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Graham Keith

A Rival, a Relative, or Both? Differing Christian Stances Toward Judaism Over Two Millennia

Dr Keith, who teaches Religious Education in a secondary school in Kilmarnock, has written on the question of Christian responsibility for anti-Semitism in his book Hated Without a Cause? (Paternoster 1997). Here he turns to the related question of Christian attitudes to specifically Jewish religion.

Key Words: Spiritual blindness; the Talmud; Renaissance scholarship; the Enlightenment; 19th century Liberalism; Jewish-Christian dialogue.

An historical survey of Christian attitudes to Judaism immediately raises problems of definition. Is it possible to speak of an essence of Judaism which has survived relatively intact throughout the last two millennia? Modern Jewish scholars with some religious commitment have found this notion problematic, not least because there has been a growing awareness of how Judaism has been adapted to meet different historical circumstances.¹ If Jews have problems defining Judaism, how much more will outsiders!

One such scholar, William Scott Green, has written, 'Two bad habits plague the study of Judaism. The first is the inveterate reduction of the Jewish religion to the Hebrew Scriptures. The second is the assimilation of Jewish religion to Jewish peoplehood and Jewish history.'² Though Christians have fallen into both errors, the second error has had the more impact. From the beginning Christians were aware they differed significantly from most Jews in their interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. And when they were confronted in the medieval period with the Talmud, as we shall see, this hardened rather than changed their perception of Judaism. By contrast Christians have often found it difficult to accept that there have been ethnic Jews who have not practised Judaism. The position of the tax-col-

1 Louis Jacobs in (edd.) Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck *The Blackwell Reader in Judaism* (Blackwell, Oxford 2001) 3-8.

2 William Scott Green in *ibid.* 8-9.

lectors in the New Testament – to say nothing of the Samaritans – should have alerted them to this phenomenon. Certainly, there were periods when Jews were able to maintain a tight rein over dissent in their communities. That, however, was not always the case and is manifestly untrue today. Indeed, so weak have the religious ties become within the various branches of the Jewish family that certain non-religious elements – a common culture or history or civilisation – have been proposed as the basis for Jewish identity. We cannot, therefore, assume that comments about the Jewish people inevitably involve Judaism. It is certainly true, as Jewish religious scholars recognise, that Judaism cannot be divorced from the Jewish people.³ But at the same time we can talk of individual Jews or communities of Jews who have little interest in Judaism. It is rare to find Christians who make such a distinction between Judaism and the Jewish people.⁴

The Early Church

In the early church, as we can see from the *adversus Judaeos* literature, there were three main areas of debate between Christians and unbelieving Jews – (a) Was Jesus the Messiah? (b) Was the Law of Moses abrogated? (c) Were the Jews replaced as God's people by the gentiles, at least the believing gentiles?⁵

From these debates we gain an unflattering picture of Judaism. The Jews were spiritually blind when it came to interpreting their own Scriptures. This blindness was manifested in their denial that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in their Scriptures. Once this denial became their considered choice, further spiritual blindness was inevitable. Moreover, when they had Jesus crucified, they became guilty of a terrible crime to add to an earlier history of rebellion against their God. As a result, God punished them not only internally by furthering their obstinacy but externally by destroying the centre of their religious system in Jerusalem and by dispersing them throughout the world. Their only benefit to the Christian church or to mankind generally was indirect. They demonstrated God's judgment against unbelief. More positively, they vouched for the authenticity of the Hebrew Scriptures on which Christians relied in the face of pagan challenges. For some modest purposes, therefore, Christian

3 Jacobs in *ibid.* 8.

4 See further Graham Keith *Hated without a Cause?* (Paternoster, Carlisle 1997) 4-6.

5 For a full summary of anti-Jewish arguments see Samuel Krauss/William Horbury *The Jewish-Christian Controversy* (J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1995) Vol 1 : 13-24.

theologians would recognise Judaism as a relative but not the sort of relative you would want to know too closely. Judaism was hardly a rival since it seemed comparatively easy to allege that the Jewish people had been an object of exceptional divine wrath.

In more detail, the Jewish rejection of Jesus was not an isolated event. Rather, it was the culmination of the killing of the prophets.⁶ Some patristic writers might take a gloomier view of Jewish history and present them as rebels from the time they were in Egypt, where they learned idolatrous habits of which they never entirely got rid. This picture of a persistently rebellious Jewish nation was contrasted with the patriarchal period, a time of unusual fidelity and virtue. But most patristic writers found it unwise to magnify the picture of earlier Jewish sinfulness to the point that they were virtually denying they were ever God's chosen people. Besides, it was generally agreed that the earlier faults of the Jews were forgiven; but the denial of their Messiah was a radically different matter.

As today, it is out of place to speak of a uniform picture of the Mosaic Law in the patristic period. But it was commonly thought that the ceremonial as distinct from the moral aspects of this law were symbolic of Christ. It was right for the Jews to observe them up to the time of Christ, but inappropriate to do so thereafter because they had been fulfilled in Christ.⁷ Not only were such prescriptions obsolete, but it was positively sinful to continue them. It was a denial that the Messiah had come. Moreover, God had in decisive historical events (notably the destruction of Jerusalem with its Temple in 70 and the later dispersal of the Jewish people) rendered it impossible for key elements of the Mosaic Law to be fulfilled.⁸ For example, John Chrysostom pointed out that Jews could not celebrate the Passover since they no longer had the freedom to travel to the one place (the temple in Jerusalem) where God had made his name to dwell.⁹

From another angle the Jews were interpreting their Scriptures according to the flesh, whereas Christians claimed the spiritual interpretation. This sort of distinction, originating from Paul's letter to the Galatians, was used much more widely than in the debate between Jews and Christians. But the Jews are regularly represented as 'carnal exegetes' who correspondingly follow a carnal lifestyle.¹⁰ At a time when asceticism was highly valued among Christians, the Jew-

6 Rosemary R. Ruether *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Seabury, Minneapolis 1974) 124-31.

7 Marcel Simon *Verus Israel* (ET, Oxford U.P., 1986) 163-9.

8 Cf. Origen *contra Celsum* 4:22 and 7:26. For further references see Ruether 144-7.

9 Robert L. Wilken *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (California U.P., 1983) 135.

10 Ruether 163-4.

ish religion was seen as encouraging carnality in its various forms.

