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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**Attitudes of Jews in Oxford**

**to**

**Other Monotheistic Religions**

**and**

**Interfaith Engagement**

**Wendy Fidler MBE**

**Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 2016**



## Abstract

This study provides an analysis of the attitudes of a minority faith in the UK, the Jews, to interfaith engagement, to the Council of Christians and Jews and other monotheistic religions. It is based on oral testimonies of interviewees who were all members of the Oxford Jewish Congregation, a unique community which has three Jewish groupings of Orthodox, Masorti and Liberal all under one roof. The objectives are to determine the influence of upbringing and life experiences on resultant interfaith attitudes, and link these with the religious denomination of the respondents. Thereafter these attitudes are considered in relation to Israel; to membership of the Council of Christian and Jews; to the attitudes of Jews entering into the sacred space of the 'Other' in situations of increasing intensity. Finally this thesis explores attitudes of Jews welcoming non-Jews to attending services in synagogues.

The thesis firstly highlights that the participants' attitudes towards those of other religions were dependent upon upbringing, background and life experiences, irrespective of whether these resultant attitudes were positive, ambivalent or negative. Secondly, the most significant result found was that *all* the respondents were involved in dialogue with the Other irrespective of whether they had positive, ambivalent or negative attitudes towards interfaith and despite which Jewish denomination they belonged to. Thirdly, with regard to Israel, each had their own view and opinion which was not dependent on religious affiliation. Fourthly, with regard to the space of the Other, there is more complexity from whether the respondents would enter a church, attend, then participate in an interfaith service held in a church, and finally if they would take part in a service in a church involving a friend or colleague. The responses were divided by the Jewish grouping of the interviewees and demonstrated a new paradigm. There were personal interfaith boundaries beyond which responders would not pass. There was no correlation between background or religious affiliation, revealing an underlying level of unpredictability within the interviewees. Fifthly, this study demonstrated that half of the Orthodox responders were engaged in interfaith activity. Anecdotally, without previous evidence, it has been assumed that Orthodox Jews were less likely to engage in interfaith work. Within this research this was not the case.



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## Glossary

**Aliya:** literally to 'go up'. Also used to name the honour of 'going up' to recite the blessings during the reading of the Torah in a service.

**Barmitzvah:** This marks the coming of age ceremony when a Jewish boy is deemed to be an adult at the age of 13, when he can then take responsibility and play full part in synagogue services.

**Batmitzvah:** This marks the coming of age ceremony when a Jewish girl is deemed to be an adult. The age of the girl differs from 12 in the Orthodox tradition to 13 in Masorti and Liberal. The ceremony is also different for girls between according to the different groupings of Judaism.

**Beth Din:** Means a house of judgment and today is a rabbinical court of Judaism. In ancient times, it was the building block of the legal system in the Biblical Land of Israel.

**B'nei mitzvah:** Plural of both bat and barmitzvah.

**Brit milah:** The covenant of circumcision.

**Chag/chagim** (plural): Festival or festivals.

**Charedi/Charedim** plural: Are a stream of Orthodox Judaism characterised by rejection of modern secular culture. Its members are often referred to as strictly Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox.

**Chavura:** literally a group of friends. Also used to describe a group of people with a common purpose, e.g., those who get together for Jewish services or Youth Groups.

**Cheder:** literally 'Room'. Also used to describe children's Hebrew classes.

**Chazzan/Chazanim** plural: A professional who sings and leads services on behalf of the community; in some synagogues they still wear canonicals.

**Chazzanit:** A female chazzan.

**Dabru Emet:** a statement issued by mainly American rabbis and theologians to forward Jewish-Christian relations.

**Frum:** Yiddish. To be committed to the observance of Jewish religious law that often exceeds the requirements of the surrounding Jews.

**Haham:** Among the Sephardim (the Spanish and Portuguese Jews) haham is the official title of the rabbi.

**Halacha:** Is the rabbinic Talmudic interpretation of the Torah governing all Jewish practices.

**Heshbon haNefesh:** The study of one's own soul.

**Hiphil:** A grammatical stem that can be used to express a causative type of action with an active voice; i.e., to make an intransitive verb into a transitive verb.

**JSOC:** Is the name of the University Jewish Societies and the main focus of Jewish student life on campus. It is a recognised member of each university's Student Union.

**Kashrut:** Is the Jewish law dealing with what foods Jews can and cannot eat and how those foods must be prepared and eaten, including the method of slaughter of animals.

**Kippa:** Is the Hebrew word for the skullcap traditionally worn by **Jewish** men. It is also called a **yarmulke** or koppel in Yiddish.

**Kiddush:** Is the ritual of blessing **wine** and bread, and drinking and eating. Kiddush has become the name of the light refreshments enjoyed by a community at the end of a service.

**Kittel:** A **kittel** is a white linen robe worn by some **Jewish** men on special religious occasions to signify purity, holiness and new beginnings, and is frequently worn on Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year. It is also the name of the gown in which the dead are clothed for burial.

**Kol Nidrei:** Is the opening prayer in the evening for the beginning of the service of the Day of Atonement. The evening service has now become known as Kol Nidrei.

**Mitzvah/mitzvot** plural: A good deed or a commandment.

**Minyan:** Is the quorum of the necessity for 10 Jewish people for a service. In the Orthodox this means 10 men, whereas in some Masorti communities this can be comprised of men and women.

**Musaph:** is the additional prayer, recited on Sabbath and festivals which was introduced to take the place of the sacrifices that were formerly offered in the Temple of Jerusalem.

**Neviim:** The prophets.

**Other:** In this thesis Other refers to non-Jews.

**Oxfordshir:** The name of the choir of the Oxford Jewish Congregation, where 'shir' is Hebrew for a song.

**Nostra Aetate:** Latin; 'In our Time' is the Declaration on the relation of the Catholic Church with Non-Christian Religions of the Second Vatican Council. Passed by a vote of 2,221 to 88 of the assembled bishops, on October 28, 1965, by Pope Paul VI.

**Orthodox, Masorti, Reform and Progressive:** some of the Jewish groupings and those used in this study.

**Rosh Hashana:** The Jewish New Year.

**Shabbat/Shabbatot:** Plural; Sabbath.

**Shacharit:** Hebrew; Means 'Dawn' and is also the name given to the morning prayers.

**Shema:** Hebrew; It is the oldest fixed daily prayer in Judaism and is recited morning and night. It is an affirmation of *Judaism* and a declaration of faith in one God.

**Shoah:** Hebrew; The Holocaust.

**Shul:** Yiddish; Synagogue.

**Talmud:** Is the source from which the code of Jewish Halakhah (law) is derived. It originates from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE., and is made up of the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Mishnah is the original written version of the oral law and the Gemara is the record of the rabbinic discussions following this writing down.

**Torah:** Is the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the most important document of Judaism.

**Ulpan:** Is an institute or school for the intensive study of Hebrew, designed to teach adult immigrants to Israel the basic language skills of conversation, writing and comprehension.

**Yehudi Nefesh:** Hebrew; a Jewish soul.

**Yom Kippur:** The Day of Atonement; the holiest of days for Jews.



# Academic Thesis: Declaration Of Authorship

I, Wendy Fidler, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

The Attitudes of Jews in Oxford to Other Monotheistic Religions and to Interfaith Engagement.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Either none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published as: [please list references below]:

Signed: .....

Date: .....



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1. Background

This study will provide a fresh approach in studying the attitudes of a minority religion in the UK, the Jews, to interfaith involvement, to the Council of Christians and Jews and to other monotheistic religions. At the core of life in the multi-cultural society of today, politicians and others stress the need for people of different religions and none, to coexist together peacefully, and to treat each other with respect. The rapid pace of global change, including mass migration that has taken place since the latter part of the twentieth century has had an impact upon the previously Christian dominated demographics of the UK. Today Weller describes the complex landscape as 'Christian, secular and religiously plural'.<sup>1</sup> The many changes in globalization include changing attitudes towards religion, where in some parts of the world religion is becoming more significant, whereas other parts are becoming more secular. The significance of this is that religion is not immune from these societal trends and there are changes which are spilling over into many areas of modern life, both nationally and globally. These changes provide the catalyst for undertaking this study. Moreover, in a time of flux and tension, it is possible that some Jews in the UK may be reluctant to engage with people of other religions and may prefer to stick together to the exclusion of those of other religions, which will lead to even less understanding. It is important to ascertain if this is the case with the Jewish community, which is the basis of this study. The reality of Britain today is that communities are becoming increasingly diverse and as this occurs it becomes increasingly important and interesting to define what these communities, particularly the minority communities, know, understand and think about people of the majority religion and of each other. People of differing religions need to understand each other in order for society to improve and become more harmonious.

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<sup>1</sup> Weller, P., 2005 *Time for a Change: Reconfiguring Religion, State and Society*. London, T&T. Clark p.73.

The only way we know how to do this at the moment is through interfaith activities and dialogue in particular.

These are some of the reasons why a study about Jewish attitudes towards other religions is so relevant. This is the objective of this thesis as expressed in the title of Jonathan Sacks' book *The Dignity of Difference*.<sup>2</sup>

This study will provide evidence where previously none has existed and will uniquely assess the situation from within a minority group, the Jewish community, using the case study of Oxford. It is highly significant because for the first time detailed evidence will become available about the attitudes of Jews to other religions where previously there existed only anecdotal information.

The Jewish population included in this study will all be members of the Oxford Jewish Congregation (OJC), an unusual Jewish community in the UK, linked by some of its membership, albeit separate from the adjacent academic universities. It has members who originate from across the world and who will be representative within the sample of this diverse community.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the environment of the OJC the thesis will consider the Jewish denomination affiliation, the upbringing, life experiences of those involved in this study.

## **2. The Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis provides a qualitative study, structured in five distinct chapters. Chapter One, the Introduction, will begin by defining the differences between 'faith' and 'religion'. It is this concept which is included in the thesis title so the rationale for this is defined at some length. This is because it is important to understand the decision as to which is the most apposite descriptor for the title to reflect in the content of the thesis. Thus this concept has a special place. This will be followed by the literature review, which for this study was challenging because there is no literature

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<sup>2</sup> Sacks, J., 2002 *The Dignity of Difference*. London, Continuum.

<sup>3</sup> A detailed description of the sample will be included in the methodology section 4.vii p. 21, and the history and development of the OJC in section 8.ii p. 47.

directly connected to this topic. However related literature is considered. The Introduction will be set within the rationale of the methodology; the background context of the history of the distinctive Jewish community of Oxford and the history and development of existing interfaith organisations. The definitions of the Judaic groups of Orthodox, Masorti and Liberal Judaism included in the study will be described because it is these groupings to which the interviewees belong. It might be anticipated, because of existing anecdotal information, that fewer of the Orthodox respondents will be involved in interfaith activities.<sup>4</sup> The analyses will show if this is the case. Chapter One will conclude with a discussion of some of the themes introduced by the respondents. Chapter Two, begins the heart of the thesis, and is devoted to the interviews with the respondents. It considers the main question of this study: does background and life experience link resultant attitudes toward interfaith involvement? It will introduce the respondents, describe their upbringing and life experiences and consider if these are linked to their attitudes towards other religions. In this chapter the respondents will be grouped by their resultant attitudes namely, positive, ambivalent and negative, and the religious group to which the respondent belongs will be noted. Chapter Three will examine attitudes towards Israel. Because of the high profile of the Israel/Palestine situation, the interviewees' discussions relating to Israel deserve a specific chapter. However, for this topic the respondents' attitudes will be grouped by religious affiliation i.e., Orthodox, Masorti and Liberal because it may be that religious affiliation will have more influence on the respondents' views about Israel and it is through this means that more information will be revealed. The second part of this chapter will discuss the respondents' membership of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ), and likewise for this topic the respondents will continue to be grouped according to their attitudes towards interfaith as this is the most appropriate manner to link these attitudes to membership of a national interfaith organisation.

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<sup>4</sup> The anecdotal information was substantiated within the last two months directly to the researcher by a Reform Rabbi, and previously by a CEO of CCJ

Chapter Four, 'Jews in Pews' analyses respondents' attitudes towards the sacred space of Christian worship, the churches. This situation addresses the personal behaviour of each respondent of being present and then taking part in various different services in what may become progressively deeper and more difficult situations for the interviewees. In this chapter the analysis will be according to religious grouping because the three groupings may affect the respondents differently. Chapter Four will address the issue above from the opposite perspective, the aspect of non-Jews visiting a service in a synagogue. The conclusion will highlight the findings from this research, bring together the analyses, consider the practical implications of this research for interfaith practice.

### **3. 'Faith' or 'Religion'**

Because this thesis is an assessment of Jewish involvement in interfaith, the working title of this thesis began as, 'Attitudes of contemporary Jews of Oxford interfaith and to other monotheistic faiths.' However, as the study progressed it began to be revealed that 'Faith' was not the most appropriate descriptor. In 1873 Müller wrote:

The effort to define religion is as old as the academic study itself.<sup>5</sup>

However, more than a century later Arnal wrote:

Surprisingly enough, the definition of religion has not been a consistent major concern for students of specific religious traditions or for theorists of religion.<sup>6</sup>

Opposing viewpoints are certainly expressed here. If the reason for this was solely academic custom it might have been anticipated that the view expressed by Arnal preceded those of Müller, because the definition of key terms is a usual beginning for essays and research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The thesis will now consider the differences between 'faith' and 'religion'. 'Religion' implies practice, i.e., the ritualistic observances which accompany

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<sup>5</sup> Müller, F.M. 1873. *Lectures on the Science of Religion: Four Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution with Two Essays of False Analogies, and the Philosophy of Mythology*. London. Longmans, Green & Co p.22.

<sup>6</sup> Arnal, W. E. 2009. *Defining 'Definition'* In (Eds) Braun, W., & McCutcheon R.T. *Guide to the Study of Religion*. London, Continuum.

a specific belief system. Belief in a religion is related to a specific faith and the framework of its ritualistic practice. By implication, 'religion' includes a spiritual concept, but not all who practice a religion necessarily have a spiritual belief. Why might this be? Why might individuals affiliate themselves with a religion, and practice all or some of the rituals and observances whilst not having a secure belief in a spiritual component of that religion? There may be many reasons why an individual will choose to belong to a community. It may be that people join a congregation for social reasons, for a sense of belonging, and, particularly in the minority religions of Judaism or Islam, for a perception of security and support. Phillips, an Anglican priest, arguing that humanity is genetically programmed for storytelling (which fits well with Jewish-Christian heritage), has noted:

People attend religious communities and adhere to a religious tradition in part because they gain value, purpose and identity through the mingling of their narrative with those of that particular religion.<sup>7</sup>

These practices may provide a continuity with previous generations, with a framework for family life or with a desire to bring up their children imbued with their religion for the purpose of continuity. Belonging to a community may also provide a moral code of living, it may provide comfort and a readily established feeling of commonality with other members, or a means of giving thanks or supporting charitable societies.

'Faith', includes a definite concept or notion and belief of a spiritual force, frequently called 'God', which is both broader and deeper than simply religious practice, whether that practice be the observance of *Halacha* in Judaism or Christian or Islamic ritual observance. Faith is not dependent upon scientific evidence.<sup>8</sup> Faith cannot be tested in the same way as a drug is tested through randomised controlled trials or through any other scientific methodology. Faith is neither demonstrable nor generalised and is more a statement about 'self' and self-beliefs.

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<sup>7</sup> Phillips, J., 2004 (Summer) 'Why were Humans Created?' *Common Ground*. p.4.

<sup>8</sup> Halacha is the rabbinic Talmudic interpretation of the Torah governing all legal Jewish practices.

All religions accept the recognition of a common good for humanity. However there exists a fine dividing line which separates for individuals what is acceptable or appropriate practice for them, from what is beyond the pale with regard to the beliefs and actions which can be undertaken in the name of religion - such as the negative life styles of the Western world as perceived by some Muslims; the actions of the Islamic State in the Middle East (2014); the destruction of the twin towers in New York (2001); Christian actions in Nigeria and Israeli military intervention in Gaza (2014), irrespective of any element of retaliation. It is the 'Faith' of an individual, as opposed to their religion which influences the point on the continuum a person may fall. It is a belief held by the 'self'. It is also individuals who must make a judgment about what is acceptable to them, personally, according to their beliefs, and how they interpret some of the more difficult issues of their religion, e.g., homosexuality, women bishops or rabbis or imams. 'Faith' also has additional meanings unconnected with religion, e.g., 'I have faith that you will repay your debt'. In this example the 'Faith' can be based upon likely attributed evidence, e.g., that person has repaid debts previously, although there is no certainty that this will happen again. This meaning is not relevant to this study. The question can be asked, 'Is having a faith a good thing?' The answer may be 'not always', which is why the word 'religion' is more specific and thus more appropriate for this study.

### **Faith**

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the etymology of 'Faith' as Anglo-Norman and Old French. However the concept of 'Faith' dates back from the Hebrew Bible, as there are several words within the Torah which have the meaning of a belief in God. The word 'Aman', from the noun Emunah, truth, means 'believe in', 'trust', or 'be certain'. (ps.31:v24). Harris, Waltke, Leonard and Archer say that in the Hiphil aman means:<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Hiphil stem can be used to express a causative type of action with an active voice; to make an intransitive verb into a transitive verb.

to cause to be certain, sure, to be assured, which shows that Biblical faith is an assurance, a certainty, in contrast with the modern concepts of faith as something possible, hopefully true but not certain. (Gen.15:6, Ex.14:3, Num. 14:11, Deut.1:32, Ps:78:22).<sup>10</sup>

The Talmud observes that the prophet Habakkuk based the whole Torah on the idea that ‘the righteous shall live by faith’. This suggests that the whole Torah is based on trust in God.<sup>11</sup> It was not until the medieval period when Jewish thinkers confronted atheism that they interpreted ‘faith’ to denote a belief in the existence of God.<sup>12</sup> It is revealing that many Jews reflect extensively on God’s existence whilst some, particularly the ultra-Orthodox have no doubts. However, unless a respondent specifically introduces this issue, it will not be initiated in the study.

### **Religion**

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the etymology of ‘religion’ as Anglo-Norman and Old French, with the meaning ‘A state of life bound by religious vows; the condition of belonging to a religious order’, and ‘religio’ in the Latin.

However, despite the origin of the word faith, and its historic link with Judaism, the title uses the word ‘Religion’ rather than ‘Faith’, because this is a contemporary study, and even though some historical background will be included, the attitudes and views are those of Jews of the 21st century. Also, as we have seen, faith includes an aspect of spirituality. This may or may not be the case for the Jews of Oxford included in this study, as although they are members of the Oxford Jewish Community (OJC), it could be the ritual, the practice and the belonging in itself that may be most important to them; having a spirituality may be incidental. This concept reinforces the choice of ‘religion’ rather than ‘faith’ in title of this thesis.

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<sup>10</sup> Harris, R.L., Waltke, B.K., Gleason L., 2000 *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago, Moody Publishers. p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> *Makkok* 24a.

<sup>12</sup> Jacobs, L., 1995 *The Jewish Religion: A Companion*. New York, Oxford University Press, p.160.

## 4. Methodology<sup>13</sup>

### 4.i Study Design

The first decision to be taken, which affects the design of a project from the beginning, is whether the study should be a quantitative or a qualitative study. The aims of quantitative and qualitative research differ. *Quantitative* research aims to provide information which can be generalized across a population group, but lacks details in terms of depth of information. In contrast, qualitative research provides depth and detail but the results remain the individuals and they cannot be generalized. For a quantitative study there needs to be a large data source. Collecting a large sample for quantitative analysis comes with several problems.<sup>14</sup> In order for the sample to be viable and not biased, a minimum response rate of 40% is necessary; this is almost impossible to predict and the research needs to have progressed a long way before this is able to be assessed. Collecting data via anonymously completed questionnaires has problems in addition to the response rate issues - namely the representation of the responses. A viable sample must also be representative according to the demographics of the target population e.g., by age, sex, education, religious affiliation.<sup>15</sup> If not, the results can only be analysed and discussed in terms of the specific population group achieved within the respondents, and cannot be generalised across a population. It must be stressed that a researcher has no control over these issues and that problems, should they arise, cannot easily be remedied. Quantitative research also does not enable respondents to enlarge upon their responses to give deeper information or to have the opportunity to comment upon their life experiences.

The aim of *qualitative* research is to consider the attitudes and views held by people belonging to a community in a greater depth rather than

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<sup>13</sup> Ethical permission was sought and granted by Southampton University.

<sup>14</sup> Fidler, W., 2010 A Study to Determine the Attitudes of Anglicans towards Jews in England in 2008. Unpublished.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

breadth, through the collection of detailed interviews. The methods of research are usually structured and semi-structured interviews, rather than numerical or statistical data.<sup>16</sup> Qualitative research enables evidence to be analysed to look more deeply into the thoughts and minds and backgrounds of those interviewed, so that the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the population group can be better understood. Because the material is collected via face to face interviews, the interviewee has the opportunity to question the interviewer and vice versa, so that there is less opportunity for misunderstanding. Also an interview enables a 'life story' approach which allows changes in attitudes over time to be identified enabling an analysis of both 'then' and 'now' and the relationship between the two. It would be impossible to obtain this without personal interviews. However, qualitative research is also not without challenges, and there may be occasions when some data may be examined quantitatively. There are several methods used in the field of qualitative analysis, although Silverman highlights that there is no 'right' method.<sup>17</sup> Willig, like Silverman, makes the point that 'strictly speaking, there are no right or wrong methods for collecting data'. Rather methods of collecting evidence and analysis can be more or less appropriate to the research question.<sup>18</sup> This study adopts a qualitative methodology and is in accord with the views of Willig who writes:

Qualitative researchers tend to be concerned with meaning. That is they are interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events. They aim to understand what it is like to experience particular conditions...how people manage certain circumstances.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Rosen, C., 2002. *Real World Research*. (2nd ed.) Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.

<sup>17</sup> Silverman D., 2006 *Interpreting Qualitative Data Third Edition*. London, SAGE Publications. p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Willig, C., 2001 *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. McGraw Hill, Maidenhead, Berkshire, Open University Press p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> Willig, C., 2001. *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. McGraw Hill, Maidenhead, Berkshire, Open University Press.

Qualitative researchers tend, therefore, to be concerned with the nature and texture of experience, to understand a problem or situation rather than with the identification of cause-effect relationships. Qualitative researchers study people in their own territory within naturally occurring settings, or a setting of their choice.<sup>20</sup> Qualitative research focuses on the subjective views of how individual participants perceive situations and consequently aims to explore phenomena in greater depth than quantitative approaches. Additionally qualitative research is not limited by pre-chosen variables and consequently more detailed and multi-layered evidence can be gathered.

#### **4.ii The Interviews**

A frequently used method for collecting material for a qualitative study is the ethnographic interview. Ethnography is a branch of anthropology that provides a description of individual human societies. Ethnographic interviewing has its origins in cultural anthropology, and has its emphasis on the duration of contact, on the quality of the relationship with respondents, and on the meaning of actions and events to respondents.<sup>21</sup> Ethnographic interviews are normally conducted in a semi-structured or unstructured in-depth format with people from a particular culture, in this instance with Jewish people from the community of the Oxford Jewish Congregation (OJC), and by their nature include a subjectivity and uncertainty. It is a form of interviewing conducted in the context of a relationship of rapport and respect between the interviewees and the researcher.<sup>22</sup> This is particularly relevant to this study as the researcher is known to the majority of OJC members and there is already an existing relationship at some level between herself and the interviewees. Inevitably the interviewee will reply according to his or her memory when relating

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Ortiz, A. M., 2016 The Ethnographic Interview in (Eds) Stage, F.K., and Manning, K., *Research in the College Context: Approaches and Methods*. Oxford, UK, Routledge. Chapter 3.

<sup>22</sup> Fielding, N. G., 2006 *Ethnographic Interviewing* [Online] Available at: <http://www.srmo.sagepub.com/view/the-sage-dictionary-of-social-research-methods/n69.xml> [Accessed 20 April 2014].

experiences from their past. Previously, historians have been wary of accepting memory as a reliable source of history because they challenged the reliability of memory itself. Portelli addressed this issue by arguing that a subjective oral narrative should be considered a strength rather than a weakness.<sup>23</sup> He argues that an oral narrative gives less information about an actual event itself and more about its meaning to the narrator. This is particularly relevant to this study because what is important is how the interviewees 'perceived' the influence of their background upon their resultant beliefs and attitudes and not on the specific accuracy of the facts of their background per se.

By its very method, qualitative analysis can be influenced by the experiences and perceptions, or subjective interpretation of the analyser.<sup>24</sup> A challenge is the possible influence exerted by the interviewer upon the interviewee, the narrator, which may colour or change the resultant story, and vice versa, i.e., the influence of the attitudes of a narrator upon the interviewer.<sup>25</sup> However Harris argued that this was an advantage:

To become emotionally involved (with the interviewee), while it is true that it violates the first canon of the historian, which is objectivity, nevertheless, puts you intimately into a situation and thus enables you to understand it. It is a way I think you cannot understand it if you remain outside the situation.<sup>26</sup>

The skill of an interviewer as expressed by Anderson and Jack needs to be able to move from information gathering to interaction and moving beyond the detail to encourage subjective feelings and perceptions.<sup>27</sup> Because of the inclusion of the subjective, oral histories can provide insights not normally found in more traditional historical sources. The

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<sup>23</sup> Portelli, A., 2003 What makes Oral History Different? In Perks, R, Thompson, A. eds, *The Oral History Reader*. Oxford, UK, Routledge. Chapter 3, p.32.

<sup>24</sup> Module R 14. *Qualitative research*.

[Online] Available at: <http://www.okstate.edu/ag/agedcm4h/academic/aged5980a/5980/newpage21.htm> [Accessed 15 March 2014].

<sup>25</sup> Yow, V., 2003 'Do I like them too much? Effects of oral history interview on the interviewer and vice versa.' In (Eds) Perks, R., Thompson, A., *The Oral History Reader*. Oxford, UK, Routledge. Chapter 4, p.55.

<sup>26</sup> Harris, A. K., 1973 The Introduction in Envelopes of Sound, In Grele, R.J. ed, *The Art of Oral History*. Chicago, Precedent Publishing Company. p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Perks, R., Thompson, A., eds 2003 *The Oral History Reader*. Part II: Introduction. Oxford, UK, Routledge. p. 116.

interview process enables participants the opportunity to address their own memories directly, to discuss their own motives, to provide their own personal assessment of the significance of specific events to them and to talk freely about their attitudes.

The skill of an interviewer, as expressed by Anderson and Jack, needs to be able to move from information gathering to interaction and move beyond the facts to encourage subjective feelings and perceptions.<sup>28</sup> Because of the inclusion of the subjective, oral histories can provide insights not normally found in more traditional historical sources. The interview process enables participants an opportunity to address their own memories directly, to discuss their own motives, to provide their own personal assessment of the significance of specific events to them, and to talk freely about their attitudes. Most families have their own stories and traditions which can become important in situations of change of lifestyles, which are frequently retold by the narrator. This is relevant to this study as the older interviewees' background may be considerably different from their lives and environment today. Burton discusses the issue of cross-cultural interviewing, this may well be relevant in part to this study because the interviewer is from the same religion culture group as those in the sample, although the national and regional backgrounds across the sample *is* diverse. In this sense, from an ethnographic perspective, the interviewer is both an 'insider' and an 'outsider'.<sup>29</sup> Above all ethnography is more reflexive and subjective so that it provides a good medium to observe and respect the culture of the interviewees.

#### **4.iii The Interview Method**

It is important to use methods of collecting evidence which encourage the participant to engage in the research process by avoiding contrived or highly structured methods.<sup>30</sup> There are a range of interview methods varying in their degree of structure. Semi-structured interview methods

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<sup>28</sup> Perks, R., Thompson, A., eds 2003 *The Oral History Reader*. Part II: Introduction. Oxford, UK, Routledge. p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> Burton, S.K., 2003 'Cross-cultural Interviewing'. In Perks, R., Thompson, A., eds, *The Oral History Reader*. Oxford, UK, Routledge. Chapter 9, p.123.

<sup>30</sup> Sapsford, R., & Jupp, V., 1996 *Data Collection and Analysis*. London, Sage.

usually follow an interview agenda consisting of open ended questions. In contrast, structured and survey style interviews consist of predetermined questions which follow a similar format and which follow the researcher's agenda and do not accommodate deviations from the questions easily. Willig states that 'semi-structured interviewing is the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research in psychology', largely because data can be analysed in a variety of ways and are compatible with various methods of data analysis.<sup>31</sup> Bryman describes interviewing in qualitative research as a flexible process where the researcher is interested in gaining the interviewee's point of view.<sup>32</sup> Thus a semi-structured interview was considered most appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to prompt and probe at relevant times and ask open ended questions related to the research questions. The next question to ask is how is the evidence collected?

#### **4.iv Interview Protocol**

Before approaching any members of the OJC, the project was explained to the President of the OJC and permission was obtained for the researcher to contact members. The researcher then approached members of the OJC to ask if they would be willing to be included in the project and talk about their Jewish backgrounds and their attitudes towards other religions. No one refused to participate, and in fact some members approached the researcher to ask if they could be included.<sup>33</sup> Those approached were from the different denominations of Judaism, i.e., Orthodox, Masorti and Progressive, and were representative by sex and age. The sample also included two students, one from Oxford Brookes University and one from the University of Oxford. All the interviewees were assured their interview would remain anonymous and advised of their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time.<sup>34</sup> The researcher was not a stranger to any of

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<sup>31</sup> Willig., Ref 68 p.21.

