



A Sacred Obligation Seeing Judaism and Christianity Anew

Spring Term 2016

The Queen's Foundation
for Ecumenical Theological Education



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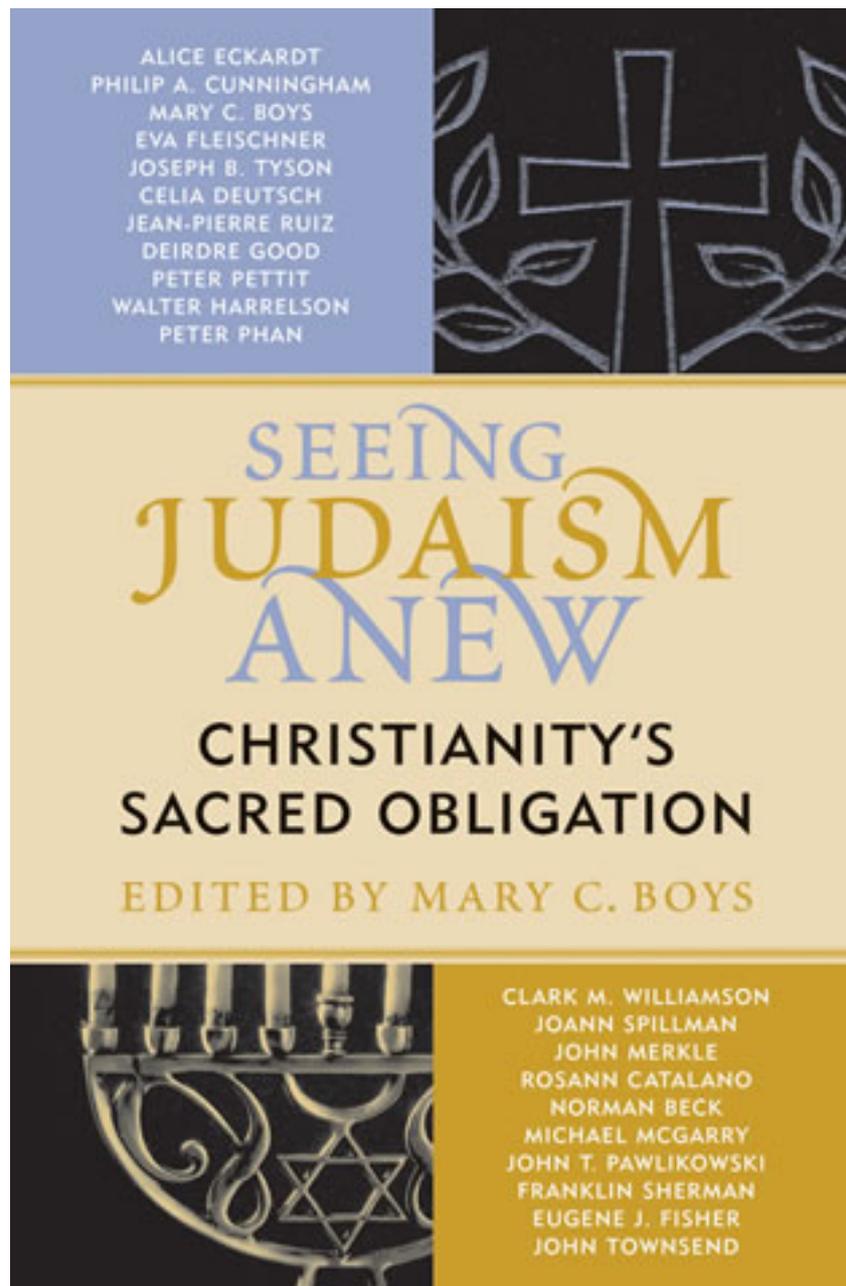
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The Core Text for this course is



Available in the library and for purchase online as paperback & Kindle <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Seeing-Judaism-Anew-Christianitys-Obligation/dp/0742548821> or it is available as a Dawsonera e –book with free access at <http://www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/AbstractView/S9781461635956>
You will be able to view it onsite without log in but will need to log in off site