In fact, the most common Christian perception of Judaism was as a literal and quite inappropriate understanding of the Law of Moses. In the fifth century Jerome and Augustine, two important figures in the formation of later attitudes, discuss in correspondence the credentials of anyone from a Jewish background who claimed to have acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah and still continued the practices of the Mosaic Law.¹¹ They agree that such a person must be designated a Jew by the church. No place was given for what we would call a cultural expression of Jewishness. But this did not mean that Christians dubbed Judaism as legalism as that term has come to be understood after the Reformation; for many Christians developed their own nomism and claimed to be following the new law of Christ. This attitude, if anything, hardened into the medieval period. We find, for example, the royal law in 13th century Castile defining Jews in these terms – ‘Someone is called a Jew who believes in and adheres to the law of Moses as it is stated literally, and is circumcised and does the other things that Law of theirs commands’.¹²

The continued sinfulness of the Jewish people meant they could no longer be considered God’s people. That title should now be reserved for the Christians. But that left Christians having to explain why the Jews continued to exist at all. Indeed, Christians were sometimes hard pressed by pagans as well as Jews to explain why they kept the Jewish Scriptures and yet did not obey all the Laws of Moses.¹³ In a world that respected time-honoured religious traditions Christians appeared suspiciously selective in handling their Jewish inheritance. So, Christians responded by denying that the Jews were being faithful to their own traditions. Instead, they pointed to their depressed political condition as a sign of God’s judgment. In fact, some Christians were happy to say that Jews had proved themselves enemies both of God and of the Roman Empire as though these were two aspects of the same thing! More plausibly, Augustine gave prominence to the ingenious suggestion that the Jews had been preserved by God as the unbelieving custodians of his own holy books. Those outside that tradition could not, therefore, accuse Christians of fabricating these books, as might have been possible if no Jews had been left to testify to their authenticity.¹⁴ Christians could, then, happily allude to prophecies of Jesus which had been made centuries before there had been any Christians.

11 For more details see Keith 104-7.

12 John Edwards *The Jews in Western Europe 1400-1600* (Manchester U.P.,1994) 34.

13 Cf. the criticism of the pagan Celsus as quoted in Origen *contra Celsum* 7:18.

14 John Y.B.Hood *Aquinas and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1995) 12-13.

Where did this leave the Jews? In a position, certainly, where they were guaranteed some protection. It was not in the interests of the church to remove them altogether; besides, some like Augustine believed they would be converted en masse at the end of the age. But at the same time it meant the Jews were like slaves who fetched and carried books for their masters. 'The Jew carries the book from which the Christian takes his faith. They have become our librarians, like slaves who carry books behind their masters, the slaves gain no profit by their carrying, but their masters profit by their reading.'¹⁵ That is the best for which the Jews could hope from their relationship to Christianity. They were not the sort of relatives who might claim by right their share in the patrimony of Christians. They were slaves whose position was altogether more tenuous.

Judaism, then, was a servile religion.¹⁶ This spiritual assessment was not yet translated into a political reality. It was only after the 13th century that Jewish servitude acquired a juridical meaning. Then the concept of Jewish chamber serfdom was introduced and South German Schwabenspiegel no longer regarded Jews as free men.¹⁷ Prior to this the church leadership saw little point in examining a slavish religion in its own terms. They were, however, watchful to guard their own flock against Jewish influences, especially as Jews regularly challenged their interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The conflict, therefore, between Christianity and Judaism from these early centuries into the medieval period turned on who had the authentic interpretation of the God-given Hebrew Scriptures. Though the intensity of the conflict varied and often the church had other priorities, this remained the heart of the confrontation between Christianity and Judaism. Indeed, the situation only changed when in the 18th century the idea of special divine revelation was queried and this process went a stage further in the 19th century with the inspiration and integrity of the Hebrew Scriptures being challenged within the Christian church itself. At the same time anti-supernatural trends were working in the Jewish community with the result that liberal Jews gladly renounced the notion that their Torah had been given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. And so today we have a scenario where some from the Jewish and Christian communities can find common ground because they treat the biblical record selectively.

15 Augustine *Enarr. In Ps.*, 56:9.

16 This tied in with some pagan notions of the Jews as a servile people – Krauss/Horbury 22.

17 Anna Sapir Abulafia *Christians and Jews in Dispute* (Variorum, Aldershot, 1998) II:78.

The Medieval Period : The Discovery of the Talmud

That, however, is to look ahead. It was not the position in the patristic era. Nor was it the position in the Middle Ages, when interest grew in the Jews especially from the 12th century onwards. In fact, this was the time that saw the emergence of the self-consciously Christian civilisation that we call Christendom, when both ecclesiastical and secular rulers looked for greater uniformity in belief and in behaviour than in earlier centuries. There was much concern about heresy and other forms of dissent. Jews attracted special interest because they were the only licensed dissenters in Christendom – licensed because of the acceptance in papal edicts of the Augustinian view that they were reluctant witnesses to the truth of Christianity.¹⁸ There was also a fear that the Jews would win converts from Christianity; for up to the end of the 11th century Jews actively encouraged proselytes.¹⁹ The fear persisted long afterwards, especially in Spain where it was one of the major motives for Jewish expulsion in 1492. Also, this is the period when it begins to be appropriate to talk of socially entrenched anti-Semitism, though that did not happen overnight. It is, therefore, the period in which Christians were most concerned about Judaism as a rival.

It was around this time that Christians became aware of the importance to the Jews of the Talmud. In recent scholarship this has occasioned a fruitful debate as to whether this led to a different perception of Judaism among Christians. This debate was triggered by the publication in 1982 of Jeremy Cohen's *The Friars and the Jews – The Evolution of Medieval anti-Judaism*.²⁰ Cohen pointed out that the 14th century saw an aggressive, polemical approach to the Jews from the newly formed mendicant orders (the Dominicans and the Franciscans), some of whom acquired detailed knowledge of the Talmud. He argued that these friars were effectively disseminating a new line on the Jews. No longer could the Jews be considered witnesses to the truth of the Hebrew Scriptures, because it had become clear that they themselves gave equal, if not greater, weight to the Talmud and other writings outside the canon of Scripture. Since the Jews had outlived their usefulness in Christian society, steps should be taken to remove them. The church need no longer recognise the Jews even as distant relatives. In support of his view Cohen can point to a new policy of aggressive missionary effort toward the Jews which included

18 Cf. Edward A. Synan *The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages* (Macmillan, New York, 1965) 31-50.

19 Abulafia III: 157.

20 Cf. the review in Abulafia II:77-82.

their being forced to listen to Christian sermons and to participate in public disputations. The mid 13th century developments do require explanation. But not all scholars have agreed with Cohen that this implies a new evaluation of Judaism.