<sup>32</sup> Bryman, A., 2004 'Constructing Variables.' In Hardy, M and Bryman, A, eds. *Handbook of Data Analysis*. London, Sage.

<sup>33</sup> They were not included because the representation across the denominational groupings would not have remained representative.

<sup>34</sup> None of the respondents withdrew. All expressed an interest in how the study was progressing and said they were looking forward to reading the thesis.

the interviewees so that a relationship of trust and mutual respect was very quickly established. Twenty four members were interviewed of whom seventeen play a major role in this study and become more prominent as the analyses progress. They were chosen because they articulated very specific ideas and attitudes, and came from a wide range of different backgrounds. Most importantly, their testimony was particularly rich. The other interviewees echoed some of the views expressed by the other seventeen, came from similar backgrounds and did not relate further or different attitudes. All the respondents co-signed an agreement with the researcher that their participation in this study would remain anonymous.<sup>35</sup> A brief resumé of the respondents who were interviewed but were not included in the analyses are included in the appendix. A safe environment should be provided for the interviews, so that the interviewee feels as relaxed and unthreatened as possible. For this reason the interviews for this study have taken place in the interviewee's own home unless he or she prefers otherwise. The students were interviewed in college and six further interviews took place in the home of the interviewer which was at the request and convenience of the respondent. All the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis by the researcher in 2012 and the age of the interviewee is noted at the time the interview took place.

The interviews did not begin immediately as the interviewees were given time to relax and feel secure. Conversations opened with the respondents being thanked, appreciation offered for the time they were giving to the project, and a full explanation of the project was given. The respondents were given the opportunity to ask any questions and these were answered immediately.

The interviews were structured to ensure the identified subjects were included for discussion. These focused on a personal history with the emphasis being upon the 'Jewishness' and Jewish family of their

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<sup>35</sup> These agreements are not included in the appendices of this thesis because the respondents have co-signed using their own name and this would inevitably betray their anonymity.

upbringing; their own personal Jewish practice today compared with their upbringing and their life experiences; their spirituality and their involvement with and attitudes towards other religions.<sup>36</sup> Also included are questions which introduce different topics as the responses to these questions may reveal another, yet different aspect of attitudes towards those of other religions. For example, also included are questions to stimulate discussion about Jewish artists who have painted pictures of Christian theological themes and in particular to the crucifixion.<sup>37</sup> Over the millennia Christian artists have painted scenes originating from the Hebrew Bible which have been accepted by Jews. However, this concept from the opposite perspective has never been addressed. These questions were therefore included to stimulate discussion and to discover if the respondents felt comfortable looking at copies of the paintings. Also included were questions to determine attitudes towards the places of worship of other religions and the levels which interviewees felt were accessible to them. Also attitudes towards Israel, antisemitism and Christian theology were elicited, and the major topic of interfaith some of which will be discussed later.

An important technique to elicit information is for the interviewer to listen, thereby ensuring the interviewee is given space and time and does not feel pressurised. Terkel recommends the fundamental principles of interviewing are to listen, to watch and to be aware.<sup>38</sup> Laub and Feldman also give importance to the listener stating that the listener becomes a 'participant' and even a co-owner of particularly traumatic events.<sup>39</sup> Effective probing was used as necessary to stimulate a hesitant interviewee and the interviewer removed herself from her own ideas and refrained

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<sup>36</sup> Appendix, Ref 56.

<sup>37</sup> The researcher was also interested in respondent's attitudes towards Jewish artists who paint Christian themes, in particular the crucifixion. During WWII as a means of attempts to publicise what was happening to the Jews in Nazi Germany and Eastern Europe, artists such as Chagall and Levy painted pictures which included an unambiguous Jewish Jesus being crucified to represent the actions of what was being done in the name of Christianity by the Nazis.

<sup>38</sup> Terkel, S., Parker, T., 2003 Interviewing an interviewer In Perks, R, Thompson, A. eds, *The Oral History Reader*. Oxford, UK, Routledge. Chapter 9, p.123.

<sup>39</sup> Feldman, S., Laub, D., 1992 *Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York, Routledge. pp. 84 – 85.

from interjecting by using the techniques of remaining silent and waiting for the interviewee to continue; using an 'echo probe' that is repeating the last phrase used by the interviewee to encourage continuation and showing interest in what the interviewee was saying; give encouragement by allowing the interviewee to say what they *need* to say and to lead the direction of the responses.<sup>40</sup> It is because of the use of these differing techniques which is why the interviews differ from person to person.

In terms of practice, oral interviews should be taped and then transcribed, as the original recording is the most accurate reproduction of the interview, minus, inevitably, the non-verbal gestures. The interviewees' words and speech patterns should not be changed, and neither should the content or the intent of the interviewee. This protocol will be respected in this study and all interviews have been digitally recorded, transcribed and included in the analyses. However, the issue of guaranteed anonymity creates some problems for accessibility. All the recorded interviews use the respondents' own names as do the transcribed texts and the researcher has personally signed guarantees to respect the anonymity of the respondents. Therefore for the immediate period this information cannot be generally available. This part of this section has shown how the respondents were interviewed and now it is necessary to discuss the in further interview detail.

#### **4.v The Main Research Topics**

The first issue was to determine the respondents' attitudes towards interfaith involvement; whether they are involved themselves and whether in fact they believed interaction and dialogue with the Other was a positive and constructive initiative. The second issue to investigate was the role played by Israel within interfaith as perceived by the respondents; this was to determine if it was thought that Israel had in fact become incorporated within general interfaith dialogue, how they felt about this and if they had found this a challenging matter. The third issue looked at how many

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<sup>40</sup> Bernard, H.R. 2002. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Walnut Creek, C.A. AltaMira Press.

respondents were members of CCJ. The fourth issue was to find out how far the interviewees were prepared to be involved within the sacred space, the place of Christian worship, of the Other. It explored the degrees of involvement by the respondents which went progressively deeper in order to discover how far they were prepared to be involved. The fifth issue was to discuss whether the Jewish respondents thought non-Jews should attend a Jewish service in a synagogue.

#### **4.vi The Interview Questions**

The interview questions were designed to answer the main research topics above. It was unlikely that the interviewee responses to these issues would be predictable and so it would have been unhelpful to structure the interview questions without an inbuilt flexibility. The question of membership of CCJ was included as a means of being able to corroborate the validity of responses about interfaith involvement and interest as it would be unlikely that a respondent would profess to having a deep and involved interest in interfaith without being a member of CCJ or another interfaith organisation. The main issue focused initially upon the interviewees' background, where they grew up and were educated, and where appropriate, life experiences. Linked to this, was their and their family's Jewish environment, education and community involvement. Through indirect discussion the interviewees discussed their Jewish practice, beliefs and observances which later would enable any changes from their upbringing and background to adulthood to be identified. It was these topics which opened the discussions as relating personal experiences encouraged the respondents to feel more confident to speak about their life experiences. The rationale behind these discussions was to determine if childhood and life experiences do influence resultant attitudes towards interfaith involvement. The second important topic that the schedule needed to stimulate was the respondents' relationship with interfaith issues themselves, i.e., interest, involvement or, apathy in the subject. These subjects were then deepened to address actual practice with other religions. Other linked issues to interfaith also provided the rationale for inclusion, and as mentioned earlier included

dialogue, Israel, antisemitism, Christian theology and, to use a visual and potentially controversial prompt, Jewish artists painting Christian theological themes. All the subjects were chosen in order to explore the practical behaviour of these Jews towards interfaith.

A second aspect considered was the relationship between the respondents and the place of worship of Christians, i.e., did the interviewees feel comfortable to enter into the sacred space of worship of the Other. Questions were developed to stimulate discussion on this topic. The rationale for the inclusion of this aspect of Jewish behaviour in relation to entering the space of other faiths has never been considered before, there is no existing research and thus it is important to extend knowledge in order to understand this aspect of Jewish attitudes which influence behaviours.

Finally the view of the respondents was sought to consider how they felt about non-Jews attending services in synagogues. Again, to date there is no existing information on this important subject and because it is important for as much knowledge as possible to be discovered about Jewish behaviour in relation to other religions it is vital that this subject was included.

The schedule was developed by an iterative approach which began by pre-testing. Those interviewed at this stage were not included in the final study. The questions were then changed, improved and any ambiguities in the questioning clarified.<sup>41</sup> This study is based on what has been referred to as 'initial theory', or 'study prepositions'.<sup>42</sup> Both study prepositions and initial theory, guide the researcher's attention to what is to be examined within the framework of the study. In other words the researcher's selection of a case and the questions he or she chooses to ask about it are theoretical in that they identify particular concepts as relevant.<sup>43</sup> The questions were phrased in affirmative language describing what is wanted

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<sup>41</sup> Questionnaire is available in Appendix 2.

<sup>42</sup> Hamel, J., 1993 *Case Study Methods*. London, Sage. And Yin, R. K., 2009. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Beverly Hills CA, Sage.

<sup>43</sup> Willig, C., Ref 68 p.76.

rather than unwanted and each was preceded by an explanation. Responses provided by the participants were investigated in more depth using open ended follow up questions, as suggested by Holloway and Jefferson, and addressed issues raised in the interviewee's responses, using their own language and phrasing.<sup>44</sup>

The next section will briefly describe the sample selection.

#### **4.vii The Sample**

When sampling methods are discussed a choice needs to be made between probability and non-probability samples. Probability sampling is not appropriate for qualitative research as the population is chosen at random and has a known problem of selection.<sup>45</sup> Qualitative research uses non-probability or purposive sampling for selecting the population for study which are deliberately selected to reflect particular features or groups within a sample population. It is the characteristics of the population used which is the basis of selection as members of a sample are chosen within a proposed group in relation to a key criteria, in this case Jews within the OJC. In this study the sample key criteria included people aged across the decades from students in their twenties to those in their eighties and it was equally inclusive between men and women. It was important that the affiliation to the religious denominations of Orthodox, Masorti and Liberal broadly represented the distribution of these groupings within the UK. Within these parameters those selected also demonstrated the diversity of the OJC including members who came originally from outside the UK. A representative sample was achieved. The Board of Deputies' Community Project which used focus groups for the interfaith activist group does not define their sample beyond giving the minimum age as 22 and saying there were two men and two women within a group.<sup>46</sup> Within their community leaders focus group the only

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<sup>44</sup> Holloway, W., & Jefferson, T., 2000 *Doing Qualitative Research Differently*. London, Sage.

<sup>45</sup> Roberts, J., et al. 2004 Qualitative Methods Overview. NHS [Online] Available at: <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/LSEHealthAndSocialCare/pdf/SSCR.MethodsReview1pdf> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

<sup>46</sup> Kahn-Harris, K., 2009 *Communities in Conversation: Jewish Involvement in Interfaith Activities in the UK*. London, The Board of Deputies of British Jews.

information given is that the groups included 18 rabbinic and lay leaders, 9 men and 9 women from a range of institutions and religious denominations across the community so it is not possible to make direct comparisons between the two samples. Another factor for consideration is the sample size. In this study interviews continued until no new attitudes were being given. Obviously the life stories which belonged to the interviewees differed, but the views and observations became repetitive. It was at this point that interviewing of additional respondents ceased and the people included in the analysis were the 17 who were the first interviewees.

Another decision to be made appertaining to the sample was to identify a source for collecting the data which would provide information about Jewish attitudes towards other religions. As has been mentioned already, this was the OJC because of the special structure of this community. The OJC is unique in that there is one communal building in the centre of Oxford which fills the needs of all the Jews in Oxfordshire who wish to be associated with the community and who are prepared to identify themselves as Jews.<sup>47</sup> In practice this means that on Shabbat or festivals, more than one synagogue service can be taking place concurrently.<sup>48</sup> As members of the community are practicing rabbis, Orthodox, *Masorti* and Progressive Jews who all come together socially as one cohesive community.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the collection of the attitudes towards other religions of a sample from this community provides a cross section of data across different denominations of Jews from only one source. This is important as it will reduce the major external variable and ensure the data is more cohesive and is relevant to this study because the sample will then provide a detailed picture of individuals who all belong to the same subculture i.e. members of the OJC which enables a detailed investigation

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<sup>47</sup> The structure of the OJC will be explained more fully on p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> See page 38 in which the history of the Jews in Oxford and page 42, a description of the current operation of the OJC, is explained more fully.

<sup>49</sup> *Masorti*, Hebrew meaning traditional, is a traditional branch of Judaism for modern Jews. In Israel, the U.S. and Canada this same branch is known as Conservative Judaism.

of a social process within a specified context, i.e. Jewish attitudes towards other religions, to be examined.<sup>50</sup> It *could* be seen therefore, that the OJC in this respect represents a microcosm of Anglo-Jewry because of the membership of three different Jewish denominations (albeit all existing together as one community, instead of three separate distinct groups each with its own ethos and customs existing in separate communities with their own rabbis and leadership as exists in other UK communities). The selection of the OJC also reduces any possible differences of Jewish community environments so that the current background experiences of the OJC members included in the sample are all consistent.

Where the OJC is most probably *not* representative of the UK Jewish community is the educational background level of its members. It is intriguing to note that of a community of about 500 adults, 26 have the title of 'Professor' (5%), 75 have a PhD (25%) and there are 12 who have been ennobled to become Sirs and Ladies, i.e. 22% of the adult members of the OJC have achieved recognition at the highest level. These numbers exclude lawyers, teachers and other professionals with a first degree. Whilst the Jewish Policy Research found that 73% of their sample of Jews in the UK included in their research had a first degree, it must be concluded that the educational attainment of membership of OJC is not representative of other UK synagogue members.<sup>51</sup> However, what is fully representative is the expressed preference of religious practice. Even so, this becomes non-representative because the participation within these different denominations occurs uniquely under one roof. This is important within this study because the only difference between the interviewees is the religious group which they attend, although this is not definitive since some members move between the groupings. What they *do* all have is a commonality of background of synagogue ethos and philosophy. This has

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<sup>50</sup> Elam, G., Lewis, J., & Richie, J. 2003 Designing and Selecting a Sample. In (Eds) Lewis, J. & Richie, J. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science students and Researchers*. London, Sage. Chapter 4, p.77.

<sup>51</sup> Boyd, J., Staetsky, S.D., 2014 *The Exceptional Case? Perceptions and Experiences of antisemitism among Jews in the United Kingdom*. London, Institute for Jewish Policy Research [Online] Available at: [http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/Perceptions\\_and\\_experiences\\_of\\_antisemitism\\_among\\_Jews\\_in\\_UK.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/Perceptions_and_experiences_of_antisemitism_among_Jews_in_UK.pdf) [Accessed 4 August 2015].

been highlighted by some of the interviewees who commented on the differences between the London communities of the same grouping. Thus in the case of this study a variable background of synagogue membership by Jewish group has been eliminated. Also, there are only four adult Jewish members belonging to the OJC today who were brought up in Oxford by parents belonging to the synagogue. This is very different from the large communities in Manchester or London, where irrespective of Jewish religious affiliation, many family memberships persist from generation to generation. Oxford is not only a transient community with new members arriving at the start of each academic year, or departing at the termination of a sabbatical. Many do, but there are also members who come for an academic appointment and ultimately spend their career in this city. The impact of the university can be seen to impact upon the community even though the university is not the community. However, since there are no data about attitudes towards interfaith or other religions from any other community in the UK, whether Oxford is typical or atypical of other communities in this respect cannot be assessed. The important factor is that the commonality of all the Jewish groupings involved in this study belonging to the same Jewish community and having the same Jewish environment and influences will reduce what could otherwise have been perceived as an important variable. Additionally, Oxford was one of the first cities in the UK to establish a Branch of the Council of Christians and Jews shortly following the foundation of the CCJ. This may well be able to establish whether the Jews belonging to the OJC are or are not well represented in interfaith involvement.

#### **4.viii The Analyses**

The most common methods for analysing oral testimonies are thematic or semantic analysis. Thematic analysis is the most common form of analysis in qualitative research.<sup>52</sup> It emphasizes, pinpoints and examines themes

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<sup>52</sup> Guest, G., 2012 *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage. p.11.

within data.<sup>53</sup> Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question.<sup>54</sup> The themes become the categories for analysis and are constantly reviewed and defined during the analysis. This method emphasizes the description of the data, enabling the analysis to identify implicit and explicit ideas.<sup>55</sup> Semantic analysis is the study of the structure and meaning of speech whereby themes are identified within the explicit meaning of what has been said or written. The data are analysed according to how and why the specific language has been used by a respondent. The surface meaning is represented and the researcher does not attempt to go beyond this and the data are organised to show patterns of the semantic content within the data. Braun and Clarke make a distinction between semantic and latent thematic analysis.<sup>56</sup> A decision had to be made between these two options and because this study aims to better understand the perceptions of the interviewees in greater depth so that respondents' implicit and explicit ideas can be identified, a thematic approach is adopted in this study. The respondents will be introduced in sequence Chapter Two, and as interviewees are introduced life stories and attitudes will be built up and compared against each other as each new interviewee is introduced. This will enable a full comparison of all the interviewees' testimonies to be made.

The testimonies in Chapter Four, Jews in Pews will give information about the respondents' attitudes towards entering the sacred space of worship of the Other. Everyone has a subjective, emotional and spiritual limit which focuses on how their beliefs and attitudes influence their behaviour of entering into this space of the Other, and how far they are prepared to participate into the Other's place of worship. The discussions of these

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<sup>53</sup> Braun, V., Clarke, V., 2006 'Using thematic analysis in psychology.' In *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 3 (2): 83 [Online] Available at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a795127197~frm=titlelink> [Accessed 20 April 2014].

<sup>54</sup> Daly, Kellehear & Gliksmann, 1997 *The public health researcher; A methodological approach*. Melbourne, Australia, Oxford University Press. pp. 611-618.

<sup>55</sup> Guest, G., MacQueen, N., 2012 'Introduction to Thematic Analysis' In *Applied Thematic Analysis*.

<sup>56</sup> Braun, V., & Clarke, V., 2006 'Using thematic analysis in psychology.' In *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

issues become progressively deeper and may become more challenging to the interviewees. This has enabled a new conceptual and pragmatic phenomenon to arise out the analysis of these findings from the interviews which will be known as a personal interfaith boundary. What emerged was that each individual had a boundary in how far they were prepared to be involved in entering the space of the Other. This concept has enabled differences in attitudes, convictions, beliefs and approaches to interfaith encounter to be exposed despite the Jewish tradition from which the respondent was currently practicing. That a boundary will arise is not in doubt, but where the boundary is placed by the individuals will differ for each participant and in some instances will be beyond which a point others will not cross. The establishment and use of a personal interfaith boundary is a new concept within interfaith involvement, and will be particularly relevant when the interviewees are discussing their attitudes towards the space of the Other. Thus the 'personal interfaith boundary' represents the attitudinal and behavioural limit which the individual perceived they could not or would not pass beyond for reasons of their own experience and spiritual beliefs.

## 5. Literature Review

The search for relevant literature for this thesis was challenging. There is academic literature which examines the changes in British culture including religion, dialogue, Jewish-Christian relations, the implementation of how to improve relations and increase knowledge between religions, but little which examines the interaction and attitudes of Jews to non-Jews, particularly within a contemporary time frame.<sup>57</sup> No religious community can live in isolation from its experiences of the past, nor can it fail to respond to or be influenced by its past, so that the Holocaust throughout

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<sup>57</sup> Lynch, G., (Ed) 2007 *Between Sacred and Profane: Researching Religion and Popular Culture*. London, I.B. Taurus.

Weller., Ref 8.

Kamenetz, R., 1994 *The Jew in the Lotus* New York, Harper Collins.

Shermis, M., Zannoni, A.E., (Eds) 1991 *Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* New York, Paulist Press.

Europe and antisemitic events of today, inevitably influences Jewish communities' attitudes towards other religions. The author has investigated contemporary attitudes of Anglicans to Jews, and it was this previous study which provided the catalyst for this current investigation, as a gap was clearly identified and it seemed right that there should be two parallel and complementary pieces of work.<sup>58</sup> There is also work which has examined exactly how Jews should be prepared to dialogue with non-Jews, and what topics should and should not be included. Because dialogue is such an intrinsic part of interfaith relations, such literature will be included within this review. Today there are Jews who have written about Jesus the Jew.<sup>59</sup> But there is little literature reporting directly on research which has examined Jewish involvement and attitudes towards interfaith and people of other religions – especially with regard to Jewish communities within Britain. However, in 2007 The Board of Deputies of British Jews undertook a project which examined Jewish involvement in interfaith activities in the UK. This research was then related to two further research projects undertaken with funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government The first project surveyed the involvement of UK synagogues and their leaders in attitudes towards interfaith activities. 'Most' synagogues in the UK, including those which fell under the umbrella of Orthodox, Masorti, Reform and Liberal communities were contacted.<sup>60</sup> It is probable that the Oxford community was included within this definition and completed the questionnaire survey but there is no remaining evidence either for or against this.<sup>61</sup> In this first part of the study, the Board's researchers contacted rabbis and leaders of communities and found that 73% of the respondents answered 'yes' to the question 'Are you personally involved in any interfaith work?' And 71% of respondents

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<sup>58</sup> Fidler, W., 2010 A Study to Determine the Attitudes of Anglicans towards Jews in England in 2008. Unpublished Master's Dissertation. The Woolf Institute, Cambridge.

<sup>59</sup> Vermes, G., 1973 *Jesus the Jew*. London, William Collins Sons & Co Ltd.

Vermes, G., 2000 *The Changing Faces of Jesus* London, The Penguin Group.

Levine, A.-J., 2006 *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* New York, Harper Collins.

<sup>60</sup> There is no record of the communities who were approached, nor of those which responded, in the report.

<sup>61</sup> See ref 43.

answered 'yes' to the question 'Are you a member of, or otherwise associated with, any national interfaith groups, such as the Council of Christians and Jews or the Three Faiths Forum?'. These results were with reference only to leaders of communities, and therefore cannot be directly compared with either the respondents themselves or the findings in this thesis. The results were then added to the second and third parts of the Board of Deputies' study. The second part was an audit of the interfaith activities involving Jews, and again this is not an objective of this thesis although some specific interfaith activities will inevitably be introduced by the respondents. It is the third part of this project which may or may not be shown to have links this thesis. The Board of Deputies' study set up three separate and distinct focus groups of youths and students, interfaith activists all of whom were over the age of 22 and community leaders. This is the project which may show some commonality between this thesis and Board of Deputies project which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

However, the methodology using focus groups of four people is very different from the methodology of this thesis in which respondents are interviewed solely on a one to one basis. This difference in methodology is likely to produce differences in findings because on a one to one basis the information given by the respondents is deeper and more personal. This enables the conversation to be directed by a single respondent so that topics do not move and change too quickly. When topics do change information is frequently lost because an individual focus group member does not manage to have his or her say before the discussion moves to a different topic. Also the respondents in this thesis are more likely to be revealing because there is no-one else present other than the interviewer in whom the respondents have trust. In one-to-one interviews there is no-one else listening to what has been said so, unlike focus groups, there is no danger of any reported information being passed onwards. Therefore the interviews in the thesis study are more respondent controlled and the interviewees have the confidence and reassurance to present deeper and more honest responses. Some of the findings from the thesis project may

be similar to those of the Board of Deputies' survey. It will be revealing if this is so and will reinforce the information found in the thesis. These results will be discussed in the analysis of the findings.

Anecdotally, it would be anticipated that the Orthodox participants in this study would be less involved in interfaith than Jews belonging to other groupings. In practice this statement is too simplistic as in reality it is more complicated. The survey separates and describes the responses of the Orthodox which it compares with the other denominations. It found that the Orthodox Jews were less likely than other Jews to be involved in national interfaith (63%) compared to Progressive (84%). The Board of Deputies' survey suggested that the Orthodox introduced discussions in the focus group not made by the non-Orthodox. It will be instructive to compare the Board of Deputies' findings with those in this study.<sup>62</sup>

Although there is little literature which directly addresses contemporary Jewish attitudes towards other religions, there are important writers of Jewish-Christian relations whose work is relevant. Some of these will be discussed, and others will be included in other sections, e.g. Jewish-Christian Relations. The first is David Novak. His book *Talking with Christians*, (2006) aims to show that respectful engagement can be conducted on specific theological points between Christianity and Judaism which historically have caused difficulties. He wrote:

Some modern Jews are offended by the traditional Christian belief in supersessionism, but it need not denigrate Judaism. Christian supersessionism can still affirm that God has not annulled his everlasting covenant with the Jewish people, neither past nor present nor future.<sup>63</sup>

His essays were influenced by the Church Fathers and he addressed the 'difficult issues' were given to largely Christian audiences. In his book *The Jewish Social Contract* he asks how a traditional Jew can participate

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<sup>62</sup> As has been discussed, the Board of Deputies also asked synagogues leaders and rabbis about their interfaith involvement, but these results were not statistically significant.

<sup>63</sup> Novak, D., 2006 *Talking with Christians: Musings of a Jewish Theologian (Radical Traditions)* (Eds) Hauerwas, S. and Ochs, P. SCM Press.

politically and socially and in good faith in a modern democratic society. Novak shows how social contracts emerged, rooted in biblical notions of covenant, and how they developed in the rabbinic, medieval, and 'modern' periods. He suggests Jews today can negotiate the modern social contract by calling upon non-Jewish allies for help. *The Jewish Social Contract* contributes to the debate about the role of religion in liberal democracies.<sup>64</sup>

Peter Ochs, who was one of the editors of Novak's book *Talking with Christians*, above, was one of the original members of a small group of Jewish philosophers who originally called themselves 'Textual Reasoners'. This evolved into a larger movement which Ochs called 'Scriptural Reasoning'. This is relevant to this study because it is a development of dialogue through which a deeper understanding between those of different religions can be established.<sup>65</sup> Participants in scriptural reasoning meet to read passages from their respective scriptures and discuss the variety of ways in which those texts shape their understanding of and engagement with a range of spiritual and contemporary issues. The goal is not agreement but rather growth in understanding one another's traditions. Ochs then co-founded the Society for Scriptural Reasoning in 1995 together with David Ford, a Christian theologian and philosopher, which led to their initiation of the *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*. The goal of this organization is to build a consensus and promote reconciliation among Christians, Jews, and Muslims through shared discussion of the scriptures. This makes Scriptural Reasoning in itself important to mention in this thesis.<sup>66</sup> David Ford has written profusely.<sup>67</sup> His writings include a

<http://jtr.lib.virginia.edu/> [A

<sup>64</sup> Novak, D., 2005 *The Jewish Social Contract: An Essay in Political Theology*, Princeton, USA, Princeton University Press.

<sup>65</sup> Scriptural Reasoning [Online] Available at: <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/what-scriptural-reasoning> [Accessed 28 January 2016].

<sup>66</sup> *Journal of Textual Reasoning*. University of Virginia. [Online] Available at: <http://jtr.lib.virginia.edu/> [Accessed 22 October 2015].

<sup>67</sup> David Ford was the Founding Director, Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) in the Centre for Advanced Religious and Theological Studies (2002- ). The Co-founder, Society for Scriptural Reasoning (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim academic philosophers, text scholars and theologians from Africa, America, Asia and Europe) (1996- ) and the Co-Chair, Education Commission of C-1 World Dialogue (2009- ).

two-way ‘conversation’ with Ochs, when they discuss and reaffirm their separate religious identities, albeit not through mutual exclusion.<sup>68</sup> The purpose of this conversation was expressed by Ochs who thought there was an urgent cultural need today for profound Jewish-Christian dialogue of a kind that has not happened, with the level of energy and sophistication that is truly needed. Professor Jonathan Magonet, Vice-President of the World Union of Progressive Judaism, and a biblical scholar, has long been promoting interfaith dialogue among Jews, Christians and Muslims. When he became principal of Leo Baeck College, he was the first principal to invite Christian and Muslim scholars to the faculty.<sup>69</sup> The resultant rabbinic discussions were then opened externally enabling the differences and similarities between how ‘truths’ are perceived by the other religions to be recognized. He stated:

In the face of overwhelming destruction, dialogue seems powerless, but without interfaith dialogue we can never achieve peace.<sup>70</sup>

Magonet is stating the importance of dialogue, and that without dialogue, which is the means through which interaction takes place between those of different religions, he is concerned that peace will never be possible. These eminent academics have illustrated innovative methods through which interfaith involvement can be enhanced and for which this model and structure can be adopted by people of differing religions engaged in discussion and dialogue. It can be seen that it is impossible to separate dialogue from interfaith interaction, so discussions of dialogue will now be included.

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<sup>68</sup> Ochs, P., Ford, D.F., 2006 *A Third Epoch: The Future of Discourse in Jewish-Christian Relations*. In (Eds) Aitken, J.K., and Kessler, E., *Challenges in Jewish-Christian Relations*. New York: Paulist Press. Ch. 11 p. 153.

<sup>69</sup> Leo Baeck College is a privately funded rabbinical seminary and centre for the training of teachers in Jewish education. Rabbinic ordinations are recognised worldwide by the Liberal, Reform and Masorti movements. The College has been at the forefront of Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue and provides access to Jewish learning for all through interfaith work.

