

The Church of England In Canada and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era 1933-1945

ALAN DAVIES and MARILYN F. NEFSKY

In a previous article,¹ we examined the alleged silence of the United Church of Canada in the face of Jewish suffering in Europe and the refugee crisis as a footnote to Irving Abella and Harold Troper's important study *None is Too Many*. This article is an examination of the attitudes and actions of the Anglican communion (or the Church of England in Canada, as it was then known) during the same period. Were Canadian Anglicans better or worse than their United Church brethren, or were they much the same? Did antisemitism and nativism hold the bishops, priests and laity of this highly 'Anglo-Saxon' denomination in thrall, or did they respond to the growing crisis of European Jewry with sympathy and demands for rescue? Were, as Abella and Troper believe,² only a few "highly-placed" Anglicans in Canada interested in the burning moral issue of the hour, or were these select individuals less isolated in their efforts to melt the hardness-of-heart of the King government and its bureaucracy than the authors of *None is Too Many* suppose? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to reconstruct as closely as possible (a) contemporary Anglican views of Jews and Judaism (b) Anglican responses to the rise of fascism and militarism in Europe (c) Anglican responses to Nazi antisemitism and persecution (d) Anglican responses to the refugee situation. The material is fairly plentiful in each case.

Anglicans, Jews and Judaism

It is scarcely surprising to find the traces of patristic theology about Jews and Judaism among the adherents of a largely conservative Christian tradition, even when the turmoil of the age was beginning to discredit old ideas and prejudices. Christianity was seen as the true religion, Jesus was the true messiah, the Pharisaic ancestors of modern Judaism were seen as

legalistic, merciless and blind, and the religion that they spawned was regarded as nothing more than a “monstrous creation of human ingenuity . . . a system from which the light of God and the love of God had been shut out.”³ Such, it seems safe to assume, was the state of conventional Anglican opinion not only in the pre-war era but also during the war, when the editors of *The Canadian Churchman* felt no qualms about republishing a sermon on the “danger” of Pharisaism as the religion “which crucified Christ”.⁴ By 1943, information with respect to the true state of affairs in Nazi-occupied Europe was seeping through to the North American press,⁵ but the death camps did not usually constitute a reason for refraining from denouncing the Pharisees in religious columns. Obviously, no connection was made between the latter and twentieth-century Jews. In keeping with these triumphalistic assumptions, moreover, the church throughout the entire period pursued its time-honoured task of Jewish evangelization, an enterprise far more dear to the hearts of Anglicans (especially evangelical Anglicans) than to their United Church cousins, who seemed to lack this particular fixation. Hence, the Church of England in Canada maintained active Jewish missions in Toronto and Montreal, staffing the latter with ordained converts whose progress reports were carefully filed in diocesan journals. On the other hand, these proselytizing activities were usually accompanied by a high degree of empathy toward Jewish immigrants as well as a passionate dislike of antisemitism and antisemites, both in Europe and in Canada. Indeed, as the evidence of a mounting Nazi campaign against the Jews accumulated in the press, the church intermingled its calls for a renewed evangelism among Canadian Jews with ringing denunciations of their German persecutors. In 1938, for example, the Archbishop of Toronto, who was also the primate of Canada, managed to combine these themes in a Good Friday pastoral letter:

The return of Good Friday reminds us once more of the debt which we owe the Jews, and of our responsibility to share with them . . . that which we have ourselves found in Jesus Christ. The presence in the world today of all that is meant by the term ‘anti-Semitism’ and its consequences, gives to the Jews a new claim upon our sympathies. As people who profess and call ourselves Christians we have witnessed with horror and regret the sufferings and injustices which have been done to them. This distress also lends urgency to the need of evangelism among them . . .⁶

Naively, it was imagined in this and similar declarations that conversion was not merely the cure for the alleged spiritual problems suffered by Jews, but for their material problems as well, especially the menace of antisemitism. As early as 1935, the report of the Montreal Jewish Mission drew attention to German “Neo-paganism” in order to underscore its guiding philosophy that “Christ alone is the final solution” (the choice of this term was more unfortunate than the author of the report could have

realized) as far as Jews are concerned, and that they should seize the present opportunity to align themselves with the true people of God.⁷ Interestingly, those Anglicans, such as the Rev. F.J. Nicholson,⁸ who involved themselves directly in Jewish missions, also seem to have studied the history and character of antisemitism, including the nefarious role played by past Christian ecclesiastics and princes; as a consequence, they were more sensitive than most churchmen to contemporary persecutions, and more eager to come to the assistance of Hitler's victims. Nevertheless, the philosemitic Nicholson was totally unable to tear himself away from the anti-Jewish theology of the Christian ages, since to have done so would surely have destroyed the *raison d'être* for his own missionary activities in Toronto. "Christianity", he wrote, "must be presented as the crown and completion of Judaism . . . [for] any special privileges and blessings promised to them [the Jews] were inherited by the New Israel, the Church of Christ, when the Old Israel rejected Him."⁹ However, sincere in their 'anti-antisemitism', the Anglican priests still wished to abolish Judaism. Ironically, this was also the goal of the antisemites whom they opposed.