Reflections on Marc Chagall's White Crucifixion

'In the *White Crucifixion*, Chagall leaves little doubt of Jesus' identity as an observant Jew, persecuted for his ancestral faith. He wears a beard and his head is devoutly covered, while a prayer shawl has been slung around his loins, perhaps as a taunt by his captors, or possibly as a gesture of pity, preserving the last vestiges of his modesty. Chagall surrounds this Jesus with a series of scenes directly referencing contemporary attacks and oppressive restrictions forced upon Jews. The arrangement here, with smaller, related episodes arranged around a central figure, recalls the icon paintings which Chagall grew up surrounded by in Russia, and the viewer's eye is invited to circle around the perimeter of the picture, meditating on the scenes one by one. In the upper right of the canvas a Nazi Brownshirt plunders the ark from a flaming synagogue, calling to mind the destruction of the Munich and Nuremberg synagogues on 9 June and 10 August 1938. The lions placed over the synagogue doors may refer to Judah, but they could also, following Christian iconography, be read as heraldic references to the Evangelist Mark, thus serving as a coded reference to the artist's own forename. In the lower left of the painting an elderly man staggers imploringly towards the viewer, a placard fastened to his chest. Even with the text of the sign blurred beyond recognition—we know from reproductions of earlier versions of the painting that it once explicitly read "*Ich bin Jude*", I am a Jew—it is clear from the context that the man is a victim of Nazi measures designed to differentiate and humiliate Jews. Above him, refugees unsuccessfully attempt to escape by boat while a nearby *shtetl* is set ablaze in the helter-skelter of a pogrom. While some commentators speculate that the rabble emerging from the upper left of the canvas, waving the flags of the Russian Red Army, represent an element of hope in the picture, they may also portend further danger in the hands of an artist who had experienced first-hand the virulence of Russian anti-Semitism'

Aaron Rosen

[http://www.jnr.div.ed.ac.uk/Primary
%20Sources/holocaust/rosen_whitecrucifixion.html#web](http://www.jnr.div.ed.ac.uk/Primary%20Sources/holocaust/rosen_whitecrucifixion.html#web)

'When I first saw Chagall's ...paintings I was repulsed and perplexed by them. I wondered why a Jew would work on such themes. Contrary to their sacred place in Christian religious imagination, for Jews the cross and the crucifixion have always been, in both their Roman and Christian manifestations, dark symbols of murder, violence and destruction, symbols of Jew hatred. But finally I came to a crucial realisation: Chagall did not paint these pictures for Jews. Rather, they are for Christians. Already in 1938, and then throughout the many years of Nazi mass murder of the Jews, Chagall was saying *to the Christians of Europe*: Don't you see? Don't you understand? When Nazis kill Jews they are killing Christ''

**Richard A Cohen 'The Holocaust a Christian Issue – Christology Revisited'
in Michael Morgan and Benjamin Pollock (Eds) *The Philosopher As
Witness – Fackenheim and Responses to the Holocaust* (SUNY 2008)
p127-8**

A SACRED OBLIGATION

By Ray Gaston

Originally published in Methodist Recorder 14/7/11

Theologian Kendall Soulen points out that because Christianity is concerned with the God of the Hebrew Bible and because Jesus was a faithful Jew, **'the question has never been whether Christians should speak and act with reference to the Jewish people. Rather the question has been *how* they should do so, and how what they would say and do would affect the existence of the Jewish people.'**¹

A Rabbi friend when first confronted with the passage in John's Gospel, 'the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews,'² reflected 'How ironic, as for most of the last 2,000 years it has been Jews who have been hiding behind locked doors for fear of Christians'. The truth of Christian – Jewish relations for much of the church's life has been a story of oppression and violence inflicted by Christians upon Jews. This violence was located within the very self-understanding of Christians in relation to their Jewish neighbours. It was built upon a theology of supersessionism that saw Christianity as having displaced the Jewish people in their covenant with God. This interpretation of Christianity is still widely preached in our churches.

Soulen outlines three types of supersessionism that have dominated the church's theology - **punitive, economic and structural.**³ The first argues that the Jewish people rejected Jesus and are therefore being punished for this rejection, God has abrogated the covenant made with the Jewish people and has replaced Israel with the 'New Israel' of the Church, the Jews became a wandering people who in their homelessness witnessed to the consequences of disobedience to God. In the second version sometimes aligned to the first but not always, Israel is merely the preparation for the coming of Christ. Israel's relationship with God based on 'worldly' limitations such as a specific people, land and way of life is replaced by a 'superior' more 'universal and spiritual' salvation brought in Christ. Finally, structural supersessionism is perhaps the most deeply ingrained in the Christian consciousness – it is the way we often read the biblical story in prayers, liturgy, lectionaries and preaching. Soulen calls it the **Standard Canonical Narrative** – a story in four movements -The creation, the fall, Christ's redemption and the future consummation. All other characters and events of the diverse and complex biblical narrative are co-opted (or ignored) to fit this overarching narrative.

