal lands. Communities of assent on the other hand are made up of people from

more than one descent community and they are linked by their assent to a person, or truth, or the meaning assigned to an experience. Communities of assent spiritualise their physical, dietary and purity laws and familial relations so that in assent communities one's brothers, sisters, father and mother may not be biological also. Assent communities are hierarchical and missionary and the absolute centrality of what I call the assent package entails that this is policed and that these boundary lines create heretics who fall outside of the acceptable spectrum of assent. The assent community is necessarily cross-cultural and thus usually clearly marks off religion from culture.

Judaism, as you have probably guessed, is a religion of descent, a primal related community, not much given to mission and conversion, living with physical purity and dietary codes while remaining intensely theologically pluralistic. And we are very bad at hierarchy. But who, you ask, is a Jew? The books of the Pentateuch are known by their first Hebrew word or words. The *Book of Exodus* begins "*Ve-elei Sh'mot*", "And these are the names". What names? These names are the names of the people of Israel who came down to Egypt and whose descendants received God's Torah at Mt Sinai. Those who have an unbroken lineage to those names are the people of Israel, the Jews. Included in this number are converts to Judaism. The Talmud defines a person as Jewish if they have a Jewish mother – Judaism has held to matrilineal descent for nearly two thousand years – as the Hebrew has it, *mila ve-twila ve-kabbalat ha-mitzvot*, or to preserve the Hebrew rhyme, "snip, and dip and the tradition of the commandments". That is, you need a Jewish mother, or if you are a

male convert, circumcision and immersion, and for a female, immersion, and both are required to observe the commandments. The prayer at the time of conversion includes, "as if I were at Sinai", that is, a fictive descent. In all these regards Judaism is, I think, rather like Hinduism and it is no accident that Jewish communities have flourished in India for perhaps fifteen centuries without inquisitions, pogroms, forced conversions or genocide. For a descent community, a religious community is always made up of an already existing community. Jewry as a religious community can only be established in the actual community that is already there. We are somewhat familiar with this in Aotearoa with regards to Maori, where a real community is the foundation for purification and dedication to some sacred task or purpose.

Christianity, along with Islam and Buddhism, its closest parallel, is a community of assent. Just as the Buddha calls his new community, the *sangha* out of the Hindu caste and descent community, so the early Christian communities call out their new community from among the Greek, Jewish and other descent communities of the time. The word for church, *ekklesia* in Greek, literally means "called out from". That is, called out from the descent community to form the new assent community. When the apostle Paul says:

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew; circumcised nor un-circumcised; Barbarian, Scythian, bond [nor] free: but Christ [is] all, and in all. (Col 3:11)

Or,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28)

This is the matrix for the new sort of community, the community of assent. As the Christian communities grew they developed their hierarchy and the policing of their assent packages whereby living experience became

condensed into creeds and dogmatic formulae as in Anglicanism's *Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith* or the various creeds. These are cross-cultural assent packages. In Islam, the *Five Pillars of Faith*, or the *Four Noble Truths* and the *Twelve-Fold Path* of Buddhism. The move is clear with Paul, who, if Maccoby was right, was a Greek covert to Judaism who became a Christian. If he's wrong – and I think that he is – he was a Hellenistic Jew who knew little if any Hebrew and brought off a magnificent synthesis of his rich life of religious enthusiasms. I myself find that these elements are there earlier in the teachings of Jesus but this is more difficult to establish. Jesus both reminds a gentile that he came for Israel and advocates leaving ones family to follow him.