Despite the diocesan missions, not all Anglicans were obsessed with converting Jews, or even wedded to this notion in the least. Largely, one suspects, as a result of the influence of the British Anglican scholar James Parkes, famous for his studies of both antisemitism and the relationship between Judaism and Christianity,¹⁰ a less patristic view of the former religion occasionally strayed into various church publications, especially in book review columns. Parkes, who visited Canada in both 1933 and 1938, engaged in what can only be described as a concerted exercise in consciousness-raising.¹¹ His efforts were not in vain. "If Christians are apt to believe that Judaism as a religion has shot its bolt and has degenerated into a simple technique for maintaining the racial solidarity of Jews," a Parkes-inspired reviewer of a new book entitled *Common Ground* by Morris S. Lazaron wrote in 1938, "they may be startled to find here a devotion to religious principles coupled with a recognition of the constant expansion of the idea of divine revelation which may make them impatient with too many of the narrow views of God so often found in Christian literature."¹² The following year saw the promotion of four short writings by Parkes in *The Canadian Churchman*, including his essay "Judaism and Christianity" with its unconventional interpretation of the two religions as equal and mutually complementary,¹³ When the same journal published C. E. Silcox's eloquent appeal for a spiritual rapprochement between Jews and Christians based on the British theologian's novel concept of a "dual revelation" — the

revelation to the community (Judaism) and the revelation to the individual (Christianity) — in 1941,¹⁴ the patristic grip on Anglicanism was at least partially broken. While still a minority opinion, and while obviously prompted by the Nazi assault against Christianity as well as Judaism, the emphasis on a Jewish-Christian ‘common ground’ in scripture, ethics and spirituality was more than a passing fad. It was destined to survive the war, and to set the stage for the inter-religious dialogues of our day. Silcox, of course, was not an Anglican, but his voice was in tune with a growing willingness among liberally-minded Anglicans to deepen their understanding of Judaism as an authentic biblical faith in its own right, rather than a fossilized relic of the first century. Not surprisingly, this willingness was encouraged by a moral revulsion towards the accelerating crimes of the Third Reich.

Anglicans, fascists and fascism

Anglicans, like the members of other churches, felt the tremors of the great social crisis of the Depression era and feared an impending catastrophe. Suddenly, both capitalism and democracy were threatened, and more radical systems acquired a certain public attraction. Even more than the United Church, however, the Church of England in Canada was passionately attached to the imperial connection, and therefore to British ideas and institutions — the very core of the Anglo-Saxon racial and spiritual heritage. Since political democracy was regarded as indigenous to the latter, no true Anglican could easily turn to non-democratic ideologies without betraying both his Anglicanism and his essential (if derivative) ‘Englishness’. Even though “our old system has been seriously weakened,” declared the Bishop of Montreal (John C. Farthing) in 1933, and even though some Canadians “are anxious to throw over the existing order of things, and are willing to try Socialism, Communism, Fascism, Hitlerism, or any other . . . We Anglo-Saxons will never consent to the loss of our liberty.”¹⁵ These words can be regarded as characteristic of the Anglican response to the rise of totalitarianism throughout the entire pre-war and war periods, especially to the National Socialist variant of fascism. Indeed, the “menace of fascism” was detected by the Anglican press virtually from the moment of its inception, and, in spite of the Anglo-Saxon ‘love’ of democracy — fascist methods suited the “truculent German bully” rather than the “English sportsman” — the menace was almost as great in Britain (and Canada) as in Germany.¹⁶ As far as Canada was concerned, the appearance of various fascist movements in both the English and French sections of the country did not pass unnoticed, notably Adrien Arcand’s National Social Christian Party

(Le Parti National Social Chrétien) in Quebec; it drew the fire of Bishop Farthing for its unChristian and unBritish plank of antisemitism as well as for its insurrectionist ambitions.¹⁷ Eternal vigilance was necessary if democracy was to survive. When the Italian-Abyssinian crisis erupted in 1935, an initial admiration for Mussolini as the man who had “saved Italy” was replaced by a sense of profound alarm in the pages of *The Canadian Churchman* at the new threat to world peace and the international order symbolized by the (democratic) League of Nations. “We must think of the Italian nation as drunk with the wine of war, made forcibly drunk by its own government, not of its own choice.¹⁸ The fact that Italy was angry at Britain as a result of the latter nation’s opposition to his imperial dreams did not help the Duce’s reputation in Canadian Anglican eyes. He was now one with Hitler. “Fascism, whether it is under the form of the paganism of Nazi Germany, or the ruthless militarism of Italy, as seen in the rape of Ethiopia, culminating in the appalling massacre of Addis Ababa, which will go down as one of the most inhuman in history, and as the darkest blot on our modern civilization, is everywhere the negation of all for which Christ stands.”¹⁹ Not quite the darkest blot on modern civilization, however. That honour, as the church was later to realize, was reserved for the destruction of the European Jews. When the Italians started to imitate German Jew-baiting, Anglican disillusionment with Italy’s so-called ‘saviour’ was complete.²⁰

In the case of Nazi Germany, although the brutal and sinister side of the National Socialist revolution was evident to Anglican observers from the beginning, a curious tendency to distinguish between the Führer and his followers also appeared in Anglican literature. “What we have to fear . . . is not Hitler himself, but some of the wild men behind him, the sadistic perverts, the nationalist-maniacs, the bull-headed young men who want excitement at all costs, whom Hitler himself no doubt has considerable trouble in controlling.²¹ In retrospect, this blindness is not so surprising, since many Germans shared it, and since their ruler was a consummate actor who had mastered many parts. In Canada, at any rate, Hitler was never idealized, at least not in Christian circles; in fact, his leadership cult was usually distrusted and, as the powerful sermon “Follow Me” (1938) by the Rev. W. J. Gilling of Trinity College, Toronto, demonstrates, occasionally analyzed with merciless clarity.²² Nevertheless, not everyone prior to the war was willing to believe that Hitler *really* was as evil as he seemed to be, and as a growing body of evidence suggested that he must be; Germany, after all was a great nation, and great nations do not readily allow themselves to be controlled by monsters. The Führer, consequently, was only a somewhat

overwrought German nationalist — according to the Very Rev. W. R. Inge, he was explained by Fichte, the father of German nationalism, exactly as Mussolini was explained by Mazzini, the father of Italian nationalism²³ — who allowed his emotions and actions to go too far. Furthermore, the resurgence of German nationalism after 1918 was more the fault of the victorious allies, especially the French, than it was the fault of the Germans themselves.²⁴ Hence, by implication, neither Hitler nor the Germans should be blamed too much. While this point of view was not universal, it was not without its supporters. The Right Rev. A. C. Headlam, for example, an English bishop remembered for his pro-German (and seemingly anti-Jewish) sentiments throughout the pre-war period,²⁵ was cited in *The Canadian Churchman* as follows:

We all condemn the folly and violence of the attacks upon the Jews in Germany, and the violence with which the members of the Socialist and Communist parties are being treated, but to both Jews and Socialists some words of warning are necessary. Many Jews were responsible . . . for the violence of the Russian Communists; many Jews have helped to inspire the violence of the Socialist communities. . . . So in the same way our English Socialists at present are violent in their attacks upon Germany, and are proposing to boycott German goods. . . . It is they who first of all made the appeal to violence. . . . If it is legitimate for the Socialist or Communist to employ force to carry out a revolution, it is equally legitimate for a Nazi.²⁶

If, in other words, Hitler has been unkind to others, his victims have thoroughly deserved their blows.