Christians had first been alerted to the Talmud by a Spanish convert to Christianity who adopted the name Peter Alphonsi and migrated to England in the reign of King Henry I.

Peter composed a dialogue between Peter (his new self) and Moses (his old self) around 1108-1110 which was so popular that it was regularly reprinted up to the 15th century.²¹ Peter used this dialogue to make out that Christian belief was more rational than the Jewish belief he had encountered in the Talmud; that was how he explained his conversion. In particular, he dismissed as irrational nonsense Jewish literal treatments in the Talmud of God's bodily parts. He thought it was obvious that God could not be a corporeal being, thinking and moving in the way humans do. Christians welcomed Peter's work as an excellent rejoinder to the Jewish claim that Christian insistence on the Incarnation had demeaned God by giving him a body. The Jews, on Peter's understanding, had been guilty of more serious indiscretions in speaking of God. At this stage allusion to the Talmud had proved useful to bolster Christian arguments in favour of the Incarnation.

In 1240, however, the period when Cohen detects new attitudes in the church, another convert from Judaism, Nicolas Donin, approached the Pope with a concern that the Talmud be suppressed altogether.²² It was this initiative which led to 24 cartloads of Jewish books being burnt in Paris on 6th June 1242. Donin attacked this Jewish literature from two different angles.²³ First, he contended that for the Jews this extra-canonical literature had supplanted the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore the Jews no longer guaranteed a vital part of the Christian Scriptures. But the other plank in Donin's argument proved the more influential with the ecclesiastical authorities. He alluded to passages where apparently there were blasphemies against Christ and the Virgin Mary as well as permission for Jews to practise deception, theft and violence against Christians. The Popes certainly saw it as part of their role to ensure that Christianity was never brought into contempt by the Jews (among others). The Pope allowed Donin to investigate this concern, but he obtained support only from the King of France who authorised the public trial of the Talmud, where Jewish Rabbis had to appear as reluctant witnesses for

21 Abulafia XVI:126-7.

22 Krauss/Horbury 153-61.

23 Hood 35.

the prosecution. The verdict on the Talmud was guilty, the sentence burning. However, the Jews responded cleverly, and appealed to the Pope on the ground that the sentence was too severe. Jewish life, they argued, was unthinkable without the Talmud. If every Talmud were to be destroyed, then the balance which allowed the Jews to live in a distinctly subordinate capacity within Christendom would be jeopardised. The Pope agreed, and wished the sentence to be commuted to the removal of offending passages from the Talmud. The French court did not like such interference, and pursued a more rigorous policy toward the Talmud than the Papacy recommended.²⁴ While later Popes would fulminate against 'revelations' from blasphemous sections of the Talmud and prescribe immediate action, significantly no perpetually binding canon was ever promulgated against it.²⁵ How are we to explain this? The Popes had an interest in maintaining Jewish life in Europe, and recognised that this entailed toleration of error. But as part of a delicate balancing act, the Papacy took a cool attitude toward specifically Jewish learning – an outlook which persisted beyond the era of the Counter Reformation. In short, the papal policy was conservative. They liked to maintain Jews as guests within the house of Christendom. This meant ensuring the guests never forgot they were anything but guests. Christians were not to encourage them by looking into their own literature or religion. On the other hand, the Popes were unenthusiastic about the zeal of those who would drive out the guests. For our purposes we should note that the Popes were unconcerned about the authority given to the Talmud by the Jews. No doubt, this did go against the Augustinian framework, but by this time there were few pagans around to whom it was of interest to the church to point to the Jews as the custodians of its own Scriptures. Cohen is right to that extent. But there were other reasons to preserve the Jews. It would be going too far to suggest that many in the church were keen to get rid of the Jews because they no longer fulfilled their Augustinian role.

The Medieval Period : The New Missionising

Apart from the reaction in Paris, Donin's initiative did not produce a lasting impact on church leaders. An interesting change of strategy by the late 1250s further illustrates that awareness of the Talmud did not change the perception of the Jews. This new strategy was advo-

24 Robert Chazan *Daggers of Faith* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989) 33-4.

25 Hood 35. For patristic antecedents to the idea of the Jews being duped by their own human traditions see Ruether 162.

cated by another Jewish convert, Pablo Christiani. He was convinced that many of the Jewish sages who had contributed to the Talmud really believed that the Messiah had come sometime in the first century, this Messiah was theanthropic and had repealed the Mosaic Law. This, according to Christiani, could only mean that they accepted the identity of the Messiah as Jesus of Nazareth. He, therefore, obtained leave to engage both in preaching within Jewish synagogues and in public disputations with Jewish leaders on this subject. The most famous of the latter was the Barcelona Disputation of 1263 held in the presence of the King of Aragon where the leading spokesman on the Jewish side was Nachmanides (Moses ben Nahman).²⁶ It was an audacious strategy to appeal to the Talmud to demand that the Jews should come to accept the validity of Christianity. It was open to the very obvious objection that if these sages really had believed Jesus was the Messiah, why had they not embraced Christianity?²⁷ Despite this objection being raised by Nachmanides, church and state leaders felt sufficiently happy with this technique to allow Christiani to persist with it. In fact, Christiani's first attempts to challenge the Jews on their own ground were developed and refined by the Dominican Raymund Martini, whose work *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos* (1278) has been described as 'the high-water mark not only of mid-thirteenth-century missionizing effort but, in many ways, of medieval Christian proselytising argumentation against the Jews altogether.'²⁸ A similar strategy can be detected when the Kabbalah first became available to Christian scholars toward the end of the 15th century. Kabbalistic works were ransacked for evidences of Christian doctrine. It was assumed that kabbalistic literature was a reflection of primitive and authentic Jewish faith. Since Christian doctrines could be found in it, it was further proof that the Jews had in their blindness despised their own best traditions.²⁹

Christiani had instigated the first serious attempt by the medieval church to evangelise Jews. We might wonder about the term 'evangelism' when Jews were forced by the ruling powers to listen to Christiani's sermons in their own synagogues and elsewhere, but we must make allowances for the restricted religious freedom within medieval Christendom. This does not imply an increasingly negative view of Judaism. On the contrary it suggests that there was in certain circles an expectation of Jewish conversions. Such an expectation may have

26 Krauss/Horbury 161-5.

27 Hood 36-7.

28 Chazan 136. The work translates as 'Dagger of faith against Moors and Jews'.

29 G.F. Moore 'Christian Writers on Judaism' in *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921)

been fuelled by an influx to the church of a new type of convert from the upper echelons of Jewish society – a type as much moved by intellectual and social changes within Jewish society as by the actions of Christians.³⁰ A further question arises – were many converts added by the aggressive style of missionizing associated with Christiani and Martini? The answer is probably not, though we can be sure that their strategy did cause consternation in Jewish communities.³¹ Certainly the church did not sustain the sort of approach which relied so heavily on knowledge of the Talmud and related literature. There were not the people with the interest or the training to develop the specialist knowledge.³² Besides, the church had no interest in the Talmud in its own right. Their concerns were restricted to two areas – (a) were these writings smearing Christianity? (b) are there evidences for Christian doctrines which can be used against the Jews?