These sociological forms of community – the differences between communities of descent and assent – become in time more fixed but this happens in complex ways. What is clear is that as soon as the new community, the assent community – textually perhaps as in the Council of Jerusalem – no longer married within the recognised Jewish community, and gave up the rites of circumcision and dietary laws, they effectively left the community. This was not always a single event but can helpfully be seen as three discrete, at least heuristically distinct, phases. First, the new community – if made up of Jews – were *Judim* (Jews). As they began to live separately from Jewish communities, they became *minim* (sectarians). Finally, no longer concerned with the descent community at all they become *Gerim* (gentiles). By about the time of the edict of Domitian in 82 the communities are written about separately, and certainly by 132 and the Bar Kokba revolt against the Romans there is later mention of the failure of the *Nozrim*, the followers of the Nazirite, to stand with the *Judim* against the *Edomim*, the Romans. It is interesting to note that the rabbis of the Jewish tradition refer to the Romans as Edomites,

their ancient biblical enemy, and later to the Christians in the same way, as if they perceived little difference between the churches and Romans. So, Christianity is the assent community that arose out of a number of Jewish and Greek and other descent communities in the first-century Near East.

Failure to recognise the difference between communities of assent and descent entails a failure to understand the relationship between Judaism and Christianity at all. Everything is different: conceptions of justice, of revelation, of the law, of spirituality, of hierarchy, and of identity.

I promised to take two scriptural example of how different Jews and Christians read their religious texts:

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people: and they said, All that the Lord has said will we do then we will hear. (Ex 24:7)

The last two words are *Naaseh Ve-Nishmah*, we will do (it) and we will hear (it). For Jews this makes perfect sense. The commandments are observed within a given community and in the doing of them the voice of God is heard (revelation). In fact, this is how some of the leading rabbis came to understand this biblical verse. For Jews, revelation is not a book or a teaching that is subsequently applied or lived but rather a way of life that when followed within a given community brings one closer to God. Christian scholars, such as Luther, however, have often reversed the order in their commentaries on this Exodus passage, so that, first you hear and then you obey and not vice versa. Here is an example of a descent versus assent understanding of revelation and support for my contention that we have "different" scriptures, or scripture read so radically differently that it is effectively a different text.

My second example is from the prophets, from the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 31. John Bright refers to the thirty-first chapter as the very heart of the Old Testament.² But this is, of course, a

later Christian theological reading of the words of the Bible. From a Christian perspective, verse 31 is indeed a very central passage in that it mentions the “new covenant”, the “new testament”, the new and coming revelation of Christ. If we explore the classical Jewish commentaries and references to Jeremiah, we discover that many of them offer but a passing reference to this all-important biblical verse. In fact, some commentators do not comment on this verse at all. The Christian commentators from the Church Fathers via the Victorines, Luther and Calvin, to contemporary Christian exegetes, all recognise the paramount significance of this verse. The verse reads:

Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant (Brit Chadasha) with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. (Jer 31:31)

The Jewish commentators even if they missed the importance of verse 31, all dwell on the fifteenth verse of the same chapter.

Thus says the Lord: A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, [and] bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they [were] not. (Jer 31:15)

The Jewish interpretative tradition invokes Rachel’s lost children again and again with reference to the experience of Jewish mothers and the slaughter of their children – from the destruction of the Temples and exiles, via the Crusades, to pogroms and the Holocaust. While this verse is central to Judaism it is significantly less prominent in the Christian commentarial traditions. Here, we have a second example of those two great books, our “different” Bibles, at the heart of Western civilisation, the Jewish Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament.

Disputations, Dhimmis and death Jewish and Christian communities developed separately from each other. Christian communities were obsessed with their Jewish origins, necessarily, as to be a Christian

entails a view of the truth but not the whole truth of Judaism. If Judaism were true without remainder there would be no need for Christianity; but if Judaism were simply false then Christ would not fulfil the true prophecies of the “true” Jewish scriptures. It is an ambiguous and complicated relationship. As Augustine puts it “the Jews are evil people but they have good books”!