Antisemitism and persecution

On September 20, 1934, the Lower House of the General Synod of the Church of England in Canada passed a resolution on the persecution of the German Jews in which, “the Upper House concurring”, the full measure of Anglican sympathy for the Jewish plight was expressed in unequivocal terms.²⁷ The Upper House did concur, and Act. No. 85 came into being. In this manner, the assembled Anglicans recorded their antipathy to Nazi Germany and the Aryan laws and other anti-Jewish measures that had been sweeping the Third Reich since its inauguration; at the same time, they chose this moment to express their gratitude for the many Jewish contributions to civilization as well as for the Hebrew scriptures themselves, without which Christianity could never have been born. Jesus, after all, was a Jew, and ill-treatment of his people “after the flesh” was necessarily abhorrent to his followers. Such denunciations of Nazi policy grew more common and more strident in the Anglican press and elsewhere as the decade unfolded. On January 23, 1936, for example, when Hitler’s regime was “on its best behaviour owing to the Olympic games”, the editor of *The Canadian Churchman* asserted that it was “high time that the public opinion of the

world was aroused at the condition of the Jews in Germany”, pointing to their “pitiable” and “doomed” situation.²⁸

It is being made increasingly difficult for Jews and ‘Non-Aryans’ in Germany to sustain life. Condemned to segregation within the four corners of the legal and social Ghetto which has now closed upon them, they are increasingly prevented from earning their living. Indeed more than half of the Jews remaining in Germany have already been deprived of their livelihood. In many parts of the country there is a systematic attempt at starvation of the Jewish population . . .²⁹

Once the Olympics were over, the editor reported, the Jews expected a new terror, not without reason. Krystallnacht (Nov. 9-10, 1938) confirmed this expectation, and focused Anglican attention on the dangers of antisemitism in a closer fashion. These dangers were not only evident in Germany; they also existed in Canada, as the appearance of “venomous” anti-Jewish literature on the home front certainly demonstrated.³⁰ Germany, however, was the source of the evil.

If Jesus lived in Germany
And plied His craft today,
Doing His Honest carpentry
In His own perfect way,
Oh! would he find his workshop wrecked
By some mad Nordic crew —
His windows labelled: “Men, beware!
Within there works a Jew”³¹

Thus inspired, it was not difficult for latter-day Canadian disciples of the Jewish carpenter to deplore the victimization of their saviour’s earthly “brothers” at “Nordic” hands. When the Synod of the Diocese of Rupert’s Land (Manitoba) denounced the latest pogroms in November, 1938, while pledging itself to assist Jewish fugitives who managed to escape Hitler,³² its members probably had this image in mind. Characteristically, the denunciation was accompanied by a pious hope that these Jews would discover their place of spiritual refuge in the Christian church.³³

As the world moved inexorably toward a clash of the titans, the Anglican preoccupation with the crimes of the German state toward both Jews and Christians (the church struggle was also the object of constant concern) acquired a more passionate tone. On February 23, 1939, the front cover of *The Canadian Churchman* featured in bold print a call for its readers to pray for the “Jews of all lands” — the “stunned, desperate, tortured victims of demonic hate” many of whom were being “slowly starved out of existence”.³⁴ Antisemitism, the editors declared, is inherently unChristian, and anathema to a religious community that has inherited the ethical and

spiritual insights of ancient Israel.³⁵ At least, it should be anathema, but, as the readership was earlier reminded,³⁶ the deepest tragedy of the European situation resided in the fact that so many European Christians were contaminated with the same disease as the National Socialists, and had actually assisted the persecutors in their pernicious task.

Once war was declared, Anglican ecclesiastics, filled with patriotic as well as moral zeal, lost no opportunity to awaken the Canadian Christian conscience to a realization of the true depths of the Jewish plight. Particularly energetic in this regard was the Rev. C. J. Lamb of Merritton, Ontario, who, as Jews were being deported and ghettoized in eastern Europe as a prelude to their systematic destruction, called not merely for food, clothing and medical supplies (presumably he had some kind of airlift in mind) but also for the admission of Hitler's victims *en masse* to Canada: "We have plenty of 'Lebensraum' ".³⁷

Intimations of the destruction itself and all of its horrors started to appear in the Anglican press as well as in other ecclesiastical channels almost as soon as the fires of Auschwitz began to burn in the terrible year of 1942. Cyril Garbett, the Archbishop of York, warned English Anglicans of "cruelties and atrocities" in Poland "so ghastly" as to defy belief, and his words were reprinted in *The Canadian Churchman* on September 10th.³⁸ William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, described "an eruption of evil [such] as the world has not seen for centuries" at a public meeting in Albert Hall, London, and an account of his speech also found its way into the same paper on December 24th. According to the Anglican primate, the "fury of the Nazi evil" was concentrated so much on the Jews that "it was hard to resist the conclusion that there was a settled purpose to exterminate them."

"What else", said Dr. Temple, "is the explanation of recent occurrences in France? At first it seemed possible to explain the German demand for the surrender of Jewish refugees in unoccupied France as due to a need for additional labour-power; for at first only men of working age were demanded. Later, women were claimed, with the option of leaving their children, . . . not expecting ever to see them again. . . . But now the children also are being deported, from two years old and upwards. . . . Dr. Temple said that there was every reason to fear that a large proportion of those who were being deported were destined for the ghastly ghetto in Eastern Galicia, where thousands of Jews have already perished. He claimed that the Government should do whatever was possible for their relief."³⁹

This report reveals that the Christian world outside of Europe was not left uninformed by its leaders and journalists concerning the real nature of Hitler's 'Final Solution', although, because the evidence did indeed defy belief, as Archbishop Garbett declared, there was undoubtedly a considerable reluctance on the part of many Anglicans (and others) to believe it.