Assuming the approach of Christiani and Martini did not secure many conversions, the result was a negative impact on perceptions of the Jews. They would appear even more spiritually blinded than ever. Christians had pointed to the true sense of their Scriptures but the Jews could not recognise their spiritual meaning. Now Christians had delved into their Talmud and shown them that their own early leaders had effectively known the truth, and still the vast majority of Jews did not believe. Further clear evidence of Jewish blindness. The result of this comparative failure was to underscore the earlier picture of the Jews as a spiritually blinded people who really knew the truth but from perversity or blindness would not acknowledge it.³³ We can bring further evidence to support this picture. Thomas Aquinas, a contemporary of the new missionizing, argued that while Jews were not quite as bad as heretics who had denied the truth they had once professed, they were not in the same category as pagans who never had the truth of the gospel at all. The Jews fell into a sort of intermediate category where they accepted the gospel in a figurative sense as set out in their own Scriptures, but then they distorted that faith by their interpretations.³⁴ This represents a sort of partial rejection of a truth they really knew. (In fact, the arguments of Christiani and those who followed him tended to blur even the distinction between heretics and Jews. The Jews resembled another group of heretics who had produced their own books to justify and extend their own perverse interpretations.)

210-1.

30 Chazan 35-6.

31 Chazan 159-60.

32 Chazan 161-3.

33 Chazan 180-1.

Significantly about this time it became accepted in Christian exegesis that the Jews had recognised that Jesus was the Messiah before they clamoured for his crucifixion. Strictly speaking, this was not the view taken by Aquinas or of many writing before him. Reflecting their own intellectual and cultural elitism, they distinguished between the malice of the leaders and the ignorance of the common people.³⁵ But a generation or so after Aquinas, Duns Scotus and Nicholas of Lyra were claiming that all first-century Jews had known that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God.³⁶ And even Aquinas could assert that the public events surrounding the resurrection were such as to leave none with the excuse of ignorance. Moreover, the very strength of Christianity and the dispersion of the Jewish people were signs that God had removed his special blessing from the Jewish people. Seeing that the Jews failed to interpret these signs correctly and would not espouse Christianity, they in a sense approved of the crucifixion. 'The blood of Christ,' wrote Aquinas, 'binds the children of the Jews insofar as they are imitators of their parents' malice and thus approve of Christ's killing.'³⁷

Moreover, there was nothing to be gained by studying Judaism for its own sake if it was the product of a spiritually blinded people. Generally Christians believed that contact between Jews and themselves should be limited to the utilitarian and economic ties inevitable in a society where they lived next to each other. Such ties did not extend to theological discourse. Thomas Aquinas, for example, believed that theological disputations with Jews should be limited. Ordinary Christians should not be present, and even with professional theologians strict limitations should operate.³⁸ The reasoning was simple. Christians were sensitive to any situation where Christianity might appear inferior to Judaism. In such a climate anyone expressing an interest in Judaism was suspected of judaising. This is illustrated by Andrew of St Victor (died 1175), who was considered a Judaiser by his colleagues because his interest in Jewish commentaries led to a more literal understanding of Scripture than was normal among Christians.³⁹ Their suspicions, however, revealed a superficial understanding of Andrew's method. He made it clear that establishing the literal meaning was only the first step in comprehending the text. Besides,

34 Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* (Vol 32) 2a2ae, 10; 5-6.

35 Hood 64-76.

36 Jeremy Cohen 'The Jews as Killers of Christ in the Latin tradition from Augustine to the Friars' *Traditio* 39 (1983) 20.

37 Aquinas *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo* 4.8-9.

38 Hood 97-100. Krauss/Horbury 77 mention some figures who took an even stricter line than Aquinas.

he would sometimes use the word 'Hebrews' pejoratively in reference to a Jewish authority. But his example does highlight the problems of showing too great an interest in Jewish learning. Thus, when Christians did consult Jews about the Hebrew Scriptures, they did not want to understand Judaism in its own terms. Their primary concern was to boost the church's own store of knowledge.

The Renaissance – a new interest in Hebrew scholarship

The Renaissance, beginning roughly in the 1480s, saw a flowering of Hebrew and related oriental studies alongside a revival in the Greek and Latin classics, though Hebrew never attained the prominence of the other two languages. This scholarly interest peaked in the 17th century and lasted until the middle of the next century.⁴⁰ It was never so strong in Roman Catholic as in Protestant circles. In fact, up to the first part of the 17th century Catholic Hebraists still felt the need to preface their works with apologies explaining why they had needed to study rabbinics.⁴¹ However, interest in Judaic studies lapsed c.1750 for about a century before they were revived in earnest – and then on quite a different footing.

