Connected Communities

Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

Produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
and the Council of Christians and Jews

Introduction

Connected Communities: Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism **is a resource for Christians to learn more about Jewish-Christian dialogue, antisemitism, and anti-Judaism. As the title implies, our intent is to grow appreciation for the connections that have linked Christians and Jews for the last two thousand years, to equip local churches to engage in Jewish-Christian dialogue, and to cultivate esteem for Judaism in Irish and British churches.**

Antisemitism has been in the headlines in recent years in the UK. Allegations of antisemitism have rocked major political parties and incidents on the streets and online are at historically high levels. The last two years have also seen, tragically, the loss of life in American and German synagogues in violent attacks perpetrated by individuals motivated by hate. This resource arose out of a concern on the part of CTBI and CCJ to help ordinary Christians understand these issues, as well as wider ones related to Christian faith and practice. However, this resource is not narrowly focused on hate crime, nor even on antisemitism in itself, but also on Christian theology, worship, and practice. The resource is proactive, because our aim is not simply to respond to headlines, but to foster appreciation of Judaism and Christian rootedness in Judaism, especially, perhaps, where there are fewer Jews and less opportunities for dialogue.

Connected Communities can be used by a study group in a single congregation, but, as befits a CTBI publication, the resource is best suited to an ecumenical study group. In some places, this resources draws from recent resources and statements from British churches, and a mixed Christian group will find that its diversity will enrich the discussion. The 'connected communities' in the title, then, implies connections between Jews and Christians, but also the ties that bind Christians to one another. Finally, the term also refers to the towns, villages, and cities that Jews and Christians live in together across Britain and Ireland. As Ireland and the UK rebuild after Covid-19 pandemic, we hope this resource will strengthen local community by building bonds between Christians and Jews and between diverse Christian groups.

Several rabbis and Jewish lay leaders have contributed reflections to this resource. However, nothing can replace real relationships on the ground between local churches and Jewish communities. Participants may wish to arrange a visit to a local synagogue or local branch of the Council of Christians and Jews (for a full list of branches, visit **http://ccj.org.uk**). A local CCJ branch is an excellent first stop to continue the journey of Jewish-Christian dialogue:

There are six topics covered in this resource, after **an 'invitation to dialogue' covenant, Bible, Jesus, evangelism, the state of Israel, and antisemitism.** These topics need not be followed in this order, and they are available to download individually from the CCJ and CTBI web sites.

Living and everlasting God,
You reveal Your truth in myriad ways;
Help us to listen to Your words afresh.
May we repair broken relationships,
repent of wrongs done in Your name,
and rejoice in the promise of a new future,
one where Christians and Jews can journey together
in friendship, peace, and mutual flourishing.

Amen.

Connected Communities

Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

Jewish-Christian Dialogue

An Invitation

Produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
and the Council of Christians and Jews

You are invited on a journey. This journey is an ancient one, and embarking on it you will recognise old friends and make new ones. This journey promises to enlarge your understanding of history, your understanding of God and the Bible, your understanding of your local and national community, and even your understanding of yourself. The journey has joys as well as challenges, laughter as well as pain: the unfolding, ongoing journey of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

On the face of it, and to swap metaphors, in Christian perspective dialogue with Jews might be seen as a small branch within the large, living tree that is Christian theology. It might appear like an area for specialists. Yet Jewish-Christian dialogue is not some tiny twig, but the trunk and roots sustaining the living tree itself. In the view of the Apostle Paul, Christians are grafted into this tree, which is Israel – not the other way around (Romans 11:17-18). This resource will also help you imagine other images for Jewish-Christian relations. But whether conceived of as shared journeys, living trees, or an extended family, Jewish-Christian relations is foundational to Christian theology. In the words of a recent Roman Catholic document, 'the dialogue with Judaism occupies a unique position for Christians; Christianity is by its roots connected with Judaism as with no other religion'. (The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable, no. 2) From Dublin to Dundee, whether we live near Jews or not, being Christian involves an abiding encounter with Judaism. Only in the last hundred years has the Church begun to recognise the true importance of this encounter.

In Britain and Ireland, Jewish-Christian dialogue is well established, even though the Jewish community there was one of the last to be established in Europe. Jews probably first came to the British Isles from northern France nearly a thousand years ago with William the Conqueror in 1070, and a community was probably established in Dublin within two hundred years. Jews flourished in Lincoln, Oxford, Bristol, Norwich, London, and elsewhere, but Jewish life in Britain was also marked by prejudice and periodic violence, including the wiping out of entire communities. In 1290, Jews were expelled from England by King Edward I, the first such expulsion in Europe; this ban was officially in place until it was relaxed by Oliver Cromwell in 1656 (Jews were never banned in Scotland). Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) was the first person of Jewish descent elected Prime Minister. Today, more than half of Jews in Britain and Ireland live in London, with communities also found in Manchester, Leeds, Gateshead, Hertfordshire, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin and elsewhere. Jews might be part of Orthodox, Reformed, Haredi, Liberal, or Masorti communities, or they may be secular or atheist. There are 263,346 Jews in the UK according to the 2011 census, the fifth largest population in the world after the USA, Israel, France, and Canada. Ireland is home to approximately 2,500 Jews.

Although there is much that Jews and Christians share, this journey will also highlight many ways Jews and Christians differ. One of the features of this resource is the presence of Jewish voices explaining aspects of Judaism in personal terms. As you read these voices, be attentive both to common ground shared with Christians, but also to sharp and distinct differences. The question of how Christians and Jews can welcome one another without seeking to dissolve their respective identities is at the heart of dialogue. Finally, as we begin the journey, you will notice that we will seek to remember our history, and remember it rightly, rather than forge ahead and try to forget the past. Perhaps surprisingly, the very act of remembering the past is a way of continuing the journey into the future.

How, then, might Christians encourage 'right remembering' in Jewish-Christian relations? One goal of this resource is to help you recognise an attitude that many mainstream churches have rejected: supersessionism. This odd word is related to the verb 'to supersede', which the Cambridge Dictionary defines as 'to replace something, especially something older or more old-fashioned'. Version 2.0 of a certain computer software or mobile phone, for example, renders obsolete what came before it. Applied to Christianity and Judaism, this remarkably hardy idea teaches that Christianity renders Judaism obsolete; ongoing Judaism is, at best, a shadow of the gospel. History has shown that this theology can shift into outright hostility towards Jews, and lies at the root of much antisemitism in wider society. Since the Holocaust, many mainstream churches in the West have publicly denounced this theology and sought to remove its traces from liturgies and hymnals. However, supersessionism persists in many aspects of the Church, and this resource will help you be aware of it. Christianity need not make Judaism 'less' in order to be faithful to the gospel.

Although there is much that Jews and Christians share, this journey will also highlight many ways Jews and Christians differ.

An indifferent attitude to Judaism might be better than outright hostility in our remembering, but it, too, should be challenged. This position might be uncomfortable about the idea of God's covenantal love for Israel, as described in the Bible, or it might avoid the Hebrew Bible altogether in favour of the New Testament. Being indifferent has even tacitly permitted hatred and acts of violence against Jews. The question God puts to Cain, 'Where is your brother?' is appropriate for such indifferent Christians, as well. 'I do not know', was Cain's reply; 'Am I my brother's keeper?' (Gen 4:9). Again, this resource is designed to spark interest and start conversations about Judaism, and with Jews, on the part of Christians.

Beyond supersessionism and indifference lies a broad and exciting path of dialogue, curiosity, and affirmation of Judaism as Judaism, not as the next best thing to Christianity. Because of its ancient connection with Christianity, Judaism can be seen not as a rival but as a partner or elder sibling: a path of the people of God with its own integrity. Judaism, in this view, might have positive value for the Church; Roman Catholic Cardinal and theologian Walter Kasper has compared Judaism to a 'sacrament of otherness' for Christianity,

mediating God's grace through Judaism's very distinctiveness. Or Judaism's traditions might positively influence Christian theology. Protestant theologian Karl Barth, for example, has reflected on God's ongoing, covenantal love for Israel, as we will see in future sections. Christians can affirm Judaism warmly, and can stand up for Jews unequivocally, without watering down Christian faith. This resource is designed to give you some knowledge, but, perhaps more importantly, to give you confidence to speak up when you feel Jews or Judaism might not be receiving the respect they deserve.

As this discussion shows, the question of the significance of Judaism for Christianity is a hopeful one as well as a painful one. It is also a point of much debate and thought today within the Church, between Jews and Christians, and even in wider society. Perhaps the greatest gift of Judaism to Christianity, then, is just this: that God isn't yet finished with either the Church or the Synagogue. The 'not yet' of Judaism, for Jewish scholar Irving Greenberg, challenges all final political, social, and theological statements. The journey of dialogue continues. Or, to switch metaphors one last time, trees have a stubborn way of keeping growing. As Job 14:7 puts it, 'There is hope for a tree' (NRSV). The questions grow deeper, more alluring, more personal, more challenging, and more urgent. You, too, are invited on this journey: to listen and learn, to remember, and to grow.