<sup>70</sup> Roberts, J., 2011 *Interfaith Dialogue in Europe – Focusing on the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relationship*. Lecture given in Japan at Doshisha University on 5 May 2001. [Online] Available at: <http://www.cismor.jp/en/2011/05/28/interfaith-dialogue-in-europe-focusing-on-the-jewish-christian-muslim-relationships/> [Accessed 26 October 2015].

## 6. Dialogue

Dialogue is the tool commonly used for both formal and informal interfaith exchange and which in itself has become a formalized discipline. This section aims to define and explore the notion of dialogue, its change in character or paradigm shift in the years since 1942 and then consider the indicators of its success and if it failed, why that was the case. Therefore what is dialogue? There were three major philosophic thinkers who began to define the meaning and need for dialogue. Kessler says that much of the theory of dialogue was laid out by Martin Buber who wrote as early as 1929:

A time of genuine religious conversation is beginning – not those so-called fictitious conversations in which none regarded and addressed his partner in reality, but genuine dialogue, speech from certainty to certainty, but also from one open-hearted person to another open-hearted person.<sup>71</sup>

Buber (1878 – 1965) was a pioneer of dialogic thinking who had a great impact upon the Christian world. He argued:

The fundamental fact of human existence, too readily overlooked by scientific rationalism and abstract philosophical thought, takes place in a ‘sphere of between’.<sup>72</sup>

He also helped the churches and Christian theology recognise that God’s covenant with the Jewish people had not been revoked, and he helped to make Christians aware of the importance of the literal translation of the bible.<sup>73</sup> He wrote about the spirituality of God and the difference between the I of man and the Thou of God.<sup>74</sup> Without compromising his Jewish identity he spoke of having an open, brotherly relationship with Jesus.<sup>75</sup> In

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<sup>71</sup> Kessler, E. & Wenborn, N., eds 2008. *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. p. 124. and Buber, M. 1965 (1947). *Between Man and Man*. Macmillan, New York.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> In Jeremiah 31:31-34 it is stated that from Mount Sinai the covenant between God and the Jews was established. However, this became a difficult issue for Christianity and in several sections of the New Testament, e.g., Hebrews 9:15 the new Church said that by rejecting Jesus the Jews had forfeited their covenant, which was then transferred to Christianity. This has been one of the difficult pointers between Christianity towards Judaism as a cause of antisemitism. Buber was one of the first Jewish philosophers to address this issue.

<sup>74</sup> Buber, M. 1958. *I and Thou*. New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.

<sup>75</sup> Buber, M. 1951. *Two types of Faith*. Translated by N. P. Goldhawk from the German *Bibliography* London. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

1980, fifteen years after his death, he continues to have a significant impact on Jewish-Christian relations as Pope John Paul II accepted Buber's assertion of the continuity of God's covenant with the Jews. Kessler accepts that even before Buber, Jewish-Christian relations were carried out by The London Society of Jews and Christians in the UK, whilst in Germany Franz Rosenzweig (1886 – 1929), a friend of Buber, also laid important foundations for Jewish-Christian dialogue.<sup>76</sup> Rosenzweig assigns both Judaism and Christianity as having distinct but equally important roles in the spiritual structure of the world, and found in both biblical religions approaches towards an understanding of truth and reality. He thought the continuous task of synagogue and church was to prove the one truth of God, truth which is given to them only as a divided earthly truth. This has to be undertaken in prayer and commandment, when the desire for the eternal kingdom of redemption remains within the unredeemed kingdoms of the world. Both Christianity and Judaism should pray and live according to the truth as each have received and understands it.<sup>77</sup>

Buber and Rosenzweig had similar open views towards Christianity, but Buber was concerned with responding to Christianity's claim that their 'new' covenant with God had superseded the covenant with the Jews, whereas Rosenzweig that Christianity and Judaism were equal because both shared God's truth. Both were offering Judaism an innovative approach to Christianity.

Another key Jewish thinker in this field was Emmanuel Levinas (1906 – 1995), who extended dialogue to include ethical commitment to and responsibility for the Other person of religion, which he then linked to the ethical relationship with God. Levinas's notion of ethics implied that for Christians and Jews to begin to have a new maturity and patience, each must be invited to enter into the world of the Other, and in turn each must

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<sup>76</sup> Novak, D., 1992 *Franz Rosenzweig's Theology of the Jewish-Christian Relationships* Oxford, OUP.

<sup>77</sup> Rudiger, L., Rosenzweig, F., [Online] Available at: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Rosenzweig.html> [Accessed 15 July 2015].

have the desire to truly see the face of the Other.<sup>78</sup> He believed that there can be no 'knowledge' of God without a relationship between all humankind. Levinas's notion of ethics implies that for Christians and Jews to begin to have (this) new 'maturity and patience' which he caught sight of in the *Amitie judeo-chretienne* dialogues, each must be invited to enter into the world of the Other, and in turn each must have the desire to truly see the face of the Other. Levinas's writing on this subject is relevant to this study because the Chapter Four, that of the attitudes of the respondents towards entering the space of the Other, address this very issue.<sup>79</sup> Rosenzweig's writing also had an impact upon Levinas's thinking. However, despite not agreeing with everything Rosenzweig had written, Levinas opposed Rosenzweig's ridiculing the concept of 'transcendence', which was a central term for Levinas. The philosophical possibility of finding the truth in both Judaism and Christianity influenced him.

Rosenzweig spoke of the parallel and universality for all humans, whereas Levinas spoke just as strongly of distance.<sup>80</sup>

In modern society with its multiplicity of religions there has been a growing interest in the relationship and interaction between religions. This interest has covered a spectrum of thought from the conservative thinkers who believe their own religion contains the only truth to the more liberal who affirm the presence of God in religions other than their own.<sup>81</sup> It is from the latter that 'dialogue' has evolved and developed. One of the criticisms and concerns about dialogue from both a Christian and Jewish perspective is the possibility of persons of one religion being attracted to that of the other. However, there is no evidence which shows that dialogue and interaction across religions encourages conversion: if the dialogue is

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<sup>78</sup> Stephen Innes, 2013 (Summer) Towards a new Paradigm for Jewish-Christian dialogue: Facilitating a Movement 'beyond dialogue'. *Common Ground*. pp 8-9.

<sup>79</sup> Levinas, E. 1998. *Entre Nous: On Thinking of the Other*. Trans. Smith, M.B. and Harshav, B. New York, Columbia University Press.

<sup>80</sup> *SIDIC Periodical XXXIII 20000/1* Transformation through dialogue pp 16 – 19 [Online] Available at: [www.notredamedesion.org/en/dialogue\\_docs.php?a=3b&id=69](http://www.notredamedesion.org/en/dialogue_docs.php?a=3b&id=69) [Accessed 16 July 2015] and

Rosenzweig, F. 1985. *The Star of Redemption*. Trans William Halo. Indiana, Notre Dame University Press.

<sup>81</sup> Cohn-Sherbok, D., 2001 *Interfaith Theology: A Reader*. Oxford, One World.

carried out with both integrity and openness, the Jew will be even more Jewish and the Christian even more Christian, not from changing the difference in the 'Other', but because of it.<sup>82</sup> Levinas also described the ten points of Seelisberg, which was approved by CCJ in July 1947, as formulating resolutions on the way Christians should speak to and about Jews. Five of the ten points focus on developing Christian relationships towards Jews and Judaism including a biblical and liturgical perspective. However, this text does not tell Jews what they should think about Christians. Levinas believed that the centuries in which Jews lived next to Christians qualified them to know how to interact.<sup>83</sup>

The word 'dialogue' has often been both misconstrued and ill-defined. In reality dialogue consists of a direct meeting of people of different religions and involves reciprocal religious conversations. Dialogue speaks to the Other with a full respect of what the Other has to say, and those engaged in dialogue have a commitment to listen to the Other.<sup>84</sup>

The key question is 'What is the purpose of dialogue?' From early writings of Buber, Levinas and Parkes, relating to Jews and non-Jews, as well as early issues of CCJ's magazine *Common Ground*, the two principal purposes of dialogue would appear to emerge as: the importance of increasing understanding and tolerance between those of different religions and Jewish – Christian dialogue to produce positive outcomes and reduce antisemitism. These are issues which have been addressed by the Jews included in the sample in this study and are discussed in Section Two, each respondent having their own complex attitudes on this issue.

The history of how Jews and Christians have lived together has been, at times, painful, some argue culminating in the *Shoah* and is well documented.<sup>85</sup> Today the goal of dialogue is for people of different faiths

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<sup>82</sup> Swidler, L., 2008 'The Dialogue of Head, Hands and Heart. In Krantz Mays, R. ed., *Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots*. Temple University. Philadelphia, Ecumenical Press. p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> Levinas, E., 1999 *Alterity and Transcendence*, New York, Columbia U.P. p.79.

<sup>84</sup> Kessler, E., Pawlokowski, J., Banki, J. eds., 2002 *Jews and Christians in Conversation*. Cambridge, Orchard Academic. p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> Yehuda Bauer, The Impact of the Holocaust, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 548 (November 1996): *The Holocaust: Remembering for the Future*, pp. 14-22.

to be able to reach an awareness about and generate a respect for the other's deepest spiritual beliefs.<sup>86</sup> What is significant is the paradigm shift which dialogue has passed through since 1942. The aim of dialogue has been for each to have a knowledge of the religious practices of the Other, and with the hope that a greater understanding of each other would minimise antisemitism and help to develop a relationship of trust in an atmosphere free from the fear of conversion, antagonism, harassment or persecution. As time progressed and Jews and Christians became more assured of each other dialogue broadened, so that Christians began to understand their traditions that led to their contempt of Jews and Jews began to accept that Christianity grew from Judaism, from Jesus, a first century Jew. A lack of understanding and respect for other cultures and beliefs can lead to misconceptions, which can breed fear, hatred and antisemitism. Today, dialogue continues to underpin interfaith relations. And so the question must be asked, does dialogue reduce antisemitism? This can be perceived as the most crucial question to ask and in order to be answered there must be measurable outcomes. Research has consistently shown that it is easier to increase knowledge rather than change behaviour.<sup>87</sup> An important measurable outcome is to assess the number of dialogic and interreligious initiatives happening today compared with a decade ago. Today the list is long and includes a strong political input since influencing behaviour and changing negative attitudes is central to public policy. National Government had set up funding for local communities to establish multi-Faith Forums. These initiatives have arisen because of both global and national factors, including the rise of militant Islam, the latter which resulted in 9/11 and 7/7 amongst others. In each of these areas the dialogic content has responded and what has arisen is a greater emphasis

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<sup>86</sup> In 2012 CCJ established a Theology Group consisting of nine Jews and nine Christians representative across the Jewish and Christian denominations. A Jew and Christian were paired, each given a subject which they addressed from their own personal perspective. The resultant book is awaiting a final title and publication.

<sup>87</sup> NHS. National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. Issue date Oct 2007. Behaviour Change at Population, Community and Individual levels. [Online] Available at: <http://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/54e6de9e0c383719802572b9005141ed/06c915878f925b038025737e005a9137?OpenDocument> [Accessed 28 September 2015] And Changing Attitudes, Knowledge and Behaviour. Issue date May 2009. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

on Jewish-Muslim relations. The difficulty here, is the political problem in the Middle East which can easily prevent dialogue reaching a deeper level.

Regarding this, Mona Siddiqui has asked:

What function does dialogue hold when people are being blown up, their families and homes destroyed? Unless dialogue is backed by the political will to effect change, it remains a noble exercise with little more than a limited reconciliatory impact.<sup>88</sup>

This view illustrates the economic, political and social changes that over time have contributed towards the alteration of the dialogic landscape.

Militant Islam may be said to have brought an increased awareness of extremism, and Israel/Palestine issues have added to tensions. But these examples serve to underline the importance of dialogue and its goals.

Nationally in the UK governmental initiatives have found popular support and in themselves are both expressions and dialogic opportunities. These opportunities include Holocaust Memorial Day Commemorations which occur across the UK which frequently involve CCJ Branches.

Another example of the paradigm shift through which dialogue has progressed in order for it to continue to maintain its success is through social action. One important model is the Mitzvah Day project which is an extremely successful innovation. One of Mitzvah Day's unique achievements has been its pivotal role in creating valuable partnerships between religions. In this project adults, students and children of many differing religions and backgrounds interact and communicate together whilst undertaking activities to improve local environments. This model of grass roots social action-based interfaith fosters collaborations centred on the mutual values of social action and giving. These result in unthreatening, non-contentious initiatives that have not only made a very real difference to helping the needs of local charities but importantly, forge

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<sup>88</sup> Siddiqui, M., 2010 'What is Religious Dialogue?' *The Guardian* 20 April 2010 [Online] Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2010/apr/20/religious-dialogue-islam-christianity> [Accessed 13 February 2015].

long-term relationships and understanding through dialogue, which leads to more cohesive local communities.<sup>89</sup> When CCJ was first founded in 1942, during the Holocaust, its main aim was to reduce and eliminate antisemitism through dialogue. Over the last 70 years antisemitism has mutated into many different forms over each decade and continues to do so today in the 21st century. Today it is frequently events in the Middle East and the politics of Israel/Palestine which initiate many of the antisemitic occurrences in the UK and in Europe and which appear to define antisemitism. Therefore in order to remain effective, the approach of interfaith dialogue also has to change to address these new issues. The approaches differ through engagement in a variety of events, situations and approaches, but the commonality within each is underpinned by dialogue. Whilst CCJ continues to be primarily concerned with relationships between Christians and Jews, the organization has begun to reach out and include Islam within some of the projects.<sup>90</sup> These changes are examples of the paradigm shift through which dialogue has progressed over the decades so that it is as relevant and necessary today in 2015 as it was in 1942. From a Christian perspective Colwell believes that the reason for continuing with dialogue is clear:

Christianity, without a deep engagement with the faith alongside which it grew, is likely to lose its heart.<sup>91</sup>

However, although he believes in the necessity of dialogue, he suggests it requires a new model, because just as changes have taken place within society, so Christianity has changed from being a Euro-centric to a globalized religion where many churches in Africa and Asia see Jewish-Christian relations as a Western preoccupation, and they instinctively give

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<sup>89</sup> Mitzvah Day [Online] Available at: <http://www.mitzvahday.org.uk/interfaith.html> [Accessed 19 May 2015] Mitzvah Day was started in the UK by Laura Marks in 2008. Since then, it has grown into a global movement of change, encouraging people all over the world to take part in hands on social action together. Now in 20 countries, Mitzvah Day brings 37,000 people together at the same time, to make a difference.

<sup>90</sup> CCJ has recently relocated, (2015) to offices in 'Collaboration House' in London, where several of the interfaith organisations are now located, sharing space together.

<sup>91</sup> Colwell, P., 2013 (Summer) Jews and Christians: Is there any point in continuing the dialogue? *Common Ground*, p. 3.

support to the Palestinians.<sup>92</sup> In view of these changes within Christianity, Colwell offers suggestions for a broadening and deepening in dialogic approach.<sup>93</sup> Speaking from the Jewish perspective Young-Somers, who teaches comparative religion at Leo Baeck College and is Reform Judaism's new community educator, says she finds it a challenge to engage younger Jews in traditional Jewish-Christian dialogue despite the continuing need. She thinks that dialogue now should be made practical, personal and embedded in change and social action. Because the issues shift and change, so must dialogue be responsive to a different world environment. The opinions of the professional Christians and Jews working within the relationships between their faiths all believe that dialogue remains the primary and important method through which improved relations can be developed further, but just as world situations develop and change, dialogue, likewise, must reflect these changes and be itself prepared to change. As will be seen, Soloveitchik and Herschel write about dialogue in depth and it is these thinkers who continue to influence contemporary grouping of Jews today. Innes states:

The state of dialogue has reached a maturity that could scarcely have been envisioned a generation ago. Yet it is equally important to discuss the remaining challenges that can sometimes make dialogue difficult.<sup>94</sup>

Innes includes church policy decisions, antagonistic media articles, and polarized views about Israel as difficult dialogic subjects. It will be revealing to discover if any of these are introduced and discussed by the interviewees.

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<sup>92</sup> Colwell says that the language of the Kairos Palestine document was an attempt to gain the sympathy of a globalised Christian audience.

<sup>93</sup> *Common Ground*, Ref 38 p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Innes, S., 2015/2016 (Winter) On (Not) Welcoming the Other: Why Dialogue in Contemporary Culture can be Difficult. *Common Ground*.

## 7. Jews of Oxford and the UK

In 2001, religion was included as a question in the national census for the first time, although it was not compulsory for these questions to be completed. It is significant that only 7.2% of all respondents failed to respond. These questions were then repeated ten years later in the 2011 census which produced by far the largest dataset ever compiled on Jews in Britain, and provides very useful information about the Jews of Oxford and Oxfordshire. A decision had to be made as to within which section to include these results as it was possible they could be included within the Jewish denominations. However it is pertinent for these statistics to be reported with reference to Oxford since it is Oxford that is the source of the sample. The findings about the Jewish population in the City of Oxford and Oxfordshire are as follows:<sup>95</sup>

**Table 1: The Jews of Oxfordshire: 2011 Census**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Number of Jews</b>	<b>Total population</b>	<b>% Jewish population</b>
Jews living in County of Oxfordshire	1893	653,800	0.3
Jews living in City of Oxford	1072	158000	0.7

This shows that more than half (57%), of all the Jews living in the County of Oxfordshire live in the City. It also shows that only about half of the Jews who live in the City are members of the OJC. Initiatives have been suggested that some of the missing 50% should be located to find out why

<sup>95</sup> OUH. NHS [Online] Available at: <http://www.ouh.nhs/about/equality/documents/2011-census-ethnicity.pdf> [Accessed September 29 2015].

they do not want to be associated with the OJC, but none to date have been implemented, so there is no information available regarding this cohort.<sup>96</sup> It is also significant that the Jewish population of the UK is 0.5% whilst that of the City of Oxford is higher at 0.7% and that of Oxfordshire is lower at 0.3%.

It is necessary to compare levels of Judaism with other religious groups between Oxford and England to reveal how typical the city is:<sup>97</sup>

**Table 2: Comparison of Religious Practices between Oxford and England**

Religion	% Oxford	% England
Christian	48%	59%
Muslim	6.8%	5%
Hindu	1.3%	1.5%
Buddism	0.9%	0.5%
Jewish	0.7%	0.5%
Sikh	0.3%	0.8%

From this it can be seen that the Jewish community is certainly a minority both in Oxford and England, although in Oxford the Jews are slightly over represented (0.7% as opposed to 0.5%). There are also overall more Muslims in Oxford than in England (5% across the UK and 6.8% in Oxfordshire); The converse is the case with the Sikhs; there are less than half the number of Sikhs in Oxford compared with England (0.8% in England compared with 0.3% in Oxford). Also there are almost twice as many Buddhists in Oxford compared with England, (0.9% to 0.5%). The

<sup>96</sup> This was a project initiated in 2013 by the previous President of the OJC, but it never progressed beyond the 'good ideas' wish list.

<sup>97</sup> Office of National Statistics. [Online] Available at: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_290510.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290510.pdf) [Accessed 30 September 2015].

statistic appertaining to Christianity is also significant as there are fewer Christians in Oxford than across the England (59% of the population in England with only 48% in Oxford). It is interesting to note that with the exception of Sikhism and Christianity where the percentage in the population in Oxford is lower than in England the other religions are over represented in Oxford compared with England. It is likely that the University of Oxford explains the number of Jews, Muslims and Buddists in the town.

The data from the Censuses have provided information about the Jewish population including its social data, but because of the structure of the questions relating to religion the data cannot be completely reliable. (This is because the questions about religion were voluntarily, and it is reasonable to assume that a number of Jewish people chose not to answer it. There were instances of conflicting responses being completed within the same census form e.g. some people who chose not to respond 'Jewish' to the religion question but instead wrote 'Jewish' in the ethnic group question or the new nationality question thus skewing the information.) The Census responses provide an enumerated lower limit. In 2013 the Jewish Policy Research completed a National Jewish Community Survey (NJCS) to seek additional information to generate figures that are complementary to census data, and which can be used alongside the Census results to assess an upper limit.<sup>98</sup>

The Jewish population of the UK according to the 2011 census is 0.5% or 267,373 of whom more than half live in London. Between 2001 and 2011 the size of the UK's Jewish population appeared to be static. However, this apparent stability disguised changes which occurred below the surface, albeit not denominational affiliation, rather in terms of geographical change. There are ten UK Local Authorities which experienced the largest Jewish population growth between 2001 and 2011, where the Jewish

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<sup>98</sup> Boyd, J., Graham, D., Staetsky, L.D., 2014 Jews in the UK: Preliminary findings from the National Jewish Community Survey. London, JPR. [Online] Available [www.jpr.org.uk/documkents/JPR\\_Jews\\_in\\_the\\_uk\\_in\\_2013\\_NJCS\\_preliminary\\_findings\\_Feb.%202014.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documkents/JPR_Jews_in_the_uk_in_2013_NJCS_preliminary_findings_Feb.%202014.pdf) [Accessed 26 December 2015].

population increased from 36% in 2001 to 44% in 2011. By contrast, there were also ten UK Local Authorities which experienced the largest decrease in their Jewish populations between 2001 and 2011 and saw their share of the total Jewish population decline from 23% in 2001 to 18% in 2011. This shift reveals geographical change at the local level which is important for the future planning needs of the community.<sup>99</sup> The Jewish population has remained static. There was also a change in the Jewish age/sex profile, as between 2001 and 2011, the average age of the Jewish population reduced from 43 to 41. This was because the proportion of the population aged under 18 in 2011 increased from 19.7% to 22.5%, while the proportion aged 65 and above decreased from 22.4% to 21.1%. The key driver of this change is the high growth in the Charedi (strictly-Orthodox) births, which constitutes 84% of this increase. Charedi Jews account for 16% of the total Jewish population, but at least 29% of Jewish children under five years old are born to Charedi parents. Thus, two demographically distinct Jewish populations are clearly identifiable in England and Wales, Charedi Jews with an average age of 27 years, and non-Charedi Jews with an average age of 44 years.

The Censuses do not provide data on the other different Jewish denominations, but the JPR community survey do.<sup>100</sup> They found that 26% of the population were traditionally Orthodox, and almost an equal number 24% described themselves as secular or cultural Jews; 18% were reform or Progressive and the remaining 10% as 'just Jewish'. Masorti Judaism was not identified separately. In the last century the Charedim were few in number in the UK, relatively unknown, although with a similar level of observance and Jewish practice, were *Chassidim*. It is interesting to look briefly at the change of the size of the Jewish community from the 1950s. Alderman suggests that the Jewish population of the UK may have

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<sup>99</sup> Graham, D., 2013. *Census Results Thinning and Thickening: Geographical Change in the UK's Jewish Population, 2001-2011* [Online] Available at: [http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/Thinning\\_and\\_Thickening.Final1.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/Thinning_and_Thickening.Final1.pdf) [Accessed 27 March 2015].

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

reached 450,000, i.e., 0.8% of the UK population, an estimate originating from the Jewish Year Book.<sup>101</sup> However by the 1980s this figure had been revised to around 354,000 by the first appointed Director of the Board of Deputies Research Unit. Today the 2011 Census defined the UK Jewish population as 259,927 and the JPR report as 269,568.

## **8. The Oxford Jewish Congregation**

### **8.i The Contemporary Community**

This section is crucial because it will form the basis of the rationale for the choice of Oxford to examine the attitudes of some of its present day Jews towards those of other religions. In order to justify this choice, it is necessary to reinforce how the distribution of the groupings of Jews in Oxford reflect the distribution of the Jewish grouping from the UK all within a single community and in this respect the OJC can be seen as representative of Anglo-Jewry. In understanding this community it is important to consider how this community evolved. The OJC in its present format emerged from the small size and diverse nature of the local community, as well as the need to serve its resident academic members, the ‘town’ members and its many transient visitors, the majority of whom are visiting Jewish academics from across the globe. In order to understand how this small community reached this *modus vivendi* of today, it is necessary to place the Jews living there today in context; although to respect the confines of this study, the history will mainly date from the nineteenth century.

Today there is only one Jewish Centre which is open to all persons of Jewish religion and to all forms of Jewish worship and observance, all under one roof.<sup>102</sup> In practice this means that Orthodox, Masorti and Progressive groups all hold services at the same time in different parts of

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<sup>101</sup> Alderman, G., 1992. *Modern British Jewry*. Oxford, Clarendon Press. p. 321 and Neustatter, H., 1955. Demographic and Other Statistical Aspects of Anglo-Jewry, in M. Freedman, (ed.) *A Minority in Britain*. London, pp 74 – 6.

<sup>102</sup> The Constitution (point 1.1) states ‘the premises are available for all forms of Jewish worship’.

the building, the system functioning because the OJC has enjoyed and cultivated a sense of unity and common Jewish identity, based on mutual respect for, and collaboration between, the different denominations of Judaism. The OJC operates as a single 'umbrella' organisation to which Jews of any denomination can belong, while permitting, and indeed encouraging and funding sub-groups of members to organise different services. How then did this small community reach this *modus vivendi*? The constitution of the OJC lays down that its objectives include the 'advancement of the Jewish religion' and the provision of religious and welfare services for the 'Jews of Oxford'. Membership of the congregation is open to 'all persons of the Jewish religion'.<sup>103</sup> This cannot be repealed. By implication the denomination of Judaism is not specified, and the only crucial rider states that any individual's access to religious rites, including bar/batmitzvah, marriage, burial etc., depends on the halachic religious status of the individual.<sup>104</sup> The status of all Jews is fiercely protected and there is a mechanism to ensure this status quo. Both men and women are counted as full members, with non-Jewish spouses/partners of members offered non-voting associate status. Significantly the community does not have a rabbi except on High Holydays when outside assistance is obtained for the Orthodox, and more recently, for Liberal services. An Orthodox service is held every shabbat, the *chagim* (the festivals) and the High Holydays; egalitarian Masorti or Liberal services are held simultaneously with the Shabbat Orthodox service. Also held are regular 'non-denominational' children's services and women-only Orthodox services. Progressive services are also held on *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, including *Kol Nidre*. Physically it works because there are two fully functioning synagogue spaces, and the Congregation has a further portable Ark which can be used should the need arise. Following the services, the community join together for one *kiddush*, with each community observing

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<sup>103</sup> The Constitution states: 'the membership of the Congregation shall be open to any person of the Jewish faith who satisfies the appropriate criteria .Constitution available appendix 3.

<sup>104</sup> Point 1.2 of Appendix to Constitution.

the unwritten rule that whichever service finishes first, waits to make *kiddush* for the other service to join them. This is extremely important as it ensures the cohesiveness of one single community. Practically it works because the OJC has the responsibility for conducting its own affairs and services and because the members want it to work all are prepared to offer respect and interact with all the OJC members. There are no permanent rabbis representing the differing strands of Judaism, although there are rabbis who are members of the community. In addition, occasionally there are visits from individual visiting rabbis. In 2005 a rabbi was appointed by the University Chaplaincy Board to support students from both Oxford and Brookes University. Each rabbi has served for about two years and each has been Orthodox, but all have accepted the Oxford structure and support all the students irrespective of their Jewish practice, and are, by necessity, supportive of the ethos of the Oxford community.<sup>105</sup>

The Torah scrolls are available for use by all denominations without qualification, with the mutual understanding that every Torah scroll must be accorded utmost respect.<sup>106</sup> Also, out of respect for Orthodox sensitivities, the Liberal group would not hold a service with music, other than singing, in the Centre on *shabbat* or festivals. During the first part of a *shabbat* service, the *shacharit* service, if the Orthodox service has been short of a minyan, the Masorti group will 'trade' their men for women, or Masorti and Orthodox will, on occasions, temporarily 'borrow' attendees from the Liberal service. Some members prefer to attend only their 'own' services, but there is a significant degree of fluidity in attendance, i.e., a number of Liberal and Masorti adherents attend Orthodox services on the *shabbatot* when their preferred service is not available and some people will attend different parts of the service with different groups on any one *shabbat*. Individuals and families 'belong' to the community. Their

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<sup>105</sup> Blumenfeld. J., 2003 History of the OJC – The Oxford Story. *The Edinburgh Star*. (The Edinburgh is the Journal of the Edinburgh Jewish Community) January 2003 p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> The Constitution does not cover issues in this detail, but the respect of the Torah is an oral obligation equally applicable to all groupings of Judaism.

membership does not stipulate a denomination and so the OJC does not hold any data about which service a family may prefer to attend. The location of services is determined in an equally collegiate manner. In practice, the arrangements are usually settled between the respective service conveners. The building was refurbished in 2004 when facilities for a second permanent 'sanctuary' were created. This space also doubles as a meeting room and contains the original ark. It is also possible to run three services concurrently as the OJC also have a third 'mobile' ark. Orthodox services are normally held in the 'main' *shul*, and any alternative services in an adjacent multi-purpose room, simply because the Orthodox services generally attract larger numbers. However, if, on a particular *shabbat*, either the Liberal or Masorti group want to use the main *shul* for a special occasion such as a *bar/batmitvah*, locations are switched. The Jews of Oxford take great pride in the inclusiveness of their institutional structures. They are also proud of the fact that their Congregation is vibrant and growing. The OJC is linked to the university through its membership but remains separate from it. As will be seen from the testimonies there are members from all over the world, some from within and others outwith the university. This system of the Oxford congregation works because everyone wants it to work through a combination of mutual respect, tolerance, inclusiveness, negotiation, common sense and avoidance of rigid structures. Previous to the OJC the religious history of Oxford Jewry reflected the wider history of the town, but how did it evolve to the inclusive system of today?