But there is an awful asymmetry here in that Christians need a view on Judaism; but Jews have no such parallel need of Christianity for their religious self-understanding. Most Jews even today are notoriously ignorant of Christianity. When I was young, I used to walk past two churches en route to school, one Roman Catholic and one Protestant. When I asked my mother what the difference was, she explained that Catholics worshipped a “mother and a baby” while Protestants worshipped a “man on a cross”! I met a *Dayan*, a Jewish court judge, recently who in response to my suggestion that in order to be an effective legal authority in a “Christian country” he would need to learn a great deal about Christian culture, replied that he had spent a decade walking past a church in the morning and knew all that he needed to about Christianity! For example, I had an observant (Jews tend to be “observant” rather than “orthodox”) Israeli graduate student who grew up in the Middle East and had had no real contacts with Christians or Christianity. He asked me one day what was all this about Christianity. I lent Tali a Hebrew copy of the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament), which a thoughtful Christian had once given me – a terrible translation I might add. A few days later he returned it reporting that he thought it was an interesting read and not bad at all!

Christians almost never appreciate the implications or fact of this asymmetry. That is, that they require to take a view on Judaism and that being a Christian is somehow dependent upon this; while the reverse simply has not

been true – Jews don’t need a view on the truth or otherwise of Christianity in order to live fully as Jews. I do consider that after the Holocaust of last century, exclusively perpetrated by Christians, it is incumbent on every single Jew to learn something about the nature of Christianity and its teachings.

The entwined nature of the required for Christians to develop their assent communities – their new quasi-metaphorical family – reached imperial levels. In the New Testament, in Matthew, the inverted blessing of Exodus becomes a curse. In *The Passion of the Christ* this appears somewhat strangely only in Aramaic with an English subtitle in which the generational curse is removed! John 8:4 translates into English: “You are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do...”. These and many other horrific verses, horrific in terms of the ways in which they have been used to divinely sanction the murder and oppression of Jews, have to be read in their very specific contexts. The Roman Catholic priest and Canadian scholar, Gregory Baum, examined all such passages in his 1962 book, *Is The New Testament Antisemitic?*³ Baum came to the conclusion that while the charge of anti-Semitism could be legitimately launched at almost every post-biblical Christian text starting from the *Epistle of Barnabas*, in relation to the New Testament itself the answer was a resounding no. Twelve years later in 1974, Baum wrote the introduction to Rosemary Radford Ruether’s *Faith and Fratricide*,⁴ and reversed his earlier opinion, reporting that the New Testament was filled with texts that were anti-Jews and anti-Judaism.

Since that time there has been a radical rethinking of the Christian traditions of anti-Judaism. The Church Fathers were obsessed with a virulent anti-Judaism. They linked Jews with Satan, perversions, carnality, and a lack of spiritual potential as they constructed their “Judaism” as a veritable mirror image of Christianity. They

projected their visions of anti-Christianity on to Jews and Judaism. It is most shocking literature – Jerome, Origin, Chrysostom, in fact every Church Father without an exception. As Elizabeth Clark has noted the epithets attached to Jews are very similar to claims made about women. As my mentor at one time, Emil Fackenheim, put it, the problem of anti-Semitism for Christians is not their sinners but their saints! This vitriolic hatred, coupled with the adoption of Christianity as the imperial religion by Emperor Constantine, led to restrictions and the fear and hatred of Jews becoming imperial law. Most of these restrictions are very recognisable: special clothing, a prohibition against serving in the army, limitations on occupation and residence, and so on. The gaps between Jewish and Christian accounts of the same history, reflecting different experiences, can be clearly seen in the designations of the Emperor Julian who ruled from 361-363. For historians and posterity he became known as Julian the Apostate, while in Jewish sources he is Julian the Just, the emperor who removed the arbitrary imperial restrictions against the Jews.

This hateful anti-Judaism provided the foundations for the medieval history of crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries that resulted in more than 50,000 Jews murdered by Christian crusaders across Europe. 1290 saw the beginning of the expulsion of Jews first from England, then in 1306 from much of France, and so on across Western Europe as European Christians opposed difference by exiling and killing “it”. During periods of Christian power Jews were persecuted and murdered. By the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 Jews were gone from much of Western Europe or severely impoverished, just in time for the revival of those earlier Roman codices: special distinctive clothing and harsh and extreme limitations on the Jewish freedom of movement, occupation and

residence. By 1492 and 1497 Jews were expelled from the Iberian peninsula as well.