Scripture

Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord. **(Jer 31:20)**

For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. **(Rom 9:3-5)**

For shared Bible study:

Read the Romans passage above slowly, and consider each item in the list in the second sentence. What examples can you give for each? What might '**glory**' and '**adoption**' mean? If time permits, read Romans 11:11-20. What are the images Paul uses for the relationship between Jews and Gentiles? How do these images fit with the three models described above?

Factbox

Vatican II

The Second Vatican Council was convened from 1962 to 1965, and Nostra Aetate was published in its final year. The shortest of the documents to be published, it considered the relations between Christianity and other religions, especially Judaism, and it ranks as the most important Christian statement on Jewish-Christian relations of the 20th century. The document forcefully overturned the long-held Catholic teaching that Jews were corporately responsible for the death of Christ, saying: 'What happened in [Christ's] passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.'

'The Jewish religion is not "extrinsic" to us but in a certain way is "intrinsic" to our own religion. With Judaism therefore we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers.'
Pope John Paul II, in an address in the Great Synagogue of Rome, on 13 April 1986, the first papal visit to a synagogue.

'As Christians, our understanding of the revelation of God in Christ is impoverished when we fail to appreciate God's calling of and upon the Jewish people. In simple terms, the Church is being less than its true self when it refuses the gift of Christian-Jewish encounter… Understanding the relationship between Christianity and Judaism is not an optional extra, but a vital component of Christian formation and discipleship.'
Archbishop Justin Welby, God's Unfailing Word, Foreword

Pharisees, Part 1

The Pharisees were one of many Jewish groups in the time of Jesus in First Century BCE. They were distinguished by their close readings of scripture, creative use and adaptation of tradition, and their prioritizing of study and personal piety over temple sacrifice and ritual. It was especially this latter characteristic that enabled the Pharisees to survive the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE and to flourish in the world outside the Holy Land as the main Jewish group. The diversity of Judaism today owes much to their creativity and resilience.

For further study

Read Ps 119:9-16. What attitudes towards God's law or teaching do these verses seek to instill? One influential Bible commentator, Artur Weiser, wrote in 1950 that Ps 119 led to 'Pharisaic' religion. What do you think he meant? How would you respond?

For further discussion

Prejudice towards Jews and Judaism is often thought of as a problem for 'racists' – not faithful Christians. By contrast, this resource aims to help Christians reflect on their own attitudes towards Judaism, especially on attitudes which unwittingly shape understandings of Judaism in negative ways. How might the image below speak to this process of reflection?

How would you define supersessionism in your own words?

Jews and Christians have sometimes been compared to Jacob and Esau, vying for Isaac's promise. Paul used the image of an olive tree in Romans 11:16-24. What other stories or images from the Bible or elsewhere illustrate the pain or promise of the relationship?

What is the history of Judaism local to your town, city, or region? What is the nearest synagogue? If appropriate, contact the synagogue and enquire about visiting.

Consider the first verse of the much-loved hymn 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel', which many Christians in the UK will know by heart. What do you notice about the verse's attitudes to Judaism?

What does my Judaism mean to me?

Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers

Being Jewish is a part of the lenses through which I experience and interpret the world around me. It helps me to find meaning and to do the most with the life I have been given, by honouring and experiencing fully both the tiny things (like blessing each type of food I eat or giving thanks that I can go to the toilet) and life's milestone moments (for example helping us fully mourn so that we can live more fully afterwards).

Being Jewish often feels like being part of an extended family. People can become part of the family, sometimes by marriage, always through deep friendship. But this is a family where we rarely agree with one another, and this is key.

One of the most important things Judaism has taught me is that there is no one correct way. No one can know the whole Truth. In Exodus 33 Moses asks to see all of God and is told 'No one can see all of me and live'. No one knows the whole Truth so we all need to learn from each other's truths. This idea continues into the legal codes of the Talmud which are not just decisions and rules but are a conversation on the page, with the minority opinion always preserved in case future generations need it, and discussion and debate making up the bulk of the text.

This process of ongoing debate and discussion helps my Judaism remain dynamic and in conversation with and responsive to the world around me. It encourages me to return year after year to the same cycle of Torah readings, finding something that speaks to the now every time. It reminds me that everyone has something to teach me, and it insists I remember that no one knows all of God, or all there is to know.

What does my Judaism mean to me?

Rabbi David Mason

Judaism is a religion that is rooted in revelation of God to a complete nation. In that revelation were the roots of the responsibilities and obligations that God then placed on the Jewish nation which would be relevant continually. The revelation took the form of what is known as the Torah, the book of revelation, which was then given over to the Jewish people to study, understand, interpret and act upon. This revelation had two basic elements to it. The first was a written aspect which Jewish people still today associate with the Sefer Torah, or the Torah Scroll, which is kept in the Holy Ark in a Synagogue. Alongside this Written Torah was an Oral Torah, passed down orally from generation to generation. It would fill out and expand on the written revelation and develop a larger set of rules of Jewish life known as the 'Halacha'. To me, Halacha is central to Jewish identity. It is a way of life, but also evokes a set of values which can be derived. The Halacha does evolve over time, taking into account the change in reality, but it does change at a slower pace than society often does, bringing forth a dissonance between orthodox religiosity and the demands of modernity. In summary, my religion is one that has firm roots in God's revelation; but it contains also a robust human input.

Connected Communities

Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

Covenant

The Mystery and Love of the Creator God

Produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Council of Christians and Jews

A mountain, a storm, a prophet, a people gathered, and a God who comes down: the covenant between the God of Israel and Israel is one of the most dramatic stories in the Bible. This covenant, and others, made between the God of Israel and his people are at the heart of Judaism and Jewish-Christian dialogue. They are so important that we turn to them next.

A covenant is an agreement between two parties found in all ancient cultures in the Near East. And there are many covenants in the Bible. They can be environmental, like God's with Noah and the Earth (Gen 9:9-10), or political, spiritual, and social, like God with Israel at Sinai (as in Exodus and Deuteronomy). Some are practical and pragmatic, like Abraham's with Abimelech in Genesis 21:22-24; others have a scope that can only be described as cosmic, like God's with David (as, for example, in Ps 132:11-18). In a sense, the many covenants in the Hebrew Bible build on each other and can be said to comprise one covenant, which is described as 'eternal' in Gen 17:3, 13, and 19, as well as Is 54:10, Ps 105:8-10, Ps 111:5 and 9, and elsewhere.

Christians often think of a covenant in legal terms as a binding agreement. But such an arm's-length understanding misses the mystery, love and intimacy of God's covenant with Israel. The covenant with Israel is not just something external to God, like a constitution or law code, but is part of the loving, personal mystery that is God. Nowhere does the Bible explain why God elected Israel; in fact, as in the quote from Deuteronomy 7 below, the Bible states that Israel was not the most obvious choice. God's choice of Israel was personal and mysterious, not instrumental or calculated. It's more like choosing a life partner than a dishwasher. The covenant with Israel, that is, shows God's commitment to the world, and the degree to which God is willing to enter into human history. For Israel, the covenant is joy and privilege and not just obligation, a way to 'run' (Ps 119:32). Covenant, then, is more like a marriage than a legal contract, but even this analogy doesn't do it justice; in Deuteronomy, God himself gives the strength necessary to fulfil the covenant (Deut 8:17-18), and Jeremiah 31:33 imagines a new covenant in the future in which God will inscribe his teaching directly on the people's hearts, making teachers unnecessary. In other words, God is at work on *both* sides of the covenant relationship, even bearing with Israel's mistakes and sin along the way, as in the Hosea passage opposite. A covenant, then, approaches what some Christians would call a sacrament: it has a power of its own in biblical and Jewish perspective. Attributed to the early 20th century Rabbi Ahad Ha'am is the famous saying: 'More than Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews'.

Covenant is not something merely external to God, but is part of God's character and is a way God is at work in the world

So central is the covenant with Israel to the character of God, and such are its depths, that one theologian, Karl Barth, even placed it within God's very purposes in creating the world. For Barth, perhaps the most influential Protestant theologian of the last century, God's covenant with Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 was not an afterthought in response to human sin. This might suggest that the people of Israel are also an afterthought or a side-story to the more important story of God's universal blessing of all people (Gen 12:3). Therefore Barth suggested that God's covenantal love of Israel was the *foundation* for God's acts of creation, not an afterthought. The covenant was the reason God created in the first place! 'Covenant' has also taken up a central place in Roman Catholic appreciation of Judaism, especially in the public addresses of John Paul II (see below).

Christians have often viewed the covenants of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible as legalistic and even exclusionary. The insights above, however, suggest that the covenant with Israel can remind Christians of the personality, even the humanity of God: God falls in love with Abraham in an utterly human way. God here is not an abstract principle, much less a legalistic one, but a loving and merciful parent or partner. Covenant also suggests that God has entered the life of the world, and is now joined to the experience of a particular people. Finally, the emphasis on human responsibility implied by covenant can help Christians think practically and urgently about their role in upholding justice and peace.