Nevertheless, even in 1942, for those with ears to hear and eyes to see, it was becoming more and more difficult to resist Archbishop Temple's conclusion.

Further reports on events in Europe continued to be published on a regular basis throughout 1943. Once again, the British archbishops publicly condemned the Nazi policy of "cold-blooded extermination" and appealed to the British as well as to the Dominion governments to offer sanctuary within the empire to all who might still be rescued from the European hell.⁴⁰ In Canada, the Ven. A. P. Gower-Rees, Rector of St. George's Church, Archdeacon of Montreal and one of the communion's more distinguished preachers, uttered these words at an interfaith rally in the same city (May 28th):

Friends, at the moment . . . revelations have brought home to us the horror of Nazi rule. . . . The greatest crime in history is now being perpetrated — the murder of a nation and the deliberate extermination of Jews, particularly throughout Europe. It is not possible to give a correct estimation of the extent of the fiendish operations of the Nazis. But you have already been told . . . that no less than two million out of 3½ million of Polish Jews have been done to death. The remainder seemed doomed to torture and death. . . . This is a horror unprecedented in the history of the whole world. It is a blood bath on a gigantic scale, to which no parallel can be found.⁴¹

Like the British bishops, the Canadian archdeacon concluded his speech with a call for rescue and sanctuary.⁴² To what extent these sentiments were echoed in Anglican pulpits throughout Canada cannot now be determined; Gower-Rees, however, was probably not alone. Some indication of popular support for exhortations of this kind can be found in occasional synodical resolutions during the same period. The Diocese of Niagara, for example, in response to a ringing denunciation of the "unspeakable and inhuman treatment" suffered by the European Jews,⁴³ decreed (May, 1943) (a) that antisemitism is "contrary to natural justice, incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man, and a denial of the Gospel" (b) that "every possible step ought to be taken at once to rescue from massacre the Jews in enemy and enemy occupied countries" (c) that Canada should offer sanctuary to "Jewish and other refugees".⁴⁴ Apparently, the information from Europe had not fallen entirely on deaf ears in Anglican parishes in Canada. This does not mean, of course, that everyone accepted the reports at face value — the Holocaust was still the object of much public skepticism — but it certainly means that the church was neither kept in ignorance of the truth nor indifferent to it.

The refugee crisis

Largely as a result of the massive unemployment of the Depression, Canada was scarcely in a pro-immigrant, not to mention a pro-refugee, mood

during the Nazi era across the ocean. Nativist feelings, moreover, were intense in both the English and French segments of the country, and a fear of revolution was in the air, boding ill for cultural, religious and ethnic aliens from eastern Europe — the assumed home of all radicalism — who sought admission to the Dominion of the north. It was into this climate that the refugee crisis erupted. For the Church of England in Canada, with its Anglo-Saxon roots and its fervent imperial loyalties, the suggestion that Canada should suddenly open its doors to masses of non-Anglo-Saxon, non-British, non-Christian and frequently destitute strangers constituted a moral test of no small proportions. How did the Anglicans respond? Certainly, they were not without the typical apprehensions of the age. Immigration, according to one expert, if it is permitted at all, cannot be allowed on an indiscriminate basis; national (and doubtless racial) origin, is important since there is a “Gresham’s law of population — cheap men . . . drive out dear men.”⁴⁵ While this restatement of Gresham’s law was never endorsed by the church, or even regarded as morally acceptable doctrine, a decided preference for immigrants of British stock — indeed, an anxiety concerning the consequences of a decline in the ratio of British to non-British immigrants — is clearly present in the various recommendations of Anglican officialdom throughout the pre-war period. In 1933, for example, the ‘English-speaking’ churches were urged to form a council on British migration in order to persuade the British government of their ‘united and unwavering in their desire . . . to have more and yet more British people settled in Canada.’⁴⁶ In 1937, a renewed effort to encourage a higher number of British settlers in light of their “disturbing” recent decline in relation to European, especially south European, immigrants was approved.⁴⁷ Moreover, “vigilance” on the part of the Department of Immigration was urged to make certain that a “proper proportion” of the newcomers were British:⁴⁸ an echo of the spirit of F. C. Blair, the *bête noire* of the Jewish refugees,⁴⁹ although the context was hardly the same. Two years later, however, the Anglican watchdogs had second thoughts.

That British immigration in greater numbers is desired by our Church people goes almost without saying, but your Executive believes that there are many evidences that Mid-and Northern European immigrants may and will become first class citizens, upholding our political, moral and religious ideals. The necessity laid upon our Anglo-Saxon people is to extend neighbourliness and friendship to these peoples and to see to it that . . . decent economic conditions of living are made available to them.⁵⁰

The church, in the final analysis, was far more interested in the preservation of British institutions and ideals than in the preservation of British racial hegemony. In Anglican eyes, therefore, the Anglo-Saxon *idea*

took precedence over Anglo-Saxon *blood*, and, as the church fathers were starting to realize, the latter guaranteed nothing. The ‘New Canadians’ had the proper virtues and some Anglo-Saxons — notably the leaders of the Canadian communist party — actually had subversive tendencies.⁵¹