All these ways of reading our relationship with the Jewish people represent attempts to assert the superiority of Christianity. We tend to see the church as growing out of a moribund and degenerate second temple Judaism. The truth was quite different⁴. The Jesus movement was one of a number of movements associated with the diversity of Judaism in the 1st century of the Common Era (CE) – a pluralistic tradition that sought to survive and continue to stay true to the God of the covenant under the heel of a vicious Roman occupation of their land. Following the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and the later failed Jewish revolts it was the quietist siblings of the Jesus Movement and the embryonic Rabbis that survived the further brutal oppression of empire. In the events that followed these two movements developed different trajectories: the Rabbinic movement resourced the Jewish people - renewing the tradition after temple destruction and led to the Judaism we have today. On the other hand the Jesus

Movement increasingly orientated itself as a missionary movement taking the God of Israel into the gentile world and became the Church. Where the two movements met there was theological conflict and the echoes of this often acrimonious intra Jewish debate can be heard in the gospels and the epistles. But when these largely Jewish texts became the Scripture of an exclusively gentile movement the nature of the conflict changed. An eventually powerful gentile church allied to empire, sought to shame or destroy its weaker sibling and supersessionism became the theological rationale for the dismissal of the Jewish people and the preaching of contempt the norm. It was this continual message of contempt in varying degrees, with very few exceptions that filled the preaching of the early church fathers, the medieval church, the reformers, the 19th century liberal Protestants and their later neo-orthodox detractors alike. This contributed to the rise of Nazi ideology in a culturally Christian Germany and the murder of 6 million Jews. So deeply rooted was the theology of supersessionism that the church stood by at best and joined in the Nazi obscenity at worst. The small organised Christian resistance to the Nazis was not because of their treatment of the Jews but because they sought to interfere with the Church. [5](#)

The reality of the *Shoah*[6](#) has led to a re-examination of the theology of supersessionism in the churches of Europe and North America particularly. But despite many Church statements supersessionism remains embedded in the consciousness of Christians and is often at the heart of much of our preaching and worship. To challenge this we must continually ask ourselves the questions posed by Soulen above: *How* are we speaking of the people who gave us Jesus and whose scriptures we share and what are the implications of our speaking for the Jewish people today? As one group of Christians has argued it is *A Sacred Obligation*.

[1](#) R. Kendall Soulen *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Fortress Press 1996) p1

[2](#) John 20:19 (NRSV)

[3](#) *Op Cit* pp29-33

[4](#) See for instance Mary C Boys *Has God Only One Blessing? Judaism as a Source of Christian Self Understanding* (Paulist Press 2000) pp83- 85

[5](#) Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel *Betrayal – The German Churches and the Holocaust* (Fortress Press 1999)

[6](#) *Shoah* which is Hebrew for 'catastrophe' is often preferred by Jewish commentators to 'Holocaust' as a term for the Nazis murder of over 6 million Jews

Aims of the Course

Course Outcomes:

This course aims to:

- Give students an understanding of the contemporary movement in Christian – Jewish dialogue
- Examine the actual and potential impact of that dialogue upon Christian self-understanding

Learning Opportunities:

Students will, have the opportunity to:

- Explore understandings of early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism influenced by Christian – Jewish Dialogue
- Explore the nature and diversity of contemporary Judaism
- Explore Biblical interpretation in the light of Christian – Jewish dialogue
- Engage with the Jewish experience of the Holocaust/Shoah through the testimony of survivors
- Reflect on the importance of engaging with the Holocaust/Shoah as a critical challenge to Christian self-understanding.
- Reflect on Jewish and Christian understandings of the 'Land of Israel' and the 'Holy Land' and the impact of the Israeli – Palestinian Conflict on Jewish – Christian relations.
- Reflect on new ways of envisaging the relationship between the Jewish people and the Church offered by the Christian – Jewish dialogue movement of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Course Programme

All Sessions are on Mondays starting at 9.30am in the Wakefield Room

Monday 18th January

SETTING THE SCENE

Led by Ray Gaston

Preparatory Exploration: Explore the BBC Religions website on Judaism <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/> you don't need to read everything but follow your interest and return to this site as the course progresses

Read Christian Scholars Group *A SACRED OBLIGATION - Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People* 2002
http://www.jcrelations.net/A_Sacred_Obligation_-_Rethinking_Christian_Faith_in_Relation_to_Judaism_and_the.2372.0.html?