In Christian theology, Jesus' life and death is often referred to as a new covenant (1 Cor 11:25), an idea which itself has roots deep in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34). For much of history, Christians understood this 'new' covenant as replacing the 'old'. However, Paul argued forcefully that God's calling is irrevocable (Rom 11:29), and the Church after the Holocaust has thought again about the ongoing nature of God's covenant with Israel. As discussed in the last section, the mainstream Churches have realised the error of supersessionism and the injustice and suffering related to it. But how *does* the covenant in Christ relate to the others in scripture? How can Christians proclaim that something new has happened in Jesus Christ without denigrating God's prior covenants -- and not just something merely new, but something with atoning, reconciling, and saving power? This is still being pondered by Christians seeking to understand the place of Judaism in God's ongoing work.

Some Christians understand the new covenant as an expansion or fulfillment of the covenant with Israel rather than its replacement. New Testament scholar Tom Wright argues that Paul saw Jesus Christ as the 'climax' of the covenant. Since the Holocaust, other Jewish and Christian theologians have also explored the idea of Judaism and Christianity as being two overlapping covenants, each with its own integrity. In the view of the Anglican theologian James Parkes, a founding influence on CCJ, God continually upholds the covenant with the Jewish people, and God also establishes a new covenant with Gentiles, in Christ. Others seek to strike a balance between these options, and prefer the traditional formulation of a single covenant, but one that has its 'climax' in the future as a promise and destiny; in

the meantime, God is at work upholding both Church and Synagogue as equal partners. As Christians consider these options, and others, in the light of the new saving act of God in Christ (1 Cor 11:25, cf Jeremiah 31:31), it is important to remember that Jews will have their own ways of modeling the relationship.

We started this section by noting that a covenant is not just legalistic and external to God, but expresses the mystery of God's love and faithfulness. As we consider God's ways with Jews and Christians, then, it is not inappropriate to end with a note of humility before God. Wrestling with these issues, Paul wrote: 'O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!' (Rom 11:33)

Factbox

John Paul II and God's ongoing covenant with the Jewish people

Pope John Paul II was the only pope in the modern era to have grown up with Jews, in pre-war Poland. As discussed in the first chapter, he was the first pope to visit a synagogue; he was also the first Pope to visit the Western Wall and the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Centre, and Auschwitz. The idea of God's ongoing covenant with the Jewish people featured prominently in his sermons and addresses. In a speech in November 1980 to the Jewish community in Mainz, Germany, he described Judaism as a "living" legacy that must be appreciated by Christians, and spoke of a dialogue between "today's churches and today's people of the covenant concluded with Moses." He addressed his Jewish audience as "the people of God and of the Old Covenant, which has never been revoked by God".

Scripture

It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. **(Deut 7:7-8)**

I remember the affection of your youth. Your bridal love: How you followed me through the wilderness, through a land unsown. **(Jer 2:2)**

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? …
My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim;
For I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in wrath. **(Hosea 11:7a and 8-9)**

For shared Bible study:

Hebrews 8:6-13

This passage has often been related to Christian supersession of a Jewish covenant. More recently, however, scholars have argued that the letter might have been written after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70; in this perspective, the letter seeks to define a new covenant for Judaism in all its variety at a time when Judaism as a whole was fighting to redefine itself in the wake of the traumatic loss of the temple. Within this 'big tent' of 1st century Judaism was the growing Jewish-Christian movement. What difference does this more recent reading make?

Jeremiah 31:31-34

According to the models for the Jewish-Christian relationship we've considered so far, what are some positive and negative ways Christians might read this important passage?

For discussion:

What do you think Ahad Ha'am meant by the words 'More than Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews'?

Many Christians associate the idea of covenant with John Wesley (1703-1791), who composed a covenant service, building on earlier traditions. Many Methodists start the year with a covenant service, featuring the famous prayer (below, in contemporary language). How is this prayer similar to the themes of covenant above, and how is it different?

I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

(Methodist Worship Book, option 2, p 290)

Write your own covenant prayer, based on some of the scripture and some of the ideas above.

Jewish philosopher Michael Wyschogrod has suggested that antisemitism, at its core, might spring from jealousy of God's covenant love for Israel. What do you think he meant?

What covenant means to me

Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner,
Former Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism

The core of covenant in Judaism is mutuality - this is true for all of God's covenants, whether with Noah, Abraham or Moses. It indicates that our relationship with God is a reciprocal one. I believe that the continually renewing covenant compels us as Jews to actively seek out transcendence and meaning in the world. It encourages us to embody, through our actions, what I believe is the mission statement of Judaism - L'takkein olam B'malchut Shaddai - to ceaselessly, actively and enthusiastically work to improve the world in partnership with the Divine Force. This means improving the world for everyone - Jews and non-Jews alike.

This mutuality is also echoed in the concept of Chesed, which is more often translated as loving kindness. This, however, is insufficient in portraying the true nature of love and acts of loving kindness. Every time that Chesed appears in the Torah, it is always in the context of the mutual relationship of the covenant. In order to be truly loving, we have to be in partnership - between humanity and the divine source of being.

The Covenant

Raphael Zarum, Dean of London School of Jewish Studies

The Torah actually calls itself, Sefer HaBrit, the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 24:7).When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek and then Latin, the word used for this phrase was 'testamentum' which originally meant both a final testament and a binding covenant. This is why the Hebrew Bible, when translated into English, was mistitled as the 'Old Testament'. Some Christian theology argued that the 'old' covenant between God and the Jewish people had been replaced by a 'new' one through Jesus. Jews have always rejected this. This is because the essential element of the covenant is that it is eternal. This is a divine promise. Moses expressed this when he warned the Israelites about a future of calamities and exile, "Yet, even then, when they are exiled to the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling My Covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God." (Leviticus 26:44).

In the Torah, and indeed many times in the later books of the Hebrew Bible, God talks of the persecutions that will befall the Jewish People, but God always promises to bring them home. And, incredibly, history has attested to that. Who could believe that after almost two millennia of exile, and just three years after the Nazi Holocaust, that a Jewish State would be recognised and declared in Israel, and that in the coming decades lost Jews would return from far-flung countries in their hundreds of thousands, and that the ancient Hebrew language would be revived and spoken by children on the streets of Jerusalem?

The eternity of the covenant is the eternity of the Jewish people. That God never gave up on the Jews is what gives us the strength to never give up on God, on humanity, or on anything else worth fighting for. This is the essence of the covenant.

Connected Communities

Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

The Bible

In the Context of Jewish-Christian Relations

Produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
and the Council of Christians and Jews

churches together in Britain and Ireland

CCJ

Traditionally, Christians have read the Bible as a story. That story stretches from God's creation of all things, in Genesis, to God's consummation of all things, in Revelation. It takes in a huge sweep of history: from God calling and forming the people of Israel to the story of Jesus and his first followers. As Christians who care about good Jewish-Christian relations, it is important to think about how we tell this story, because the Church has often told it in a way that sidelines the significance of Ancient Israel in God's purposes. In this section we will think about other ways we can tell the 'big story' of the Bible, and about the often hidden assumptions that shape what we think the Bible is.

In fact, we have already sneaked an assumption about the Bible past you. Do you think that 'story' is the best category for the Bible? Much of the Bible, like Proverbs and Psalms, is poetry. It is hard to fit these two books into a tidy biblical story. And a large amount of the Bible is also God's commandments that the Israelites were to obey. As Jews often point out to Christians, the Bible is a Word of God to be obeyed and lived out – not simply a story to be believed, like a creed. Perhaps the Bible can be all of the above: a theological story as well as a witty saying, a profound poem that eludes a single meaning, and a teaching to live out.

However, for nearly 2000 years, Christians have read the Bible as story: a four-fold story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. After creation and the fall (Gen 1-11), God's redemption within history begins with the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12; we await God's final consummation (described in the Gospels, Paul's writings, and Revelation). This structure has a certain logic and power, but over the centuries it has not always promoted Christian esteem of Judaism or even the most faithful rendering of the Bible. Is all of biblical Israel's life just a reaction to sin, to be squeezed into the idea of redemption, between creation and final consummation? If so, it is easy to see how the story of Israel (and, by extension, the Jewish people in ancient times and today) might be seen as less important, even disposable, to God's overarching purposes.

Certain assumptions made about the Bible can corrode Christian respect for Judaism and for the Bible itself, and they undermine the very roots of Christian theology

There are other ways to tell the 'big story' of the Bible that avoid this. In the section on covenant, we noted that it is possible to see God's covenant with Israel inscribed in creation itself, from the beginning. In this view, things begin to look different. The covenant with Abraham, by which Israel and all nations will be blessed, is not just an antidote to sin, but expresses God's purposes from the start. From the beginning, God desired to be intertwined with the life of a people, and through them with all people, and this divine desire is ongoing. The Bible's overarching story, not just its middle bit, then, tells of God who is present as redeemer and covenant partner within human history: through Israel, and, Christians believe, in Jesus Christ.

This 'alternative' big story of the Bible also might counteract the prejudice some Christians harbour against the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible. The terms 'Old' and 'New' Testaments do not necessarily suggest a difference in importance or value; in the ancient world, what was older was sometimes preferable (in Luke 5:39, for example, Jesus states that older wine is preferable to new wine). But many Christians associate the term 'Old Testament' with God's wrath, legalism, failure, and darkness, and the 'New Testament' with God's love, grace, triumph, and light. These assumptions corrode Christian respect for Judaism, and for the Bible itself, and they undermine the very roots of Christian theology. A thinker named Marcion (c. 85-160) even argued forcefully that the church should jettison the Hebrew scriptures and keep only parts of the New Testament, which he thought alone portrayed the true God. By rejecting Marcion, the early Church at least kept a vital link to Judaism alive, even though it was anti-Jewish in other ways.