### **8.ii The Development of the OJC from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Only David Lewis, Pam Manix and Cecil Roth have written scholarly histories of the Jews of Oxford and the OJC.<sup>107</sup> Manix and Roth wrote only about medieval Jewry in Oxford, which although important in its own right, is

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<sup>107</sup> Roth, C., 1951. *The Jews of Medieval Oxford*. Oxford, Clarendon Press And Lewis, D.M., 1992. *The Jews of Oxford*. Oxford, The Oxford Jewish Congregation.

Pam Manix is a medieval historian who through the archives, many of which are lodged at Merton College, Oxford, has created maps showing the location of the Jewish quarter.

beyond the scope of this study. Lewis's book includes the medieval history but he continues the narration of Oxford Jewry until the mid 1980s. He was both grounded in his professional life and held the office of both President of the Oxford community and the University of Oxford Jewish Society, and thereby illustrated his ability to travel seamlessly between town and gown. His book is referenced from the archives of the OJC held by Oxfordshire County Council and he states that all material is traceable from his notes with the exception of one primary source relating to Raphael Loewe and the feeding arrangements in Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>108</sup>

Between 1900 and 1903 community records illustrated a power struggle between the Town and Gown of the Jews in Oxford, showing that a tension was very much a part of this developing community. The numbers of the Town community were declining through deaths, and it would appear that there had been some financial constraints which had been dealt with by the president, Zacharius, in his own way, before his death.<sup>109</sup> This distinction between Town and Gown Jews continued until about 1960 when the colleges began to be more outward looking. By 1912 synagogue attendance had continued to decline and reached an all-time low. The opinion was expressed that it was of great importance to make synagogue services more attractive and Judaism a greater relevance in Oxford. Opinions differed between Town and Gown whereby the students thought the Oxford Jews had a duty to attend services, whilst the Town Jews thought the students had a responsibility to use their influence positively, to think of the future and consider the next generation of graduate and undergraduate Jews coming to the University. Lewis argues that in the end, the catalyst to resolve these issues came with the appointment of a Jewish Reader in Rabbinics who would give academic status to Judaism and place the teaching of this subject in Jewish hands.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid Lewis., p.112.

<sup>109</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* 4 August 1905 obituary Zacharius.

<sup>110</sup> Lewis., p. 24 Ref 98.

Individual leadership often enables quantum progress and change, and this is what happened within the community in Oxford in 1931, through the charismatic energies of B.L.Q. Henriques, who was a renowned twentieth century philanthropist and social worker and a key figure within progressive Judaism. He managed to increase the number of Jewish students attending synagogue from 12 to 43 which he achieved by cancelling Saturday morning services and remodelling the Friday evening service to meet the needs of the Oxford Jewish students. Hebrew was retained for the first part of the service, while the psalms of the second part were recited in English from the Singer's prayer book. It is important to note that this service structure was sanctioned by the then Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler, who, by this action showed he appreciated that the Oxford community of Town and Gown was different from both other small provincial communities as well as from the larger Jewish conurbations that were fast developing.<sup>111</sup> It was this action, particularly the approval granted by the Chief Rabbi which set a precedence that enabled the OJC to develop the structure which exists and which is fiercely guarded and protected into the twenty-first century today. It is significant also that the Chief Rabbi gave the authorization to Henriques, a Liberal Jew. This is what led to the OJC developing its inclusive flexibility to all strands of Judaism today, its ability to see what is needed and to have the courage to implement change together with approval from the Chief Rabbi. In the 1930s, the students continued with their lecture series and a sub-committee of the Adler Society arranged the Orthodox synagogue services.<sup>112</sup> It was also agreed that the synagogue would be available for alternative services for those not wishing to attend Orthodox services. This was an important agreement for the OJC as it reinforced the scene for what has become the multi-denominational structure in Oxford today. It is

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid p. 42.

<sup>112</sup> The Adler Society was founded in 1904, on the initiative of the University Section of the Oxford Hebrew Congregation. It created a forum for the discussion of religious, literary and other Jewish matters, and usually met usually twice a term. [Online] Available at: [http://www.ochjs.ac.uk/mullerlibrary/digital\\_library/Intranet/Loewe/stainedglassdesign/HL/Herbert-15.html](http://www.ochjs.ac.uk/mullerlibrary/digital_library/Intranet/Loewe/stainedglassdesign/HL/Herbert-15.html) [Accessed 14 April 2015].

also significant that this multi-denominational approach did not prevent Chief Rabbi Hertz from visiting Oxford and giving a sermon at the Orthodox service. During the 1930s the number of senior Jewish academic appointments at the university increased and included David Daiches and Isaiah Berlin, members who offered support and hospitality to the Jewish students. In October 1932 the Adler Society and the Zionist Society the two University Jewish groups, amalgamated to become the Oxford University Jewish Society, whose aim was to create one representative body to speak for all the Jews of Oxford.<sup>113</sup> This action is another rare example of co-operation between Jews with differing spiritual practice and beliefs finding a *modus vivendi* for the benefit of all. In 1938 funding was found to create a Readership in Post-Biblical Jewish Studies when Cecil Roth was appointed and whose home, for the next 30 years became a focus for hospitality and discussion every Shabbat afternoon.<sup>114</sup>

The beginning of the Second World War created a radical change within the OJC.<sup>115</sup> There was a large influx of Jews escaping the blitz in London who came to Oxford so that it was estimated that on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur between 200 to 250 people attended synagogue services. The treasurer, Walter Ettinghausen, also made a comment which again is most relevant to practice in Oxford today. He noted that an increased use has been made of the Synagogue buildings for other than ritual purposes.<sup>116</sup> Today, the building is multi-purpose and every space can be used for worship or meetings. An Extraordinary Meeting was held in 1940 to address support services required by the increasing size of the community

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<sup>113</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* 21.10. 1932.

<sup>114</sup> Lewis., p. 64 Ref 105. Also the author remembers Roth's Shabbat afternoon hospitality.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid* p. 66. Until this point, the Jewish students had dominated the community but WWII abruptly changed this. These changes are detailed by Walter Ettinghausen in his 1940 Treasurer's report. By May 1940 he said: 'What barely two years ago was a tiny community consisting of perhaps half a dozen resident families and a number of undergraduate and graduate members of the University has developed into one of some thousand souls. We have today some four or five hundred refugees from Germany and other central European countries, some two hundred children evacuated from London and not less than two hundred permanent or temporary residents in the city. It is certainly the largest settlement of Jews in Oxford since the thirteenth century.' *Ibid* p.66 – 7).

<sup>116</sup> Lewis., p. 68 Ref 105.

which again is relevant to the OJC today, that of the formation of a 'Management Committee',<sup>117</sup> which continues to function today.<sup>118</sup> After the end of the war, two directly contrasting events happened which dramatically changed the composition of the community yet again. Undergraduates returned to the University in large numbers whilst the evacuees returned to London. The Jewish members of the Town who remained were those who had established businesses which they did not wish to leave and the German refugees chose to stay. The undergraduates were mainly concerned with events in Palestine and worked for the establishment of the state of Israel and were separate from the community, but in 1948 Passover fell in term time which proved to be a watershed event for the community.<sup>119</sup> The timing of Passover created problems for the students who wanted access to special kosher Passover food. The OJC were sympathetic to this problem and provided facilities for the students for them to prepare their food in the vestry in the Synagogue, and as the numbers increased gradually spread into the synagogue itself. The long term importance of this event was the development of the Hillel House movement which now provides kosher facilities and accommodation for Jewish students in many UK universities, and highlighted the responsibility for community support for Jewish undergraduates.<sup>120</sup> Today the OJC provides kosher meals for Jewish students every Friday evening, Shabbat lunch and evening meals every night of the week, a huge commitment for a small community.

After 1945, gradually more Jewish families arrived in Oxford and the expansion of the University brought in more Jewish academics including

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<sup>117</sup> Ettinghausen began in the Chair followed by Neville Laski, an eminent Q.C., lately President of the Board of Deputies, previous officer of the University Adler Society in 1910 and a Trustee of the synagogue, took the position as Chair. The interesting point which came from this meeting was the development of a 'Management Committee' which still exists today.

<sup>118</sup> The management agreed with Roth that the OJC should be under the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi and follow the ritual of the Singer's prayer book on shabbat and the Routledge prayer book for festivals, a system which is still used today in the orthodox services, although information about page numbers from the Art Scroll and the Birnbaum machzot have also been introduced during the High Holydays Day services of the last few years.

<sup>119</sup> Lewis., p. 81 Ref 98.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid p. 86.

those not involved in Jewish studies, many of whom had a common background to those of the existing 'Town' community. This had two main organisational consequences.<sup>121</sup> The divide between Town and Gown began to blur. Furthermore, the next generation of women who had lived through the war, knew what they wanted from a community – not only for themselves but also for their children. They began to take positions of responsibility within the community. Meanwhile the community had to face the dilapidation, inadequacy and deterioration of the Synagogue building, but the funding of a new building was not straightforward. Student numbers were greater than community numbers and a Jewish centre would have to fulfil the needs of both groups. The Oxford community on its own would be unable to find sufficient money for a centre so years passed with much talk but no outcome. By 1963 two ex-Oxford undergraduates set up an international funding drive, and building began in 1972.<sup>122</sup> In 1974 the building was consecrated by the Rev. Malcolm Weisman, the Jewish Chaplain to the University and also Minister to the small communities. The new building meant the administrative structure, including ownership and running the whole community of Town and Gown needed to be formalised. The solution eventually arrived at was four different organisations, all still in place today.

In the mid-1990s after much discussion, about five OJC members began to consider the formation of the OJC holding Masorti services. Following two experimental successful egalitarian Masorti services an open meeting was held to which all OJC members were invited when leading Masorti Rabbis Chaim Weiner and Jonathan Wittenberg answered all queries posed by the members. The main concerns expressed were from the Orthodox people

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid p. 82.

<sup>122</sup> By 1963 two ex-Oxford undergraduates, Sir Alan Mocatta, then a High Court Judge and Robert Carvahlo took control of the project, set up an international funding drive and employed a high profile architect, of which Lord Segal, an OJC member, became Treasurer. Building began 1972 after the existing synagogue and two adjacent properties which had been bought by the OJC, were demolished. This rendered the congregation homeless for the next two years. Most shabbat services were then held in the church hall of the nearby St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church, High Holy Day services in 1972 were held at Manchester College, now known as Harris Manchester College, and in 1973 in Rhodes House.

who felt they might lose attendance at their services.<sup>123</sup> The establishment of the Oxford Progressive group had not created a threat in any way to the Orthodox Jews because it was extremely unlikely that the Orthodox would lose any of the members who attended their services: the services themselves are so different, both in structure and in language. (Some of the Progressive service uses English rather than Hebrew.) However, this is not the case between an Orthodox and Masorti service, as the service structure is almost identical. The difference exists because the Masorti service are egalitarian, with women taking an equal role in every aspect of the service. Some Orthodox members were, therefore, concerned that some of their attendees would be attracted to attend the Masorti services. In the event this has not happened.

To summarise: The importance and uniqueness of Oxford being the focus of the research, is the combination of three religious practices whilst belonging to a single organizational structure all uniquely under one roof. This system evolved in the early twentieth century with the blessing of the Chief Rabbi, and it was this factor that has enabled the development of the community today. This is important within this study because the only difference between the interviewees is the religious group which they attend, and even this is not definitive since some members move between the groupings. It is also impossible to compare statistically the numbers of Jews attending the different denominations, as it is important within this special community that all are members of the one congregation, the service of choice being incidental. What all do have is a commonality of background of synagogue ethos and philosophy. This has been highlighted by some of the interviewees who commented on the differences between the London communities of the same three groupings as in Oxford. Thus in the case of this study a challenging variable (the background of synagogue membership by Jewish group), has been eliminated.

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<sup>123</sup> There are no references to this meeting, but because this researcher was involved in the formation of the Masorti group there is a personal memory of this event.

The structure of the OJC has demonstrated in itself a good example of intra-faith, with the three Jewish denominations co-existing largely in harmony. A mark of its success can be measured by its membership. In 1960 there were around 85 families who belonged whereas today this figure has grown to over 510 families. It will be fascinating to discover if the uniqueness of the Oxford system has an effect on the outward attitudes of the interviewees which are revealed through the testimonies. However, now it is necessary to define these groups and their religious differences.

### **9. Jewish denominations: Orthodox, Masorti and Liberal**

When Jews confronted the modern world at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, they developed what already existed in Christianity: denominations. For the best part of 200 years Ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox, Modern-Orthodox, Masorti, Reform and Liberal/Progressive Jews have been constructed categories. The average Jewish members of a congregation tend to categorise these groups by levels of 'traditional observance' rather than theology or ethics. Because this thesis compares attitudes of Orthodox, Masorti and Liberal Jews it is necessary to define these groups, ones which today are changing the structure of British Jewry. Jews from the denominations described are all able to engage in dialogue. However, as will be seen from the testimonies the depth and content of that interaction may differ according to the affiliation of the respondents. The distribution statistically for British membership of these denominations might have been provided within section nine. However, the sample within this thesis is from the Oxford community, and so to avoid repetition the overall statistics have been given with reference to Oxford, section seven, page 39.

For the initial references for the denominations internet references relating to the groupings' own websites have been cited. This is because they have been written by the organisations themselves and therefore

include the factors and beliefs which are most significant to the specific group.

The United Synagogue is the largest Orthodox synagogue movement in Europe. It was founded in 1870 and today comprises 62 local communities supported by a central office. The Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, Chief Rabbi Mirvis, is the spiritual head of the communities. However, not all Orthodox communities are members of the United Synagogues which means that the chief Rabbi does not represent all British Orthodox Jewry. The OJC is an affiliated member of the United Synagogue.<sup>124</sup>

Another smaller grouping of Orthodox synagogues in the UK is the Federation of Synagogues which include 17 member synagogues, 14 within the greater London area and three in Manchester. The Federation has its own *Beth Din*, burial Society and *kosher* food licensing organisation. It is the history of its formation in 1887 which differentiates it from the United Synagogues as the Federation was founded by Samuel Montagu MP, a banker who saw a need to unify the numerous small ill-housed congregations that had begun in the East End of London following the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe.<sup>125</sup>

By the 1990s mainstream Orthodoxy was in decline, thought to be because it was becoming more religiously 'right wing' for many of its members. This factor was ignored by the United Synagogue Rabbinate, who themselves were likewise also becoming more right wing. Jonathan Sacks served as Chief Rabbi to the United Synagogues between 1991 – 2013, but he also seemed unable or maybe unwilling to halt this drift to a more observant and less flexible level of Orthodoxy to which many traditional Orthodox

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<sup>124</sup> United Synagogue [Online] Available <http://www.theus.org.uk/aboutus#sthash.fa1jYHo.dpuf> [Accessed 27 December 2015].

<sup>125</sup> Federation of Synagogues [Online] Available <http://www.federationofsynagogues.com/about/> [Accessed 27 December 2015].

The relationship between the newcomers and the existing Anglicised community was an uncomfortable one; the immigrants suspected the Orthodoxy of the English Jews, while the latter, who lived and worshipped in greater affluence, tended to look down on their less fortunate brethren - who were by now a majority, but with no effective say in community affairs.

Jews were not accustomed. This led to Orthodox rabbis refusing to sit on any platform with Reform or Liberal rabbis. The early 1960s marked a final divide from this new standard of Orthodoxy with what became known as the 'Jacob's Affair' from which Masorti Judaism was born in the UK.<sup>126</sup> The differences between Jewish denominations today are a difference of interpretation of scriptures, and how much each thinks biblical requirements can be changed and whether those requirements are mandatory or God given.

### 9.i Orthodox Judaism

Orthodoxy itself is composed of several different groups including the modern or traditional Orthodox, who have largely integrated into modern society whilst broadly maintaining observance of *Halacha*. It is this designation of Orthodox Jews who are members of the OJC and who are included in this study. The *Chassidim* and *Charedim*, two separate very Orthodox groups who live separately from a multi-faith society and dress distinctively, are referred to in this study but are not included as interviewees for two main reasons. Firstly, they separate themselves from society in total, as well as Jews from other denominations who are not

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<sup>126</sup> Rabbi Louis Jacobs, who was expected to become Chief Rabbi, after Rabbi Brodie, published his book in 1957, '*I have Reason to Believe*', in which he expressed doubt that God had dictated the entire Pentateuch to Moses, but without denying the binding Mitzvot. Jacobs, who had recently changed his community rabbinic post at the New West End Synagogue, was then teaching at Jews' College, the Orthodox Rabbinic College, Brodie subsequently refused to appoint Jacobs as Principal, compelling Jacobs to resign from the college. Lay officers from the college were unable to persuade Brodie to change his mind, and after high profile publicity, the incumbent at the New West End synagogue left to become an American Conservative Rabbi, (equivalent to what became known as Masorti in the UK). The New West End offered the post to Jacobs. However Brodie then blocked this appointment by refusing to certify Jacobs as fit for the post. Following a furor, officers of the synagogue who supported Jacobs' appointment, dismissed other officers and replaced them with compliant members. However, following the resignation of a further 300 members a new independent congregation was established and Masorti Judaism in the UK was born.

Masorti, known as Conservative Judaism in the USA, is a moderate branch on the spectrum of Jewish beliefs and practices. It seeks to avoid the extremes of both Orthodox Judaism and Reform Judaism at the same time as conserving the traditional elements of Judaism while allowing for reasonable modernization and rabbinical development. It was founded upon the teachings of Zacharias Frankel (1801-75) when he broke away from the Reform movement in Germany in the 1840s, insisting that Jewish tradition and rituals had not become non-essentials. He accepted both the Torah and Talmud as enduring authorities but taught that historical and textual studies could differentiate cultural expressions from abiding religious truths. In 1902, Solomon Schechter reorganized the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and made it the flagship institution of Conservative Judaism. Masorti and Conservative Jews observe the Sabbath, and as in Reform Judaism, women may be rabbis and may play a full egalitarian part in services, reading from the Torah, leading prayers and counting towards a minyan. Masorti Jews are encouraged to study of Hebrew and all aspects of Judaism. Beyond these basic perspectives, beliefs and practices. It is more "a theological coalition rather than a homogeneous expression of beliefs and practices." Masorti Jews can range from Reform to Orthodox as will be seen from the range of Masorti Jews included in this study.

ultra-Orthodox, they are the group who rarely take any part in interfaith. Secondly, they are a group who are not represented in the Oxford community.<sup>127</sup> All the Orthodox movements have (in theory if not in practice), similar beliefs. They all believe that God gave Moses the written Torah at Mount Sinai and also the Oral Torah, the commentary and interpretation of the written Torah. In theory, they believe the Torah is literally the word of God, and that it has been passed from each generation intact and unchanged. They believe the Torah contains 613 *mitzvot* which are binding upon Jews but not upon non-Jews. Orthodox Jews will try to keep as many of the *mitzvot* as they can, particularly those relating to Shabbat. According to the report by Jewish Policy Research, in 2010 there are 45,393 traditional Orthodox families belonging to 167 synagogues across the UK.<sup>128</sup>

### **9.ii Masorti Judaism**

Conservative, or Masorti as it is known in the UK, began in the mid 19th century Germany through the work of Zechariah Frankel, head of the Seminary at Breslau. His approach supported a positive commitment to the observance of Jewish law while offering an historical, developmental view of Judaism. It was a reaction both to the Reform Movement which did not consider Jewish law binding in modern times, and to the Orthodox approach, which limited the concept of development of Jewish law.<sup>129</sup> In the UK by 1962 the rabbis of the Chief Rabbi's court had become religiously 'right wing', and one of Anglo-Jewry's leading religious scholars Rabbi Dr Louis Jacobs, had joined Jews College on the express understanding that he was to be appointed as principal. However, following the publication of his book *We have Reason to Believe*, in which he argued that the whole Bible, including the Pentateuch, is open to

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<sup>127</sup> Charedi Jews do not live in Oxford because the demands of Jewish support and infra-structure which they need, e.g., schools and Jewish shops, are not available. Jewish food supplies are brought to Oxford from London on a monthly basis, and now, via internet ordering, many kosher shops will deliver to Oxford. This would be insufficient for the ultra-Orthodox.

<sup>128</sup> Graham, D., Vulkan, D. 2010 *Synagogue Membership in the United Kingdom in 2010*. London, Jewish Policy Research and Board of Deputies of British Jews. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/SynagogueMembership2010.pdf> [Accessed 12 June 2015].

<sup>129</sup> Masorti Judaism [Online] Available at <http://www.masorti.org.uk/newsblog/newsblog/news-single/article/a-short-history-of-the-masorti-movement.html#.VnvvBWLQ2w> [Accessed 24 December 2015].

investigation with all the resources of modern knowledge, his appointment was not sanctioned and nor was he allowed to return to his previous community ministerial appointment at the New West End Synagogue. After an angry public row, most of the community's membership resigned and formed the New London Synagogue, the first Masorti community in the UK with Dr Jacobs as its Rabbi. The New London flourished and was followed by the establishment of further congregations. The Synagogues work together through their membership of Masorti Judaism (AMS).

By the mid-1990s there were six Masorti communities around Greater London. Now this number has doubled. Each Masorti community is autonomous and run by a team of lay-leaders and volunteers. Many of the more established congregations have their own rabbis and chazanim, and the larger ones have educational and other professional staff. The Oxford Masorti group is an affiliated member of Masorti Judaism, which promotes traditional Judaism for modern Jews.<sup>130</sup> The structure of the Masorti services are almost identical to those of Orthodox Judaism, but with one significant difference. Each community is free to choose where on the egalitarian spectrum they wish to fall. In Oxford there is complete equality between men and women. Masorti women play an equal part, they count in the *minyan*; they lead the prayers and they read from the Torah. Other communities may decide that women cannot read from the Torah but can be given the honour of an *Aliya*. The *Halacha* plays an important role in Masorti Judaism, as it does in the Orthodox communities, however, with the proviso identified by Jacobs, that it was dictated by God to Moses. Although Masorti Judaism represented the majority beliefs and practices of many Jews, most Jews still remained members of United Synagogues for the simple reason that they wished to maintain their burial rights within the cemetery where their family was buried. What is significant about this is the majority of Jews are members a community which does not

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<sup>130</sup> Masorti Judaism. [Online] Available at <http://www.masorti.org.uk/about-masorti/about-masorti.html> [Accessed June 1 2015].

represent their beliefs or practices. This scenario illustrates the forward looking attitudes of the Oxford Jewish Congregation (OJC) where various denominations of Judaism belong to one centre of Judaism, but can practice as, where and how they choose, where there is one burial ground for all Jews. In 2015 there are approximately 5,800 members attending 13 Masorti communities across the UK.<sup>131</sup>

### 9.iii Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism began in Germany 200 years ago and then spread across Europe to North America. The initial aim was a search to feel a sense of belonging within the general culture stressing the common values and behaviours they shared with their non-Jewish neighbours.<sup>132</sup> The denomination of Reform Judaism, is closely related to Liberal/Progressive Judaism and which, in terms of religious observance can be said to fall approximately between Masorti and Liberal Judaism. In the first sermon preached in a Reform service in the UK, David Wolf Marks said:

Let it not be supposed that this house is intended as a synagogue of ease or convenience.<sup>133</sup>

By this he meant that because some of the laws of Halacha observed by Orthodox Jews had been relaxed in order to enable congregants choice, Marks wanted to stress that Reform Judaism did not represent an easy option. A fuller definition has not been included in the Jewish denomination descriptions because there is no Reform group within the OJC, and therefore, no analysis has taken place with Reform Jews. Should an OJC family wish to hold a Reform service for a specific reason, e.g. *bar or bat mitzvah*, this can be organized. However, as will be seen in the interviews, the background and upbringing of a respondent may be from Reform Judaism, but they are now integrated into the structure of the OJC.

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<sup>131</sup> Masorti Judaism [Online] Available at: <http://www.masorti.org.uk/our-communities/about-our-communities.html> [Accessed 24 December 2015].

<sup>132</sup> Reform Judaism [Online] Available at: <http://www.reformjudaism.org/history-reform-judaism-and-look-head-search-belonging#sthash.rj37HmhL.dpuf> [Accessed] 24 December 2015.

<sup>133</sup> Kershen, A.J., Romain, J.A., 1995. Tradition and Change: A History of REfom Judaism in Britain 1840-1995.

#### 9.iv Liberal Judaism.

The movement to reform Judaism began in Germany in the early nineteenth century, the first major synagogue being founded in Hamburg in 1818. Ideas then spread although the dynamism for reform and modernisation varied as ideas travelled from country to country. However, in Britain the modernisation of Judaism happened slowly mainly because of opposition from the 'establishment' of Anglo-Jewry. For example the Sephardi congregation of Bevis Marks attempted to prevent the founding of British Liberal Judaism.

The origins of liberal Judaism are relatively obscure. Kessler notes:

Surprisingly little has been written about the origins of Liberal Judaism in England ... And even the contributions (writings) of the four founders are rare.<sup>134</sup>

The four founders Kessler refers to are Israel Abrahams, Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu, and Israel Mattuck, each of whom possessed complimentary attributes. Kessler believes that their writings show that without the scholarly contributions of Abrahams, the astute leadership of Montefiore, the organisational abilities of Montagu and the pastoral dynamism of Mattuck, the Liberal movement would not exist today. Each worked independently but also influenced each other through their writings and activities.

In 1899, Lily Montagu wrote an article for the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 'The Spiritual Possibilities in Judaism today', which eventually led to the formation of Liberal Judaism.<sup>135</sup> This article was favourably received by several community leaders including Orthodox ministers and it was this latter response which gave Montagu the endorsement she sought to encourage her to begin to help Anglo-Judaism modernise. The work and lives of the four founders were driven by their passionate belief in the importance and, as they understood it, the truth of modern Judaism.

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<sup>134</sup> Kessler, E. (Ed) 2004 *A Reader of Early Liberal Judaism: The writings of Israel Abrahams, Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu and Israel Mattuck*. London, Vallentine Mitchell. p.1.

<sup>135</sup> Montagu, Lily. The Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism Today. *JQR* 11, pp. 216-31.

The oldest of the famous four was Israel Abraham, 1858-1925, whose father was the Haham of London's Spanish and Portuguese congregation. As a youth Abraham's Jewish scholarship was well recognised. He received an MA from Jews College and after teaching there until 1881 he moved to Cambridge where he became Reader in Rabbinics.<sup>136</sup>

It was during his time in Cambridge that he became sympathetic to Biblical criticism, a methodology which led to the majority of his students becoming Liberal Jews. Abrahams regretted the resultant divide that had emerged between Orthodoxy and Liberal Judaism which he worked to try to repair – a divide which still exists today and which has been mentioned by two of the respondents in this study. He wished for Judaism to develop beyond the narrow confines of Orthodoxy and be open to new thoughts including those of Christianity.<sup>137</sup> He was the founder of the Jewish Historical Society of England and co-editor with Claude Montefiore of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, so it can be seen that Abraham and Montefiore were already close colleagues when they were both persuaded by Lily Montagu to support her initiative. Abraham worked to ensure the new Liberal Jews understood that certain aspects of Orthodoxy were important and should not be lost, thereby remaining a mediator between the two denominations.<sup>138</sup>

Also crucial to the development of Liberal Judaism was Claude Montefiore, 1858 - 1938.<sup>139</sup> He was another recognised leader of Progressive Judaism and in 1926 was elected the first President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Montefiore together with Mattuck believed Liberal Judaism should be free from the constraints of Orthodoxy although Abrahams was against Liberal Judaism creating a division.<sup>140</sup> Relevant to this study is that Orthodoxy were fearful of Jews and Christians working together discussing the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, as in fact

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<sup>136</sup> Bibliography

<sup>137</sup> Abrahams, I. 1924. *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*: Vol. 2. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>135</sup> Abrahams, I., Montefiore, C. *Aspects of Judaism*. London, Macmillan.

<sup>139</sup> Langton, D.R. 2002, *Claude Montefiore His Life and Thought*. London, Mitchell & Co Ltd.

<sup>140</sup> Montefiore, C.G. 1912, *Outlines of Liberal Judaism*. London, Macmillan & Co, London.

carried out by Abrahams in Cambridge. Mattuck and Montefiore rejected these fears as their Liberal beliefs enabled them to study Judaism and Christianity together across the complete spectrum of each religion, highlighting the inter-relationship between the two religions. This laid down the corner stones of future modern Jewish-Christian Relations. In 1908, Montefiore commented that:

The relation of Liberal Judaism to the life and teaching of the historic Jesus, as well as to the books of the New Testament. This is one of the most important matters which has yet to be taken in hand.<sup>141</sup>

Montefiore's scholarship was recognised by Christianity and he was the first Jew to deliver the Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College, Oxford in 1892 when he introduced his lecture stating:

It would be unjust exclusively to identify the history of the Hebrew religion with the history of Monotheism, inasmuch as the monotheistic conception was attained by chosen individuals of other races.<sup>142</sup>

In 2014 the size of the Liberal community in the UK is approximately 10,000 members. There are 37 communities and synagogues which hold full membership of Liberal Judaism in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, as well as two affiliated congregations and a number of new 'developing' communities across the UK.<sup>143</sup>

Lily Montagu, 1873-1963, was also brought up within traditional Jewish Orthodoxy. As women's educational opportunities were broadened she took advantage of these opportunities and began pioneering work within social services. She began evening classes in Judaism so that women who worked would be able to attend as well as initiating Shabbat services for children - the latter innovation receiving the approval of Chief Rabbi Herman Adler. As early as 1890 she took on

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<sup>141</sup> Bowler, M G., 1988, *Claude Montefiore and Christianity*. Atlanta, Georgia, USA, Scholars Press. p.3.