This debate over immigration policy, which, on a deeper level, was really a struggle against nativism, served to clarify Anglican attitudes as the refugee emergency mounted during the twelve years of Nazi rule, reaching a crescendo in the European nightmare of the holocaust. Refugees, of course, are not ordinary immigrants, and the niceties of ordinary immigration policy with its carefully calculated quotas do not or should not apply. By 1936, the implications of this distinction as far as Jews were concerned were starting to dawn on Canadian Christendom, including its Anglican segment; together, representatives of the major non-Roman Catholic churches drew up a manifesto on the subject in response to James G. McDonald’s public letter on the German situation (January 15th, 1936) in which he announced his resignation as the League of Nations’ high commissioner for refugees. It not only protested against the treatment meted out to Jews and ‘non-Aryan’ Christians, but also declared that further silence on the part of the Canadian churches was now impossible: neither sympathy for Germany’s problems nor a fear of international complications nor a fear of stirring anti-semitism in Canada nor doubts concerning the truth of the allegations against Hitler could justify bridled tongues any longer.⁵² Furthermore, the time had come for deeds as well as words: ‘. . . should the flow of exiles from Germany not cease, we feel that Canada should share with other countries the responsibility of providing a haven for at least a reasonable number of selected refugees.’⁵³ A ‘reasonable number’ was hardly a call for out and out rescue, and the word ‘selected’ was ambiguous; nevertheless, the manifesto embodied a new sensitivity to the Jewish plight, and a new willingness to apply pressure on the Canadian government by means of public opinion. As an example of this willingness, the Anglican Council for Social Services passed a resolution at its meeting in Quebec City in September, 1938, urging the Canadian government to “continue to explore the possibilities for the Immigration [sic] of selected groups of Jewish people and non-Aryan Christians from Austria and Germany, so far as is possible and desirable, and . . . (to) assume a share of the responsibility of finding a home for these unfortunate victims of political aggression.”⁵⁴ When, moreover, the King government did *not* seem to listen to these and similar exhortations, the fact did not pass unnoticed. In December, 1938, *The Montreal Churchman* republished an article from the Australian *Church*

Standard attacking the Australian government for dragging its feet in an identical manner to Canada: the implication was obvious:

What is in the Government's mind is not clear, but we are somewhat perturbed by reading from time to time of what seem to be special measures directed against Jewish immigrants. . . . The desperate plight of European refugees should give them a prior claim . . . we may express our regret that signs of anti-Jewish sentiments are becoming apparent in certain quarters.⁵⁵

Did Australia also have its F. C. Blair? Like their Australian cousins, some Canadian Anglicans at least were becoming suspicious.

Perhaps for this reason, the church intensified its efforts in 1939, relying heavily on the lobbying skills of the Rev. W. W. Judd, General Secretary of the Social Service Council, a member of the newly formed Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political persecution, and, like the Rev. C. E. Silcox of the United Church, a man on a personal crusade. As soon as his mandate was made clear,⁵⁶ he devoted himself energetically to his task.

Your General Secretary joined with representatives of other Canadian-wide groups under the auspices of the League of Nations Society in Canada to face the problem. . . . They have waited upon the Government at least three times. His Grace, Archbishop Roper [of Ottawa], as well as the General Secretary represented our Church on those occasions. . . . The matter is one of deep-set prejudice in the mind of most people . . . Suffice it further to say that we believe that we should express our sympathy in deeds on Christian and humanitarian grounds and also as a democratic reply to the challenge of 'totalitarian' persecution. . . . Our Church has done its best to awaken the public conscience to this most baffling and prejudiced problem.⁵⁷

Not only ecclesiastical emissaries such as Dr. Judd but the Anglican press did what it could to move public [and political] opinion in the right direction. In an editorial commentary on a speech by Conrad Hoffman, General Secretary of the International Missionary Council's Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews, entitled "The German Refugees", *The Canadian Churchman* pointed out that in the past great refugee movements have often brought unanticipated benefits to their countries of refuge — Spanish Jews, French Huguenots, English pilgrims, United Empire Loyalists, etc. — and that, if the European Jews are admitted to Canada, they might bring similar gifts.⁵⁸ Self-interest, however, cannot be the motivating factor, for a "truly Christian nation" has a moral obligation to heed their cries for help regardless, and to heed them with all the resources at its command.⁵⁹ Hoffman himself pulled out all the stops:

It is high time that as Christians who have protested so much against Hitler's anti-Semitism [we] should now come to the aid of the many victims thereof. Christians must play the role of the Good Samaritan in this emergency or be justly accused of being as the high priest or the Levite. . . . Six millions of people in Europe to-day are unwanted because by the accident of birth or inheritance they have Jewish blood. What is to become

of them? Christendom must give the answer.⁶⁰

Although Judd believed in the Good Samaritan principle as fervently as Hoffman, he was also a realist who understood that governments are not usually susceptible to altruistic appeals unless they are tempered by a few quite non-altruistic considerations. “We have to deal with the children of this world”, he wrote, and sometimes they are wiser than the children of light. “In this instance, if we can get the Canadian Government . . . to open the door even a few inches we shall do well and we shall be helping some of these sorrowful peoples. A demand at this time for a wide open door would in the end help to seal it fast.”⁶¹ Clearly, he knew with whom and with what he was dealing! At the same time, he urged the church and its clergy to struggle against “narrowness, selfishness and race prejudice” in Canada and in its own ranks;⁶² otherwise, there was little chance of accomplishing anything.

Some of the narrowness, selfishness and race prejudice found sensational public expression in an anti-immigrant (and refugee) petition bearing 127,364 signatures sponsored by the nationalistic St. Jean Baptiste Society of Quebec and presented to the House of Commons by Wilfrid Lacroix M.P. early in 1939. To a prime minister obsessed with national unity and the fortunes of his party in French Canada, the political message was perfectly clear. To his Anglican critics, however, the matter appeared in an entirely different light: “If ever there was a time when Canada could give a Christian lead to the world, if ever there was a time when our leaders in Parliament might forget differences and forget votes and think of people made in God’s image and come together in opening our doors to the persecuted, surely that time is now.”⁶³ More of the narrowness, selfishness and meanness found expression when the King government refused to allow the desperate Jewish passengers on the liner St. Louis — the notorious ‘Voyage of the Damned’ — to land on Canadian soil in June of the same year. “What must our warm-hearted King and Queen . . . be thinking as they read of that shipload of persecuted Jewry being sent back to Germany, and then recall the vast open spaces of the Canada they have just seen and, we believe, have learned to love?”, wrote a correspondent to *The Canadian Churchman* on June 15th.⁶⁴ That he was not alone in his sentiments is demonstrated by the spate of offers from many parts of Canada to adopt refugee families that followed this incident, including at least one from a Toronto congregation,⁶⁵ perhaps prompted by a pro-refugee resolution of the local diocesan synod.⁶⁶ The government, however, rejected these applications. “Have we the courage”, asked the Rev. C. J. Lamb, to “let down our prejudice and admit at least

as many refugees as we can or are willing to come’?