Perhaps Christians don't need to set new wine against old wine at all as they read the Bible. As a clue towards a healthier relationship, some today would point to the table fellowship enjoyed by Jewish and Gentile believers in the background of Acts 15. This community in first-century Jerusalem was able, fleetingly, to affirm Jewish identity and legal observance within the Jesus movement. Likewise, perhaps the Hebrew Bible is like a constant companion at the table, not just a preamble: an enduring context and goal. If God chose to share the gospel with 'the Jew first and also the Greek' (Rom 1:16), and if God's faithfulness to Israel is enduring (Rom 3:1-4), perhaps the Hebrew Bible can remind the Church that it still shares a family link with Jews. Below you will find one attempt by a theologian to argue that both Jewish and Christian interpretations of scripture can be affirmed by Christian theology.

The book of Revelation closes the Bible with a vision of this kind of 'unity within diversity' for Israel and the nations. The names of the tribes of Israel, including those lost forever in Israel's turbulent history, are inscribed above the gates of the heavenly city through which the kings of the earth will bring 'their glory' (21:24). Here, the glory of the nations does not come at the expense of the glory of Israel, or vice versa. Perhaps this vision can model the way Christians might read the Word of God: glory unto glory, equally cherished by God.

How might this vision influence the way you tell the story of the Bible?

Scripture

She [wisdom] is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy. **(Prov 3:18)**

O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.
Your power and your righteousness, O God, reach the high heavens.
You who have done great things, O God, who is like you? **(Ps 71:17-19)**

Factbox

Unfamiliar Scripture?

Familiarity with the Hebrew Bible is declining in the Church, according to experts. In a 2010 survey in the US, only 55% of Christian respondents knew that the Golden Rule was not one of the Ten Commandments. A recent book by a respected American Bible scholar is called 'The Old Testament is Dying'! (Brent Strawn, 2017. Strawn gives the survey findings on p 96).

For discussion:

Is there a single 'centre' to the Hebrew Bible?

As the Jewish biblical scholar Jon Levenson has pointed out, Christian Bible scholars have suggested many 'centres' or organizing ideas to the Hebrew Bible: covenant, redemption, and God's presence being just three. But no Christian scholar, in his opinion, has argued that the centre of the Hebrew Bible is what humans must do, despite the fact that much of the Hebrew Bible is commandments. Unless they take care, Christian interpreters, in his view, can easily miss a central aspect of what the Bible is.

Which 'centres' to the Hebrew Bible have been important to your church tradition? Which are important to you?

What's in a name?

What other terms can you use for the Old and New Testaments? Here are some options: Hebrew Bible or the Elder Testament (for the Hebrew Bible); the Scriptures and the Apostolic Witness; or 'the Law of Moses, the Prophets, the Writings' for the Hebrew Bible (cf Luke 24:44).

If you described the Bible to a friend as poetry, rather than as a story, what would you say? What would be gained from this description?

Appreciating Jewish traditions of Bible interpretation

Christian-Jewish dialogue highlights an assumption Christians often make about scripture: that Christians must agree on everything in it. While being Christian implies shared beliefs and practices, Christians have perhaps not always appreciated that interpretation, debate, disagreement, and disaccord can also be a way God works. The Gospels tell many stories of Jesus engaging in just this kind of debate – even sitting at the feet of scribes in the temple and listening and learning to engage. A traditional Jewish Bible called a 'mikraot Gedolot' ('big Scriptures') reprints the biblical text surrounded by running commentary from several different interpreters over the centuries. Interpretation, in this perspective, is not an add-on to 'what the Bible says', but the way we have the access to the Bible in the first place. A reflection by Bible scholar Jonathan Magonet gives one example of Jewish interpretation, below.

Can God intend different interpretations of scripture for Jews and Christians?

Lutheran theologian George Lindbeck has proposed the following example for a way Christians can affirm Jewish readings of scripture. He suggests imagining a host at a family dinner saying to the group: 'You know I love each one of you'. The host's partner hears these words in one way, and each of her children hear these words in a variety of ways; yet all hear in a way the host intends. Lindbeck concludes: 'God may intend Jews and Christians to hear very different messages through one and the same text'.

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of Lindbeck's proposal?

(Lindbeck, 'Postmodern Hermeneutics and Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Case Study', from *Christianity in Jewish Terms.* Tikva Frymer-Kensky; David Novak; Peter Ochs; David Fox Sandmel; and Michael A. Signer, Eds. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000, 110).

Jewish traditions of Bible interpretation

Rabbi Jonathan Magonet

Does the Ten Commandments condemn stealing?

Jews traditionally have had direct access to the Hebrew text of the Bible and have inherited two thousand years of rabbinic commentary to help us try to understand the many meanings each word or verse can contain.

Take the sequence of things forbidden by the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 that begin with 'You shall not murder', followed by 'You shall not commit adultery' 'You shall not steal' and 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour'. 'Murder', 'Adultery' and jeopardising the life of another by falsely accusing them, all expect the death penalty in the Bible, for they are assaults on the life, family and freedom of an individual. But why is 'stealing' here? Is there another meaning to the Hebrew verb '*ganav*', to steal?

The rabbinic tradition points us to the following Biblical chapter which elaborates on these laws. In Exodus 21:16 we find 'one who steals (kidnaps) a man, whether he sells him or he is found still holding him, requires the death penalty'. This reflects a society in which slavery and a horrifying slave trade existed. This is a legal example, but the same verb is found in a familiar Biblical story. When Joseph's brothers capture him and debate whether to kill him, he is found by merchants who sell him as a slave in Egypt. When Joseph explains the dreams of Pharaoh's chief butler, he pleads for help. 'Mention me to Pharaoh and bring me out of this prison, because '*gunnov gunnavti*', I was forcibly kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews' (Genesis 40:14-15) This puts 'kidnapping' very firmly into the sequence of an assault on the life and independence of another person and fits much better the sequence in the Ten Commandments.

What difference would it make to our understanding of the Ten Commandments if kidnapping, sex trafficking, abuse and exploitation of refugees, were clearly identified at the top of that list of divine commandments and human responsibilities?

Connected Communities

Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

Jewish Jesus, Christian Christ

Produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Council of Christians and Jews

Whatever our church background, all Christians confess that Jesus was Jewish, descendant of Abraham, son of David, and born of Mary (Matt 1:1 and 1:16). Why is this significant? What can it tell us about Jesus, and about God?

Historically, Jesus' Jewishness is essential to understanding who he was and what he taught. Jesus was circumcised like other Jewish men according to Luke 2:21. He may have worn a garment with tassels on its corners as prescribed in Deut 22:12 and Num 15:38 (Matt 9:20 mentions Jesus' cloak having a fringe, and the same word is used of the Pharisee's clothing in Matt 23:5). The Gospel of John relates how Jesus made pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple for the autumn festival of Sukkot and for Hanukkah (John 7:10 and John 10:22). Jesus probably spent even more time in synagogues, and Luke describes the praise he received in these gathering places for worship and study (Luke 4:15) as well as the controversy he stirred up (Luke 4:16 ff). Jesus' teaching, like the Lord's Prayer, is quite similar to prayers which Jews say daily even today. The Gospels tell us that Jesus believed his own mission was solely to the people of Israel (Mark 7:27), and his first followers (including the disciples, some women followers, and, after his death, Paul) were all Jewish. Although the church has traditionally blamed 'the Jews' for the death of Jesus, crucifixion was a Roman punishment, not a Jewish one, and the Roman authorities must bear the brunt of responsibility. Jesus' Jewish context is important to understand him historically.

Jesus' Jewish identity is also theologically important. Paul taught that Jesus was not just any old teacher, but one descended from Israel 'according to the flesh' (Rom 9:5). Three hundred years after Jesus' death and resurrection, the early Church affirmed that Jesus' humanity was theologically significant. After a lot of argument, the Church came to see that the incarnation was not a trick in which God only appeared to be human. Jesus was truly human, as well as truly God. Even as the Church grew further away from its Jewish roots, its affirmation of Jesus' humanity suggests that Jesus' Judaism, too, can today be seen as theologically important and not just accidental. Jesus did not only appear to be a Jewish man; he was one, in a scandalously specific way. For Christians, then, Jesus' Judaism is historically accurate and theologically significant. God's incarnation in Jesus' Jewish identity teaches us that God can understand myriad human cultures 'from the inside', as well, even today.

The figure of Jesus can help Christians appreciate Judaism, but understandings of Jesus also divide Jews and Christians.