<sup>142</sup> Montefiore, C.G., 1892, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Ancient Hebrews*. London, Williams & Norgate. p.1.

<sup>143</sup> Liberal Judaism [Online] Available at: <http://www.liberaljudaism.org/communities-rabbis.html> [Accessed] 24 December 2015.

religious leadership positions and began to preach. This later developed into her teaching Bible Classes and serving as an administrator within Liberal Judaism.<sup>144</sup> It was Anglo-Jewry's willingness to accept women had a role to play in communal responsibility that enabled her to play an important role within Jewish public life.<sup>145</sup>

Isidor Mattuck, 1883 – 1954.<sup>146</sup> He was born in Lithuania in 1883 although the family left sometime between 1888 and 1890 and immigrated to Boston, USA. As a means of entering mainstream American life, the children were encouraged to learn and become formally educated and Mattuck completed his studies at Harvard in Jewish studies and ultimately became ordained as a rabbi. It was in Harvard that he was introduced to Reform Judaism and where he became interested in forms of Judaism other than the Orthodoxy of his upbringing. In 1911 he came to London having accepted the post of minister at the London Liberal Jewish Synagogue (LJS), where he became the most influential figure in its development and also the wider Liberal Jewish movement through his involvement with the World Union for Progressive Judaism, which he chaired from its foundation in 1926 until his death in 1954. His authority was partly the result of his personality and intelligence, but this was backed by his comprehensive Jewish education and his exposure to the American Reform Movement. He led the LJS and the Liberal Jewish movement through two world wars, produced prayer books that provided the liturgy for the Liberal Jewish movement for over 40 years, and he was one of the prime instigators in setting up the London Society of Jews and Christians, which he co-chaired for many years and which provided the model for the foundation of the Council of Christians and Jews in 1942. Mattuck's lectures and sermons clearly illustrate his universalism

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<sup>144</sup> Umansky, E. 1985. *Lily Montagu: Sermons, Addresses and Prayers*. Studies in Women and Religion, Vol 15. New York, Edwin Mellen.

<sup>145</sup> Umansky, E. 1983. *Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism*. Studies in Women and Religion, Vol.13. New York, Edwin Mellen.

<sup>146</sup> Fox, P. 2014., *Israel Isidor Mattuck*. Middlesex, Vallentine Mitchell.

and his belief that Judaism is able to influence the wider world.<sup>147</sup> Mattuck's sermons also conveyed his passion for Judaism to engage with a broad society and be limited to personal religious observance. He also believed that ethics come before ceremonial ritual. However, he was also a traditionalist and had a strong commitment to the service of God as the essence of Judaism, although in parallel with this he believed that some 'ugly' rituals should not be maintained. For Mattuck, Jews were a religious community and not a nationality and this was the reason he was opposed to political Zionism. From the perspective of Jewish-Christian relations, Mattuck should be noted as a leading advocate for dialogue between religions.<sup>148</sup>

These brief pen-pictures of the various and distinct threads of Judaism allow the thesis to continue by exploring the origins, structure and objectives of the Council of Christians and Jews, the oldest national interfaith organisation in the UK embracing all denominations of Judaism and Christianity.

## **10. The Council of Christians and Jews**

### **10.i The Founding of the Council of Christians and Jews**

The literature referenced in this section is largely based upon the only two extended histories of CCJ. Both are written by Marcus Braybrooke who was Executive Director of CCJ between 1984 – 87. Although Braybrooke wrote these books from the perspective of an 'insider', no other critical literature exists. It is important that a full history and description of CCJ should be included firstly because not only is it the oldest interfaith national organization in the UK, but also because it is the only interfaith organisation which has a grassroots base. In an age when interfaith work was not well recognized, Braybrooke was respected. Other interfaith organisations do exist, e.g., the Three Faiths' Forum and FODIP, the Forum for Discussion of Israel and Palestine, the latter which is highly focused and

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<sup>147</sup> Mattuck, I. 1937. *Faith and the Modern World*. London, JRU.

<sup>148</sup> Hulbert, F., 2015 9Spring) *Common Ground*. p. 34.

does not have the broad base of CCJ. Neither have a grassroots base which is most likely to have introduced the interviewees to interfaith engagement. Indeed some of the respondents in this study comment within their interviews about organisations which encourage interfaith activities to take place at grassroots levels.

The birth of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ), in 1942 was complicated and difficult. In fact it was remarkable it actually took place. It is a tribute to all who were involved at the beginning and to those who have been involved over the last 70 plus years that CCJ remains alive today. Until the twentieth century there was no formalised interaction and dialogue between the religions. In 1927, pre dating CCJ by fifteen years, the London Society of Jews and Christians was founded by intellectuals, namely Rabbi Israel Mattuck, Claude Montefiore and Dean Carpenter from Westminster Cathedral.<sup>149</sup> The Society, the first formalised association between the two religions, held quarterly meetings where the theology and religious practices of both religions were discussed. The Society did not and had no intention to expand to include volunteers to work at a grass roots level: it was an elite, intellectual organisation. The aims of the Society were to promote good will and cooperation between Jews and Christians and combat religious intolerance, which was both organisationally and purposely different from CCJ. By 1941, before the official foundation of CCJ, an article appeared in the *Children's Newspaper*, which described Rabbi Mattuck's aim:<sup>150</sup>

All religious institutions need the utmost strength now, not for their own sake but for the greater purposes they serve. Dr Mattuck's aim has always been close collaboration with every other religious community, not in social service alone but in

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<sup>149</sup>Today the London Society holds six meetings each year, including the Lily Montagu memorial lecture, four other academic lectures, a summer outing and a reception at Westminster Abbey. The Orthodox community are invited to the meetings but they are mostly attended by Liberal Jews. Thus, as will be seen, there is no conflict between CCJ and the London Society as both have very different programmes. The London Society, by its name, has never included Jews and Christians from outside the London, has Jewish members almost exclusively from Liberal Judaism and does not engage in formally constructed dialogue.

<sup>150</sup> *The Children's Newspaper*. March 15<sup>th</sup> 1941. p.6 [Online] Available at: <http://www.lookandlearn.com/childrens-newspaper/CN410315-006.pdf> [Accessed 12 July 2014].

religious service. The differences between the Churches say the Liberal Jews, are negligible compared with the importance of the work we can do together.

One of the early key scholars who began to consider the necessity for a new positive relationship between Jews and Christians was the Rev Dr James Parkes, an Anglican clergyman. He wrote that he was unprepared for the discovery that it was the Christian Church which turned good into bad, and into the unique evil of antisemitism.<sup>151</sup> He recognised that the teachings of the Churches had contributed towards creating the root of antisemitism.<sup>152</sup> Writing in 1930 about the Christian conversion of the Jews, Parkes wrote:

... But we are quite definitely not interested in the evangelisation of the individual Jew. It seems to me that your brethren have completely left out of the account another alternative, which seems to me to be the most truly Christian one at this time: our Christian responsibility to give the Jew a square deal to be a Jew.<sup>153</sup>

And to 'give the Jew a fair deal', became James Parkes' life's work.<sup>154</sup> Parkes was the first Christian to address the issue of mission to the Jews, an idea that at this time was not held by other Christian theologians. CCJ was extremely fortunate to have such a forward thinking Christian involved who was and willing to make his mark upon Jewish-Christian relations. Parkes was the first theologian to reject the Church's theology of mission to the Jews, and it was his thinking which has led to the Parkian perspective of mission having become a symbolic gesture today. Another Christian who contributed both generally and at an organizational level towards

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<sup>151</sup> Parkes, J. 1969. *Voyage of Discoveries*. London, Gollancz.

<sup>152</sup> Parkes, J., 1934. *The conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*. London, Soncino Press.

<sup>153</sup> Letter, 9 Dec. 1930 Parkes to Hoffman. Parkes Archives, quoted by Theodore C. Linn in an unpublished essay, 'From Conversion to Cooperation: James Parkes' Call to Christian Conscience'.

<sup>154</sup> Braybrooke, M., 1991. *Children of One God: A history of the Council of Christians and Jews*. London, Vallentine Michell. p.5. On his retirement in 1966, Parkes gave his magnificent library of 7,000 books and treatises on antisemitism and Christian-Jewish relations to Southampton University.

establishing a positive relationship between Jews and Christians was W.W. Simpson, a Methodist minister. Whilst looking back on his life as an 'Old Testament' student in Cambridge in 1928, where he met his first Jew, Simpson wrote that until that point he had never previously thought of visiting a synagogue.<sup>155</sup> Simpson later studied contemporary Jewish problems at Jews' College.<sup>156</sup>

Well before the Second World War, Simpson had been calling for a reassessment of Christian theology regarding its attitude towards the Jewish people. Simpson thought the key to the whole development of this theology was the understanding of the nature of covenant. Rather than starting from the point of Salvation being for and through the church, Simpson believed it began with the acknowledgement that's God's covenant with his people Israel is everlasting.<sup>157</sup> These thoughts represented ground breaking beliefs which the majority of Christians, including Archbishop Temple, were not yet ready to accept, and which took many decades to become a recognised part of Jewish-Christian relations. These two issues of Christian mission and covenant overturn almost two millennia of Christian belief, and as with many 'new' ideas, members of a religion are frequently reluctant to incorporate them within their existing theology, particularly as in the cases of mission and covenant Parkes' and Simpson's ideas refute the text of the Gospels. By the middle of the war, Simpson and others came to the conclusion that cooperation of Christians and Jews across national boundaries was required to meet the challenge of antisemitism, which had by no means been stamped out by the defeat of the Naziism.<sup>158</sup>

William Temple, the third major Christian involved in the formation of CCJ, was previously Bishop of Manchester, Archbishop of York and The Council and

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<sup>155</sup> Simpson, W.W., 1976 *Light and Rejoicing*. Christian Journals Ltd. Belfast, p. 13.

<sup>156</sup> Jews' College was the orthodox rabbinic seminary in London, founded in 1855 and now known as The London School of Jewish Studies.

<sup>157</sup> Aitkin J.K. and Kessler E., eds 2006 *Challenges and Jewish-Christian Relations.*, New Jersey, USA, Paulist Press.

<sup>158</sup> Franz Delitzsch, 1813 – 1890, Old Testament scholar, wrote, "For the church to evangelize the world without thinking of the Jews is like a bird trying to fly with one broken wing." [Online] Available at: <http://www.chosenpeople.com/main/evangelism/400-the-church-and-jewish-evangelism>. [Accessed 15 July 2014].

finally Archbishop of Canterbury. He was an enlightened theologian with progressive views on social and economic policies and relations between other religions and races. As early as 1916 he saw no theological objection to the ordination of women, though he feared for its effect on the prospects of Christian unity. Even so, he did find mission and covenant as interpreted by Parkes and Simpson too challenging.<sup>159</sup> Ever a man who preferred decisive action to pious resolutions, on 23 March 1943 Temple urged in the House of Lords that immediate measures should be taken for providing 'help and temporary asylum to persons in danger of massacre who are able to leave enemy and enemy-occupied countries'. He added: 'We at this moment have upon us a tremendous responsibility. We stand at the bar of history, of humanity, and of God.'<sup>160</sup>

#### **10.ii The Council**

Although some enlightened Christian scholars were beginning to think about the positive relationship between Christianity and Judaism, before 1933 it was the Nazi persecution of Jews that created the catalyst and the imperative for the work between the religions. Jews were being cruelly, deliberately and systematically exterminated in Europe and it was against this background that CCJ was established. How the Council actually began is uncertain as there are two differing accounts of the first meetings, although each with the same common aim. One version suggests that CCJ was built on the foundations of the London Society of Jews and Christians, and the other that it came from meetings organised by James Parkes between leading Jews and Christians.<sup>161</sup> Kushner has suggested that this obscure beginning reflects either the marginal nature of the organisation or conversely its early dynamism.<sup>162</sup> Seventy years later, although of interest, which version and which reason was correct, it is of lesser

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<sup>159</sup> Kushner, T., 1992 James Parkes, the Jews and Conversionism: a Model for Multi-Cultural Britain? In D Wood (ed) *Christianity and Judaism*. Oxford, SCH29. And Shepherd, N., 2008 unpublished lecture given to Oxford Branch of CCJ.

<sup>160</sup> Hansard, House of Lords Debates, 23 March 1943, vol. 126, cc811-60.

<sup>161</sup> Braybrooke., p.10 Ref 133.

<sup>162</sup> Kushner, T., 1992 'The Beginnings of the Council of Christians and Jews.' In *Common Ground*. no. 3&4; pp.6-9.

importance for the purpose of this study. What is significant is that ultimately CCJ was finally, if tentatively, established.

In November 1941, following the wishes of Parkes and Simpson, a conference was convened in London when Archbishop Temple took the chair. Those also present at the meeting included Chief Rabbi Hertz,<sup>163</sup> the Dean of St Pauls, Very Rev. W. Matthews, Henry Carter, Bishop Matthew, who represented the Catholics, Dr Mattuck from the Liberal Jewish community, plus other prominent Orthodox Jewish representatives.

Temple made the proposal that this new organisation should be against all forms of discrimination and should promote the ethical teachings which are common to Christianity and Judaism. He also stressed that the major purpose of CCJ was not solely to protect Jews. Even today there are still some people who regard CCJ as existing for this purpose alone. The difficulty was that Chief Rabbi Hertz had frequently and strongly criticised any form of 'religious fraternisation' which he regarded as 'neither desired nor desirable'.<sup>164</sup> However, it was inconceivable that there should be any form of CCJ in which the Chief Rabbi did not play a leading role. Hertz was very clear that each community was responsible for its own religious teachings. This was because he did not wish the Jewish community to become involved in any way with Christian theology, and vice versa. He was also fearful of Christian mission to the Jews and of any interaction between youth organisations as he did not want the Jewish youth to make friends with the Christians for fear of intermarriage. Hertz wanted to establish a CCJ which had a remit solely to fight antisemitism. Bishop Matthews, likewise had similar concerns about the possible influence of Judaism on Christians, particularly Christian young people. However, despite these concerns a motion was still carried to form CCJ on 20 March

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<sup>163</sup> Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz, (September 25, 1872 – January 14, 1946) was a Jewish Hungarian-born rabbi and Bible scholar. He held the position of Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox Jewish Community of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth from 1913 until his death in 1946, in a period encompassing both world wars and including the Holocaust.

<sup>164</sup> Braybrooke., p. 17 Ref 133.

1942, and a committee was drawn up to design a constitution, the preamble to the aims of CCJ were expressed as:

...that the Nazi attack on Jewry has revealed that antisemitism is part of a general and comprehensive attack on Christianity and Judaism and on the ethical principles common to both religions which form the basis of the free national life of Great Britain.<sup>165</sup>

Temple mapped out the path CCJ was to follow and the stated aims were:

1. To combat religious and racial intolerance.
2. To promote mutual understanding and goodwill between Christians and Jews in all sections of the community, especially in connection with problems arising from conditions created by the war.
3. To promote fellowship between Christian and Jewish youth organisations in educational and cultural action.
4. To foster co-operation of Christians and Jews in study and service directed to post-war reconstruction.<sup>166</sup>

Superficially these aims might appear to be laudable, but the Chief Rabbi found himself unable to accept the last two aims and offered his resignation and likewise Hinsley, the Archbishop of Westminster, withdrew his support. Both were fearful that the effect of the third aim, encouraging young Jews and Christians to join together for social interaction, may well result in them moving away from their own religion. Hertz wrote that he feared these policies may result in a danger to his community, saying:

...These are things I fear far more than pogroms.<sup>167</sup>

The fourth aim, Jews and Christians studying texts together, also created a problem for Hertz. This was because Orthodoxy did not believe interfaith interaction should include the discussion and study of theological Biblical texts with those belonging to other religions. This was an activity to be

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid p.14.

<sup>166</sup> It is interesting that these aims were not accepted by the Inland Revenue as those of a charity, but that CCJ was considered a political organisation and thus denied charitable status. Eventually in 1948 CCJ was finally recognised as a charity although in 1964 it had to modernise the constitution in order to maintain this status. Shepherd, N. lecture given to CCJ Oxford on Archbishop William Temple. November 2007.

<sup>167</sup> Braybrooke., p. 17 Ref 133.

limited to Jews working together. As has been mentioned previously the Orthodox generally followed the teachings of Maimonides who did not class Christianity as a monotheistic religion thus limiting interfaith interaction to addressing antisemitism. This happened before Rabbi Soloveitchik had reinforced Maimonides and before Rabbi Heschel had disputed Rabbi Soloveitchik's writings and declared Christianity was, in fact, monotheistic. It will be revealing to discover if these two scholars had an impact upon some of the respondents included in this study.<sup>168</sup>

Both could be difficult characters, but were redeemed by their enlightenment and dedication to Jewish-Christian relations. Hertz referred to these difficulties as 'spiritual intermarriage', but fortunately, through the skilled diplomacy of Temple, and with the revision of the wording of the offending aims, both Hertz and Hinsley were persuaded to withdraw their resignations.<sup>169</sup>

On 1 October 1942 a public statement was made in the press and on the radio of the successful formation of CCJ by the Presidents, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the moderator of the Free Church Federal Council and the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation of the British Empire. The statement included the aims of CCJ and referred to Nazi antisemitism in Europe, concluding:

In these circumstances we are agreed that it would be for the general benefit to form in this country, a Council of Christians and Jews, which might draw to itself the support in this matter of all men and women of goodwill. Such a Council has now been formed and, as joint Presidents, we have been gratified by the influential and whole-hearted response which has been immediately forthcoming.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Soloveitchik 1964. *Confrontation* [Online] Available at: [http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research\\_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/soloveitchik/from Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought, 1964 volume 6, #2](http://www.bc.edu/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/soloveitchik/from%20Tradition%20A%20Journal%20of%20Orthodox%20Thought%201964%20volume%206%20%232) [Accessed 10 March 2011].

<sup>169</sup> Braybrooke., p.15 Ref 133.

<sup>170</sup> Appendix to minutes of 21 September 1942.

The *Jewish Chronicle* was extremely positive about the formation of CCJ and its pathbreaking stance:

We have formal and authoritative recognition that anti-semitism is not a matter for Jews alone, but a challenge of equal if not greater gravity to non-Jews... it is certainly a Christian quite as much as a Jewish peril. This is what the formation of the Council means.

Perceptively, the *Jewish Chronicle* warned against quick results:

The public must be on its guard against impatient clamour for concrete results of the Council's endeavours... The Kingdom of God is not to be handed to restless spirits on a platter. Much care and devotion must go to its building, and perhaps many setbacks, disappointments and heartbreaks.<sup>171</sup>

Although what became known as the Holocaust was discussed by the Council in its early days, it might be thought surprising that it did not dominate the agenda.<sup>172</sup> Perhaps the Jewish members of the Council had insufficient confidence to continuously remind the non-Jewish members about the appalling suffering of the Jews in Europe; perhaps they felt they had to proceed with caution and avoid conflict. They did, however, specifically register their appreciation of Christian opposition to the Nazis. Ministers asked Temple to be aware that Jews coming into this country may well be Nazis or Communists, and if the government was seen to be too supportive of the Jews, this may lead to antisemitism in Britain. Shocking though this may sound in the next millennium it is difficult to criticise CCJ for not taking stronger actions as these may well have led to the complete disintegration of the organisation. Temple did all he could by bringing motions and speaking persistently in the House of Lords.<sup>173</sup> He felt restrained in bringing effective help to the millions of Jews in Europe because he had to balance the effectiveness of private appeal and protest

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<sup>171</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 October 1942, p.8.

<sup>172</sup> Braybrooke., p.20 Ref 133.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid* p. 23.

against public statements which might have put ministers on the defensive, an extremely difficult and diplomatic situation to be in. By 1943 he felt it was clear that nothing said in Britain could worsen the plight of Jews under the Nazis, and in March he spoke more graphically in the Lords. With news of the massacres in Buchenwald in 1944 he again spoke out and even after the war had ended Temple was one of the few voices concerned about the homeless and stateless Jews, particularly those wishing to enter the British Mandate of Palestine.<sup>174</sup> The violence of the extreme Jewish groups there was condemned by the Jewish community in Britain as by the Christian leaders. The Council's concern was the effect that these events was having upon Jewish-Christian relations, as have events in Israel/Palestine continued to do today. From the beginning CCJ was involved in educational work and 1943 saw the first edition of *Common Ground* which gave information about the two religions and is still in publication today. By the early 1950s additional educational materials were produced for schools and universities.

Hertz resigned again when it was proposed that CCJ dialogue should go beyond antisemitism.<sup>175</sup> In November 1954 CCJ received a huge set-back when Cardinal Griffin said he would be addressing the joint presidency of CCJ on instructions from Rome. His resignation was followed by that of other leading Catholics. Rome had fully supported the Council's work against antisemitism, but objected to aspects of its educational programmes that involved questions of religion.<sup>176</sup> It must be remembered that this pre-dated *Nostrae Aetate*.<sup>177</sup> By the early 1960s, changes were beginning to take place and the matter was referred directly to Pope John XXIII.<sup>178</sup> Later that year in a television interview Archbishop Heenan

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid p. 22.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid p.16.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid p.34.

<sup>177</sup> *Nostra Aetate* was the Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, proclaimed by his Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965. [online] Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html) [Accessed 26 April 2015].

<sup>178</sup> Letter to Cardinal Lienart, 4 May 1961.

expressed regret about the Catholic withdrawal from CCJ which he believed was a mistake,<sup>179</sup> and shortly afterwards with the permission of their Bishop, Catholic laymen rejoined the committee and by 1964 Archbishop Heenan reinstated his membership. Such resignations and rejoinings show the controversial nature and fragility of the CCJ in its early decades.

### **10.iii CCJ Branches and the Oxford Branch**

Soon after its formation, local church groups began to offer their help to CCJ. It was through these initiatives the concept of CCJ 'Branches' was born. By October 1942 Branches were formed in Birmingham, Blackpool, Chester, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, followed shortly by Oxford.<sup>180</sup> Inevitably the question arose of how the structure of CCJ could adapt to enable the newly formed local groups to fit in with CCJ in London and how they could play a full part in supporting the work of the organization as a whole. Indeed, this remains a difficult issue even in the 21st century, as the Branches are fiercely concerned with protecting their autonomy, albeit at the same time demanding to have a voice in the national strategy of CCJ. At a meeting of national and local CCJs in June 1947 this relationship was discussed, and subsequently representatives from the Branches were asked to attend AGMs.<sup>181</sup> Efforts were made to keep in contact with the Branches although attempts to convene meetings of Branch representatives were unsuccessful. The executive members were aware that this relationship had its difficulties as there are recurring references to this.<sup>182</sup> Over the years the relationship has swung between a toleration of each other to a degree of animosity, but in 2009 following the re-instatement of the Advisory Board with Branch, Trustee and head office

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<sup>179</sup> ATV, 17 December 1961.

<sup>180</sup> By the early 1950s, the Oxford Branch ceased operating. There is no remaining evidence as to why, although it must be assumed that post war it was felt there was a) no longer a need in Oxford, and b) that there was little support at that time for a Branch. By the late 1960s young Jews had come to Oxford who decided to revive the Branch. It continues to function strongly today.

<sup>181</sup> Memorandum in AGM minutes Book, 17 June 1947 held at CCJ Offices.

<sup>182</sup> For example; in 1970 the organizing secretary of the Manchester Branch and chair of Conference of Standing Local Councils (Branches), wrote to Simpson stating that there was still insufficient cooperation and that she wanted Local Councils (Branches), to play a more active part in the overall affairs of the Council. Letter of Mrs Zoe Young to Simpson 11 Aug 1970.

staff representation, this Board now acts as an interim soundboard between the Branches and the Trustees. Because Oxford was one of the first Branches and has played an important role thereafter, it is another reason why the city is an excellent case study.

It is difficult to determine the number of OJC members who currently belong to the CCJ Oxford Branch because they do not officially declare their religious affiliation when they join. Today, in 2015, The Oxford Branch has 115 paid members, of whom approximately 36 i.e. 31% are Jewish.

Numerically this sounds few in number, but this means that 36 out of 500 i.e., 7% of the members of the OJC belong to CCJ. However, when the Jewish membership of 31% is compared to demographics of Jews living in the City of Oxford at 0.7% of the population, it can be seen that Jewish commitment is heavily over represented.<sup>183</sup> Taking these statistics a stage further, the average attendance at CCJ lectures is probably around 20 people, of whom four or five may be Jewish. In terms of being able to demonstrate an influential presence, the actual number of Jews present is small, although this represents that 25% of the attendance is Jewish. There are anecdotal instances where Christians attending CCJ meetings have been disappointed because their perception of the attendance was that there were no Jews present. This Jewish representation and membership of CCJ is a mark of the success of CCJ in Oxford. Today it has helped the Branch to be able to attract high quality speakers, particularly from the University, to present at meetings. The differences in theological belief between Christians and Jews have historically created problems for the Jews so the avoidance of specific aspects were deliberately excluded and following the Second World War this was particularly relevant. To enable a chronological understanding of CCJ, having explored its history and characteristics, this thesis moves beyond the Second World War (which gave CCJ its impetus and focus) to examine how it developed from 1945 onwards.

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<sup>183</sup> There is no available data which would enable an assessment to be made of whether the Jewish membership in Oxford is representative within the other Branches.

#### **10.iv Post War**

As Parkes identified, a difficulty for Jews has always been the Christian issue of conversion, a fundamental tenet of Christian theology, and one which for two millennium has been the cause of much suffering for Jews. CCJ has always been very clear, and remains so, that friendships between CCJ members are based on mutual trust and that there should be no evangelism whatsoever. Following the war, the Christian communities worldwide formed the World Council of Churches and held their first Assembly in Amsterdam in August 1948.<sup>184</sup> At this meeting the report of Committee IV was received which included a section headed 'Concerns of the Churches' in which chapter was considered 'The Christian Approach to Jews'. The recommendations in this chapter included the specific targeting of the Jewish people in evangelistic work, including the appointment and preparation of ministers for the specific purpose of Jewish mission.<sup>185</sup> It is surprising that few Christian or Jewish members of CCJ reacted to these recommendations. These statements would certainly not have gained the support of either Parkes or Simpson, showing how isolated they were on this issue. The issue of Christian mission continues to create problems for CCJ, because there are groups of Christians whose theology encourages a missionary approach towards Jews. In turn, there are some Jews who remain suspicious of this, and are uncomfortable meeting under the CCJ banner.

#### **10.v The last decade**

For the last ten years the chair of CCJ has been the Rt Revd Nigel McCulloch, recently retired Bishop of Manchester and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) the Rev David Gifford. It is through their commitment and direction that CCJ has adapted to the twenty-first century, and although remaining a binary organization there is a thoughtful awareness of the

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<sup>184</sup> The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, \*\*Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. At the end of 2012, there were 345 member churches.

<sup>185</sup> Graham A., Van Buren P., Rendtorff R., Schoon S., 1988 *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People: Statements by the World Council of Churches and its Member Churches*. Geneva, WCC Publications. p. 124.

necessity to include religions beyond Christianity and Judaism. From July 2014, Rev Gifford returned to work for the church and Dr. Jane Clements became the new CEO. The change of leadership within any organisation usually produces changes in structure and emphasis and this was the case with CCJ. Clements continued and broadened the work begun by Gifford and one of the most important was the further development of the relationship between 'Head Office' and the Branches. This not only increased the feeling of their worth by the Branches but encouraged them to support and deliver projects initiated from the Centre. As more staff have been appointed, Clements has also been able to extend the accountability of the national organization to the Branches and a successful Branches residential conference took place in September 2015 which is being repeated in 2016. It will thus be important to discover if the Branches of CCJ are discussed in any of the testimonies of the interviewees. In July 2015 Bishop McCulloch retired and his place was taken by Bishop Michael Igrave, now Bishop of Litchfield.

In 2006 a participative strategic plan was introduced and in 2006 – 7 the Branches Consultative Group (BCG), was convened with active Branch representatives from Finchley, Guilford, Hillingdon, Lincoln, Manchester, the North East, Oxford and South Hampshire, whose main task was to create position statements on the key issues of Israel, Antisemitism Mission: Evangelism and Proselytising and Zionism and Anti-Zionism.<sup>186</sup> The position statements once written by the BCG were submitted to the Trustees and thence the Presidents, who accepted them unchanged with the exception of the statement on Islam which was never rewritten. The purpose of these statements was for CCJ to have one policy and to speak with a united voice across the UK, so that when any CCJ member was contacted by the radio or press, all would give a united and consistent CCJ response regarding these issues.

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<sup>186</sup> The only access to these position statements are in the form of hard copies which are available from CCJ in London on request.