What of the Jewish side? These horrors are recorded and still form part of our liturgies as we recall those murdered. We should note, however, that there is precious little about Jesus in Jewish sources. We are told that *Nozrim* cannot be trusted to stand with you when it counts but little else. Jesus is not really a topic for Jews at all.

In the Middle Ages one form of entertainment was the public disputation between a Jew and a Christian expert, who was often a Jewish covert to Christianity. We have Latin and Hebrew versions of the Barcelona Disputation of 1263 between the “Jewish” priest, Pablo Christiani, or Friar Paul (who like many coverts was not a very good Hebrew scholar or knowledgeable about the tradition of his former co-religionists) and his Jewish opponent, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (known as Nachmanides, or in the Jewish tradition by the acronym RaMbaN) was born in 1184 in Gerona, a genius and one of my heroes. Ramban had been Chief Rabbi of Catalonia and was retired in 1263. The disputation took place in the presence of King James of Aragon, who had formally ordered Nachmanides to participate, and a host of churchmen and other nobles. Pablo had promised his superiors and King James that he could prove that Jesus was the Messiah based on the Jewish Talmud and other rabbinical sources. Ramban only agreed if he was free to speak, a concession most rare in these circus circumstances. More often than not the proceedings climaxed with the Jewish disputant arrested and sentenced to death for offending the Church. For four days – 20-24 July 1263 – at the direct behest of the King the usual restrictions were lifted and Ramban was free to argue as he saw fit.

The agenda dictated by Fr Pablo was focused on whether the Messiah had appeared on earth and if he was human or divine. The answers to these would determine

if Christians or Jews had the true religion. The full texts bear careful reading as marvellous examples of the difference between disputation and dialogue. The disputants are like two ships passing each other by on a dark night. Further, it is interesting to compare the Hebrew and Latin versions. Nachmanides is correct that the Jewish sermon and homiletic literatures (*Midrash*) are individual statements of faith and as such cannot be the basis of legitimate argument. Only the decisions recorded in the literature of the *Halakhah* – decisions about behaviour – are to be followed. Pablo Christiani clearly doesn’t understand this and seems to have spent a great of effort mastering some of this sermon literature. The rabbi proves that the biblical prophets considered the Messiah to be a man of flesh and blood, and not a divinity, and that the promised era of justice and peace was to come. In fact, he claims that since the time of Jesus, the world had been filled with strife and injustice, and that of all the faiths the Christians are the most violent. If we recall *Na’aseh Ve-Nishmah*, above, Nachmanides tells Pablo that the gospel that he follows is not his sacred text but his words and deeds in the world and that the Jews bear Christians no animosity they just want to be left alone to follow their traditions through the generations.

Rabbi Moses while he believes that the Messiah and the age of redemption are evidently still to come, also believes that for Jews it is more important to keep their faith under Christian rule than it will be in the coming time of universal and perfect faith. He wrote a treatise on this, *Ketz Ha-Ge’ullah*. After the first three rounds of the dispute, as it were, Nachmanides was three-nil up and Barcelona’s Jews, anxious about the coming backlash by the feared Dominicans, begged him to concede and retire. The King, however, insisted that he continue. He did so and “won” the disputation and was given three hundred *maravedis* as the prize and a marker of the victory.

The Dominicans too claimed a

victory and Nachmanides responded by publishing the controversy. Father Pablo highlighted a number of passages arguing that these evidenced positions against Christianity. Nachmanides was charged with blasphemy, a capital offence. King James instituted a court to hear the charges. Rabbi Moses ben Nachman admitted that he had said various things that could be construed as being against the Church but he had said all these under the King's banner of "free speech" and before the King. His defence was accepted although in a deal with the Dominicans he was still exiled for two years, his version of the disputation was to be seized and burned and he was given a hefty fine. The Dominicans appealed to Pope Clement IV and Nachmanides was permanently banished. He died in the land of Israel in 1270.