The horror of the plight of the refugees was emphasized a month ago when a shipload of 907 homeless and despairing people, driven from their country by the Nazis, were refused a haven in South America. For three weeks they went from port to port, and because no nation in the so-called generous West was willing to receive them, were in danger of being dumped again on German soil.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, neither the nation as a whole nor its leadership had the courage. Both, therefore, but the latter in particular, earned the indictment of the Canadian Quaker G. Raymond Booth, published at the end of 1939 in *The Canadian Churchman*: “Between Nazism which drives them [Jewish Children] forth and a certain kind of Canadianism which seeks to bar their coming there isn’t much to choose from morally.”⁶⁸ Apparently, the Anglican editors concurred.

When the wrong kind of Canadianism showed no signs of diminishing, a sense of profound disappointment at the failure of the pro-refugee forces to change the government’s mind manifested itself in church reports and during the war years. In 1940, for example, the executive committee of the Council for Social Service deplored the fact that a lack of public support had prevented the rescue of more than a limited number of Hitler’s “victims”; only those who could “amply pay their way” had found admission into Canada.⁶⁹ Once again, the Synod of the Diocese of Toronto approved a motion urging the federal government to do its part in alleviating the crisis, as the “Motherland” (Britain) was already staggering under a heavy burden, and could not absorb large numbers of destitute aliens unassisted.⁷⁰ In any case, the “plight of the refugees ought to call forth the streams of Christian sympathy and love, and should break down the many barriers of Canadian national selfishness.”⁷¹ That is certainly what ought to have happened, but, as the readers of *The Canadian Churchman* were soon informed (by Raymond Booth), it was not what actually *was* happening.⁷² Instead, Canada was second only to Soviet Russia in its anti-refugee intransigence: a remarkable feat for a so-called ‘Christian’ nation, and one of which the Anglican leadership clearly was not proud. In 1941, and in each subsequent year, The Council for Social Service pleaded for a more open policy as the crisis deepened and grew more sinister. Why could not the government be more generous?

At the present moment [1943] there are some 10,000 to 15,000 [Jewish refugees, mostly children] in Portugal who have escaped over the Pyrenees. . . . Those rescued make room for more to escape from conquered countries. Every one rescued is a life saved. There is here a challenge for humanity’s sake, for sweet charity’s sake. These today, are among the offended “little ones” of the world for whom Christ spoke.⁷²

The pathos of this situation also excited the sympathy of the 1943 meeting

of the General Synod, which collectively resolved to “earnestly entreat” the King government to offer immediate sanctuary to the objects of persecution, especially those stranded in Portugal, without regard to “race, creed or condition”, and to facilitate their entry by suspending the immigration laws in light of the exigencies of the hour.⁷⁴ Similar resolutions were passed during the same year by two diocesan synods (Niagara and Rupert’s Land).⁷⁵ Although, by this time, if Robert W. Ross is correct,⁷⁶ most of the details of the Final Solution had found their way into the western press, and were certainly known to the western leaders — including, one surmises, the Canadian prime minister —, not even the national assembly of a major Canadian denomination managed to prick the public conscience to any significant degree. The church was merely one more voice crying in the wilderness.

Conclusion

No one can now reconstruct the era in its entirety, and it is simply impossible to know to what extent the plight of the European Jews was mentioned, or not mentioned, in the innumerable sermons, parish newsletters and other organs of the Anglican communion in Canada from the years 1933 to 1945. Probably, as Abella and Troper allege, the majority of Anglicans like the majority of Canadians were not particularly moved by the pro-refugee appeals to which they were subjected, at least, not sufficiently moved in order to instigate a public outcry. Probably also, Anglicanism was infected with some measure of antisemitism — most Christian churches were, especially at that time, although there is no real evidence to support this assertion in the official records and journals that constitute the main source materials of this article. Certainly, neither in England or Canada did the Church of England possess an arch-antisemitic propagandist such as the American Catholic priest Fr. Charles Coughlin, whose radio tirades against the Jews, incidently, were heard regularly on Canadian soil; Bishop Headlam was hardly an Anglican equivalent. Indeed, the Anglican interest in Jewish missions, fostered by a few priests of Jewish extraction (Rev. Morris Kaminsky, Rev. E. S. Greenbaum), created a special sensitivity to antisemitism, since it kept the church in close touch with the ills and torments of modern Jewry which the missionaries heard at first hand. Like the German pietists of the previous century, moreover, the Anglican pietists who wished to convert Jews to Christianity could not abide racial doctrines that seemed to strike at the foundations of biblical faith. While they were Christian triumphalists, and frequently also scriptural literalists, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of their love for the Jewish people. However, not all

Anglicans by any means shared this kind of special concern; most, in common with the Laodiceans in *Revelation*, were neither 'hot nor cold' but somewhere in between.