In many ways, then, Jesus' Jewish identity connects Christians to Jews. Scriptural ideas like a Jewish messiah, the kingdom of God which Jesus announced, and early Christian practices of scriptural interpretation are thoroughly in keeping with Judaism of the time. Some scholars have even suggested that the idea of God incarnate in a human being has analogues with God's dwelling among the Israelites (as in Exod 29:45 and Leviticus 26:11; compare with John 1). As recently as the 1960s, scholars often assumed that Christianity arose from a 'dead' religion, Judaism, bound by ritual and tradition. But more recently scholars have argued that it is far more likely for a living religion than a dead one to give birth to another tradition. The earliest thinking about Jesus arose in a vibrant Judaism, fizzing with ideas and debate, not one that was hidebound and inward-looking.

While the figure of Jesus can help Christians appreciate Judaism, understandings of Jesus also divide Jews and Christians. Core Christian beliefs about Jesus, like his being human and divine, or the messiah (the meaning of the title 'Christ'), are of course not held by Jews. In fact, worshiping Jesus and confessing Jesus' divine nature have traditionally been seen as idolatrous in Judaism, because they have been held to be contrary to monotheism. Led by scholars, Jews and Christians in recent years have made strides in mutual understanding around these issues. In the year 2000, for example, a statement called Dabru Emet ('Speak the truth'), signed by over 200 rabbis and academics from many Jewish traditions, affirmed that 'Jews and Christians worship the same God' while still acknowledging differences between the two religions (Dabru Emet can be easily found online). But there remains a tragic and unseemly history of Christian persecution of Jews for their lack of faith in Jesus (more on this below). It remains a familiar Jewish experience today to be quizzed about one's thoughts on Jesus, to have one's religious practice negatively compared with Jesus', or even to be blamed for his death.

While the Gospels' portraits of Jesus are indispensable windows into a formative period in Judaism, Christians need to remember that they are not historical record or news reports as we think of these today. The Gospels record 'remembered' history rather than history 'as it happened'. The Gospel writers wrote decades after Jesus lived, for early churches which were probably majority gentile, not Jewish. At this later time, debates between the Christian movement and the rest of Judaism had grown more and more heated. These later arguments are woven into the Gospels, and it is not always easy, or even possible, to know whether an event involving Jesus or a saying attributed to him, is historically accurate or is in fact a later writer making a point. In other words, the portrait of Jesus in the New Testament is already coloured by sentiment which is polemical and even anti-Jewish in places, in the way one side of a family might re-tell the story of a bitter split. The Bible certainly records the words and actions of a Jewish Jesus, but also a 'Christian' Christ, as portrayed by a mostly gentile church.

The Bible's portrait of Jesus is good news: it can change lives, empower faith communities, and foster tolerance and acceptance. For Christians, the stories and teachings in the New Testament are God's word, which Christians believe are inspired by God and which are held as authoritative in different ways by Christians (2 Tim 3:16). Moreover, as we have discussed above, study of Jesus' Judaism can help Christians appreciate Judaism today. However, unless Christians take care to give context, words like Jesus' calling 'the Jews' children of the devil (John 8:44) can do harm. For the love of God and scripture, Christians must be aware of the ways scripture can be abused, too, lest we dishonour the 'Prince of Peace' himself.

Scripture
For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. **(Matt 5:18)**

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." **(Luke 2:29-32)**

For discussion:
'One cannot understand Jesus' teaching or that of his disciples without situating it within the Jewish horizon in the context of the living tradition of Israel; one would understand his teachings even less so if they were seen in opposition to this tradition…fully and completely human, a Jew of his time, descendant of Abraham, son of David, shaped by the whole tradition of Israel, heir of the prophets, Jesus stands in continuity with his people and its history.'

'*The Gifts and Calling of God are Irrevocable*' (Rom 11:29): A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate'

For discussion:
'Those who crucified Christ are in the true mind of the Christian Church representatives of the whole human race, and it is for no one to point a finger of resentment at those who brought Jesus to his death, but rather to see the crucifixion as the divine judgement upon all humanity for choosing the way of sin rather than the Love of God. We must all see ourselves judged by the crucifixion of Christ.' Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, in a 1964 statement, as quoted in *God's Unfailing Word*, p 65.

Factbox

The Gospel of John and 'the Jews'
In the main discussion above we made reference to John 8:44, where Jesus refers to the devil as the father of the Jews. This accusation is unique to John, and there is scholarly agreement that it stems not from the time of Jesus himself, but from a later time closer to the end of the first century when a small Jewish or Gentile Christian group was undergoing a painful break from wider Jewish society. How is this context different from a 21st century British and Irish context? (For more information on this topic, see the Further Resources section.)

Factbox

The Pharisees vs Jesus
The Pharisees are the 'baddies' of many Christian sermons: the embodiment of rigid, orthodoxy and legalism which opposed the love and grace taught by Jesus. But the Pharisees have many more similarities than differences with Jesus and the movement he started. Jesus' teaching on the 'hypocrites' in the synagogues (Matthew 6:5), for example, echoes Pharisees' own concern with righteousness, and bears comparison to prophetic critiques' like Amos in Amos 5:21-24. Paul was a proud Pharisee (Phil 3:5), and the Gospels record Pharisees who were open to Jesus' teaching and the early Jewish-Christian movement, like Nicodemus (John 3:1) and Gamaliel (Acts 5:34). Jesus' own method of learning, love of scripture, and enjoyment of debate looks Pharisaic, and in places Jesus urges stricter adherence to tradition than did other Jewish groups. The anger directed at Jesus on the part of the Pharisees, scholars think, at least partly reflects the times and prejudice of the later gospel writers, not the time of Jesus himself. In Hebrew, the word at the root of 'Pharisee' simply means to separate or interpret, and might refer to the Pharisee's ritual concerns or their devotion to scripture. In Jewish worship, a 'parashah' is the weekly Bible reading 'separated' or 'interpreted' on the Sabbath.

Factbox

The charge of deicide
The ancient Christian charge that the Jews are 'Christ-killers', familiar from Matthew 27:25, has reverberated through history with appalling effects for Jews. On Palm Sunday in 1934, in a small Protestant town near Nuremberg, a Nazi Stormtrooper named Kurt Bär incited a crowd to riot in an impromptu speech by calling Jews 'our mortal enemies' who 'have nailed our Lord to the cross'. At the end of the night, thirty Jews had been arrested and two had died, one by his own hand, and the other likely murdered. The full story, with references to the German court trial which documented the event, can be found in *The Holocaust: A New History*, by Laurence Rees (Penguin, 2017), pages 86-89.

For shared Bible study:

While there are some messianic Jewish communities in Britain and Ireland, the Church in Britain and Ireland is comprised mostly of gentiles, not of Jews. How might this affect our reading of the Gospels? Read the story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman in Matt 15:21-28. With whom do you identify in the story, the disciples or the woman? Why might this be significant for our theme?

Reflecting on our own stories of faith

Considering Jesus in light of Judaism, especially in light of the Holocaust and persecution of Jews, can provoke powerful and uncomfortable emotions in Christians. Read the following personal reflection below, and reflect on your own journey of faith.

Jesus: A Personal Reflection

Ann Conway-Jones, scholar and educator

As a child, I was taught that whereas Judaism was a legalistic, rule-bound religion, Jesus acted out of his own authority, thanks to direct contact with God. I now know this characterisation of Judaism to be complete rubbish. However, as a teenager I felt oppressed by the norms and expectations of the adults around me, under constant pressure to succeed. The idea that Jesus had defied the restrictions placed upon him gave me a glimmer of hope. Finally, I gained the courage to break free from the life-choices expected of me. I left Cambridge University with a first-class degree in physics to live unemployed in Handsworth, Birmingham, two weeks, as it turned out, before the Handsworth riots of 1985. There, as I undertook a variety of voluntary work, I began my interfaith journey, which led eventually to my studies of early Jewish-Christian relations. I tell this story to illustrate the complexities we face: an understanding of Jesus' relationship with Judaism which was historically untenable, and hugely disrespectful to Jews, proved life-giving to me.

I now find the work of Jewish New Testament scholars fascinating. Setting Jesus in the context of first century Judaism makes sense of all sorts of things. However, for these scholars, the New Testament is but a collection of interesting first century documents; for Christians, it is scripture, which is another thing entirely. People do not read scripture for historical information, but for inspiration and sustenance. They project their own lives onto it – as I did. When Christians read the Gospels, Jesus functions as a kind of holy of holies – the presence of God on earth. That makes it almost impossible to say, 'In this argument, I agree with the Pharisees' (even though, for example, many of us take a pragmatic Pharisaic view of divorce and remarriage, as against Jesus' idealism – see Mark 10:2-12).

In my teaching, writing and preaching, I am constantly trying to keep three different balls in the air: objective scholarship on the historical Jesus; Christian faith with its theological imagery, which draws in cultural influences from all over the world; and Jewish faith, which I endeavour to describe in ways that Jews themselves would recognise. There is no resolution to the incompatibilities between them. Were I to stop juggling, the balls would fall to the ground! But then paradox is at the heart of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation.

Connected Communities

Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

Evangelism

From targeted mission to respectful dialogue?

Produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Council of Christians and Jews

Evangelism is at the heart of the Christian faith. For many, discipleship is defined by the imperative to make more disciples: to share the good news with those who have not heard it so that all can share in Christ's Kingdom. Jesus' teaching (Matthew 28:19) reinforces this sense of calling. The story of Pentecost, for example, is an inspiring example of a Church that is able to speak in many languages so that all corners of the earth may believe.