In October 2008 the Trustees agreed to the expansion of the number of CCJ Presidents to include a leader of the Sephardi, Masorti and Liberal communities. (The inclusion of a Sephardi leader 66 years following the establishment of CCJ is intriguing especially because there have been Sephardi Jews in England for 300 years.) This was subsequently ratified by the Presidents, and showed that finally CCJ and its Boards were prepared to reflect the religious changes within British Jewry.

#### **10.vi The Role of CCJ in the Twenty-first Century**

Antisemitism takes many forms and CCJ has addressed this by becoming multi-faceted, and plays a key role in addressing these incidents by facilitating meetings between the disagreeing factions and encouraging constructive dialogue. As mentioned, the most difficult challenges are created by events in Israel and Palestine, when throughout the world images as the events unfold are shown together with reports, many highlighting the inequality of power between the two nations. In the current decade, CCJ adopted the 'strapline' of 'Making Dialogue Make a Difference', which includes mediation, education and dialogue. CCJ's involvement in mediation is increasing year by year showing that there is still a need for CCJ who is fulfilling this role successfully.

Controversies over Israel have created a new and important role for CCJ. Jewish students at British universities have been reporting incidents of harassment and extreme unpleasantness, mainly due to events in the Middle East. To address this CCJ has created a specific full time post for a young adult to make contact with the university chaplains of all denominations at every university to bring students together for dialogue and a greater understanding. The Branches play a greater and expanded role in education. It is very common to find CCJ Branch members visiting schools in their area to explain Judaism, as well as taking groups of visiting

schoolchildren around the synagogue.<sup>187</sup> Also some Branches receive requests from Anglican Theological Colleges and Adult Groups, e.g. University of the Third Age, for speakers. CCJ in London now organise and input a module of Judaism in the training of Anglican Ordinands, and Liberal, Reform and Masorti include a module on Christianity and Islam in their rabbinic training. CCJ is not involved with any rabbinic training at the London School of Jewish Studies. Branches frequently organize, at local level educational events, for example, Chanukah and Advent, Shavuot and Pentecost educational explanatory occasions, and Holocaust Memorial and *Yom Ha Shoah* events. Many of these events are locally high profile, attended by local dignitaries and church and Jewish leaders as well as leaders of other religions.

One of the issues frequently debated is whether being involved primarily with only Christians and Jews is too limiting for the world in the twenty-first century. Jewish-Christian relations are special and unique because of the very origins of Christianity. However, this certainly does not preclude relationships with the other Abrahamic religions as well as all religions under the CCJ heading. Jews and Christians have lived together in the UK for a long time. Members of CCJ have much experience of dialogue, and have developed a relationship of trust with each other. They are at a different place in terms of both understanding and friendship with each other than with those of other religions. This means that with those of other religions the starting point is at a different place and therefore interaction needs to be addressed differently. A Jewish-Islamic interaction can be difficult at the moment because of the issues around Israel, and on some occasions this has been found to be a problem. Equally, dependent on the participants, good and positive friendships have been made.

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<sup>187</sup> It is interesting that even in the twenty-first century the author was asked by a very embarrassed fourteen year old school girl, when taking a group of school children around the synagogue; 'where do we make our sacrifices?' Also

In 2015, a group of secondary school children recently reported to the author that they had been taught that the Jews were expelled from Britain in 1290 because they had contaminated water supplies which caused the plague.

### 10.vii CCJ and Israel

From its very inception in 1948, Israel created many anxieties and difficulties between Christians and Jews and this is still so today. Out of respect for the Chief Rabbi CCJ initially distanced itself from the Israel issues, although the Christian members expressed concern about the safety and sanctity of Christian holy sites and of the displacement of Palestinians. CCJ was concerned about both these issues, and up to modern times is continuously salvaging what could have developed into schisms between several of the church groupings as well as between the Christian and Jewish communities. In fact during May 2013 CCJ managed a dialogic encounter between members of the Church of Scotland and the Jewish Board of Deputies following the Kirk's report, 'The Inheritance of Abraham? A report on the 'Promised Land' based on the question 'Would the Jewish People have a fairer claim to the Land if they dealt justly with the Palestinians? The Report discussed the theological right for Israel to continue to have the 'promised land', and argued Israel's existence is 'conditional' on its behaviour.

From the Christian perspective, the most recent project by CCJ is known as *If not now, when, Ve'im Lo achshav ai'n matai*.<sup>188</sup> This was launched in June 2015 and is the first time Jewish communities have been asked to respond through prayer and reflection to the persecution of the Christian communities across the Middle East. This project has been adopted by the majority of Jewish communities in the U.K., so these most recent incidents and responses by CCJ validates the importance of the existence of CCJ. The Jewish community is generally extremely concerned about the issues of Israel, in particular with reference to the Palestinians and this situation is contributing towards an increase in antisemitism throughout Europe. Therefore it was important not to miss this opportunity to discover if the respondents in this study initiated discussion about Israel, which led to them voicing their opinions and attitudes in relation to Israel. This subject

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<sup>188</sup> If not now, when [Online] Available at <http://www.ccj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/If-Not-Now-When.pdf> [Accessed 23 October 2015].

is important in itself but it also has significance in this study because the Israel/Palestine situation in the Middle East can impact upon interfaith dialogue. This topic is discussed in Chapter Three.

## 11. Jewish-Christian Relations

Before the Second World War many Christian theologians continued to teach and preach that the exclusive way to God was through Jesus, so that mission to other religions, and the conversion of others to Christianity was of prime importance. Inevitably this created fear and distrust amongst Jews. However, now, in the twenty-first century, for every Christian theologian still holding these views there are more who believe that in today's era of religious plurality, Christian exclusivism must give way to dialogue and to the understanding of other religions. Scharlemann, 1929 – 2013, who was a radical theologian best known for his theological works on the being of God and post modern examples of theological thought, is one who addresses this very issue, stating that:

... even though it is difficult, it is important for Christians to understand how an exclusively understood Christianity requires the acknowledgement of other religions as equal participants in truth and salvation.<sup>189</sup>

Braybrooke, writing about the experience of interfaith prayer concluded that Jews and Christians can share, at a religious and experiential level, the worship of another's religion.<sup>190</sup> Without this, he believes serious consequences are presented for interfaith dialogue.

Jewish theologians also cover a broad spectrum of ideas relating to interfaith engagement, but there are two main schools of thought which continue to influence Jews today and can be seen to have influenced some of the Jews in this study. Kimelman (2005) identified Soloveitch and Herschel as the two most consequential and widely read religious thinkers

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<sup>189</sup> Scharlemann, R.P., 1990 'Why Christianity Needs other Religions' in Peter Phan (ed.) *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism*. New York, Paragon. pp. 37 – 38.

<sup>190</sup> Braybrooke, M., 2001 'Interfaith Prayer' in Cohn-Sherbok, D. (ed.) *Many Mansions*. London, Bellow. pp. 152 – 3.

of the early twentieth century. Although both had had much in common in background and both saw prayer and the Shabbat as defining Jewish religious experience, in the area of Jewish-Christian dialogue they held antithetical positions.<sup>191</sup> Until the twenty first century, the Orthodox Jewish community respected the views held by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, who was the religious leader of Modern Orthodoxy for much of the 20th century. In 1964 in his paper 'Confrontation', he wrote strongly against theological dialogue. His theological ideas are still held by many today.<sup>192</sup> Soloveitchik used Torah, Talmud and Mishna to support his theology towards interfaith. He equated the struggle between Jacob and the Angel (Gen. 32:24), with the modern Jew who wrestles to end his twofold responsibilities of remaining a member of a covenantal community, whilst at the same time being a modern member of wider society. Soloveitchik believed that the practices, rituals, ethos and beliefs of a religion community should not be equated with those of any other religion community, but never more so than that of the Jewish community, which is steeped in the individuality of *halakhic* practice. He strongly believed that religion groups are able to survive by keeping to their dogmas, doctrines and values which a community believes are for the ultimate good. Soloveitchik also believed that each religion group is certain that their way is the 'right' way to find the ultimate truth; he thought that the centuries of persecution of the Jews by the surrounding non-Jewish society have made it impossible for Jews to consider an interfaith relationship with people who considered us a part of a sub-human species. The limited role that the Jews played in society until modern times was not of their choosing, so Jews should continue to be wary of interaction between the non-Jewish society which surrounds them today. For all these reasons Soloveitchik believed that any attempts, in whatever guise, of the majority

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<sup>191</sup> Kimelman, R., 2005 *Rabbis Joseph B Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel on Jewish-Christian Relations*. [Online] Available at: [http://www.edah.org/backend/JournalArticle/4\\_2\\_Kimelman.pdf](http://www.edah.org/backend/JournalArticle/4_2_Kimelman.pdf) (Accessed 20 March 2011).

<sup>192</sup> Soloveitchik, J.B., 1964 Confrontation. *Journal of Orthodox Thought*. Vol. 3, No. 2 [Online] Available at: [http://www.Bc.edu/dam/files/research\\_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/soloveitchik/](http://www.Bc.edu/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/soloveitchik/) [Accessed 10 March 2011].

religion to strip the minority religion of its uniqueness must be rejected. To establish a relationship between a majority and a minority, and particularly a majority group which has conversion as an important belief cannot achieve the continuity of the minority. Soloveitchik was also concerned that the unique language used by religion groups does not cross boundaries. He wrote that there is a 'universal language of modern man', but within Judaism we should always remember:

...our singular commitment to God and our hope and indomitable will for survival are non-negotiable and non-rationalizable, and are not subject to debate and argumentation.<sup>193</sup>

He continued to say that the relationship between man and his God is personal and private and is incomprehensible to the outsider, and that if the powerful community wishes to redress its historical wrongdoings, it should be done at the human and ethical level and not at the faith level. He said that if the debate does move to matters of religion then:

...one of the confronters will be impelled to avail himself of the language of his opponent. This in itself would mean surrender of individuality and distinctiveness.<sup>194</sup>

He did not believe that the Jewish people should suggest to the other community that it should make any changes in its texts. The desire for change should come from within that community itself. It should not be the role the Jews to offer advice or request change. Likewise, because of the martyrdom of millions of Jews, we should not in any way, even hint to another religion that we are mentally ready to revise any of our texts. Such a suggestion would be:

... nothing but a betrayal of our great tradition and heritage and would produce no practical benefits.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid Soloveitchik.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

Sloveitchik ended his paper by using the theology of the meeting of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 32:18-20), to say that the Jews, should participate in every civic, scientific and political enterprise and that we should feel obligated to help society with all the skills and talents we possess, but to the exclusion of interfaith dialogue.

This paper by Soloveitchik was subsequently reinforced by the Rabbinic Council of America, when a statement of support was adopted by the Council at their conference in February 1964. More recently, Breger reassessed Soloveitchik's article, and argued that most adherents of the Soloveitchik doctrine allow interfaith interaction only under very narrow constrictions, and deal only with politics or the delivery of social services. He concluded by saying:

... In my view this kind of narrow interaction fails to capture the human and spiritual synergies that could come from the full and vibrant interaction of all those who claim themselves as 'children of Abraham'.<sup>196</sup>

However Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel (1907 – 1972), a contemporary of Rabbi Soloveitchik, who was a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, held different views on Jewish-Christian dialogue from those held by Rabbi Soloveitchik. Herschel responded to Soloveitchik's article, 'Confrontation' two years later in 1966 in his article 'From Mission to Dialogue', which was then published as 'No Religion is an Island', in which he noted the differences between the contemporary and pre-modern lives of Jewish communities.<sup>197</sup> He believed that just as physical isolation is no longer a reality for Jewish communities, so spiritual isolation is also no longer a moral option. This did not mean that Herschel did not target Christian supercessionism, as he said that we pray:

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<sup>196</sup> Breger, M.J., 2005 'A Reassessment of Rav Soloveitchik's Essay on Interfaith Dialogue: Confrontation, *Council of Centres in Jewish-Christian Relations* [Electronic], vol.1, pp. 151 – 169 (2005 – 2006), [Online] Available at: <https://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol1/iss/18> [Accessed May 11 2011].

<sup>197</sup> Herschel, A., 1966 *No Religion is an Island*. [Online] Available at: [www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/~alan/chaplain/Herschel.html](http://www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/~alan/chaplain/Herschel.html) p. 1 [Accessed 1 June 2015].

...all human beings will call upon God. We abstain from conversion, and regard any attempt at depriving a person of his noble religion, of his heritage, as an act of arrogance. ... unless we learn how to help one another, we will only weaken each other.<sup>198</sup>

He also believed that:

... the world is too small for anything but mutual, deep respect; the world is too great for anything but responsibility for one another.<sup>199</sup>

Thus he illustrated his opposition to religious isolationism and challenged both Jews and Christians, saying:

... If Judaism is the mother of Christianity, it has a stake in the destiny of Christianity. Should a mother ignore her child (Isaiah 49:15) even a wayward one?<sup>200</sup>

In common with Soloveitchik, he used the Torah to support his views. He also believed that whilst we may not, as yet, be ready for dialogue in depth, a refusal to speak with Christian scholars would be barbaric and that we should study together with the objective of finding mutual understanding. Heschel ended his paper by asking what the purpose was, of interreligious cooperation, answering himself as follows:

...It is neither to flatter nor to refute one another, but to help one another; to share insight and learning, to cooperate in academic ventures on the highest scholarly level... What is urgently needed are ways of helping one another in the terrible predicament of here and now by the courage to believe that the word of the Lord endures for ever as well as here and now; to cooperate in trying to bring about a resurrection of sensitivity, a revival of conscience; to keep alive the divine

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid p.2.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid p. 3.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid p. 8.

sparks in our souls, to nurture openness to the spirit of the Psalms, reverence for the words of the prophets, and faithfulness to the Living God.<sup>201</sup>

Heschel's paper, like Soloveitchik's was also received with great acclamation - Heschel's by the President of the Union of the Theological Seminary. However, Kimelman, controversially considered how it was that Soloveitchik and Heschel, who had so much in common, held opposing positions on Jewish-Christian dialogue and concluded his article by considering whether Heschel's paper is still relevant and apposite today.<sup>202</sup> He concluded that Heschel's article would equally meet the demands of both Rabbi Soloveitchik and Rabbi Heschel.

The reason these papers written by these theologians have been described in detail is the significance of the lasting effect their views have had upon the involvement in interfaith activities by Orthodox Jews today. It will be significant if any of the views cited by Soloveitchik and Heschel are reflected within any of the Orthodox respondents. Later Jewish theologians also used Scripture, the Hebrew Bible, the Torah, to conclude that Jews should be involved with other religions.

Soloveitchik and Heschel were both American. Aitken and Kessler wrote that in recent years it has been in the United States that many developments in Jewish-Christian relations have taken place, and that in 2006 there were twenty centres where Jewish-Christian dialogues were taking place.<sup>203</sup>

Rabbi Randall Falk, who taught, before his retirement at Vanderbilt school of Theology, Nashville, Tennessee argued that because the Jewish people are bound by their covenant with God, and were 'chosen' by God to bring about the Kingdom of God, Jewry is obliged to witness God's truth to all

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid p. 22.

<sup>202</sup> Kimelman. R., 2004 rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel on Jewish-Christian Relations [Online] Available at] [http://www.edah.org/backend/journalarticle/4\\_2\\_kimelman.pdf](http://www.edah.org/backend/journalarticle/4_2_kimelman.pdf) [Accessed 20 March 2011].

<sup>203</sup> Aitkin J.K. and Kessler E., eds 2006 *Challenges and Jewish-Christian Relations.*, New Jersey, USA, Paulist Press.

people.<sup>204</sup> Professor Ze'ev Falk, Associate Professor of Law at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, until his death in 1998, discussed, that although the Torah is critical of religious diversity, because diversity was perceived as a threat to the existence of the Jews, there is a tradition within Judaism which recognises unity beyond diversity. In their very early history Jewish practice included some of the practices of the people among whom they lived, but these were gradually eliminated. This resulted in the centralisation of religious practice by the High Priests in the Temple in Jerusalem (2Kings.23:4). However Falk continued that the contradiction of this is then seen in Malachi 1:10-12 who rebuked the High Priests and stated, 'my name is great among the nations', meaning that every offering made by all peoples is still an offering to the same one God. Falk concluded that these verses expressed a positive attitude towards religious diversity.<sup>205</sup> Falk was a member of the *Jerusalem Rainbow Group*, a group of Jewish and Christian scholars which meets regularly for dialogue, and when he gave a paper at one of their meetings on the theme of 'Jesus the Jew' in 1979 he stated:

Reading the Bible is indeed a subjective affair and the most we can do is to represent an authentic system of ideas without imposing it upon others. There is only one condition for this pluralism of exegesis: any new interpretation should be offered as an additional meaning but never instead of the original simple one. The same hermeneutic rule should be applied in the theological discussion: there is justification for a new Christian understanding of the Bible if it does not exclude the Jewish one.<sup>206</sup>

Another philosopher, Wyschogrod, who is a Jewish German-American philosopher of religion, Jewish theologian, and activist for Jewish-Christian

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Falk, R., 1996 'Jesus as Messiah?' In Fry, H. P., ed., *Christian Jewish Dialogue*. Exeter, University of Exeter Press. Ch. 6 p. 144.

<sup>205</sup> Falk, Z., 1974 *The Mission of Israel: the View from Within*. [Online] Available at [http://www.etrfi.info/immanuel/12/Immanuel\\_12\\_102.pdf](http://www.etrfi.info/immanuel/12/Immanuel_12_102.pdf) [Accessed 15 July 2015].

*SIDIC Periodical XII 1979/3 'Jesus the Jew' pp. 23 – 25.*

relations, has been concerned with the theological relationship between Judaism and Christianity.<sup>207</sup> He argues that Jews should not just dismiss the divinity of Christ by attempting to argue that God's incarnation in man is somehow inconsistent with the teaching of the Hebrew Bible. He believes there is point to the Christological position whereby the God of Israel is concentrated within a single Jew rather than defused in the people of Jesus as a whole. Wyschogrod's writing on Jewish theology shows the importance in his thought of dialogue between Jewish and Christian theology.

Amongst those Jewish theologians who argue that Judaism must interact with other religions is Cohn-Sherbok who argued that Judaism must be open to the world's religions and traditions because there is no way of determining which, if any, doctrines have the truth.<sup>208</sup> He formulated a new Jewish theology of religious pluralism stating that Jews should now free themselves from the absolutes of the past, and should no longer regard Judaism as embodying God's full and final revelation; instead, the Divine should be placed at the centre of the universe of all religions. This would then enable the way to be open for interfaith dialogue. Cohn-Sherbok continued to state that ancient Judaism had a tolerant attitude to other traditions and that today this must continue.

In 1994 at an ICCJ conference in Jerusalem, Apple spoke about the Jewish perspective of Christian-Jewish relations saying:

...But the fact is that there are Jews who are genuinely convinced they have nothing to talk to gentiles about, and Christians who are sincerely convinced they have nothing to talk to Jews about. There are Christian objections and objectors to dialogue, and Jewish objections and objectors.<sup>209</sup>

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Wyschogrod, M., 2004 Incarnation and God's Dwelling in Israel. in Soulen, R. K. ed., *Abraham's Promise*. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans press. p. 178.

Cohn-Sherbok, D., 1994 *Judaism and other Faiths*. London, Macmillan. p.81.

Apple, R. 1994 Christian-Jewish Relations: A Jewish Perspective. [Online] Available at: <http://www.jcrelations.net/en/?item=801> [Accessed 9 March 2011].

Arguing against Cohn-Sherbok is Berkovits who said that Jews have always exchanged ideas with those of other religions and this must continue but not beyond the limitation of the Jewish-Christian exchange. Theologically, Berkovits said that dialogue is pointless. He accepted that Christians need to understand Jews and Judaism, in order to understand themselves. But for Jewish self-understanding, Christianity is irrelevant:

As far as Jews are concerned, Judaism is fully sufficient. There is nothing in Christianity for them.<sup>210</sup>

Due to the role of Christianity in the Holocaust Berkovits rejected inter-religious dialogue with Christians. He felt that human beings ought to treat each other with respect independently of theological dialogue, and of what they believed about each other's religion. He believed he was free to reject any religion but was duty-bound to respect the dignity of every human being no matter what his religion. In contrast, David Rosen has also written extensively about interfaith, but from the opposite stand point of Berkovits.<sup>211</sup> In an address on the 38th anniversary of the issuance of the declaration *Nostra Aetate* by the Second Vatican Council, Rosen stated that looking only at commonalities between Judaism and Christianity actually debases the religions, as this search for commonalities ultimately prevents and excludes a deeper understanding and learning of one another.<sup>212</sup> Rosen also wrote of the danger of the possibility within dialogue, of the misunderstanding of vocabulary and culture, whereby the same word can mean different things to different groups. He believes that interfaith dialogue can help to combat bigotry and misrepresentation and also help to combat prejudice and stereotypical representation of Judaism.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Berkovits, E., 1973 *Faith After the Holocaust*. New Jersey, Ktav. p. 73.

<sup>211</sup> David Rosen is the Director of the American Jewish Committee's Department for Interreligious Affairs and the Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding.

<sup>212</sup> Rosen, D., 2003 *Learning from each Other – Reflections of a Jew*. Address at Fordham University, October 28, 2003. [Online] Available at: <http://rabbidavidrosen.net/Articles/Christian-Jewish%20Relations/Learning%20From%20Each%20Other%20-%20Reflections%20of%20a%20Jew.pdf> [Accessed 10 March 2011].

<sup>213</sup> It is also interesting to note that Jewish writers now write about 'Jesus the Jew'; Jewish poets now write about Jesus and Christianity and Jewish artists now paint pictures about Christian theological scenes and represent the crucified Jesus as a Jew. The writers and artists did not see Jesus as a deity or even as a Christian, because for them Jesus lost his Christological and theological aspects, became detached from the church and became a symbol of subversion and rebellion, most probably as how the writers and painters wished to see themselves.

Thus it can be seen that although some modern Jewish academic scholarship is tending towards a positive approach to dialogue, there are also those who do not accept its importance beyond a superficial interaction can help to improve and develop a relationship between Jews and Christians. Neither of these scenarios illustrate or predict the outcome of interfaith initiatives and influence within the non-academic Jews who are living either within or outside communities in England. What it has tended to do is divide the Jews belonging to the different groupings of Judaism to hold differing attitudes and views towards interfaith involvement. Indeed this will be illustrated in the interviews in this study. Through CCJ there were also two important groups; the first was the Manor House Group Experience which was set up in 1984 to practice and develop dialogic techniques involving 'difficult' scriptural issues e.g., Christian mission and Israel, issues CCJ were reluctant to engage in out of deference to the two Presidents.<sup>214</sup> However, dialogue regarding these topics can be productive and non-confrontational providing the participants have developed a relationship of complete trust in each other prior to discussions.<sup>215</sup> After a period of 10 years the Manor House Project came to an end, but in 2011 CCJ set up a Theology Group with different participants whose aim was to continue the discussions of difficult issues in the same fashion as the Manor House Group. The papers resulting from this initiative will be published shortly.

The Manor House Dialogue Group and the CCJ Theology Group have found no writing on Jewish-Christian relations could omit the fundamental changes which have occurred between Jews and Catholics, dating from 28 October 1965, *Nostra aetate*, *In our Age*, a decree issued by the Second Vatican Council.<sup>216</sup> This decree by Pope Paul VI is the declaration on the Relation of the church with non-Christian Religions, recalled the spiritual

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<sup>214</sup> Bayfield, T., and Braybrooke, M. (eds) 1992 *Dialogue with a Difference; The Manor House Group Experience*. London, SCM Press.

<sup>215</sup> Bayfield, T., Race, A., Siddiqui, A. (Eds) 2012. *Beyond the Dysfunctional Family: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Dialogue with each other and with Britain*. London: The Manor House Abrahamic Dialogue Group.

<sup>216</sup> Declaration of the Church to Non-Christian Relations: *Nostra Aetate*. [Online] Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils\\_ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils_ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html) [Accessed 27 March 2014].

bond of the links between Catholics, i.e., the people of the new covenant, and the Jews, the descendants of Abraham. Also, most importantly, the document repudiates the charge of deicide against the Jews as well as condemning antisemitism. In response to *Nostra Aetate* came *Dabru Emet, Speak the Truth, a Jewish statement on Christianity*, issued on 10 September 2000.<sup>217</sup> It aims for Jews to acknowledge the positive changes in the attitude of Christianity towards Judaism since the Holocaust, and its eight statements enable Christians and Jews to explore their own religion whilst respecting and learning about the traditions and beliefs of the other.<sup>218</sup>

The authors of the statement were Tikva Frymer-Kensky, David Novak, Peter Ochs, and Michael Signer, all associated with non-Orthodox Jewish movements, and it was endorsed by over 200 Rabbis, representatives of various groups, about 5% of whom were Orthodox.<sup>219</sup> *Dabru Emet* originates from Zechariah 8:16.<sup>220</sup> The aim of its eight statements is for Christians and Jews to explore their own religion whilst respecting and learning about the traditions and beliefs of the other in order to contribute positively upon Jewish-Christian relations. It is a tragedy of religious history which created the need for *Dabru Emet*, although in the decades since the Holocaust, and the establishment of the State of Israel, there have been changes in the relationship between Jewish and Christian communities. Official public statements issued by Protestant and Catholic Churches have progressively shown an understanding of Christianity's role in historic anti-Judaism and remorse for the Holocaust. It reflects some of the issues of this study but the two are very different projects. The signatories of the Statement were largely American. Only five were from the UK, one of

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<sup>217</sup> *Dabru Emet*: [Online] Available at: [http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru\\_Emet\\_-\\_A\\_Jewish\\_Statement\\_on\\_Christians\\_and\\_Christianity.2395.0.html](http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_-_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html) [Accessed 4 January 2016].

<sup>218</sup> The complete *Dabru Emet* Statement is available in Appendix 4

<sup>219</sup> Holtschneider, K.H. 2004. *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*. [Online] Available at: <https://jnjr.div.ed.ac.uk/primary-sources/contemporary/dabru-emet-a-jewish-statement-on-christians-and-christianity/> [Accessed 4 January 2016]

<sup>220</sup> 'Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgement of truth and peace in your gates'. Zachariah 8:16.

whom was Orthodox.<sup>221</sup> Because of the USA bias, publicity occurred mainly through the American press and was widely acknowledged with great interest in Christian circles. Unfortunately the attention given to Dabru Emet in America was not replicated within UK Jewish circles, due to the lack of UK signatories. Without extensive publicity it was difficult for Dabru Emet to fulfil its potential to impact upon Jewish-Christian relations in the UK so that today there are few Jews, other than those involved in Jewish-Christian relations, who are familiar with its statements. Indeed some Rabbis in Britain questioned their obligation to reply at all to Christianity because of their lack of trust following two millennia of persecution by Christianity, culminating in the Holocaust. The impetus to respond to the Christian statements came from scholars who believed Christianity's positive statements on Judaism required engagement. Their response was the eight statements of Dabru Emet of which the first four statements consider the commonality between Christianity and Judaism, the fifth statement examines the Holocaust, whilst the last three statements look towards the future.

The first statement is Jews and Christians worship the same God: This statement's objective is inclusivity which in itself can be a difficult concept for some Jews. Its aims are i) to reach towards Christianity, ii) to provide viable communication and iii) to give validity to Christianity.<sup>222</sup> It encourages respect between the two faiths and provides the foundation for Jewish-Christian relations.<sup>223</sup> However, the history of Christian persecution of Jews makes it difficult for Jews and Christians to talk about God together.<sup>224</sup> The problem with this for some Jews is that it ignores essential theological differences between Judaism and Christianity and it is this which most likely created issues which prevented some Orthodox scholars and Rabbis being signatures of the statements. This statement has

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<sup>221</sup> Rabbi A Friedlander, Leo Baeck; Dr E Kessler, University of Cambridge; Rabbi J Rayner, Liberal Jewish Synagogue; Rabbi J Sinclair, University of Cambridge; Dr Geza Vermes, University of Oxford.

<sup>222</sup> Von Rad G. 1972 *Wisdom in Israel* SCM Press Ltd London p4.

<sup>223</sup> Shermis M, Zannoni AE. (Eds) 1991 *Introduction to Jewish Christian Relations* New York, Mahwah N.J. Paulist Press p251.

<sup>224</sup> Novak, D. 1992. *Maimonides view on Christianity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

high ideals towards creating foundations for Jewish-Christian relations, being fundamental to recognising God's saving of all humanity within all religions. Even so its controversial content discussed above has limited its impact. Religious leaders participating in dialogue, frequently emphasise similarities instead of respecting the differences in theology. This tends to create more superficial relationships which then discourage a deeper understanding. Whilst religious beliefs are seldom compromised during dialogue, humanity towards the 'Other' is the over-riding important factor. In the twenty-first century, Jews and Christians need to accept and respect differences, because we live in a multi-cultural society and we need to co-exist and live together. Sacks has stated that religious truth is not universal but he is also adamant that it does not mean that it is relative.<sup>225</sup> He suggests that the solution is 'a theology of difference', enabling the first statement to have the potential to impact positively on Jewish-Christian relations thereby encouraging a peaceful and respectful co-existence. This statement can be seen to have an overlap with Chapter Four of this thesis, *Jews in Pews*. This chapter considers the reaction of Jews entering and engaging within the sacred space of the Christian, the church. The implication of this is that the Jews are worshipping the same God as the Christians. However, as will be seen in more detail in Chapter Four, for some people this will represent challenge and conflict whereas others will be more comfortable. This limit has been expressed as a personal interfaith boundary giving the degree with which a Jew will engage in the sacred space of the Other thus demonstrating some commonalities with statement one.