These Christian Hebraists of 1480-1750 were motivated by a variety of concerns mainly extraneous to Judaism. Their work, however, did impact on public perceptions of Judaism. Let me take the two Buxtorfs as an example of outstanding figures from the 17th century who left a lasting but different legacy. They also illustrate a changing climate of thought. These Buxtorfs were father and son who each held a professorship in Hebrew at Basel. The elder Buxtorf (1564-1629) became professor at the age of 27 – a position he held until his death when he was succeeded by his son (1599-1664). Initially his son followed closely in his father's footsteps but later developed a perspective of his own. With him we come near to someone who was interested in Judaism for its own sake. In their own day the two Buxtorfs held an awesome reputation among those Christians with a scholarly interest in Judaica.⁴²

Buxtorf the Elder's most popular work was entitled *Synagoga judaica*, a 730-page treatment of Jewish beliefs and rituals. Buxtorf gave a decidedly acerbic spin to his description of Jewish rituals. He made out that Judaism was 'essentially a haphazard conglomeration of ceremonies', and added weight to the unfavourable perceptions of

39 Abulafia XII:74.

40 For a brief survey see Krauss/Horbury 127-31.

41 Frank E. Manuel *The Broken Staff* (Harvard U.P. 1992) 134.

those who had visited Jewish synagogues and concluded that Judaism was a disorderly religion.⁴³ When the younger Buxtorf had this work reprinted, he omitted several sections and inserted large sections from a work of Leone Modena, a Jewish rabbi. As a result, this revised version gave a more accurate and favourable appraisal of Judaism. The younger Buxtorf also issued in Latin translation two Jewish philosophical works of a distinctly rationalist character – Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* and Yehudah Halevi's *Kuzari*. These revealed a different side to Judaism than that highlighted by his father. Interestingly, he could commend Maimonides' work in his introduction as a bulwark against atheism and against false philosophy. This was a sign of a changing climate of ideas when both Christians and Jews would be faced with challenges directed against any form of revealed religion. Thus, the Christian world received two very different pictures of Judaism from two members of the same family – the one emphasising empty rituals devoid of spiritual meaning, while the other fastened on a rational approach to religion more in keeping with developments in his age. Since Buxtorf the younger's translations were into Latin, their influence was limited to an educated elite. They proved of great interest to Anglicans and later to the German Enlightenment. By contrast, the elder Buxtorf's popular *Synagoga judaica*, which was issued in German, had more widespread appeal. He helped to maintain a scholarly tradition of Judeophobia in Germany.

Attitudes to Judaism in the 18th century, the period which would see the temporary demise of Hebrew studies, were profoundly influenced first by deism and then by the Enlightenment. The changes were complex and cannot easily be categorised. But so powerful were the currents of thought that since then it becomes increasingly difficult to talk of a standard view of Judaism in the churches. There were sections of the church where essentially medieval pictures of Judaism persisted unaltered and the Enlightenment had no effect. But elsewhere some elements in the Enlightenment proposed to cut the umbilical cord which had hitherto bound Judaism to Christianity. Others saw Judaism and Christianity as minor variations of the same superstitious themes, while still others took a more neutral approach and identified Judaism and Christianity as two specimens in the much broader genus of religion. The latter view was promoted by the deist movement in Britain which set forth the idea of 'natural religion' as possessed by all primitive peoples. The Jews, then, were not the original monotheists; indeed, their religion was thought to be a

42 Here I rely on Manuel 82-92.

corruption of true natural religion, especially when measured against its purest contemporary form, Christianity. The deist presupposition, however, of an original natural and healthy religion could also be used against Christianity and in favour of Judaism, the older religion. This was true of the Irishman, John Toland, who combined his high view of Judaism with a plea for contemporary Jews to be accorded proper civic rights.⁴⁴ Whatever the individual variations, the overall impact of deism was to downplay the idea of special revelation which formed the link between Jews and Christians and was vital to the older Christian perception of the Jews as spiritually blind. It also gave pre-eminence to rational considerations in determining what was authentic and original in religion.

The continental Enlightenment, which owed much to the deists, also stressed the primeval situation. It operated with the presupposition that 'the remote origins of a phenomenon or the early history of a collective body told what was quintessential about the thing itself'.⁴⁵ Corporate bodies, especially nations and religious groups, were endowed, as it were, with their own genetic code which laid down certain characteristics that would remain unchanged over the passage of time. This triggered a debate on how to characterise the early Jews – were they barbarians like the Picts or were they a civilised, well-ordered group? Different views could be taken on this. Voltaire, one of the leading figures in the French Enlightenment, is notorious for his view of the Jews as full of intolerance, violence and superstition; but Voltaire's onslaughts produced rejoinders from some French Catholic clergy (notably the Abbés Guénée, Bergier and Grégoire) who painted an idyllic picture of the early Jews and of the Mosaic Law. The emphasis was thus turned away from contemporary or post-biblical Judaism to the origins of the Jewish people. Judaism was seen not so much as originating from a special divine revelation as being an embodiment of the character of the Jewish people – essentially the view of Spinoza from the 1670s.⁴⁶ Moreover, on the eve of the French Revolution there was heated debate on the future of the Jews; but this had little to do with Judaism.⁴⁷ Indeed, it virtually ignored Judaism and concentrated on the Jews as people or as citizens. How could the Jews be made useful citizens of their country? It was assumed that their assimilation would lead to the disappearance or at least the pri-

43 Manuel 87.

44 Jacob Katz *Out of the Ghetto* (Harvard U.P., 1972) 39-40.

45 Manuel 192.

46 Cf. the title of the French translation of his *Tractatus – Traité des cérémonies des juifs tant anciens que modernes*.

vatisation of their religion. Thus, in the 19th century there was little interest in Judaism but a lot of interest both in the supposed racial characteristics of the Jews and in their impact on wider society. In many respects this reflected the secularisation of society; but it also impacted on the churches. In fact, the churches only began to revive their interest in Judaism in the aftermath of the Holocaust and then it was in response to charges of Jews like Jules Isaac that the church had laid the foundation for Nazi attitudes in its own teaching of contempt for Judaism in the patristic and medieval periods.⁴⁸

Nineteenth Century Changes

We must not ignore, however, some interesting changes in the perception among 19th century scholars of Judaism. Then there was a revival in Judaic studies, but significantly this had nothing to do with analysing Judaism in its own right. It was occasioned by a desire to illuminate the Jewish background to the New Testament. The pioneer for this phase was August Friedrich Gfroerer, who published the first part of his *Geschichte des Urchristentums* in 1831. Here Gfroerer freely acknowledged the use of earlier collections of Talmudic writings and the like; but he turned them to a novel purpose. These collections had largely been amassed as proof texts for Christian doctrines or as illustrations of Jewish absurdities. They were not designed for an historical analysis. Gfroerer, however, did show some grasp of detached historical method, for which he has been praised by George Foot Moore – ‘It was the first time that the attempt had been made to portray Judaism as it was, from its own literature, without apologetic, polemic, or dogmatic prepossessions or intentions.’⁴⁹ That is not to say that Gfroerer ignores Jewish theology. Far from it, but he uses a format natural to that theology. Any bias he shows derives more from an academic stance than from his ecclesiastical leanings. Other major German writers who followed him, including Ferdinand Weber, Wilhelm Bousset and Emil Schürer, however, proved less dispassionate in their treatments of Judaism.⁵⁰

These writers were responsible for spreading a novel picture of Judaism. They portrayed the rabbis as believing in a highly transcendental God, quite inaccessible to humans, and who could only deal with the world through various intermediaries. (They had read their

47 Katz 57-79.

48 Cf. Jules Isaac *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (ET, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York 1964).