Nevertheless, it does not follow that the Church of England in Canada was silent in the face of the persecutions that ravaged European Jewry during the Nazi era. Nor did only a few highly placed Anglicans speak out; church journalists, ordinary priests and laymen, diocesan and national synods as well as some bishops and archbishops made their voices heard. The church press was particularly vigorous, even if its contributors did not always read events correctly and thereby drew the wrong conclusions. One forms the impression of a community that sought to rise above its own innate prejudices in the name of a universal justice, and, while this judgment must be qualified by the apparent fact that most of the church like most of the country was overcome with inertia, the record is not as bad as Abella and Troper suggest. If a religious community is identified with its leaders and officers, the Anglicans were far from silent; indeed, they were surprisingly vocal, especially once the fires of imperial patriotism were kindled and German totalitarianism was defined as the mortal foe of Anglo-Saxon democracy. To save the Jews was to save the honour of the empire and the principles of the Christian faith. This blend of British loyalty and Christian humanitarianism was a compelling force in Canadian Anglicanism during this period in western history, and not to be underestimated or treated lightly. It had its parallel in the United Church, as well as in other Canadian denominations (as, for example, when Silcox urged Canadians to welcome their king and queen in 1939 by demonstrating that the "spirit of British fair-play" was "still alive" in this Dominion by our answer to the challenge of the refugees⁷⁷), but it was especially potent among the Anglicans. For this reason, the Church of England in Canada cannot be compared unfavourably to the United Church of Canada with respect to the Jewish refugee crisis; neither church did as much as it could and should have done, but neither church was as inert as it might have been. Morally speaking, both were more creditable than the elected government and parliament of their country.

NOTES

1. "The United Church and the Jewish Plight During the Nazi Era 1933-1945", *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* (Vol. 8/no. 2/Fall 1984) pp. 55-71.
2. Irving Abella & Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933-1948*, Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982, p. 51.
3. Rev. C. B. Mortlock, "The Christian Revolution", *The Canadian Churchman* (December 3, 1936) p. 691.
4. Rev. F. D. V. Narborough, "The Danger of Pharisaism", *The Canadian Churchman*

(February 11, 1943) p. 83.

5. Robert W. Ross, *So It Was True: The American Protestant Press and Nazi Persecution of the Jews*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980, p. 163.
6. *Mission to the Jews*, Missionary Society of the Church of Canada, Good Friday, 1938.
7. "Report of the Montreal Jewish Mission", *Diocese of Montreal Synod Journal* (April, 1935) p. 100.
8. Superintendent of the Toronto Diocesan Mission to the Jews.
9. Rev. F. J. Nicholson, "The Christian Approach to the Jew", *The Canadian Churchman* (April 11, 1935) p. 228.
10. E.g., *Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (1934); *The Jew in the Medieval Community* (1937), etc.
11. Cf. James Parkes, *Voyage of Discoveries*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1969. pp. 108, 151. Writing about his 1938 visit, Parkes notes that, while lecturing on antisemitism, he tried to persuade the Canadian authorities to open their doors more widely to professional refugees from Nazi Germany." (p. 151) His pleas, unfortunately, fell on deaf ears as far as the government was concerned, but he clearly made a significant impression on his fellow (Canadian) Anglicans.
12. C.E.S., "Book Reviews", *Social Welfare* (September, 1938) p. 25.
13. C. J. Lamb, "The Book Shelf", *The Canadian Churchman* (March 16, 1939) p. 174.
14. Rev. Claris E. Silcox, "The Church and Anti-Semitism", *The Canadian Churchman* (February 6, 1941) p. 86. Both Christians and Jews are therefore discovering through a common peril a common ground. . . . And out of this comradeship in arms, there should develop a new understanding and perhaps the groundwork of a new *modus vivendi*.
15. "Bishop's Message", *The Canadian Churchman* (August 1933) p. 1.
16. "London Letter", *The Canadian Churchman* (August 2, 1934) pp. 461-462.
17. "At Montreal Synod", *The Canadian Churchman* (May 12, 1938) p. 301.
18. "London Letter", *The Canadian Churchman* (October 10, 1935) p. 581.
19. "Enemies of Christianity", *The Canadian Churchman* (May 13, 1937) p. 294. The words cited are from Bishop Farthing's annual charge to the Synod of Montreal.
20. See "Racialism in Italy", *The Montreal Churchman* (October, 1938) p. 16.
21. "London Letter", *The Canadian Churchman* (May 20, 1937) p. 308.
22. Rev. W. J. Gilling, "Follow Me", *The Canadian Churchman* (December 8, 1938) p. 711.
The preacher dwelt on the theme of deification, describing Hitler as a "Man-God" whose worship required a blood sacrifice like the Aztec deity of Montezuma, and with the same inhuman results. Instead of Aztec temples, however, prison cells and concentration camps supplied the sacrificial altars of the modern Nazi cult. Gilling concluded his sermon (delivered before a conference of Anglican youth) with a plea to follow Jesus, the better Führer.
"Who," says the teacher to young German children, "in these days most reminds us of Jesus — through his love of humble people and his readiness for self-sacrifice?" And the answer is, "The Fuehrer". . . . Thus we see apostasy rampant — paganism would perhaps be the more accurate word. . . . And this modern apostasy is accompanied by, and enforced by, persecution — persecution comparable in extent and remorselessness to anything which the past has to deplore."
23. Very Rev. W. R. Inge, "Substitutes for Religion", *The Canadian Churchman* (May 7, 1936) p. 292. Inge, the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, England, takes pains to point out that he is neither a fascist nor a Nazi, and does not approve of antisemitism.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Headlam, who was chairman of the Church of England's Council on Foreign Relations, was extremely hostile to the German anti-Nazi Confessing Church. See Ronald C. D. Jasper, *George Bell: Bishop of Chichester*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 219.
26. "Holy Church Throughout the World", *The Canadian Churchman* (October 19, 1933) p. 631.
27. *Journal of Proceedings*, 13th Session (moved by Dr. Abbott-Smith, seconded by Mr. T. Mortimer) p. 117.