But in the context of Christian-Jewish relations, this vision—which otherwise might be perceived in terms of inclusivity (the idea that the Kingdom is for all)—can be threatening. For many Jews, there is a historic, deeply-set fear of the Christian attempt to convert Jews and thus erase the distinctiveness of Judaism. If Christians are to play a part in challenging antisemitism and in building a positive relationship with Jews, then it is important for Christians to reconsider their evangelism in the context of Christian-Jewish relations. To do so, it is important to begin by considering the specific nature of the Christian-Jewish relationship, and to reimagine how we as Christians encounter Jews.

The Christian-Jewish relationship is almost two thousand years old. That is a long history of complex relations. Often, Christian mission to the Jews has threatened the flourishing of Jewish life: most famously in the Spanish Inquisition in the 15th century when tens of thousands of Jews fled Spain due to threats to their religion and their way of life. After centuries of antisemitism, often inspired by Church teaching, and especially since the Holocaust, the attempted annihilation of the Jewish people across Europe, it was necessary for Christians to rethink their relationship with Jews.

That process of rethinking began with the Roman Catholic statement *Nostra Aetate*, promulgated two decades after the Holocaust, and described in more detail in the 'Invitation to Dialogue' chapter. In Britain and Ireland, that process of rethinking has continued in diverse ways across the churches. In *Finding a Friend: The Baptist Encounter with Judaism* (The Whitley Lecture 2020), Robert Parkinson writes about evangelism of Jews from a Baptist perspective.

> If all Jews became Christians, there would be no Judaism, no synagogue, and no Jewish community; Jews would no longer exist as Jews. Consequently, many Christians have joined with Jews to condemn evangelistic activity aimed specifically at Jews. Not all Baptists will be able to do this but Jews cannot be expected to respond well to offers of friendship if they always wonder whether conversionary strategies lie behind them…I am a Christian and I do not intend to convert to Judaism. Similarly, the Jews I meet have no inclination to become Christians. I learn from them and I hope that sometimes they might learn something from me. We go back to our communities better for our conversations and more fully able to practice our respective Judaism and Christianity. I am deeply thankful for this encounter; I know it has deepened my faith and life. (32)

It is important to begin by considering the specific nature of the Christian-Jewish relationship, and to reimagine how we as Christians encounter Jews

The Church of England report *God's Unfailing Word* calls for the Church to consider the evangelism of Jews in light of historic antisemitism.

> In a country such as this one where they form a small minority, the Jewish community can feel vulnerable when faced with the cultural and political influence of the churches, and deeply uncomfortable with the idea that this influence might be deliberately directed at changing the religious adherence of its members. Some Christians would conclude from this that it is not appropriate for Christians today to seek the conversion of Jewish people to Christianity, because we find ourselves at a point where such activity is inevitably shadowed by a legacy that is bound to trigger mistrust and estrangement. All Christians should perhaps agree that part of the witness that the Church needs to offer in these circumstances is to show repentance for the sins of the past…and awareness of the long shadows those sins cast into the present. Only on this basis can they begin to build confidence in mutual dialogue where the witness of Christians and Jews to the one God can be truly shared with one another. (p 58)

In a recent reflection on Catholic-Jewish relations, a Roman Catholic official document distinguished between targeted mission and bearing witness.

> It is easy to understand that the so-called 'mission to the Jews' is a very delicate and sensitive matter for Jews because, in their eyes, it involves the very existence of the Jewish people. This question also proves awkward for Christians, because for them the universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ and consequently the universal mission of the Church are of fundamental importance. The Church is therefore obliged to view evangelisation to Jews, who believe in the one God, in a different manner from that to people of other religions and world views. In concrete terms this means that the Catholic Church neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews. While there is a principled rejection of an institutional Jewish mission, Christians are nonetheless called to bear witness to their faith in Jesus Christ also to Jews, although they should do so in a humble and sensitive manner, acknowledging that Jews are bearers of God's Word, and particularly in view of the great tragedy of the Shoah.
> ('*The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable*' (Rom. 11:29), section 6

Evangelism: From targeted mission to respectful dialogue?

There is a wide diversity of views on the topic evangelism of Jews across the churches of Britain and Ireland. For its part, the Council of Christians and Jews in its meetings and activities rejects proselytism, understood as a targeted effort to convince someone to convert from their religion into a different one. Does this view erode a commitment to evangelism at the heart of Christian faith? Not necessarily. The fact that the Jewish people remain full recipients of God's promises can be considered a mystery, to be made plain in the fullness of time (for one explanation of this position, accompanied by alternative positions, see *God's Unfailing Word*, pp 30-31). However, the question of evangelism remains a live issue in Jewish-Christian dialogue today, and some Christians in the UK would dispute the position described here.

Learning about "the other" in dialogue can lead to our own faith being renewed and refreshed. Alternatively, some people might feel themselves personally drawn to a different faith, and do convert. But good interfaith relations are at risk as long as Jews fear Christians might try and convert them. So in the knowledge of our Christian-Jewish relationship, we are drawn to re-examine how we, as Christians, encounter Jews and to consider the following:

- Judaism has not been superseded: it is a thriving religion which has the right to exist separately to Christianity without fear of being targeted for conversion.
- Christianity and Judaism can live and flourish alongside each other in friendship and mutual respect for each other's differences.
- In order to live and flourish alongside one another, Christians and Jews can hold conversations, listen to each other, share with one another, and help each other to live out our separate faiths in a peaceful and just world. Dialogue, not targeted mission or conversion, will enable both our faiths to flourish further in love for our God and for each other.

For discussion:

What concerns do the Baptist, Anglican, and Roman Catholic reflections above share?

How would you describe the differences between targeted mission, proselytism, and witness within dialogue?

What different positions on Judaism and evangelism can you trace in your own tradition's history?

Factbox

Clifford's Tower, York

Forced conversion has been a regrettable feature of the English Jewish experience. On 16 March 1190, in a febrile atmosphere before the Third Crusade, the entire Jewish community in York was trapped by a mob inside Clifford's Tower in York Castle. Rather than face forced conversion or death at the hands of the mob, the community, as many as 20-40 families, took their own lives. Today a plaque and a planting of daffodils in shape of the Star of David marks the site.

A personal reflection on Christian evangelism

Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz, scholar and educator at London School of Jewish Studies

Jews have long memories. And those memories spring uncontrollably into action when someone tries to interest me in converting to Christianity, no matter how polite or loving their approach. Immediately I remember the Jews of York, besieged by a mob in Clifford's Tower in 1190, and massacred when they would not accept Christianity; I think about the Jews of the Rhineland communities during the First Crusade, who killed their own children and each other to avoid being forcibly baptised; I recall the fate of Edgardo Mortara, a 6-year-old Italian Jewish boy who was taken by police from his home in 1858 on the orders of the Inquisition, on the grounds that a family servant had secretly baptised him. He never returned to his family.

It makes no difference that these incidents are in the past; for most Jews, they are a part of our internal history, a formative element in our identity. I know that many (though not all) modern churches have renounced their earlier ambitions to convert the Jews, and I am grateful for this; if it were not the case, I would have grave doubts about engaging in interfaith activities with Christians. But Christian evangelizing remains a sore point, a sensitive and only partly healed wound that can be reopened by a thoughtless inquiry or a refusal to take my faith seriously.

And that is perhaps the central point here. By asking me to abandon my faith, my path to God, a missionary, however well-intentioned and eager for my 'salvation', is making it crystal clear that he or she thinks that what I believe has no validity or worth; that my understanding of the texts my ancestors bequeathed to me is defective; and that God has no covenantal connection with my people. My tradition teaches that nobody has to be Jewish to be acceptable to God ('salvation' is not a concept much used by Jews), and that there are many paths that lead to divine Truth. Why, I wonder, do some people feel that only they have the ultimate answers to life's questions, and why can't they feel humility before the Lord and Maker of us all?

Connected Communities

Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

Israel

A case of mind your language?

Produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Council of Christians and Jews

churches together in Britain and Ireland

CCJ

Israel: A case of mind your language?

Whenever Christians attempt to speak about the Holy Land they invariably run into an issue with language, and more specifically nouns. Names such as "Israel", "Jerusalem", "Bethlehem", "Nazareth", "Judea", "Hebron" are all names that resonate with Biblical stories, but they are also reminders of current events, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and a land contested. Christians who visit the Holy Land are usually overwhelmed with feelings of awe that they are actually in the very place where the dramas of the Bible took place. Some of these names also find their way into Christian spirituality, especially "Israel" and "Jerusalem". Consider these examples:

Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed.
I know not, O I know not, what joys await us there,
What radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.

They stand, those halls of Zion, all jubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel, and all the martyr throng;
The Prince is ever in them, the daylight is serene.
The pastures of the blessèd are decked in glorious sheen.

The second is the 19th century devotional song, with words by Frederick E.Wetherly, "The Holy City". It relates the dream of standing in Biblical Jerusalem, with the Palm Sunday cries of Hosanna and the "shadow of the cross" and culminates in a vision of an eschatological Jerusalem:

And once again the scene was changed,
New earth there seemed to be.
I saw the Holy City
Beside the tideless sea.
The light of God was on its streets,
The gates were open wide,
And all who would might enter,
And no one was denied.
No need of moon or stars by night,
Or sun to shine by day;
It was the new Jerusalem
That would not pass away.