The anti-Judaism of the Christian theological and popular tradition, coupled with the uses of Christian political power, had murderous consequences for Jewish communities. The medieval models for the relationship between the Christian and Jewish communities were models of misunderstanding and miscomprehension as typified by disputation and also by exile and forced conversions. There are, however, other medieval Jewish models that might be explored, for example, that of Maimonides, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, known as RaMbaM.

Maimonides asks why, if God is the author of all, has he in his infinite wisdom allowed different religions to flourish and persist? This is an excellent question for every believer to ask. His conclusions are that this religious pluralism is indeed what God intended and that Judaism is to continue to be "light to the gentiles" and bring knowledge of God and his laws to the nations of the world. Islam and Christianity are the vehicles for this transmission of God's truth, that is, Christianity and Islam are form of Judaism adapted and adopted gentiles.

Finally, before we leave the Middle Ages we need to make one last point. Jewish lives were very different living under Islam than under Christendom. Jews were deemed to be *Dhimmi* (protected monotheists), as were Christians. Although being protected basically meant that a *Dhimma* could practise his faith, there were many restrictions, including extra taxes and secondary status in law. But there was also one huge and major difference. Perhaps because they did not share scriptures, neither the Islamic tradition nor Muslim teachers demonised Jews and Judaism. Islamic authorities generally treated their minorities reasonably well. I say "generally", for there were violent episodes where Jews and Christians alike were given the choice of Islam or the sword. As one Muslim writer put it, "the Jews have no armies". Theirs was what we might call a *realpolitik* so very different from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* written when every last Jew had been exiled from England. There is no parallel in Muslim history to the Christian "mythological" relationship to the Jews. And, it has only been since the twentieth century that the Christian traditions of demonic and conspiracy theories of world Jewish power have become exported to the Muslim Middle East and beyond. For Jews living under the rule of Christian polities, the medieval choices were often baptism, exile or death; or in Spain and Portugal, baptism or exile.

From Luther's liars to "secular" anti-Judaism

Let us leave the Roman Catholic world now and jump rapidly ahead to Martin Luther (1483-1546) and the new Protestantism. While in some ways closer to Judaism with the new emphasis on scripture, the Protestant churches were no less anti-Jewish. In fact, the new centrality of the Bible radicalised anti-Judaism in the Reform traditions. At the beginnings of the new movement, Luther felt that Jews were allies against the Roman

Catholic authorities and might well be embraced and become part of his new "church". He expressed this in terms of the fraternity (descent relationship) between Jesus and Jewry:

The Jews are blood relations of our Lord: if it were proper to boast of flesh and blood, the Jews belong to more to Christ than we. I beg, therefore, my dear Papist, if you become tired of abusing me as a heretic, that you begin to revile me as a Jew.

When Jews failed to convert to the new Christianity, Luther became increasingly hostile to those of the "flesh and blood" of Christ. In his Letters to Spalatin in 1514 we see his violent antipathy to Jews expressed, a hatred that reached its climax with *On the Jews and Their Lies*. Let me quote a few of the passages from his 1543 book:

I had made up my mind to write no more either about the Jews or against them. But since I learned that these miserable and accursed people do not cease to lure to themselves even us, that is, the Christians, I have published this little book, so that I might be found among those who opposed such poisonous activities of the Jews who warned the Christians to be on their guard against them. I would not have believed that a Christian could be duped by the Jews into taking their exile and wretchedness upon himself. However, the devil is the god of the world, and wherever God's word is absent he has an easy task, not only with the weak but also with the strong. May God help us. Amen.

... He did not call them Abraham's children, but a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7). Oh, that was too insulting for the noble blood and race of Israel, and they declared, "He has a demon" (Matthew 11:18). Our Lord also calls them a "brood of vipers"; furthermore in John 8 (39, 44) he states: "if you were Abraham's children ye would do what Abraham did You are of your father the devil." It was

intolerable to them to hear that they were not Abraham's but the devil's children: nor can they bear to hear this today.