The second statement was Christians and Jews seek authority from the same book – the Bible. Whilst seeking common authority, Christian and Jewish interpretations are frequently profoundly different because those of Christianity retrospectively reflect the coming of Jesus. The difficult issue of the continuing of the covenant with Israel, of paramount importance to

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<sup>225</sup> Sacks, J. 2002 *The Dignity of Difference*. Continuum London p55.

the Jews, was not addressed. This is an important omission. This statement does support the Church statements, but as Berger pointed out:

Although it is proper to emphasize that Christians ‘worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, creator of heaven and earth’, it is essential to add that worship of Jesus of Nazareth as a manifestation or component of that God constitutes what Jewish law and theology call *avodah zarah*, or foreign worship.<sup>226</sup>

He also commented that the statement implied that Jews should reassess their view of Christianity in light of Christian reassessments of Judaism. This inclination toward theological reciprocity he believes is fraught with theological danger.

The third Statement Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people on the land of Israel has evoked much criticism. Many Christians and some Jews find it difficult to separate the Jewish theological claims to the land from the political situation.<sup>227</sup> When the latter is fraught with problems many Christians and Jews find the claim even more difficult. Support for Israel in the Christian community comes primarily from those who wish to redress grievances and achieve justice for the oppressed which today is seen as the Palestinians to the exclusion of the Jews. These attitudes are now contributing towards the increase in antisemitism both in the UK, particularly on university campuses and in France. Support for Israel also comes from the Evangelical Christian movement because their theology teaches that the second coming of Jesus will occur when all the Jews have returned to Israel. The theological attachment to the ‘land’ must be acknowledged despite the political impingement. Also, the use of the word ‘can’ is a strange choice to have used. Christians ‘can’, but do they? It leaves the statement open to different interpretations which impact negatively on Jewish-Christian relations and to encourage more successful

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<sup>226</sup> Berger, D. 2002 Paper delivered at the first annual meeting of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations, meeting in Baltimore, October 28, 2002. [Online] Available <http://www.ccsr.us/dialogika-resources?catid=0&id=286> [Accessed 25 April 2016].

<sup>227</sup> Braybrooke, M. 1992 *CCJ and Israel*, The Council of Christians and Jews, UNET. Electronic Publishing, London. p1.

relationships the statement would need to be written more directly. There is a tenuous link here with Chapter Three when the respondents discuss the issue of Israel. Each respondent had their own views about this topic which is confirmed by the number of different issues in total brought forward.

The fourth statement, is Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah. The Torah gives sanctity to human life, although seemingly both religions have a problem in living up to it and accepting this fundamental divine right, e.g. from the Christian Crusades to the Shoah to the Palestinians and to events in Africa today. It is necessary to witness in words and deeds, the shared moral emphasis which Jews and Christians accept as their religious obligation and duty whilst accepting that Jews and Christians come to this 'shared moral emphasis' from totally different perspectives. It is impossible to alter history. However although the statement is a good starting point it would have had greater potential impact on Jewish-Christian relations if it remained underpinned on the humanity of the Torah, whilst was more forward looking.

The fifth statement Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon is for many Jews the most controversial and complex statement, but any Jewish statement today would be limited without the inclusion of the Holocaust. Unfortunately, this statement in its current wording deterred many Rabbinic Jews as well as some Christian clergy from signing, because although they agreed that Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon, many Nazis were Christian. A. Roy Eckardt, a Protestant Christian pastor described the text from John 8:43-47 'the road to Auschwitz'. Many Jews agreed with him and therefore did not sign.<sup>228</sup>

Whilst Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon, 2000 years of persecution by Christianity laid the foundations. This is a difficult message for Christians to hear today but they do need to listen and accept the consequences of this concept in order to create a true and deep relationship with Jews.

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<sup>228</sup> Berger, D. See Ref 222.

Dabru Emet explained that Nazism was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. However, many Nazis, including the leaders, were Christians and Hitler used the Church to endorse his policies.<sup>229</sup> Many Christian members became, at least, bystanders. The objectives for the inclusion of this clause was an attempt to distance and create a distinction between the two concepts. Dabru Emet can be seen as a response to parallel the Church statements, asking Christians not to blame Jews through every generation for the Passion of Christ.

This is the statement which caused the most problems for Jews and prevented many rabbis and scholars from signing the document. It could be suggested that even by the new millennium, it remained too early to address this subject in this way as there were still many survivors alive for whom this statement would have been too distressing. For those gentiles who acted to save the lives of Jews, the gratitude of the Jews world-wide has been expressed through the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. This statement continues by commenting, '...If Nazi extermination of the Jews had been successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians.' This is a strange concept to have included as it is pure conjecture and highly dubious. Its inclusion is questionable it is an unproven hypothesis. Though controversial, it is an attempt by the authors to persuade a generation of Jews who were not directly involved in the Holocaust, never to forget, but to accept the sincere regret of many Christians. It is possible that it is also an attempt at universalism which obscures the particularity of Nazi antisemitism. Perhaps it is still too soon after the Holocaust for many Jews and Christians to be able to discuss these issues together. It is necessary to ensure its acceptability to many more Jews before the potential for greater Jewish-Christian relations can be achieved.

The sixth statement, The differences between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in the scripture,

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<sup>229</sup> Luther, M. 1948 *The Jews and Their Lies*. Christian Nationalist Crusade.

is an attempt to address the pressure of conversion from Judaism to Christianity by some Christians, and to alleviate Jewish fears of Christian mission which are the major hurdles preventing some Jews from engaging in dialogue with Christians.<sup>230</sup> It aims to create inclusivity for both Christians and Jews. In this philosophical format it is weak, because it can neither be proved nor disproved. Jews would be more willing to participate in dialogue when Christians eschew supersessionary and missionary activity.<sup>231</sup> The interpretation of 'redemption' highlights differences between Judaism and Christianity in terms of what humanity can achieve until God redeems the world, or until the coming of the Messiah. This statement has the potential for greater impact on Jewish-Christian relations if mission was addressed directly instead of metaphysically. An author defended this statement because it does not state that Christianity and Judaism are humanly constructed. What it does state is that each community confirms the reality of God according to its own testimonies.<sup>232</sup> The seventh statement, a new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice is the attempt to address assimilation issues of the Jews, and is one of the most positive and reassuring concepts arising from *Dabru Emet* for Jews. The positive developments in Jewish-Christian relations are occurring whilst both religions are increasingly concerned for their continuity. Although there is no definitive evidence, it is believed that interfaith dialogue strengthens rather than weakens individual faiths and does encourage conversion. It is the only statement to offer re-assurance to Jews so that more Jews might be willing to participate in dialogue. This statement has the potential to benefit Jewish-Christian relations greatly as this thesis will demonstrate through its case studies. The last statement, Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace addresses the shared heritage between Christianity and Judaism and

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<sup>230</sup> Sandmel, DF., Catalano, RM., and Leighton, CM.(Eds) 2001 *Irreconcilable Differences?* Oxford, Westview Press.

<sup>231</sup> Fryer-Kensky, T., Novak, D., Ochs, P., and Signer M. 2001 *Irreconcilable Differences* in Sandmel, DF. Catlano, RM. Leighton, CM. (Eds) Oxford, Westview Press. p12.

<sup>232</sup> Signer, M., 2005 *The Covenant in Recent Theological Statements* in (eds) Korn, E.B., and Pawlikowski, J.T., *Two Faiths, One Covenant? Jewish and Christian identity in the Presence of the Other.* Oxford, UK, Rowman & Littlefield, Inc. p.120.

suggests shared working to improve moral and ethical actions by Jews and Christians working together to help to sustain those who are suffering. This aim follows the spirit of both Torah (Deuteronomy 1:16-17; Lev 19:17-18) the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Luke 10:29-37). It encourages a shared objective and is an important component in Jewish-Christian relations.<sup>233</sup>

Has Dabru Emet made a difference to Jewish-Christian relations? It did have an impact on Christian attitude to dialogue with Jews, although mainly in the USA. Regrettably it did not sustain the authors' high ideals most likely because once in the public domain its flaws as discussed in this section were too numerous. Dabru Emet addressed the major issues; its weakness lies in the detail, partly because it is extremely difficult to summarise theological beliefs and to convey the complexities of Christianity and the Holocaust in brief statements. It is a Jewish response and acceptance of the important theological changes which have taken place in Christianity over forty years.

The concept of Dabru Emet is extremely important and relevant. This document as it stands, however, is too aspirational. In order for Dabru Emet to have an impact on Jewish-Christian relations today, the time is right to re-visit and strengthen the statements, publish a revised version with a wider base of international signatories in order to gain international publicity. This first attempt should not disappear into obscurity but should continue to evolve and amend some of the weaker and dubious elements. A new document should also be developed further to include a practical programme relevant particularly to children and young people.

This thesis reflects some of the intentions of Dabru Emet, but this study takes interfaith much further. However, despite the progress of the last 50 years, covering a period of several popes, there have been periods of tension, often due to a lack of sensitivity, for example in 1984 Carmelite nuns opened a Convent at Auschwitz in 1984 which provoked protests

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<sup>233</sup> Novak, D. 1996 *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, Fry, HP. (Ed) Exeter, University of Exeter Press, p258.

from many national Jewish groups including the World Jewish Congress calling for the removal of the convent. Representatives of the Catholic Church agreed in 1987, however, one year later the Carmelites erected a large cross just outside Block 11, a torture prison in Auschwitz I, which was visible from within the camp. The Catholic Church ordered the Carmelites to move by 1989 but they did not do so and remained until 1993; however, the cross was not removed.<sup>234</sup> Another issue illustrating a lack of sensitivity was the Catholic canonisation of Edith Stein.<sup>235</sup> For some Jews the beatification of Edith Stein was another step in the process of the Christianisation of the Holocaust, as this action illustrated that Auschwitz, the symbol of atrocities and martyrdom, was not essentially a Jewish event, and exonerated the Church from centuries of Jewish persecution.<sup>236</sup> However Bemporad and Pawlikowski thought differently and constructively.<sup>237</sup>

In all these instances CCJ has helped to calm tensions and clarify the churches' current official approach to Jews and Judaism. Jewish-Christian relations were implemented from the beginning of the founding of CCJ through dialogue. How dialogue impacted upon Jewish-Christian relations must now be considered.

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<sup>234</sup> Rittner, C. A., Roth, J. K., 1991 *Memory Offended*. ABC-Clio Prager Publishers.

<sup>235</sup> Foxman, A. H., Klenicki, L., 1998 The Canonization of Edith Stein: An Unnecessary problem [Online] Available at: [http://archive.adl.org/opinion/edith\\_stein.html#.VajCfvlViko](http://archive.adl.org/opinion/edith_stein.html#.VajCfvlViko) [Accessed 17 July 2015]

Edith Stein was a well-known German philosopher who, in 1920 when she applied for a teaching post at several universities was denied a post not only because she was a woman, but because she was Jewish. However, on 1 January 1922, she was baptized into the Catholic religion and later became a Carmelite nun, under the name of Sister Theresa Benedicta of the Cross. She was unable to remain in Germany after 1935 because of Nazi persecution, and left for the Carmelite convent in Holland where she remained until the invasion of the Nazis and sent to Auschwitz. In 1986, Edith Stein was beatified by Pope John Paul II, and on October 11, 1998, she was canonized as a martyr-saint. Her canonization has created a storm of controversy in Jewish communities throughout the world, and affected Catholic-Jewish relations at the time.

<sup>236</sup> Langmuir, G.I., 1990. *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism*. Berkley, University of California Press  
Antisemitism has been catalyst which has led to the development of Jewish-Christian relations, and much has been written about its definition. This research will not offer a definition of antisemitism because there is no one definitive definition. Flexible definitions do exist but because of the structure of this study it would be unhelpful to forgo this inbuilt flexibility. The absence of a defined, fixed definition, enables the respondents to use the word subjectively in the way that gives them freedom. Because of this, a definition will not be imposed upon them.

<sup>237</sup> Bemporad, J., Shevack, M. 1996. *Our Age: The Historic New Era of Christian-Jewish Understanding*, New City Press.

## **12. Summary and Synopsis**

This thesis has set this study into context by addressing the background issues to the broad spectrum of interfaith. It now undertakes the transition from the background, methodology and literature to describing the evidence and the analyses of the interviewees' statements, observations, comments, insights and attitudes. Chapter Two will be devoted totally towards a close reading of the respondents' testimonies which will form the heart of this study. Here the background, upbringing and life experiences of the respondents will be documented together with their attitudes towards interfaith involvement.

Chapter Three will examine two distinct issues. Firstly, as mentioned above it will consider the respondents' attitudes towards Israel. Secondly it will examine the respondents' membership of CCJ, the only organisation which has Branches and operates on a grassroots basis and thus has the facility to impact directly upon the respondents. This is important because if many of those with positive attitudes towards interfaith are found to be members of CCJ this will reinforce and create an objective measure of the honesty of the testimonies with reference to interfaith attitudes.

Chapter Four is divided into two distinct sections to provide different perspectives on the interviewees and their complex views on interactions with those of other religions. The first section focuses on how beliefs and attitudes influence the behaviour of entering into the sacred space of the Other, into the Other's place of worship. The discussions on these issues become progressively deeper and may become more challenging to the interviewees. This chapter will also consider the respondents attitudes from the opposite perspective, that of non-Jews visiting the synagogue to attend a service.

Through these two different divisions a broad spectrum of evidence will be provided which will establish a complete picture of both attitudes and behavior of the respondents. This will enable a new conceptual and

pragmatic phenomenon to arise out the analysis of the findings from the interviews - a personal interfaith boundary, as described earlier.



## Chapter 2

### Jews in interfaith: An Analysis of Testimony

#### **Do Background experiences influence interfaith interest and involvement?**

Through exploration of oral testimony, this chapter will analyse in detail the respondents' attitudes towards interfaith. It will also examine the background and life experiences as described by the respondents themselves and analyse any links that exist between those attitudes and the background and life experiences of the respondents. This will be to determine if there are any events which changed or influenced their attitudes towards or involvement with people of other religions. Those who were found to have positive attitudes to the Other will be reported first; those with ambivalent attitudes will be considered next and those with the most negative views, the last. Respondents' affiliation to the Jewish designations of Orthodox, Masorti or Liberal will not be grouped together, but that affiliation will nevertheless, be made clear during the chapter. It was after much consideration that this structure was chosen because it is attitudes which are the most important component, not the religious affiliation, and this method of analysis enables the respondents' attitudes to be clearly illustrated. Also to date there is only anecdotal information available which identifies fewer Orthodox Jews involved in interfaith. This information will still be able to be endorsed or rejected with analysis by attitude. The objective remains the same, that is, to determine if there are any links between attitude and background which may have led to the resultant attitudes towards interfaith involvement of the respondents.

### **Interviewees expressing positive attitudes towards interfaith**

The first respondent to be examined is a woman, Yolande who was aged 67 at the time of her interview.<sup>1</sup> Yolande attends the monthly Masorti services and the Orthodox services in the intervening weeks. Yolande was the most striking interviewee whose background experiences can be clearly seen to have hugely influenced her attitude towards and involvement with other religions. She was educated at a Christian boarding school in Gloucestershire where church attendance was compulsory and the teaching of Christianity, to the exclusion of all other religions, was central to the curriculum. She was educated to a high level in the study of Christianity, the Gospels and the New Testament, and what she perceived as its anti-Jewish content shocked and surprised her. Once she realised this bias, which was very soon after she began attending this school at age 11, she stated:

I then needed to talk to Christians about what Jews were really like and not how they were painted in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup>

This education background influenced her to the extent that it made her determined immediately to interact with Christians to ensure that she could educate them to exactly what Jews believed, the theology of Judaism and how they lived their lives today. She noted:

If you actually went through the New Testament and if you replaced the word 'Jew' with the word 'Black' you would never read it out loud again.<sup>3</sup>

She felt she was sufficiently articulate to do this because her education at school enabled her to have the knowledge of Christianity from the 'inside'. She began talking to Christians at school about the issues and the history of Judaism:

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<sup>1</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Yolande at her home, at Yolande's request, on 11th March 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850016**.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

...This was how I started with interfaith work. I did it as a child at school, I did it as a student at university.<sup>4</sup>

She grew up in a very small Jewish community in Cheltenham and received her Jewish education mainly from her family.<sup>5</sup> In Cheltenham she attended Hebrew classes. However, she admitted that her Jewish education at *Cheder* was extremely limited. She was taught to read Hebrew, to know the Biblical stories and about the festivals; the *cheder* of the 1950s did not provide the Modern Hebrew education of today, which now frequently includes the Hebrew language and child-centric textual interpretation:

You weren't taught with any kind of, what I would call understanding, not the way the kids are taught now, and certainly no attempt at Modern Hebrew.<sup>6</sup>

Her family was strongly Zionist and she felt that that was where her main Jewish education came from. She also commented that because she was being educated and living within a strong Christian atmosphere, she wanted passionately to tell her Christian teachers and fellow students about Jewish practice, Jewish history and the history of Christian persecution leading up to the creation of the State of Israel. Because of this determination, she was forced to learn more about Judaism than both her family and the Hebrew classes provided, saying:

Of course, being in a Church of England boarding school, their questions about Judaism forced me to do much learning about Judaism even at an early age, and they moved me to explain it much more coherently to the outside world.<sup>7</sup>

The discussion focused on how she coped with attending the compulsory church services as a teenager and how the school coped with her, as not only the only Jewish girl in the school but also the only non-Christian attending church. Yolande related the attitudes of the school staff towards

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Cheltenham Hebrew Congregation; Jewish Community Records website. [Online] Available at: <http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Community/chelt/index.htm> [Accessed 3 February 2015] Also Roth, C. 1950. *The Rise of Provincial Jewry: The Early History of Jewish Communities in the English Countryside 1740-1840*. London, *Jewish Monthly*.

<sup>6</sup> Yolande. Ref 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

her Jewishness. She thought they felt she provided an excellent example to the other girls who, when they observed her sitting whilst the congregation was kneeling, were able to see and understand her as an example of someone who was strong in her own religion:

People used to go to the Head and say to see me sitting in church made them think about their own religion and say they wanted to be confirmed.<sup>8</sup>

She continued:

I used to go back regularly to say please, you haven't converted me, isn't it about time I didn't have to go to church anymore on Sundays, but it never worked.<sup>9</sup>

It would appear that the Christian staff 'used' Yolande as an example to others to remain committed to one's own religion. This is also an extremely significant statement because historically although Jews had for many centuries lived amongst Christians, there was, historically, a fear of conversion and persecution. More recently, this fear had been reinforced following the *Shoah*, which some of Yolande's parent's generation, who had lived through it, used as a reason for Jews to live separately from and have no interest in their Christian neighbours or in fact in Christianity itself. Yolande has confirmed that being involved and communicating with people of other religions did not encourage conversion, and as in Yolande's situation the very reverse of that happened.<sup>10</sup> Yolande also felt that being so deeply involved with Christianity as she was growing up gave her a better understanding of the religion and of the liturgy and texts. Yolande's commitment to interfaith led her to become one of the founders of CCJ when the organisation was re-formed in Oxford during the late 1960s.<sup>11</sup> She is also involved in The Oxford Round Table of Religions, the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Braybrooke, M. 1990. *Time to meet: Towards a Deeper Understanding Between Jews and Christians*. SCM Press. pp. 97 – 98.

<sup>11</sup> By the early 1950s, the Oxford Branch ceased operating. There is no remaining evidence as to why, although it must be assumed that post war it was felt there was little support at that time for a Branch because it was thought that there was no longer a need in Oxford for a CCJ presence. By the late 1960s young Jews had come to Oxford who decided to revive the Branch. It continues to function strongly today.

Three Faiths Forum and is engaged in dialogue work with Muslims. At the time of interviewing she was the vice Chair of the Oxford Council of Faiths, and is now the chair of this organisation of which she was one of the founders, starting the organisation in Oxford about nine years ago. This deep commitment to interfaith involvement is unusually strong within the sample. There is only one other who became *professionally* involved in interfaith but Yolande's exclusive involvement and direction is exceptional:

I guess most of my voluntary work or activities beyond the Jewish community are to do with interfaith work.<sup>12</sup>

She began to talk about her broadcasting on 'Thought for the Day' on Radio 4 and on BBC Radio Oxford for several years (Yolande had previously worked for the BBC). Yolande felt she had succeeded when she received a comment on her broadcasts:

'You say such wonderfully Jewish things in such Christian tones' - and I thought 'Got It!' Because people don't listen to you if you sound Jewish, but if you sound Christian but you're saying Jewish things you're doing the right thing.<sup>13</sup>

This is a really revealing observation because the language and interpretation between Judaism and Christianity is different. In this instance a third party noticed that Yolande was able to express her thoughts of Judaism whilst at the same time giving a presentation and using vocabulary in a manner which would appeal to Christians on their terms, thereby hopefully encouraging their understanding and appreciation of Judaism.<sup>14</sup> It was the influence of her education which influenced her presentation technique in this way.

Yolande continued to compare the different responses between some Jews towards some of their difficult texts in the *Hebrew Bible* and for some Christians towards some of their difficult texts, particularly those relating

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<sup>12</sup> Yolande. Ref 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Magonet, J. 1996. Scripture: How a Rabbi Reads the Bible. In (Ed) Fry, H.P. *Christian-Jewish Dialogue: A Reader*. Exeter: Exeter University Press ch.7 p. 170 And

Hellwig, M. 1996 Scripture: How a Christian Reads the Bible. In (Ed) Fry, H.P. *Christian-Jewish Dialogue: A Reader*. Exeter: Exeter University Press ch.7 p. 174.

to Jews, included in the *New Testament*. She decided it was better to reach an audience who would listen to her, rather than make a delivery which might have been more 'Jewish' in terms of presentation. She thought some texts could be problematic for any reader, but the difference between a Jewish approach to them is that there are always attempts to put them into context and offer a rabbinic discursive explanation and discussion as in the *Talmud* and the *Mishnah*. Efforts are made to interpret them so they have a contemporary relevance, whereas some Christians (mainly evangelical) accept them uncritically. Here she is making these comments as a practicing Masorti and did not mention that similarly some Orthodox Jews, like the fundamentalist Christians, accept the Hebrew Bible as it is written. She continued to observe that during her time of involvement in interfaith some Christians have now learnt to look at these texts as an intellectual challenge, which has now become much more acceptable but she thought it could be argued that the approach of the Christian to their text, especially in sermons, is not one of intellectual examination, it is more coming to the text with the eyes of faith. There is Christian reinforcement of this view.<sup>15</sup>

Included in the book of the *Hebrew Bible* used in synagogues are a series of Rabbinic interpretations of the verses, so that a congregation is free to consider these discussions whilst reading and following the text. This is helpful when the background is explained as the text is then put into context which is particularly useful when the text is difficult and contains violence. It is also important to understand how the laws and commandments were an attempt to put into place an early social and legal structure from around the twelfth century, e.g. with commentaries by

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<sup>15</sup> The Methodist minister and moderator of the Free Church, Donald English (1918-1998) wrote:

The secret seems to be that only as you are willing to respond to Jesus do you perceive by faith the truth about him.

English would welcome intellectual rigour in the reading of Scripture, but would emphasize the role of faith in its interpretation. However, Yolande commented:

... when you actually think that the New English Bible, which is not so very old, was translated without one person who was Jewish on the panel to help them, then you realise just how rejecting of any kind of Jewish contextualization it is. I mean it's absolutely fundamental in a way to Christian theology.

English, D. 1992 *The Message of Mark*. II, USA. IVP. p28.

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides or Rambam.

Yolande felt strongly about these unclear issues which she then discussed how she perceived the implications:

Not only do they [the Christians] not have it [commentaries and discussion of text] but if they did, it challenges whoever is actually taking the service, or whoever is giving the sermon. It gives you the tools to argue. ... All Jewish rabbinic learning is based on argument and debate, precedents and context, and for us it's really alien to accept scripture at face value.<sup>16</sup>

The above statement cannot be generalised across all Jews, as this would be unlikely to apply to the very Orthodox. She then confirmed how her schooling had influenced her involvement in interfaith. Thus Yolande's education, which was steeped in Christianity, has definitely influenced her attitudes towards other religions and encouraged her determination to ensure that members of other religions represented in Oxford receive an educated and a more nuanced view of Jews and Judaism. Her subjective perspective on this last comment:

They should never have given me that education that enabled me to get inside Christianity and to talk about Judaism. For me it was actually great, but it took me a long time to realise it.<sup>17</sup>

In summary Yolande's educational Christian experiences have created such a deep impression upon her that without doubt have influenced her chosen field of volunteer activity: that is a deep commitment to interfaith activities. As can be seen, she is highly articulate, not fearful to speak about the issues which she feels strongly about. Similarly committed to interfaith is Rabbi Michael, even though he has different perspectives on the subject.<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Michael is introduced in this study as one of the members of the OJC who is a retired Orthodox rabbi. He is not a rabbi who represents the OJC in any capacity of responsibility either inside or outside

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Yolande. Ref 1.

<sup>18</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Rabbi Michael in his home, at his request, on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850053**.

this congregation. He is a member, like any other member, who does play a part, on occasions, within services. His 'story' is exceedingly important for this study because he had a professional lifelong involvement and subsequent commitment to interfaith work.

Rabbi Michael was brought up in Cardiff in a home where his family felt it was important to be Jewish, but where his parents were not very observant.<sup>19</sup> He was 'sent' to synagogue on a Saturday but did not attend on a Friday evening to welcome the Shabbat. When he was about twelve, i.e., before his *barmitzvah*, he became more committed and more orthodox in his practice, subsequently voluntarily attending synagogue on a Friday evening, Saturday morning and festivals. In retrospect, he thought his practice must have been a nuisance to his parents because of the laws appertaining to Shabbat customs and rituals. It was his mother who suggested that because he was so '*frum*' he should become a rabbi, a suggestion he said he rejected at the time. He seemed reticent to speak about his childhood or education in more detail. Following school he went to Cambridge University and read philosophy and music. He said that after graduating he eventually decided his mother had given him the correct advice and he attended Jews College, the Orthodox Rabbinic College, became a rabbi and then began his first job as a community rabbi in the rapidly growing Jewish community of Whitefield, Manchester.<sup>20</sup> At the age of fifty, after several community Rabbinic posts he decided to make the change into academic and dialogic work in Christian-Jewish Relations, when he had the opportunity to go to Birmingham and set up the Centre for Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations.

Rabbi Michael could not remember exactly when he first became interested in Jewish-Christian relations, but knew he was certainly already

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<sup>19</sup> Henriques, U. (Ed) 2013 *Jews of South Wales*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press.

<sup>20</sup> Graham, D. 2013 2011 *Census Results (England and Wales) Initial Insights into Jewish Neighbourhoods*. London. Module Jewish Policy Research [Online] Available at: [www.jpr.org.uk/documents/2011%20census&20results%20%20\\_%20Initial%20insights%20ibto%20into%20Jewish%20neighbourhoods.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/2011%20census&20results%20%20_%20Initial%20insights%20ibto%20into%20Jewish%20neighbourhoods.pdf).

involved when he was in Whitefield by 1960. He therefore thought he had probably always had a concern about the subject:

My interest began when I was at school because I had to learn about religion. The people who taught me Jewish stuff were quite good on ancient texts like the *Mishna* and the *Talmud*, but they didn't know about theology, and I didn't know there was such a thing to ask about. But then I started reading St Augustine; and Thomas Aquinas was interesting. I knew they had written about Jesus as well, but that didn't seem very interesting to me. It didn't seem important. But they had these ideas about God and I learnt a lot of theology actually from the Christians first of all, then, of course, I read exactly the same sort of stuff in the Jewish sources.<sup>21</sup>

Although Rabbi Michael expressed interest in Christianity during his schooldays, by reading Christian theological texts, he felt the writings of and about Jesus were not relevant or important to him. Later, working in Birmingham he met, as he described, 'some very interesting people' in the theology department at the University. He also said how very pleased he was to have had the opportunity to work internationally both with the main Jewish Board of Deputies and the main church organisations e.g., the Vatican and the World Council of Churches, saying, 'It was actually a very interesting time and I'm grateful for the unique experience.'<sup>22</sup>

The discussion moved to consider whether it was important that Jews had dialogue with Muslims as well as Christians, and whether this should be separately as a dialogue or together as a trialogue. Rabbi Michael responded:

There is the specific relationship between Judaism and Christianity where there's a lot to be done and a lot to be said,

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<sup>21</sup> Rabbi Michael., Ref 18.