Session 1: Exploring History & Theology – Challenging anti-Judaism and supersessionism -an introduction to *A Sacred Obligation*

Coffee Break

Session 2: Shared Origins, Diverse Roads –the beginnings of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism

Monday 25th January

UNDERSTANDING JUDAISM TODAY Part 1

Led by Rabbi Natan Levy

Preparatory Reading: Read Chapter 2 *Seeing Judaism Anew*

Preparatory Exploration: Check out 'Ask a Rabbi' on Council for Christians and Jews Website

http://www.ccj.org.uk/Groups/223080/The_Council_of/Resources/Ask_A_Rabbi/Ask_A_Rabbi.aspx

Session 1: A brief historical outline of the books of the 'People of the Book'. From Pentateuch to Talmud.

Coffee Break

Session 2: They Ain't Making Jews like Jesus Anymore: Beyond the Stereotypes of First Century Judaism

Monday 1st February

UNDERSTANDING JUDAISM TODAY Part 2

Led by Rabbi Debbie Young Somers

Preparatory reading: Read Chapter 9 *Seeing Judaism Anew*

Preparatory Exploration: Continue to explore 'Ask a Rabbi' above

Session 1: Remembering & Keeping – Exploring Some Core Jewish Rituals

10.45 – 11am Coffee break

Session 2: Everything you ever wanted to ask a Jew but were too afraid to ask ...

Monday 8th February

ENGAGING THE HOLOCAUST/SHOAH

Led by Jonathan Dean and Ray Gaston

Preparatory reading: Read Chapter 1 and/or 14 *Seeing Judaism Anew*

Preparatory Exploration: Browse the Yad Vashem website

<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/index.asp>

Session 1: The Particularity of the Holocaust/Shoah

Coffee break

Session 2: Personal Testimony – The Story of Ovadia Baruch

Monday 22nd February

ENGAGING THE HOLOCAUST/SHOAH Part 2

Led by Jonathan Dean

Preparatory reading: Read Part Four of *The Holocaust and the Christian World* and read *Nostra Aetate*

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

Preparatory Exploration: Continue to browse the Yad Vashem website

<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/index.asp>

Session 1: The German Church and Nazism

Coffee break

Session 2: The Church responds to the Holocaust/Shoah – *Nostra Aetate* and other institutional initiatives

Monday 29th February

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT IN DIALOGUE

Led by Ray Gaston & Steve Innes

Preparatory Exploration watch either "Channelling the Memories and Lessons of the Holocaust" Rabbi Irving Greenberg at

<http://rabbiirvinggreenberg.com/lectures/watch/> or Ethics after the Holocaust Emile Fackenheim https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfxy58FA_4A

And watch what is Jewish philosophy? at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceneZxU_geY

Session 1: Radical responses to the Holocaust /Shoah

Coffee break

Session 2: Christian engagement with Jewish philosophy

Monday 7th March

TOWARDS A NEW RELATIONSHIP – SEEING JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY ANEW

Led by Ray Gaston

Preparatory reading: Read Chapter 20 and/or 21 and/or 22 in *Seeing Judaism Anew*

Preparatory Exploration: Reread A Sacred Obligation and/or International Council of Christians & Jews, *A Time for Recommitment Jewish Christian Dialogue 70 Years after War and Shoah*
http://www.iccj.org/redaktion/upload_pdf/201011271429260.BThesen_engl_kompl.pdf

Session 1: Exploring 'A Sacred Obligation' Document

Coffee Break

Session 2: Metaphors for a New Relationship

Tutors

Rabbi Natan Levy

Rabbi Levy is the interfaith and social action consultant for the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He received his rabbinical ordination in Israel from Rabbi Brovender and Rabbi Riskin in 2006. He served as the Jewish University Chaplain to Southwest England and Wales until 2009. Rabbi Levy is the environmental liaison to the Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, and the co-author of "*Sharing Eden: Green Teachings from Jews, Christians and Muslims*". He holds a MA in Jewish Studies from King's College, London, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in environmental theology at Bristol University. He lives in London with his wife and four children, and can be reached at nzlevy@gmail.com.

Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers

Debbie was ordained Rabbi by Leo Baeck College in 2009, also earning a distinction for her MA. Her first degree was in Religious Studies (1st class honours) at Lancaster University (2001), and she was a Buber Fellow at Paideia, the European Centre for Jewish Studies (2003). Having

volunteered in the interfaith world for several years, and served as the Chair of the Young Leadership Council of the International Council of Christians and Jews, Debbie worked at the UK Council of Christians and Jews from 2003-2004. Her first rabbinic post was at West London Synagogue where she co-ordinated interfaith activities and the Jewish Preparation programme, as well as developing an interfaith programme for teenagers. She is currently working at the Movement for Reform Judaism as the Community Educator. She has been published in magazines and journals, and is a regular contributor to Radio 2's Pause for Thought and the *Jewish News*.