Luther refers to the Jews as "miserable, blind and senseless people" and insists that "the blind Jews are truly stupid fools". He advises, "Learn from this, dear Christian, what you are doing if you permit the blind Jews to mislead you". Here are a few examples of his anti-Jewish polemic:

... Therefore be on your guard against the Jews, knowing that wherever they have their synagogues, nothing is found but a den of devils in which sheer self-glory, conceit, lies, blasphemy, and defaming of God and men are practiced most maliciously ...

However, they have not acquired a perfect mastery of the art of lying; they lie so clumsily and ineptly that anyone who is just a little observant can easily detect it. But for us Christians they stand as a terrifying example of God's wrath.

... If I had to refute all the other articles of the Jewish faith, I should be obliged to write against them as much and for as long a time as they have used for inventing their lies – that is, longer than two thousand years ...

... Alas, it cannot be anything but the terrible wrath of God which permits anyone to sink into such abysmal, devilish, hellish, insane baseness, envy, and arrogance. If I were to avenge myself on the devil himself I should be unable to wish him such evil and misfortune as God's wrath inflicts on the Jews, compelling them to lie and to blaspheme so monstrously, in violation of their own conscience. Anyway, they have their reward for constantly giving God the lie.

... but then eject them forever from this country. For, as we have heard, God's anger with them is so intense that gentle mercy will only tend to make them worse and worse, while sharp mercy will reform them but little. Therefore, in any case, away with them!

Luther's advice ends with a firm recommendation to solve the Jewish problem:

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming.... I shall give you my sincere advice:

1. Set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of his Son and of his Christians. For whatever we tolerated in the past unknowingly – and I myself was unaware of it – will be pardoned by God. But if we, now that we are informed, were to protect and shield such a house for the Jews, existing right before our very nose, in which they lie about, blaspheme, curse, vilify, and defame Christ and us (as was heard above), it would be the same as if we were doing all this and even worse ourselves, as we very well know.

2. I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues. Instead they might be lodged under a roof or in a barn, like the gypsies. This will bring home to them that they are not masters in our country, as they boast, but that they are living in exile and in captivity, as they incessantly wail and lament about us before God.

3. I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them....

4. I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb. For they have justly forfeited the right to such an office by holding the poor Jews captive with the saying of Moses in which he commands them to obey their teachers on penalty of death, although Moses clearly adds: "what they teach you in accord with the law of the Lord". Those villains ignore that. They wantonly employ

the poor people's obedience contrary to the law of the Lord and infuse them with this poison, cursing, and blasphemy.

5. I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the countryside, since they are not lords, officials, tradesmen, or the like. Let them stay at home... .

6. I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping....

7. I commend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, as was imposed on the children of Adam. For it is not fitting that they should let us accursed Goyim toil in the sweat of our faces while they, the holy people, idle away their time behind the stove, feasting and farting, and on top of all, boasting blasphemously of their lordship over the Christians by means of our sweat. No, one should toss out these lazy rogues by the seat of their pants....

My essay, I hope, will furnish a Christian (who in any case has no desire to become a Jew) with enough material not only to defend himself against the blind, venomous Jews, but also to become the foe of the Jews' malice, lying, and cursing, and to understand not only that their belief is false but that they are surely possessed by all devils. May Christ, our dear Lord, convert them mercifully and preserve us steadfastly and immovably in the knowledge of him, which is eternal life. Amen.⁵

The Reformation led to the secularisation of traditional anti-Judaism and prepared the way for the racial anti-Judaism of the nineteenth century. The centrality of the Jews in Christian thinking was pervasive and Jews were re-admitted into England in 1688 in order for the prophecy that Jewish wandering would be global to hasten the second coming of Christ. It is fascinating to note that this is

almost exactly opposite to evangelical support for the State of Israel in our days.