They are only two examples, and we could easily make a much longer list where Israel or Jerusalem (Zion) are mentioned. But as we have already seen, Western Christianity has a long tradition of viewing Judaism's own self-understanding as at best partial and at worst redundant and in error. Christianity, it used to be taught, has replaced and gone beyond the Judaism that had existed up until the time of Jesus. Words such as "Israel" and especially "Jerusalem" came to be universalized (the Church was spoken of as "the new Israel") and spiritualized (the emphasis being on the New Jerusalem adorned as a bride to meet her groom (see, Revelation 21). The words of the once very popular Victorian ballade "Holy City" quoted above are a supreme example of this.

The Anglican scholar Bishop Kenneth Cragg (1913-2012) spoke of this land as "competitively loved" and in this he was referring to the unique and exclusive claims placed upon this land by Islam, as well as Judaism and Christianity. Be that as it may, some Christians have tended to ignore this reality and still hold on to the view that Christianity is uniquely placed to offer definitive comment on this land, that the church is the New Israel and Jerusalem is really about a place of memory and eschatological hope.

Yet sooner or later, Christians must come to terms with the fact that there exists a modern nation State, called "Israel" which defines itself as a Jewish State, the homeland of the Jewish people, and the fulfillment of ancient Jewish longing ("next year in Jerusalem") brought about by Zionist activism. Yet it is often the case that many Christians underestimate the significance of Israel to Jewish self-understanding in the modern world. In part this is because Christians still, subconsciously, carry with them the assumptions of replacement theology – that this specific land is not relevant to the story of salvation of the world anymore because of what Christ did in Holy Week and Easter. Expressed, for example in these words from a modern Easter hymn:

"Christ is alive! No longer bound
To distant years in Palestine,
But saving, healing, here and now,
And touching every place and time". (Brian Wren)

Brian Wren stands out amongst recent hymn writers who takes seriously the distinctiveness of Judaism and all that Christianity owes to it. But even here we find Christianity's tendency to universalize the specific issue of the relationship between God's people and the land. This is an important conversation that Christians must have with Jews – the universal and the specific, the spiritual and the physical when it comes to the land that is today both a political reality as well as a land overflowing with spiritual and romantic milk and honey. This implies a difficult conversation and it may be salutatory to remember the meaning of the word "Israel" –

"You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed." Genesis 32:28)

To struggle, it would seem, is at the very heart of the meaning of this land – struggling with God as well as human beings in all their frailty and failure as well as their blessedness. Perhaps the challenge to Jewish-Christian relations of the politics of Israel and Palestine poses a call for Jews and Christians to struggle together?

But the theology, important as it is, doesn't and should not obscure the reality that there exists conflict over this land, and that at the present time Israel holds political power and Palestinians remain stateless. Israel is

the only nation that is majority Jewish and is the only place in the world where Christianity exists as a minority where Jews are the majority: for the first time in almost 2,000 years. How should Christians speak about the conflict? How can Christians in the West express their concerns over Palestinian statelessness and Middle Eastern Christianity's crisis of survival whilst not falling back onto old assumptions about Judaism which might bleed into dialogue about the current political situation? As we have already indicated, this is the most difficult area for dialogue between Jews and Christians and the conversation will be at times be tense and difficult if it is to be authentic.

However, there are dangers about which to be vigilant.

- Confusing the terms "Jews" and "Israel" in political discourse.
- The tendency only to quote those Jewish voices that oppose the very existence of a Jewish state. Some of these are very active on social media and is tempting for Christians who feel passionate about the plight of the Palestinians to use these as their only Jewish source. That steers Christians into an apparently anti-racist safe space, yet neglects the obvious reality that the vast majority of Jews do not share this point of view and if Jewish-Christian dialogue is to have any meaning and relevance, then Christians must engage with the mainstream of Jewish opinion. Again, the word "struggle" is implied.
- The presumption that Christians know best how to interpret scripture (because of the older idea in replacement theology that the New Testament is the fulfillment of the "Old") and then insist that the "Old Testament" in relation to Israel is not understood properly by Jews.
- The danger of placing Jews under pressure to criticize the State of Israel, of seeing Jews as having divided loyalties and of believing that all Jews have the same belief about Israel.
- Language that appears to treat Israel differently than other nations, that implies that Israel should not exist, that compare the policies of Israeli government to the Nazis, whilst arising out of passion for justice for the Palestinians unnecessarily presses negative buttons for most Jewish people.
- The growing risk in political comment of viewing Israel as behind all the ills of the world, from economic crisis to global warming, from wars to pandemics. The internet is awash with conspiracy theories about Israel and the extremes of both the political left and right see the hand of Israel in almost everything against which they fight against. Israel has for example been accused of organ harvesting in Haiti, the real perpetrator behind Islamist attacks in Egypt, the "real hand" behind 9/11 and racist police brutality in the United States!

This last point underlines how much historical baggage Western Christian culture carries with regard to Judaism. Jews, have we have seen elsewhere, were viewed in negative and pejorative terms and theories of Jewish furtiveness, manipulation and control have pervaded in Europe and North America for centuries. The viewing of Israel as behind the world's ills is merely another manifestation of that tendency. The journalist Jonathan Freedland eloquently expresses this way:

> "If people can absorb that Israel is not responsible for all the world's evils, but rather for a very specific injustice that desperately needs resolution, then perhaps we can move away from a conversation that casually echoes centuries-old slurs against Jews, and towards one that at last addresses the on-the-ground reality. That reality is getting worse for Palestinians…We need to hear that, without getting diverted by medieval fantasies about Jews." (The Guardian, 26th June 2020)

The final question then, is "can the State of Israel be criticized without being antisemitic?" The answer to this is surely yes, and millions of Jews in Israel and the diaspora engage in such criticism frequently. But due to the fact that Israel is the only Jewish state in the world and that Christianity (and Western culture) carries with it centuries-old suspicions of the motives and intentions of Jews, how non-Jews engage in criticism of the policies of the Israeli Government is one that needs some sensitivity, especially with regard to language. Dialogue is as much about listening as it is about speaking, and it is in the listening to one another that we ultimately find mutual respect and understanding.

Factbox

The Balfour Declaration

The Balfour Declaration was a statement produced in 1917 by the UK government in support of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine, then a part of the Ottoman Empire. As well as a crucial document in the establishment of the State of Israel, it is a reminder that Jewish-Christian dialogue frequently overlaps with questions of geo-politics and identity.

Factbox

The Creation of the State of Israel

In November 1947, following the horrific events of the Holocaust, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to create an independent Arab state and an independent Jewish state in what was then called Palestine, and to place Jerusalem under international supervision. The State of Israel was declared established in Tel Aviv on 14 May 1948 and the ensuing conflict, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, lasted until 1949.

Factbox

Christians in the Holy Land

Christians in the Holy Land can be divided into four main groups: The Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Oriental Churches, and Protestant communities. Since the very first beginnings of the Christian movement, the Church has always had a presence in Jerusalem.

For group discussion:

Do a quick internet search to discover a few facts about your denomination's history with the Holy Land, and share as a group.

What the Land of Israel means to me

By Lindsay Simmonds

From my perspective as an orthodox Jew, the State of Israel is significant for several reasons.

Firstly, the Land of Israel is described in the Hebrew Bible as a gift to the Jewish People as part of the covenant relationship between us and God. Within this framework, the Land of Israel represents the ongoing commitment of the Jewish People to God through our fulfilment of the agricultural laws which are particular to the biblical borders of the Land, as well as all other religious obligations. At the same time, the Land of Israel represents the ongoing commitment of God to the Jewish People, both whilst we were in exile and longing to return and on our actual return. Scripture is replete with this covenant of love and commitment, and liturgy is abundant with prayers of longing to return to the Land of Israel, as well as rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem – demonstrative of a bond which remains unbroken.

Secondly, the State of Israel with the Land of Israel became a place of refuge, safety and security for hundreds of thousands of Jews after 2000 years of exile. Its inception, just after the horrors of the Holocaust, profoundly highlights both the historic and contemporary instability of living as a Jew around the world, with its unremitting pogroms and persecutions, its sustained and incessant antisemitic rhetoric. It is the material space within which we raise our hopes that the 'wandering Jew' might be a narrative laid to rest, for we have finally come home.

And thirdly (and here I reflect as an orthodox Jew), the modern State of Israel should function as the ideal society: one which encompasses its religious commitment to God through freedom of religion, through absolute democracy, through a high moral and ethical judiciary and through mutual co-existence. It should function as a bastion of the loving-kindness, charity, compassion and justice through which it emerged and upon which its future depends.

Jerusalem

Rabbi David Mason, Rabbi of Muswell Hill United Synagogue

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

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

The idea of two Jerusalems – one supernal and one earthly—is not new and not Amichai's original idea. It comes from the Talmud which refers to a Higher and Lower Jerusalem and then states as if speaking for God: 'I will not enter the Jerusalem above, until I have entered the Jerusalem below'.