Revd Dr Jonathan Dean

Jonathan is a British Methodist minister and Church historian. He has held both pastoral and teaching appointments in both Britain and the United States, where for five years he was on the faculty of Aurora University just outside Chicago. At AU, he initiated a series of events to promote deeper reflection on Jewish-Christian relations, especially in relation to historical understanding and the commemoration of the Shoah (Holocaust). Jonathan also worked with Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Centre, facilitating ongoing training and education for the volunteers and lecturing on German Christianity during the Second World War. He studied Classics at Oxford and Theology at Cambridge, from where he holds a PhD in Church History. He joined the staff of Queen's in 2015.

Revd Ray Gaston

Ray an Anglican Priest and Team Vicar in The Parish of Central Wolverhampton is Inter Faith Engagement Tutor at Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education. Ray's first taste of Inter Faith Engagement was during his training for ministry, when he participated in the Jewish Experience Weekend for Anglican Ordinands at Leo Baeck Rabbinic College in the mid-90s. He has many years' experience of inner City parish ministry; 9 years spent in multi faith contexts involving particularly grassroots engagement with Islam. He has a first degree in Theology and Religious Studies; a Master's specialising in Interfaith Studies and Pastoral Theology and studied at postgraduate level at the former Centre for Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Birmingham University. He has also undertaken postgraduate studies at Yad Vashem World Holocaust Centre and the Bat Kol Institute of Jewish Studies in Israel. He is author of *A Heart Broken Open – Radical Faith in an Age of Fear* (Wild Goose Publications 2009) and has published articles and reviews in *Theology*, *Political Theology*, *Practical Theology*, *Epworth Review*, *Modern Believing* and *Words for Today*. He can be contacted on r.gaston@queens.ac.uk and his study is Room 33 on the first floor of the 'New' Building

Dr Steve Innes

Dr Steve Innes is scholar in residence at The Council of Christians and Jews. He is a scholar of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, and he also

writes and lectures on interfaith dialogue, conflict resolution, philosophy of religion, and ethics.

Resources

Essential Reading

National Jewish Scholars Project, *DABRU EMET - A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity* 2000
<http://www.jcrelations.net/en/?item=1014>

Christian Scholars Group *A SACRED OBLIGATION - Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People* 2002
http://www.jcrelations.net/A_Sacred_Obligation_-_Rethinking_Christian_Faith_in_Relation_to_Judaism_and_the.2372.0.html?

CORE TEXT

Mary C Boys (Editor) *Seeing Judaism Anew – Christianity’s Sacred Obligation* (Sheed & Ward 2005)

Recommended

Steven Leonard Jacobs *The Jewish Experience – An Introduction to Jewish History and Jewish Life* (Fortress 2010)

Nicholas de Lange & Miri Freud – Kandel *Modern Judaism* (OUP 2005)

Mary C Boys (Editor) *Seeing Judaism Anew – Christianity’s Sacred Obligation* (Sheed & Ward 2005)

Mary C Boys *Has God Only One Blessing? Judaism as a Source of Christian Self-Understanding* (Paulist 2000)

Paula Frederiksen et al (Eds), *Jesus, Judaism and Christian anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (Fortress 2003)

John Merkle *Faith Transformed – Christian Encounters with Jews and Judaism* (Liturgical Press 2003)

Amy Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew – The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (Harper 2007)

Edward Kessler *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (CUP 2010)

R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Fortress 1996)

Richard Harries, *After the Evil: Christianity and Judaism in the shadow of the Holocaust.* (OUP 2003)

Robert Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust* (Fortress 1999)

Tom Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust: Christianity, Memory and Nazism* (Boydell 2006)

Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (Harper 2009)

James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword – The Church and the Jews* (First Mariner 2002)

Marilyn J Salmon *Preaching Without Contempt – Overcoming Unintended Anti-Judaism* (Fortress 2006)

Carol Rittner, Stephen D Smith, Irena Steinfeldt *The Holocaust and the Christian World – Reflections on the past, Challenges for the Future* (Beth Shalom 2000)

Recommended Web Resources

International Council of Christians & Jews, *A Time for Recommitment Jewish Christian Dialogue 70 Years after War and Shoah*
http://www.iccj.org/redaktion/upload_pdf/201011271429260.BThesen_engl_kompl.pdf

Council for Christians and Jews www.ccj.org.uk