The turning point comes with the French Revolution in 1789. Until this time, Jews lived a sort of parallel existence on Christian sufferance with independent educational and occupational systems. The French offered everyone citizenship. So radical was the thought of the Christian historical “other” changing status that a special revolutionary commission was established to discuss whether Jews could or could not be granted citizenship. Finally in 1791 it was agreed that under special conditions Jews could become citizens of the new French Republic. Count Ferdinand de Tonnere, summed up the situation perfectly: “To the Jews we offer nothing, to the individual Jew, everything!” That is, for the Jews as a collective entity there was no place in the new France, but for the individual Jew as Frenchman the full boons and benefits of citizenship. Jews availed themselves of new opportunities in the army, professions and education, but at the cost of the recognition of their prior communal identity or rights. Jewish identity is, of course, both individual and communal. Jewish emancipation across Christian nation-states of Europe led to a general hostility that now took racial rather than theological forms. This turned out to be even more nefarious as at least you could escape Luther’s mania by conversion, a possibility excluded by those who read Luther so approvingly in last century’s Germany.

In the Age of Shoah and the New Jerusalem

The nineteenth- and twentieth-century political and racial anti-Semitism in Europe led to the Holocaust – Shoah. In the very heart of Christian Europe, in 15 Christian countries, Christians in their millions were perpetrators or bystanders as Jews were murdered all too often in the name of Christ. It is hard to imagine now, but the

churches played a pivotal role, by commission and omission as the Catholics put it, sometimes obliquely as in Germany and Hungary and sometimes most overtly as in Croatia. The aftermath of the *Churban* (the destruction as Jewish theologian, Ignaz Maybaum, refers to it) led to the establishment of the State of Israel. For many Jews this was the miraculous response to the Holocaust. Israel. For most Jews, Israel is a religious issue, not just a question of politics. This is also true, of course, for many Southern Baptists. Christians worldwide were shocked at the end of the war, shocked as Christians. But how did they respond? At a meeting in Seelisberg in 1947, representatives of the churches met to condemn anti-Semitism, but also to renew and increase missionary efforts to convert the Jews. Not satisfied with physical genocide, they advocated that the survivors be subjected to spiritual suicide. For every Jew who converts breaks the continuity that is the life-blood of Judaism. Descent communities are both biological and cultural and the death of either is the death of the other.

Since the 1960s, Christians have remembered that Jesus and the disciples were Jewish and that Christianity arose out of Jewish traditions. The poor Pharisees have been rightly rehabilitated as religious innovators and the churches (and Christians more generally) have become aware of the anti-Jewish strands of their faith. Major statements made by all the major Protestant churches have matched Vatican II. This is all now so pervasive that we tend to take it for granted. When I was in Greece a few years ago, I was stunned at meeting Orthodox students who continue with an unreconstructed faith that still includes untimely and prejudicial anti-Jewish sentiments and teachings. As someone committed to dialogue rather than disputation, I think it is vital that we continue to meet each other, listen to each other and have tea with each other. We need, however, to be honest about what has been

achieved. Rabbi Emil Fackenheim spent a decade working for better relations between Jews and Christians only to discover in 1967 at the time of the Six Day War that he didn’t have any of his Christian friends with him. We still find anti-Jewish hatred expressed in anti-Israel terms. There are important developments such as the Bendorf Bible Weeks in Germany where Jews and Christians spend a week just reading the bible together. Although even here there are oversights and issues such as the lectionary reading during the service in the week of dialogue being the beginning of Hebrews.

Judaism, justice and Jews

Let’s return to the present. It has indeed been a bloody, nasty seventeen centuries. Christian power is awesome and terrible and Jews and others have taken the brunt of its exercise. I said before that Christians had to have a position on Judaism – and the Jews – while Jews did not. I contend that after the Holocaust it is incumbent on Jews to have a view of Christianity. After the Holocaust can there ever be any trust between the communities? Emanuel Levinas, the Sorbonne philosopher, claimed that the beginning of any ethical relationship is the commitment and promise not to kill the “other”. Historically Christians and Jews have not even got to this starting point. I endorse the view of one of the greatest rabbinical figures of last century, the late Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik – “if your grandson does not kill my grandson or watch my grandson being killed then perhaps they’ll have something to say to each other”. Perhaps! Jews are not merely Christians awaiting their Messiah – some are, some are not and a quite large crowd of them is convinced that he died in 1994 in Brooklyn, New York. Some Jews believe in heaven and some in reincarnation. My point is that we are just different and resent being defined by your categories. We need something more than “convert or die”.