- “It depreciates as being a denial of the principles of Christianity, and therefore abhorrent to Christian people, the ‘ill-treatment of the Jews’ . . . by nations, communities or individuals on account of their race or religion.”
28. “A Chat with the Editor”, *The Canadian Churchman* (January 23, 1936) p. 50.
 29. *Ibid.*
 30. Editor’s Note, “When Judaism is Blasted”, *Social Welfare* (September, 1935) p. 23.
 31. Dorothy M. Barter Snow, “He Was a Jew”, *The Canadian Churchman* (March 5, 1936) p. 152.
 32. *Diocese of Rupert’s Land Synod Journal*, 52nd Session (November, 1938) p. 18.
“We have been distressed during the last few years because of the injustice and persecution meted out to God’s ancient people. The situation in Europe as it affects the Jews at the present time is desperate. . . . We shall do what we can to forward any movement which has for its object the supplying of the bodily needs of Jewish and other fugitives and finding them a place on earth where they can live in peace and enjoy the freedom which is rightly theirs.”
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. *The Canadian Churchman* (February 23, 1939) p. 113.
 35. *Ibid.*
 36. Conrad Hoffman, “The German Refugees”, *The Canadian Churchman* (January 26, 1939) p. 55.
“What is so tragic is that wherever anti-Semitism breaks out, members of the Christian Churches, clergy as well as laity. . . . become involved and oftentimes are actually the moving spirits behind it.”
 37. Rev. C. J. Lamb, “How Long, O Lord!”, *The Canadian Churchman* (April 17, 1941) p. 249.
 38. “From Over and Across”, *The Canadian Churchman* (September 10, 1942) p. 509.
“By wholesale massacre, torture and starvation the Nazis are deliberately exterminating this brave nation.”
 39. “Too Horrible to Think About”, *The Canadian Churchman* (December 24, 1942) p. 754.
 40. “The Empire as Refuge from Massacre”, *The Canadian Churchman* (February 25, 1943) p. 121.
 41. *Religion Pleads the Cause of Refugees* (May 28, 1943) p. 7.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. *Diocese of Niagara Synod Journal*, 69th Session (May, 1943) p. 33.
 44. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. (M44 moved by the Rev. G. M. W. Smith, seconded by the Rev. D. J. Curzon.) A copy of this resolution was forwarded to Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King.
 45. John A. Cormie, “Immigration, No Remedy!”, *Social Welfare* (September, 1936) p. 99.
 46. *18th Annual Report*, The Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada, 1933, p. 9.
 47. *22nd Annual Report*, The Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada, 1937, p. 8.
 48. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
 49. Abella & Troper, *op. cit.*, *passim*.
 50. *24th Annual Report*, The Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada, 1939, p. 17.
 51. *Ibid.*
 52. “Canadian Christians and German Refugees”, *Social Welfare* (March, 1936) p. 25.
 53. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
 54. “Anglican Action on the Refugee’s”, *Social Welfare* (Winter, 1939) p. 64.
 55. “The Refugees”, *The Montreal Churchman* (December, 1938) p. 4.
 56. See minutes of the Executive Committee of the Council for Social Service (December 14, 1938) p. 1.
 57. *24th Annual Report*, The Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada,

1939, pp. 180-19.

58. "A Chat with the Editor", *The Canadian Churchman* (February 2, 1939) p. 66.
59. *Ibid.*
60. "The German Refugees", *The Canadian Churchman* (February 2, 1939) p. 71.
61. "Letters to the Editor", *The Canadian Churchman* (February 23, 1939) p. 121.
62. *Ibid.*
63. "A Chat with the Editor", *The Canadian Churchman* (March 2, 1939) p. 130.
64. W. F. Ambrose, "Letters to the Editor", *The Canadian Churchman* (June 15, 1939) p. 378. The letter written by W. F. Ambrose was originally entitled "The Wandering Jews".
65. *The Canadian Churchman* (July 13, 1939) pp. 428-429. See, for example, "Refugee Children in Canada" and "Refugee Family Wanted" in *The Canadian Churchman* (July 13, 1939) pp. 428-429.
66. 87th Session, *Diocese of Toronto Synod Journal* (May-June, 1939) p. 105. (Moved by Mr. F. Andrew Brewin, seconded by Mr. Hugh Jones.)
"That this Synod urges the Canadian Government to take steps to assist in relieving the intolerable conditions of European refugees and victims of persecution, by permitting the admission, and organizing the settlement in Canada of some of those most fitted to fit into Canadian life, and expresses its [sic] willingness to co-operate in arranging temporary hospitality or the adoption of children as required."
67. Rev. C. J. Lamb, "Have We the Courage?", *The Canadian Churchman* (July 27, 1939) p. 442.
68. G. Raymond Booth, "The Holy Innocents, 1939", *The Canadian Churchman* (December 21, 1939) p. 734.
69. 25th Annual Report, The Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada, 1940, p. 10.
70. 88th Session, *Diocese of Toronto Synod Journal* (May 9, 1940) p. 75. (Moved by Professor E. A. Dale, seconded by Canon T. S. Boyle.)
". . . the Synod of the Diocese of Toronto respectfully urges the Government of the Dominion of Canada to welcome to this country a large number of selected refugees."
71. *Ibid.*, Appendix A, p. 183.
72. "Toronto", *The Canadian Churchman* (May 30, 1940) p. 350.
"Mr. Raymond Booth . . . said the numbers are infinitesimally small compared with what they could and should be. . . . Canada," he said, "is the second on the list of civilized countries in the world giving the least offer of help and assistance to the refugees from Naziism."
73. 28th Annual Report, The Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada, 1943, p. 27. Abella and Troper, *op. cit.*, p. 150 which refers to the large proportions of Jews among the Portuguese refugees, many of whom were children.
74. *Journal of Proceedings*, 15th Session (Moved by Dr. Cartwright, seconded by Senator A. K. Hugesson) p. 39.
75. See the *Diocese of Niagara Synod Journal* (May, 1943) p. 38, and the *Diocese of Rupert's Land Synod Journal* (November, 1943) p. 35, for pro-refugee resolutions. The Diocese of Niagara Synod moved: ". . . that every possible step ought to be taken at once to rescue from massacre the Jews in enemy and enemy occupied countries" (May, 1943) p. 38; and the Diocese of Rupert's Land Synod's resolution: that "we urge upon our Dominion Government to give sympathetic consideration to the plea that Canada should play her part in affording the sanctuary needed by these people." (November, 1943) p. 35.
76. Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
77. Claris E. Silcox, *The Challenge of Anti-Semitism to Democracy*, Toronto: The Committee on Jewish Gentile Relationships (January, 1939) p. 16.