49 Moore 225.

sources through kabbalistic spectacles.) By contrast, Christianity, which offered immediate contact between God and the believer, was superior. Earlier Christians, however, had never suggested that the Jews had a different God. They had stated that in their holy writings the Jews had looked on the same God – but with their eyes blindfolded, so to speak. Moreover, these 19th century Germans were the first to denigrate Judaism as ‘legalism’ – that is, a religion highly motivated by the prospect of rewards for good behaviour and punishment for ill desert. This is all the more remarkable when we consider that the Lutheran tradition had given ample scope to view the Jews as practitioners of a ‘works-righteousness’.⁵¹ Their motive was to contrast the example and the teaching of Jesus to what was seen as the legalistic attitudes of the scribes and Pharisees. They found it desirable so to distinguish Jesus from his Jewish contemporaries as to make Christianity an obviously superior and more attractive proposition than the Judaism of his own day. It is no accident that this period saw a plethora of books on the life of Jesus. He was seen as the heart of Christianity; Christian scholars searched eagerly to find what distinguished him from his Jewish surroundings.

Here we can detect the influence of various 18th century tendencies. Judaism was seen more as the religion of a people than as a religious inheritance ultimately bequeathed by God with both nationalistic and universalistic aspects. The connection between Judaism and Christianity is contingent. Essentially they are different types of religion whose respective merits have to be argued. Up to the 17th century it would have been unthinkable for the church to argue the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Who, after all, argues for the superiority of sight over blindness, of truth over error! But the Enlightenment had left an aura of uncertainty in the church over its Jewish legacy. It seemed safest to see the life and teaching of Christ as a new beginning.

Looking further into the Enlightenment legacy, we should remember that the Enlightenment also affected the Jewish community, especially in Germany. Germany was the home of the Reform movement in Judaism which sought to redefine both Jewish belief and practice in terms of what was acceptable to reason. In the early stages of this there was close co-operation between liberals in both the Jewish and Christian communities.⁵² But as the 19th century developed

50 Moore 228-250.

51 Moore 252-3. This idea had, however, been foreshadowed by Friedrich Schleiermacher *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (ET Richard Crouter, Cambridge U.P. 1988) 211-2.

52 Schleiermacher had even encouraged the development of Reform Judaism. He

and as Enlightenment hopes for an improved society began to fade, liberal Jews and liberal Christians became more aware of their differences. Liberal Christians (at this point effectively liberal Protestants) were disappointed that the liberal Jews did not assimilate but preserved their Jewish identity.⁵³ They were stung to the quick when liberal Jews began to claim that Judaism was the purest form of ethical monotheism, whereas Christianity by its worship of Jesus had adulterated that monotheism. These Jews claimed to research Jesus' historical and cultural background and find nothing different in Jesus from his Jewish surroundings. Whatever was new in the gospels had been inserted by the early church in an accommodation to paganism. Thus, Abraham Geiger, a father figure for Reform Judaism, described Jesus as 'a Jew, a pharisee Jew of Galilean stock, who shared the hopes of his time and who believed these hopes were embodied in him. He walked in the ways of Hillel; in no way did he express a new thought.'⁵⁴ This line was taken by others in the liberal Jewish tradition and in a modest form can be found in Jewish writers to the present time. But in the context of the 1870s this viewpoint could take on an extreme and provocative tone – 'Since he (Jesus) after all did nothing, they had to make of him a kind of God.'⁵⁵ Liberal Christians, who had expected to find a friend in Reform Judaism, were amazed to discover an unexpected rival.⁵⁶

It was in this context of an aggressive Jewish challenge that liberal Christians earnestly addressed the question of what made Jesus unique. Various answers could be given to that question; but perhaps the most common answer was to appeal to a critical analysis of both Testaments. Here I should mention the names of prominent scholars like Julius Wellhausen, Adolf Harnack and Édouard Meyer. According to them, developments in the Jewish religion were neither uniform nor entirely healthy. At some point (generally around the Babylonian exile) the pure, prophetic Judaism of an earlier period degenerated into a barren legalism which reached its height in the time of the Sadducees and Pharisees. Jesus, they suggested, rescued Judaism from the sterile legalism and the narrow nationalistic particularism into which it had fallen. By contrast, contemporary Judaism reflected the dead hand of legalism that Jesus had encountered in the religion

saw this as preferable to mass Jewish conversions into the church (Katz 118-23).

53 Uriel Tal *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870-1914* (ET, Cornell U.P., 1975) 160-76.

54 Quoted in Tal 207.

55 Quoted in Tal 208.

56 For the similarities and differences between liberal Protestantism and liberal Judaism see Walter Homolka *Jewish Identity in Modern Times* (Providence, RI, and

of his own day.⁵⁷ Liberal Jews and liberal Christians were both assuming that Jesus' teaching was the key to his importance. But they gave a completely different significance to that teaching. With the Jews it was an endorsement of all that was good in Judaism; whereas Christians saw it as a reaction to a decadent Judaism. Thus, when 19th century German Protestants identified Judaism with legalism, they were responding to a challenge from liberal Jews that their religion was the purest form of ethical monotheism.

These Liberal Protestant scholars were, unbeknown to themselves, paving the way for a development which only gained momentum in the last quarter of the 20th century, particularly after the publication of the Qumran Documents. It has become fashionable to talk of Judaisms both in the time of Christ and subsequently. In their identification of different and sometimes competing elements in the Jewish religious tradition, 19th century Protestants wanted to distinguish healthy and unhealthy features, essentially true and false religion. But in a different climate, especially with today's pluralistic culture and the Jewish people effectively recognising different denominations, the same historical analysis can be used to support a plurality of Judaisms. This adds complexity to any evaluation of Judaism.