The idea being put forward by the Talmud and developed by Amichai is key to understanding the place Jerusalem plays in the conflict. For Jewish people, Jerusalem is not solely a place of local government, a regular city. It is not just a place of historic importance. It is rather a place of holiness and holds a deeply special part in the hearts of so many Jewish people. Any attempt to solve the issue of Jerusalem, which of course holds a special place for other religions, must take that into account.

Conflict resolution thus has to consider the importance of the holy. It has to come up with ways that we can share what is holy, a multiple sense of sovereignty that allows all access to places of specific religious importance. Jewish people of all levels of engagement with the religion look at Jerusalem as a uniting factor of our people. Our prayer is that it can be a beacon of unity for humanity, as well.

On Palestinian Christian Identity

The Revd Dr Yazid Said, Lecturer in Islam, Liverpool Hope University

Rowan Williams once wrote, 'Christians are answerable to the founding events of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus. In that perspective the continuity of Christian presence and worship in these places is not a small thing. It's a kind of Gnosticism, a kind of cutting loose from history, if the presence of Christians in the land of Jesus does not matter to the wider Christian world'.

The connections of Christians to the Holy Land are important for others, too. They give everyone the challenge and the opportunity of interfaith encounter. If Christianity is, as many have noted, an historical religion, there is no way in which Christians can avoid coming to terms with relations to Judaism and Islam. We are bound up with that, as some called it, family quarrel, between parts of the Abrahamic traditions. We cannot cut loose from that despite all the temptations to do so over the centuries. This encounter would be much weaker without the ancient Palestinian Christian presence in the Holy Land today.

Connected Communities

Churches Responding to Prejudice Against Jews and Judaism

Defining Antisemitism

Produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Council of Christians and Jews

What is antisemitism? Antisemitism is hatred of Jews. The definition adopted by many institutions in the UK and internationally is that of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which reads: 'Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities'. The Community Security Trust (CST), the national body which monitors antisemitism in the UK, defines antisemitism as 'hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews'.

A person acts in an antisemitic way if they use language or act in a way which demonstrates hatred towards Jews. This can include:

- Racial language
- Stereotypes, such as those concerning money, power, greed, or betrayal
- Treating Jews as 'other' or not as equal as others

This can be perpetuated by the religious prejudices with which Christianity has often acted towards Jews, such as:

- The idea that Christianity has replaced Judaism
- Overtly negative perception of 'Jews' (or 'Pharisees')
- Use of the New Testament as superior and/or replacing the 'Old' Testament
- Using scripture to support generalisations about Jews, such as conspiring to betray Jesus or 'legalistic' attitudes
- Denying the Jewish people's connection to the land of Israel

Does the Church still legitimise a sense of replacement of Judaism? Is it still suggesting that 'the Pharisee' (code word for Jew) equals bad? Does it still imply that the New Testament is a superior moral example to the so-called 'Old' Testament? In a public climate of mistrust, extremism, and fake news these apparently small examples can encourage prejudice against Jews. A positive, mutually flourishing relationship between Christianity and Judaism is therefore an essential counter to antisemitism.

In a public climate of mistrust and fake news, apparently small examples can encourage prejudice against Jews.

Anti-Jewish tropes in a Christian Context

Money: For centuries, antisemitic tropes have associated Jews with money. This myth has often used an infamous New Testament story, the story of Judas betraying Jesus to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver, as evidence of the trope that Jews cannot be trusted and will do anything for money. To this day, Jews are attacked with tropes about money. The CST reported that in 2018 the comedian David Baddiel tweeted thanks to a fan who had complimented him on his new show. Another Twitter user replied: 'You disgusting Yid, nobody is proud of you, I bet you can smell the change in my pocket.' Christians can do something to challenge the myths that associate Jews with money and which can lead to despicable examples of antisemitic abuse. Instead of holding up Judas (with his 30 pieces of silver, conspiring with the chief priests) as the symbol of Jesus' betrayal, why not reflect on other examples—not least that of the thrice-denying Simon Peter—as examples of how the human need to fit in can easily lead us—anyone—to let down others and let down God?

Power: A related antisemitic myth about Jews is that they are close to sources of power in politics, media, or finance, for example, and that they therefore cannot be trusted. The charge of deicide—the myth that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus—continues to influence antisemitism today. In 2019 a Twitter user posted two pictures: one of Da Vinci's Last Supper, the second of Change UK MPs enjoying dinner together after having left the Labour and Conservative parties. The caption read: 'Plotting to betray JC over supper, then and now.' Scholars now argue, however, that Jesus was killed by the Roman authorities because of the threat he posed to Roman rule. Like this ancient myth, tropes which suggest Jewish control over politics or the economy are false.

'Othering' of Jews: One of the central motivations of antisemitism is the idea that Jews are fundamentally 'other': that they are different to the rest of 'us', whoever 'us' is meant to represent. Historically, Jews have been said to be outside of society with other loyalties beyond the society in which they live. This 'othering' is the consequence of many factors over the centuries. But one of the most important influences has been the 'othering' of the 'Jew' in the New Testament. Nazism was a secular ideology but it drew on Christian ideas. Even Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*, 'othered' Jews using Christian language, writing 'by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the word of the Lord.' The New Testament makes frequent references to 'the Jews'. For example, John 20:19: 'The doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews'. The 'othering' of the Pharisees, familiar in the Church, can also encourage the 'othering' of Jews. Instead of 'othering' those who are different to us, we can learn from our differences, celebrate our commonalities, and try and do better ourselves.

Factbox

A note on spelling

You may have noticed we have been using the spelling 'antisemitism', not 'anti-semitism' or 'anti-Semitism'. This is because there is no such thing as 'semitism'; antisemitism is not 'anti' something called 'semitism' but is rather a specific hatred of Jews.

Factbox

Antisemitism and the IHRA definition

Many governments, churches, universities, and national and international institutions have adopted the definition of antisemitism promulgated by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). In addition to its definition, quoted above, IHRA gives examples of antisemitism, in particular drawing attention to the way antisemitism can penetrate conversations about the situation in Israel Palestine. It states that 'criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic' but it also lists examples of how and where criticism of the state of Israel can cross the line into antisemitism. It requires careful studying so that concern for the situation in Israel Palestine and concern about antisemitism need not be mutually exclusive. The IHRA definition of antisemitism can be found at *www.holocaustremembrance.com*.

Factbox

Monitoring antisemitism in the UK

The Community Security Trust (CST) is the organisation which works to protect the British Jewish community and which monitors antisemitism in this country. The CST produces 6 monthly and annual reports into antisemitism in the UK, detailing where antisemitism occurs, when, and how. In 2019 the CST reported 1,805 antisemitic incidents in the UK, the highest total that CST has ever recorded in a single calendar year; in fact, 2019 is the fourth consecutive year in which the annual record has been broken. The CST's reports are an invaluable resource in understanding the nature of contemporary antisemitism. They can be found at *www.cst.org.uk*

Factbox

Blood libel in Medieval England

Jews in the Middle Ages were regularly accused of murdering Christian children in order to use their blood in Jewish rituals. One of the first known occurrences of this Europe-wide phenomenon called 'blood libel' was in Norwich in 1144. A depiction of the grisly scene can still be found on the rood screen of a church in Loddon in Norfolk, and elsewhere. Blood libel still features today in some far-right antisemitism.

For group discussion:

The CST's most recent report of antisemitic incidents includes the following tweet:

"Revelations 3: 9 'Know the slander of those who say they're Jews but are a Synagogue of Satan.' Jews killed the Son of God, & continue to slaughter His innocent flock in Palestine! The Jews heart is void of Christian virtue, thus darkness reigns. Resist the Jew & terrorist Israel!"

What are the antisemitic characteristics on display here? Can you think of ways in which you might begin to respond?

The Church of England report 'God's Unfailing Word' encourages Christians to 'repent' of Christian antisemitism and anti-Judaism (p 20). What might that repentance look like in your community?

Prayer put in Western Wall in 2000 by Pope John Paul II:

God of our fathers,
You chose Abraham and his descendants
to bring your name to the Nations:
we are deeply saddened
by the behaviour of those
who in the course of history
have caused these children of yours to suffer,
and asking for forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to
genuine brotherhood
with the people of the Covenant.

Jerusalem, 26 March 2000

The prayer is now on display at Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem.

Acknowledgements

CTBI and CCJ wish to thank all who contributed to this resource. Additionally, thank you to all who participated in the discussion groups in 2019, convened over three separate days by CTBI; and thank you to the 14 participants from many churches who studied some of this material over four sessions in 2020. Finally, thank you to the expert readers who offered feedback on this resource, and whose suggestions, where possible, were incorporated.

Reflections in Israel: a case of mind your language? by Rabbi David Mason and Revd Dr Yazid Said are reprinted from the CCJ publication *Listening and Learning: Dialogue between Christians and Jews on issues relating to Israel-Palestine (2020)*.

Thank you to the Evangelischen Akademien in Deutschland for permission to use an image in Jewish-Christian dialogue: An Invitation similar to one which appeared in their publication 'Antisemitismus und Protestantismus: Impulse zur Selbstreflexion' (2019).