My final point is about what we

might hope for from dialogue. I think that a great deal of dialogue is based on a misunderstanding of Martin Buber's notion of encounter and the more general emphasis on empathy. Empathy is to "think with", to "feel with". I think that we need to do something much more than empathise with each other. We need "emlogy" – more correctly "ellogy" – that is, to think together. We must attempt to understand how the other thinks, not least about us.

We introduced Maimonides' position above that God sanctions the co-existence of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (we might want to increase this list somewhat for His purposes. The German Jewish theologian, and another of my heroes, Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) developed a two-covenant theory – he was less enamoured with Islam – that saw the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob renewed at Mt Sinai (and again and again since then in every Jewish community) as the first covenant with the "descent" people of Israel, to use my terminology, the Jewish people, and a second covenant with the "assent" Christian community. He argued that the second was dependent on the first for its continued existence and that both were divinely designed to live side by side. Even for more radically for Jews he claimed that the first covenant was dependant for its existence on the second. We need "emlogy", to think this through together. The aim of dialogue should not be one party's vision of reconciliation or conversion of the other but a genuinely greater understanding of ourselves and others, of our faith and our understanding of God's purposes for us all.

I have another emlogic offering. Recently a group of rabbis have produced a document, *Debru Emet*, on Jewish-Christian relations that promises to be valuable for us all to discuss.⁶ It starts by recognising the recent move beyond Christians seeing Judaism as "a failed religion" or as deviant "stiff-necked" Christians who refuse to

acknowledge the most obvious truth of Christ towards statements of goodwill and trust. *Debru Emet* is a Jewish response to these Christian initiatives and developments. They start by asserting that "Jews and Christians worship the same God" and that even if they read it differently they "seek authority from the same book". They ask that Christians respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel. Jews and Christians, they contend, share a moral code "the moral principles of Torah". These rabbis claim that "Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon" although they note that it required "the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews". My favourite of their nine points is the seventh and perhaps the wisest: "The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture". Their penultimate concern to allay Jewish fears is that "a new relationship between Jews and Christians" will not enhance Jewish "cultural and religious assimilation". They end with, "Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace" as we share a view of a world "unredeemed" and "we are guided by the vision of the prophets of Israel":

It shall come to pass in the end of days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at the top of the mountains and be exalted above the hills, and the nations shall flow unto it ... and many peoples shall go and say, "Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in his paths". (Is 2:2-3)

We need to talk about this in our communities, and between them, in order to work together for justice. The Hebrew word for justice is *Tzedek*, the same root as *Tzadakah* (righteousness). We need to learn each other's languages so that we understand both *Torah* and *Nomos*. I like to think that if Jesus came in right now he and I would have a lot

in common: we are both Jews, we both have Jewish mothers, we both acknowledge twenty-four holy books that make up the tripartite *Tanakh*, we are both committed to *Tzadakah* in an actual living community – that is our gospel, the words of our Father in Heaven, and I could talk to him in Arami/ Aramaic and Hebrew. I wonder what he would make of all this. I'm sure that he too would recognise the task before us, the need for trust and openness and hope for the future.

Endnotes

1. This article was originally presented as the Bible College of New Zealand's Clyde Vautier Memorial Lecture, 20 October 2004, St John's in the City, Wellington. The appendices to this article can be found at www.stimulus.org.nz/JesusJudaismAndJusticeAppendices.htm.
2. John Bright, *Jeremiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965).
3. Gregory Baum, *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic? A Re-Examination of the New Testament* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1965).
4. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York, NY: Seabury, 1974).
5. *Luther's Works*, Volume 47: *The Christian in Society IV* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 268-293.
6. For the text of this see www.stimulus.org.nz/JesusJudaismAndJusticeAppendices.htm.

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