The Great Changes after the Holocaust

The period after the Second World War has seen a more positive evaluation of Judaism in many Christian churches. One reason is obvious – the enormous sympathy for the Jewish people in the light of the Holocaust. Yet, the change did not come overnight. It has taken time for churches to evaluate the role of Christian teaching in preparing the ground for the Holocaust. I suspect that many disagreements remain on this point, to say nothing of the confusion engendered by those who insist that anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism are two sides of the same coin. Yet, this was not a confusion made in the earliest church statements after the war. For example, the first meeting of the World Council of Churches in the post-war period – at Amsterdam in 1948 – was not unaware of the disastrous results of anti-Semitism. As they put it, how could they be when they were meeting in a city like Amsterdam in a country from which 110,000 Jews had been deported to the gas chambers? They acknowledged serious failings on the part of the churches, but these could be classed under sins and omissions in Christian practice, not errors in Christian doctrine. In particular, the churches had failed to ensure common justice for the Jewish peo-

ple. Moreover, they had been neglectful of their responsibilities to evangelise the Jews, leaving that in the hands of specialised societies. The way forward, their conception of appropriate practical repentance, was to encourage local churches to greater involvement in Jewish evangelism in their own communities. Clearly they thought of all Jews outside the church as in need of the gospel. There was no question of acknowledging the adequacy of Judaism for those Jews who adhered to it in a meaningful way.

If we turn to the Roman Catholic Church, Vatican II proved a watershed in terms of its public attitude towards the Jews. The key document was *Nostra Aetate*, the declaration on the relationship of the church to non-Christian religions. This statement gives a positive appraisal of the Church's legacy from the Jewish people. At the same time it recognises the rejection of Jesus by most of his fellow-Jews but immediately qualifies this with reference to Romans 11:29 – 'As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognise the time of her visitation, nor did the Jews, in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading. Nevertheless God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues – such is the witness of the apostle.' Indeed, a remarkable feature of this statement is its avoidance of any mention of Judaism or an equivalent. The emphasis is on the Jewish people; no comment is made on their religion in the Christian era. Some will see the consistent emphasis on the church in its relationship to the Jewish people as a strength, but at the time the RC Church had to face the criticism that it had made no attempt to understand Judaism from the perspective of the Jewish people in marked contrast to its statements on some other world religions.⁵⁸ The statement did, however, encourage a Jewish-Catholic dialogue which has developed a momentum of its own.

This dialogue has borne fruit in RC statements, not indeed with the conciliar authority of *Nostra Aetate* but with the Vatican imprimatur, which have dealt more directly with Judaism. They have acknowledged much that is positive in the developing traditions of Judaism in the Christian era – e.g. in the diaspora Israel was allowed 'to carry to the world a witness –often heroic– of its fidelity to the one God and to exalt him in the presence of all living, while preserving the memory of the land of their forefathers at the heart of their hope.' (1985).⁵⁹ There has, however, been no attempt to detail the

57 Tal 191-200; Homolka 18-24.

58 Geoffrey Wigoder *Jewish-Christian Relations since the Second World War* (Manchester U.P., 1988) 79.

59 From *Notes on the Correct Way to present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church* cited in Wigoder 158.

positive aspects in the Judaistic tradition, but they have categorically rejected the possibility of two separate ways of salvation. Much has been left open but there are more than glimmerings of a positive image of Judaism.

This positive image has not emerged purely from soul-searching by the churches as they face up to the Holocaust. That does not do justice to the lapse of time before positive views were expressed on what previously had been seen as a rival religious system. In particular, it fails to take account of the dynamics of religious dialogue. Dialogue must begin with an attempt at mutual understanding; but if it is to proceed beyond the stage where each party accepts that the other must in all conscience differ, then it is a great help if equality is recognised between the views represented.⁶⁰ Some Jews have expressed disappointment with the progress of Catholic-Jewish dialogue because the Catholic side has as yet failed to recognise Judaism as a legitimate alternative to Christianity. But, as we have seen, there have been some tentative first steps in that direction.

Moreover, a new outlook on Judaism forms part of a wider appraisal of world religions. This applies both for the World Council of Churches and for the Roman Catholic Church.⁶¹ *Nostra Aetate*, after all, was not directed exclusively to the Jewish question. It was an attempt to grapple with the phenomenon of religious plurality – an attempt which itself followed a particular agenda. That agenda is described in these terms – ‘In her task of fostering unity and love among men, and even among nations, the Church gives primary consideration in this document to what human beings have in common and what promotes fellowship among them.’ The RC Church has been deeply conscious of the familiar argument that religion has been a leading cause of strife in the world. It has sought a religious basis for the unity of all humankind.⁶² One of its key texts in favour of a positive approach to other religious communities has been Zephaniah 3:9 which looks forward to a day when all peoples will address the Lord with a single voice and serve him with one accord. Hence it has pursued peace as far as possible with all who might in the past have been construed as religious rivals. In its Jewish dialogue it has found itself faced with increasing demands on both political and religious fronts. Perhaps it might be accurate to describe the Jewish issue as the most painful and difficult of reappraisals the RC

60 Wigoder 67.

61 For the WCC see the preamble to *The Churches and the Jewish People: Towards a New Understanding* quoted in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13 (1989) 152.

62 David Wright in (ed) Andrew D. Clarke and Bruce W. Winter *One God, One Lord* (Paternoster, Baker Book House, 1992) 207-26.

Church has had to undergo. One writer, talking of Vatican II, has stated, 'For the first time in the history of the Church, a magisterial statement recognised the value and validity not just of non-Christians but of non-Christian religions.'⁶³ But, as we have seen, Vatican II did not mention Judaism. That came later.

Whenever religious pluralists, from RC or Protestant backgrounds, encounter Judaism, they face a considerable problem. Judaism does not lend itself to pluralistic treatment because it operates with a strict distinction between Israel and the nations. It is true that the Reform Movement in Judaism has endeavoured to remove the nationalistic element in Judaism and to parade the religion as the most highly refined form of ethical monotheism, but it remains to be seen how long such a view of Judaism can last. In more orthodox circles too universalistic aspirations have not been entirely absent. But the universalism they envisage – with restored Jewish sovereignty and an acceptance everywhere of the reign of the Torah – does not match the concerns of most religious pluralists. In effect, with Orthodox Judaism and Roman Catholicism there is potentially a clash of religious imperialisms. In practice, this is rarely recognised because the more orthodox sections of Judaism shun religious dialogue and the precise nature of Judaism is not investigated in much detail.

A more positive appraisal of Judaism has also been encouraged by a convergence in understanding on theological issues. Though 19th century biblical criticism did not bring together liberal Jews and Christians, in the very different circumstances of the late 20th century it laid bare vast tracts of common ground in the handling of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. No longer is it appropriate to talk of distinct Christian and Jewish interpretations of Scripture. Jews have become happy to write about Jesus provided they can separate the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith.⁶⁴ A similar convergence may be detected in the case of the apostle Paul, who is regarded on both sides as an important figure for the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. Since the publication of E.P. Sanders' book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977, it has become customary in Christian circles to talk of a new perspective on Paul which conflicts with the idea that the religious Jews of Paul's day were mainly nit-picking legalists. Sanders, however, consciously or otherwise, was endorsing complaints made by earlier Jewish writers.⁶⁵ He has ques-

63 Quoted by Wright 208.

64 Jakob Jocz *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (SPCK, London 1949) 262.

65 E.g. C.G. Montefiore in *Judaism and St Paul: Two Essays* (London 1914) and H.J.Schoeps in *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (London 1961).

tioned a viewpoint which, as we have seen, only became widespread in the 19th century church.

There are signs too that serious re-interpretation of Christian fundamentals has affected official statements. A Vatican statement on catechesis from 1985 declares that the gospels are the product of long and complicated editorial work. Therefore, it is quite possible that hostile references to the Jews reflect Jewish-Christian controversies long after the events they describe.⁶⁶ The same statement, interestingly, is bold enough to try to bring together Jewish and Christian expectations for the future by downplaying the significance of the key Christian belief that Jesus is the Messiah – ‘In underlining the eschatological dimension of Christianity we shall reach a greater awareness that the people of God of the Old and New Testament are tending toward a like end in the future: the coming or the return of the Messiah – even if they start from two different points of view. It is more clearly understood that the person of the Messiah is not only a point of division for the people of God but also a point of convergence.’⁶⁷ To put this statement in a wider context, Jewish beliefs about the Messiah are not fundamental; but this is hardly the case for the Christian Church, though this RC statement and others like it tend to move Christian beliefs about the Messiah in that direction.⁶⁸

We also find the possibility of convergence on the vital issue of whether there are separate ways of salvation for Jew and Christian. Again, the crucial first steps were taken on the Jewish side by Martin Buber and especially by Franz Rosenzweig in the 1920s.⁶⁹ Rosenzweig is credited with being the first Jewish theologian to view Christianity as equally legitimate as Judaism. It is true he still affirmed the superiority of Judaism since on his understanding all Jews are already with the Father. Gentiles, however, are born pagans, and it is the role of the Christian church to bring them to the Father. Rosenzweig, therefore, validated Christian mission to the Gentiles but not to the Jews. In fact, he had a doctrine of Two Covenants which in some mysterious way are united before God. At present both religions are necessary, but at the end of the age Christianity will be subsumed into Judaism. In the 1930s we find movement on the Christian side with

66 Wigoder 156.

67 Cited in Wigoder 153-4. It is interesting that a recent Anglican statement on Christian-Jewish relations should be entitled *Sharing One Hope?* (Church House Publishing, London 2001).

68 On messianic beliefs in Judaism see W.S.Green and J. Silverstein in (edd.) Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism* (Blackwell, Oxford 2000) 247-67.

69 Wigoder 52-3. Jocz 294 provides an interesting sidelight on why Rosenzweig and others can accept Christianity as a valid religion.

voices like Reinhold Niebuhr and James Parkes beginning to say that Christian mission to the Jews is inappropriate because of the adequacy of the Jewish religious tradition. These voices have become more numerous since the 1960s. Indeed, the most important text for Christian understanding of the Jewish people has become Romans 11:29 – for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. It would be misleading to suggest that every time it is cited it is understood in terms of the continuing validity of Judaism.⁷⁰ In fact, there is much debate on what the text does imply in reaction to its neglect in earlier stages of the church. Does it mean that it is out of place for the Church to have a Jewish mission? In short, we can only say that today there is no consensus about Judaism across the Christian churches. This contrasts with the virtually unanimous view before 1930 that a Jew had to be baptised into the Christian faith before there was any hope of his salvation.

Conclusion

Leading Christian churches in the 20th century have given prominence to distinctively Jewish concerns and this certainly has its merits. Reappraisal of church's legacy was necessary in the light of the Holocaust. There remains, however, a lacuna on the Christian side. There has been little attempt to grasp what lies at the heart of Judaism and to give a Christian perspective on it. There are, of course, good reasons for such reticence. Judaism has been in turmoil ever since at the end of the 18th century Jewish communities in Europe experienced emancipation and have engaged in a vigorous and often polemical debate on how to approach modernity. That debate intensified in the 20th century. There is, then, no need for Christians to stir up internal Jewish debate. However, there is scope for a Christian perspective on this debate to highlight the differences as well as the similarities between Judaism and Christianity.

Individual Christians and ecclesiastical bodies have been ready to write and speak on anti-Semitism, the state of Israel or the Jewish people. But none of these topics covers Judaism as a religious entity. Often authors and speakers fail to realise this important omission, because they think in too simplistic terms of Judaism as the religious manifestation of the Jewish people. There are other difficulties too in view of the unprecedented diversity of Judaisms found today. Some

70 There is a useful treatment of the history of the exegesis of this text by Joseph Sievers in (edd.) Christina Grenholm and Daniel Patte *Reading Israel in Romans* (Trinity International Press, Harrisburg, PA 2000) 127-73.

of these Judaisms do have close relatives within the Christian world in its broadest sense, while others are very different. So, I return to my initial question – is there an irreducible core of Judaistic belief and practice which distinguishes Judaism? Few churches are grappling with this issue. Nor will they do so as long as a pragmatism reigns which either seeks only to affirm common ground between different religious traditions or wishes to subordinate religious considerations to those of political and social harmony. So, the one serious omission in modern Christian relations with the Jews is an examination of the religious dynamics of Judaism. Official statements from churches may pillory ideas of Judaism as a ‘fossil’ or as ‘an obsolete set of ceremonies’ or as a ‘manifestation of legalism’ – but what have they put in its place?

Abstract

In both the patristic and medieval periods Christians thought little of examining Judaism in its own right as they considered it the product of a spiritually blinded people. A more positive approach emerged first with the flowering of scholarship in the Renaissance and then with the Enlightenment dismissal of the idea of divine revelation, which meant that Jews were considered more as a people than as a religious group. More recently, Christian complicity in the Holocaust has jolted churches into rethinking their attitudes to the Jews, though few as yet have seen that this must entail an appraisal of modern Judaism.

Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views

Editors: James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy

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