<sup>22</sup> The WCC is a fellowship of 345 member churches who together represent more than half a billion Christians around the world. [Online] Available at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches> [Accessed 29 December 2015].

and I don't think that should be diluted, dissolved or side tracked into something else.<sup>23</sup>

He continued to comment on the general question of relations between other religions, including Islam, saying:

There is the particularly close relationship between Judaism and Islam which is closer than that between Judaism and Christianity, and that again should not be dissolved into something broader. Both of these have to be looked into at the same time, because we know that we're involved in a world of many faiths.<sup>24</sup>

He believed that there was a place for both dialogue and trialogue and that there has to be talk between people whose religions 'claim to believe in one unique God'. He thought that it was easier to hold dialogues with those belonging to the monotheistic religions from the theological view point than dialogue with those 'involving what is generally referred to as Eastern Faiths lumped together.' He continued:

...but all these dialogues have a place, that's why interfaith dialogue is really such an important activity. It's dialogue among people; dialogue among ordinary people of all faiths, and this is very important in the secular world.<sup>25</sup>

What Rabbi Michael is reinforcing here is the importance of interfaith dialogue among 'ordinary' people. This supports the action of CCJ, the only interfaith organisation with a policy to work at a grassroots level. Rabbi Michael has expressed this concept of the importance of interfaith dialogue with a subtle yet different emphasis from Yolande. Both have expressed strong positive attitudes about the importance of interfaith in a global, multi-cultural society. Rabbi Michael thought that it was extremely important for the Jewish community to be involved in interfaith and believed it was disproportionately over-represented by Jews in comparison

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<sup>23</sup> Rabbi Michael. Ref 18.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

to Christians, and that there are now probably a comparable number of Muslims involved. He said that it is those people belonging to the minority religions that have a greater interest in developing interfaith relations, rather than those who belong to the majority religion. He did not offer the reasons for this but there are several reasons why this could be. It could be because the Jews had a perceived need to integrate into their host society, or as an investment for a more secure future in a new society or community or as an aspiration for their children, or next generation. This might suggest that interfaith encounter emerges as an evolutionary phenomenon in minority religious communities at a certain stage in their adopted country. This is a fascinating concept and was an issue not broached by Yolande.

The issue of whether Rabbi Michael thought it was important for communal leaders and rabbis to be involved in interfaith activities was considered. He was adamant this was so, stating:

Very much so, because I think it can have a profound influence on them [the rabbis/leaders] and consequently on the guidance that they offer to their community. I mean I notice myself, as a mere congregant, when you are in a community which has a rabbi, and that rabbi is a bit insular and talks about antisemitism and thinks all the *goyim* are against us and the rest of it, and then gets involved in interfaith work, and I've seen a couple of times, his attitude softens, and consequently so does whatever he's telling his congregation. So it's very important for the rabbis/leaders.<sup>26</sup>

From this statement, Rabbi Michael felt that involvement in interfaith by communal leaders was extremely important. He had experienced how it had had a direct influence upon the community. Rabbi Michael thought that a rabbi who becomes connected with other religions will broaden his approach and look outwards, beyond Judaism and encourage his congregants to do likewise, rather than remain inward looking. In fact

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<sup>26</sup> Kahn-Harris, K. 2009 *Communities in Conversation: Jewish Involvement in Interfaith Activities in the UK*. London: The Board of Deputies of British Jews p.50.

Rabbi Michael noted he had observed the impact on his own congregation. He stressed that this also enabled Judaism to become more relevant in relation to other religions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, whilst at the same time ensuring a commitment to Judaism remains unaffected.

It is important to compare the similarities and differences between Yolande and Rabbi Michael which brought them both to become involved in interfaith work. Significantly, both are committed positively to interfaith involvement. The former is deeply involved on a voluntary basis, whilst the latter is equally committed but on a professional and academic footing. The former reached her decision to devote her voluntary time to become a leader of interfaith because of her experiences as a child growing up in a Christian boarding school environment and experiencing for the first time, as she perceived, the anti-Jewish teachings of the Anglican Church. The latter's interest began when he first studied Christian theology, and before he was even aware that Judaism also included such Jewish theologians and philosophers.<sup>27</sup> Thus Yolande learned and studied Christianity through her school and it was this learning which enabled her to use this knowledge to introduce Judaism to Christians on their terms. Rabbi Michael maintained an interest in interfaith work whilst holding positions as a communal rabbi in England, which gave him the experience to observe the impact of this interest on his own and other Jewish communities, so that ultimately, through his experiences as a spiritual leader within the Jewish community, reached his decision to become involved in interfaith academic work. Yolande is involved at grass roots level whereas Rabbi Michael is the academic. Thus the first two interviewees who held positive attitudes about interfaith involvement both expressed very different routes through which they arrived at their individual positivity. Rabbi Michael was born and brought up in Cardiff as has been seen, Rabbi Michael who is Orthodox and Yolande Masorti. It is intriguing now to consider the views of

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<sup>27</sup> There are many Jewish theologians, for example in medieval times these include Spinoza and Maimonides; later ones of Soloveichik and Heschel and more recently Leo Baeck, Levinas and Sacks.

another respondent who was also born and brought up in Cardiff, albeit a decade earlier than Rabbi Michael. This is Dominic who, at the time of the interview was aged 88.<sup>28</sup>

This retired academic was 88 when interviewed, and he regularly attends Orthodox services. He was an interesting and thoughtful interviewee because in some instances we discussed issues which he had previously not thought through, and which he was aware that he now wanted to spend some further time deliberating. Dominic was born in Cardiff of immigrant traditional Orthodox Jews who had come into Britain in 1913. The family story was that they came to the UK to escape the antisemitism and pogroms in Poland.<sup>29</sup> The language spoken at home was Yiddish and initially for Dominic English was a second language until he began school. He said that even after he left home he still wrote home in Yiddish. Although the main focus of education at home was Judaism, mainly Jewish practice, Dominic mixed at school with non-Jewish children although he did not make close friends with them. Indeed, there were only eight Jewish children in total in his 'elementary' school and 25 in his grammar school. His parents had Irish Catholic neighbours with whom, he said, they were quite superficially friendly, for example, ensuring the health of each family was good. He said that on New Year's Eve one of their neighbour's sons came first footing, but that it didn't seem to have anything to do with him. He continued:

My mother would have thought that the notion that God had a son was astonishing.<sup>30</sup>

Dominic went to *Cheder* five times each week and always attended an Orthodox synagogue each Friday night, Saturday and days of festivals. In fact he said that it never occurred to him that they were any other Jews or synagogues other than Orthodox. Thus he was brought up being immersed

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<sup>28</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Dominic at his home on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850029/30**.

<sup>29</sup> Many Jews did come to escape persecution, but many also came for other reasons, e.g., in order to find an improved standard of living and education for their family.

Samuel, R. and Thompson, P. (Eds) 1990 *The Myths We Live By*. London, Routledge. p.7

<sup>30</sup> Dominic., Ref 28 Chapter 2.

in Judaism and much more so than was Rabbi Michael, in the same city. Dominic was brought up in poverty, without money to buy him the necessary school books. Fortunately, a teacher in his secondary school, realised Dominic's academic potential, and provided him with the necessary books, second hand. However Dominic's parents were also focused on a secular education for their son, an education of which they themselves had never had the opportunity. Dominic managed to obtain grants, sufficient to cover all his education costs and went to Oxford, studied PPE and ultimately became a professor of economic organisation. In his early education, however, even though he mixed with non-Jewish boys at school, he did not make close friends with them:

I just took Jewish life for granted. Christianity had absolutely nothing to do with me. I never thought about it. The idea of interfaith relationships wouldn't have crossed my mind.<sup>31</sup>

He asked himself when he became interested in interfaith and answered:

Intellectually once I came to Oxford when I began to realise that there were relationships between the faiths; that there was a sharing, although a different interpretation of what was called the Old Testament, and I thought about it in the sense that I would like see good relations between Christians and Jews.<sup>32</sup>

He described how at Oxford as an undergraduate, he made non-Jewish friendships for the first time which were different from the non-Jewish boys with whom he interacted during his school days:

I had friends who were non-Jewish, and I got more interested in what they believed, but I don't believe that I seriously got interested in an effort to develop interfaith relationships until I got involved in CCJ in Oxford in my old age.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

He returned to his childhood and gave an interesting vignette of the attitudes towards other religions from the era before he went away from home, revealing that he never thought of his neighbours so much as Christians but as the other way round – as them not being Jews and of the problems of Jews living in a non-Jewish society. He thought that when Jewish scholarship was beginning to be willing to talk about Jesus, if he had discussed Jesus at home, his father, have asked ‘What’s wrong with you?’ However, he thought it excellent that:

You can have a book with the title, ‘Jesus the Jew’, with nobody necessarily saying ‘that’s astonishing’. It is pretty courageous to be like Bishop Harries and speak as he does.<sup>34</sup>

Dominic identified that it was the influence of Oxford, the OJC, the people and the university which introduced him to interfaith in depth. Dominic also had an understanding of the Jewish attitudes towards interfaith held by some Jews including some in this study, of their concern with the historic role played by Christianity in antisemitism. He addressed the perceived risk held by some Jews of the potential for conversion of Jews through interfaith interaction, but did not think this created a problem, and thought it was necessary for members of each religion to have an understanding of the other. Considering the risk of conversion he said:

I don’t think it’s going to cause a mass of Jewish conversions to Christianity, so I’m not frightened. I think it’s necessary to understand the basis of religious belief of other people ... fundamentally there is a kinship between some elements of Christianity and elements Judaism.<sup>35</sup>

Despite a shared physical location of upbringing with Rabbi Michael, there is a wide gulf between their journeys through life to an interest in interfaith. Dominic grew up totally separated from or interested in Christianity, something he reinforced several times during the interview, whereas for Rabbi Michael, it was his interest in Christian theology that

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Harries was Bishop of Oxford and past Chairman of CCI.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

provided the springboard for his commitment both to the rabbinate and to interfaith involvement. In contrast to Yolande it was her early exposure to Christianity which provided the catalyst for her involvement in interfaith. Despite Dominic's narrow upbringing, his introduction to university life, his subsequent academic career when he worked and lived in many diverse countries across the world, all these enlarged his horizons and experiences. Thus when he returned to live in Oxford on his retirement he became interested in interfaith issues to the extent that he joined CCJ and served for several years as a prominent committee member. Compared with both Rabbi Michael and Yolande, Dominic's commitment to interfaith came much later in life. There is another interviewee who shares a common facet of upbringing with Dominic so it will be useful to examine the path trodden by Eleanor aged 63.<sup>36</sup>

In common with Dominic, Eleanor was born to Orthodox immigrant parents, although Eleanor's family came to London from Germany in the early 1930s, twenty years after Dominic's family. Eleanor was brought up in London at Hampstead Garden Suburb Orthodox synagogue.<sup>37</sup> Her father became very active in the community serving as warden and he also worked on a voluntary basis supporting Jewish charities, Jewish education societies and Zionist activities. However Eleanor felt his practice was certainly different from the average Orthodox Hampstead Suburb member, as even though they practiced Orthodoxy there was a liberalism in the background, both political and theological. Her grandmother was the theologian of the family who had taught the Bible to secular Jews in Germany. She held unconventional opinions and because Hampstead Garden Suburb was about being conventional, Eleanor felt a bit different. She thought her father adapted his practice to fit in more with Hampstead

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<sup>36</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Eleanor in her home on December 4th 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850035**.

<sup>37</sup> The establishment of synagogues in the Golders Green area including Hampstead Garden Suburb. [Online] Available at: [http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/london/golders/history12\\_epilogue.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/london/golders/history12_epilogue.htm) [Accessed 29 December 2015].

Garden Suburb but there remained one or two things where Eleanor felt they were different. Eleanor expressed it:

We had all sorts of eccentric family members and all sorts of eccentric stories. We were all a bit different! My grandmother used to write letters to Buber, and to Rosenzweig – and get answers.<sup>38</sup>

We discussed where Eleanor thought she fell today on the religious spectrum. She replied:

I don't want to define myself as Orthodox, because that definition comes with a whole load of things which I don't identify with... and I am willing to experiment and look at things differently, I've been involved in Jewish Renewal in Israel and I'm now part of the egalitarian Masorti group.<sup>39</sup>

On *shabbatot* when there are not Masorti services, Eleanor will attend the Orthodox services. She described how for her, tradition was also very important. Even so, she did not want to become too attached to an unthinking tradition, because she thought if that happened, then religion became comfortable, something she believed it was not meant to. However, she also thought if one moved too far off the original structure then there was no remaining base to relate to. She thus believed it was important to have a tradition to relate to, to engage in dialogue and to learn, so she avoided an unthinking adherence to it. She continued:

I'm sure I have my comfort zone areas like anyone else, but it's not static, and if it does become static, I start to feel uncomfortable about it.<sup>40</sup>

She continued to explain how she might move in theological terms rather than in her terms of practice for example, despite any changes in her theological approach to Judaism, her practices e.g., how she keeps Shabbat

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<sup>38</sup> Eleanor. Ref 36 chapter 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid .

at home, remain unchanged. She reported that she did not cook on Shabbat, or boil water, travel or turn lights on or off. Eleanor commented:

Some people would regard that as extremely Orthodox and other people would think I'm a heretic. But that's what Judaism is about.<sup>41</sup>

She continued that she would like to be able to learn much more; she regretted that there were few resources for learning in Oxford, where she attends Rabbi Norman Solomon's lectures.<sup>42</sup> She said she enjoyed engaging with people who thought the opposite of each other so she could learn from their discussions.

Eleanor is a Jewish storyteller by profession who looks at Jewish sources and overlays a contemporary approach to them. At the time of the interview, she was working on a collaborative new project with her Muslim colleague about Joseph and Zulaicha, who was Potipher's wife, exploring the Jewish and Islamic sources.<sup>43</sup> She continued saying how much she enjoyed an encounter with someone of a different religion because it drew you closer. She said:

Having a spirituality in common, the fact that there is something special which your life revolves around which provides a community and a relationship to something bigger, all those things are the bits that I love.<sup>44</sup>

She used to be involved in organising the Interfaith Walk.<sup>45</sup> This very popular activity in Oxford begins at the OJC, continues to the City Church

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Organised by the OJC, Rabbi Norman Solomon leads an informal weekly class in Talmud. The classes are open to all and meet in the library every Wednesday in term time. Texts are in Hebrew and Aramaic but are translated as the class progresses.

<sup>43</sup> Eleanor found that Rashi and some Su'fi sources do not demonise Zulaicha. Rashi said that Zulaikha wanted to be with Joseph in the world to come and he did not respond negatively. The midrash Rabba and Yalkut Shimoni both say that Zulaikha saw in the astrological charts that she was going to have Joseph's child, but she was wrong, it was her daughter, Asenat bat Potiphara. Both sources base their ideas on the proximity of the Tamar story and the Zulaikha story, since Tamar acted for the sake of heaven by seduction, so did Potiphars' wife. It is interesting to note that Potipher's wife was not named in the Bible, only in Midrash.

<sup>44</sup> Eleanor. Ref 36 Chapter 2.

<sup>45</sup> The first Interfaith Walk was in 2003, 12 years ago. It was the idea of two Anglican priests, one of whom personally provided the funding; Eleanor was one of the Jews who helped with arrangements. After 6 years the organisation was taken over by the Council of Faiths of Oxfordshire. The walk begins at the OJC with a short address, continues to the City Church of St.Marys, a distance of about a mile, where tea and biscuits and continues another two miles to end at the Mosque, where a supper is provided for all. Last year over 1,000 people participated in the walk. Now it includes people of all faiths with the aim to enhance relationships between people of faith groups.

and ends with supper at the mosque. The idea is to develop friendships whilst walking between people of different religions. The Friendship Walk is referred to by several of the other interviewees. Eleanor said how much she loved working with the Christian priest and the Imam, both of whom were very motivated. She thought there was an aspect of this involvement that was almost like a spiritual journey. She commented that the civic side of interfaith activities interested her a lot less; everybody being very nice, and getting into the local papers, but not really getting into any depth.

It's just not my thing, even though it is very worthy. I've had many different encounters with different people that have kind of opened my eyes, it's often the case of Christians telling stories. Actually I belong to an interfaith storytelling circle. In that context it's wonderful to hear those stories, although there are difficult things behind interfaith like people will say things you don't like.<sup>46</sup>

Eleanor is the one of the first respondents to address this issue of people of other faiths making difficult statements within an interfaith setting. On the one hand it is not unreasonable to expect that even within interfaith activities that all people, whilst remaining true to their own beliefs, would remain guarded in what they would actually verbalise in order not to upset the Others. On the other hand, this approach of congeniality can be viewed as an untruthful response to oneself as well as a degree of superficiality. However, it is necessary to look beyond the immediacy of the interchange and consider which approach would create a longer term objective of interfaith interaction. Eleanor found this situation extremely difficult because she said it 'awakes' some difficult emotions because her father, who came out of Germany in the 1930s used to say very clearly 'Christianity is responsible for the Holocaust'. At the same time as he said this he also had good relations with Christians, good Christian friends, but still insisted 'they made it possible'. As a child attending a non-Jewish

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<sup>46</sup> Eleanor. Ref 36 Chapter 2.

primary school, she used to reject her father's views because she also had good Christian friends. With hindsight she wondered if she resisted her father's comments because:

It was just too heavy for me to carry and I didn't want to carry it, but I know exactly what he meant. It created a climate of de-legitimisation.<sup>47</sup>

By this statement Eleanor articulated that although she had good Christian friends whilst she was at school, she was influenced by her father's strong unwavering condemnation of the complicit role played by Christianity in the Holocaust. Eleanor found this contradicted and 'de-legitimised' the Christian friendships of herself and her father which she found extremely difficult. She commented that as an adult she wished she had not heard some of the comments spoken by some Christians. Perhaps this was her coping strategy with these issues.<sup>48</sup> Significantly, she continued to describe further experiences working within interfaith in terms of the Jewish community, this time coping with the Jews who sometimes express exactly what they dislike about Christianity. In this situation she felt she had to play the liberal role. These experiences for Eleanor cover the difficult spectrum of an involvement with interfaith at a greater depth where the difficult relationships and controversial attitudes arise from time to time between Christians and Jews. Eleanor also made a very significant observation when Islam is added to the equation of Christians and Jews:

It's very hard for my Muslim friends to understand how Christianity can hurt me because they don't have that problem; they don't have that history of antisemitism that is bound up in Christianity, which makes it hard for them to understand.<sup>49</sup>

Eleanor has been the first respondent to include interfaith involvement with Muslims and to express this anxiety. Others have mentioned the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Kellermann, N.P.F. 2001 Psychopathology in children of Holocaust Survivors: A review of the Literature. *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences* Vol. 38 No.1 (2001) 36-46. And Williams, S.S., *The Impact of the Holocaust on Survivors and their Children*. University of Central Florida. [Online] Available <http://www.sandrawilliams.org/HOLOCAUST/holocaust.html> [Accessed 20 July 2015].

<sup>49</sup> Eleanor. Ref 36 Chapter 2.

difficulty of Israel and the politics of the Middle East which arise on occasions between Muslims and Jews, but no-one hinted at the lack of understandable empathy which Eleanor's Muslim friends identified between Christian antisemitism towards Jews.

Eleanor has thus a background in common with Dominic in being brought up in a family who came to this country to escape Nazi Germany, although he was brought up a generation earlier than Eleanor in a family whose 'story' had been that they escaped Polish persecution. The comparison, however, is tenuous and superficial because the generation difference between their parents' immigration was to a very different British environment, with different local attitudes towards Jews and a different history. Eleanor has spent much of her life, both at a professional and voluntary level, being dedicated and committed to working within interfaith at a grass roots level, as has Rabbi Michael from a professional standpoint. Again this reinforces the positive policy of CCJ enabling the formation of Branches and encouraging interfaith engagement to happen at a local level. After Yolande left school the Branch network also supported her committed voluntary involvement (albeit all from different starting points). Dominic came to the whole concept of interfaith work much later, in his retirement, whilst Eleanor shares a professional involvement in interfaith with Rabbi Michael. Eleanor is also the one of the first respondents to address the issue of people of other religions making difficult statements within an interfaith setting.

These responses illustrate how it is most important that discussions of difficult texts can only occur following the development of a relationship of trust, as shown earlier by the Manor House Group and the CCJ Theology Group. The texts the Jews find most difficult tend to concentrate on the Christian 'truth' through Jesus, which lead to statements about mission. Eleanor has also so far been the only interviewee to have referred to Christian culpability for the Holocaust. Perhaps this is because Eleanor is, within this chapter, the only respondent whose family had directly experienced the rise to power of the Third Reich, the result of which was

the reason for their British domicile. Eleanor was also the only respondent to discuss so far the problem that the Muslims she knew found it difficult to understand that today in the UK, the relationship between Christians and Jews could be difficult. Certainly Muslims are not recipients of the historic antisemitism contained within the Gospels, as Islam was not a recognised religion at the time of the Gospels, and nor did they experienced the blood libels of the Middle Ages in the UK. However, Muslims suffered mass murder by the Crusaders despite fighting the Christians during the Crusades in the Holy Land, even destroying the Constantine Church of the Holy Sepulcher in 1009, as well as being persecuted during the Spanish Inquisition.<sup>50</sup> The issue today which is difficult between Jews and Muslims is concentrated around the politics of the Middle East. Perhaps Eleanor was not aware of involvement of the Muslim persecution by the Christians, but by addressing these points make Eleanor a significant respondent. In summary of the interviewees discussed so far are Yolande, who has dedicated her voluntary commitment to interfaith, initially at an educational and grass roots level, and latterly at local government through the Council of Faiths; Dominic, a child of immigrants, initially had little awareness of any different religions other than Judaism, and even within Judaism was unaware of any alternative groupings other than orthodoxy. In later life, after the broadening of his experiences of different cultures he became involved in grassroots interfaith activities through Oxford CCJ; Eleanor, also a child of immigrants had a broader exposure to other religions plus a deeper education, but, not unusually, she carries a reaction to her paternal experiences of Jewish persecution in Germany. Eleanor has devoted her life to interfaith professional involvement through Jewish and multi-faith story telling; Rabbi Michael has devoted his latter life to academic Jewish-Christian relations and he stressed the importance of congregational rabbis looking

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<sup>50</sup> Soyer, F. 2007 *The Persecution of the Jews and Muslims of Portugal. King Manuel I and the End of Religious Tolerance (1496–7)* The Medieval Mediterranean. Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1500. Volume 69 Leiden, Brill.

outwards and being involved with other religions because how this can influence for the better their congregants attitudes towards interfaith. All the respondents so far are members of Oxford CCJ and came from an Orthodox background, although both Yolanda and Eleanor attend Masorti services. Now the first Liberal interviewee can be introduced to this group. This is Norman who, at the time of the interview was aged 50.<sup>51</sup>

Norman was brought up in North West London in a committed Reform Jewish background. His father has been an active member of the community and held various offices including vice-chairman, head of education and as a teacher in the Hebrew school. Norman spent two years after university living in Israel studying in an *Ulpan* followed by a course in Jewish studies, before he returned, as planned, to do academic work. He has family who live in Israel who he and his own family visit. Norman's siblings both work in London for Jewish organisations. Norman's wife is German and she undertook a reform conversion to Judaism. We discussed how both sets of parents felt when Norman and his wife decided to marry and his wife converted to Judaism. The response was very revealing particularly from Norman's perceptions of his wife's parents:

The hardest thing is that they [*his wife's parents*] are the same age exactly, 82, as my parents and so were children during the war. I think that the main thing he [*his wife's father*] learnt from the war was not to be different, but to fit in.<sup>52</sup>

Norman's wife left Germany to study in the USA and this, as perceived by Norman, in her parents' eyes, made her seem different. Continuing further along the line of 'difference', he explored whether his wife's conversion to Judaism affected her parents:

The hardest thing for them when she did convert was, I think that conversion makes you look at things differently, and my wife did.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Norman in his home on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2012 in Oxford. Recording VN850035.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Norman thought his own father had dealt with the issue of his son's marriage by becoming more observant in his religious practice and Norman wondered if this was in fact so. After asking his sister for her thoughts, she asked his mother who confirmed that a relationship did exist between Norman's marriage and his father's increased religious practice. It can be seen therefore, that Norman's marriage caused profound reactions from both families.<sup>54</sup> Norman added, 'So you see Christianity is part of our lives anyway'. He described how initially his wife's conversion had made him see commonalities between Judaism and Christianity, but then felt this was a mistake. His wife's family is a very close family in the same way as the ideal Jewish family; for her the family always comes first. He then thought that her move to Judaism was not quite such a large step because she already had the same family value system and priorities as exist in Judaism. After talking about his background and initial thoughts, Norman spontaneously began to talk about the attitudes of the different strands of Judaism to each other i.e., intra-faith, stating:

It's extraordinary for me how interacting with Jews from other strands of Judaism inculcates prejudice.<sup>55</sup>

He described the different spectrum of Reform communities in London, each with its own differences and preferences, some being more Progressive and some leaning more towards Masorti. However, even within the London Reform community as a whole, he had heard what he expressed as 'tribal' comments made about other Jews. He continued:

Even in the Oxford Liberal group I have heard tribal comments about the Orthodox; mainly that *they* are different from *us*, in the sense like they are 'Not on our team'. I've never heard

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<sup>54</sup> Vermeer in his paper Religion and Family Life, describes the parental religious influence on children. He confirms that the family is the place where the intergenerational transmission of religious belief takes place and thus reinforces the continuation of religious traditions. Vermeer does not discuss the effect of a conversion on a family, but it is apparent that a conversion or intermarriage of a child disturbs the usual family dynamics, so that the effect of a family member becoming more observant should not be surprising  
Vermeer, P., (2014) Religion and Family life: An overview of Current Research and suggestions for Future Research. Religions 2014, 5, 402–421; doi:10.3390/rel5020402. [Online] Available at <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/5/2/402/pdf> [Accessed 27 June 2015].

<sup>55</sup> Norman. Ref 51 Chapter 2.

anything like this from the Orthodox group, but then some of the Liberals may have the perception that they are viewed as 'not proper' Jews.<sup>56</sup>

Historically Progressive Jews have been vulnerable to be viewed on occasions by some Orthodox and particularly *Charedi* Jews, as 'not proper Jews' because their ritualistic adherence to *Halacha* has an inbuilt flexibility instead of a defined compulsory code of practice of observation. Within Norman's context it is interesting that he highlighted the aspect of 'difference' between Jews to each other, which was the very element that his father-in-law had suppressed after he lived as a child through the Nazi and post-war period in Germany. Norman thought that some Jews had a preconception about Jews belonging to a different spectrum of Judaism from themselves, but that these views of the Others were not thought through:

There is an element of 'them and us'. It's more a 'we do it our way' so they make comments against the other team...

Because of this I am very comfortable with being in Oxford and having a choice of a number of services to attend.<sup>57</sup>

So far Norman has been the only interviewee who has addressed the issue of 'intra-faith, but examining some of the observations to date it would appear that there is link between the size of the community, i.e., the actual number of Jews belonging to one single specific synagogue group, and the preferences of that specific community towards an inward looking attitude towards themselves to the exclusion Others. Indeed, in some instances it leads to expressing disparaging attitudes towards, not only of other groupings but also to communities of the same grouping who hold practices and attitudes that may differ only slightly from their own. To avoid this situation it would appear that a community must be below a specific critical mass so that it is unable to operate independently from Jews with differing rituals, customs and beliefs. It would seem that the OJC

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

is below this critical mass which minimises this effect and contributes towards the success of the unique structure of the OJC. It is not eliminated altogether but it is certainly lessened. As Norman described, this situation represents ancient tribal competitiveness. Norman continued to illustrate the inclusive nature of the OJC by relating that even within his own family different members have preferences as to which service they choose to attend: for example, because of his wife's conversion, she is more comfortable with the Progressive service which includes more English, whereas he and his eldest daughter prefer to attend Masorti services. This modus vivendi is well-tolerated and is part of the very culture of the OJC, which Norman valued and appreciated. The structure of the OJC enables different services to be enjoyed within the same family as well as the same community.

By profession, Norman works within the oil industry and so has contact with many Arabs from Middle Eastern countries, including Lebanese, Saudis and those from Dubai. These colleagues are aware that he is Jewish. He recalled he has had interesting discussions with them and they visit each other's homes - something he values greatly. This makes his experience of interfaith different from the other interviewees in the study, because his interactions with his Muslim colleagues are founded upon everyday business activities and they do not take place under the constructed banner of formal 'interfaith' activities. He felt that he did not want ecumenical services with the Muslims where Jews and Muslims pray together but thought there was certainly a need to interface with Muslims and have interfaith dialogue. He argued:

The trouble is that connections with Muslims are very slow - I don't think we should underestimate how hard it is for them to join in with other religions, particularly when the news is so bad in the Middle East. They feel they are being disloyal to other Muslims living in the Middle East.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Again, this statement is one expressed uniquely by Norman. It is significant because he is expressing similar views to those held by Chief Rabbi Hertz in 1942 during negotiations for the formation of CCJ, that is that interfaith should exclude theological interaction, or in this case political interaction. Norman illustrated some commonalities between Jews and Muslims by relating possible scenarios about how both Jews and Muslims take actions to circumnavigate the detail of religious practice in order to continue to observe their religious practice. Having discussed Norman's personal attitudes towards interfaith, he progressed to talk about whether he thought interfaith activity and involvement was important per se to the Jewish community. His response, after a short pause, remained focused on Muslims:

It seems important to me that yes it is. It is extremely important to develop even narrow bridges initially so there is a channel, it doesn't matter how narrow, but at least there will then be an open channel... A bridge has been developed by CCJ to the Christians. But then that is easier because they are mainly white middle class and not too different superficially from us, although there can be issues there as well.<sup>59</sup>

Norman concentrated on Muslims as the focus of interfaith because that is his experience, with which he has a broad perspective, and which is illustrated by his ability to empathise with the issues affecting them. It was only in his last sentence that he introduced Christians, who he thought already had a means and structure to access interfaith dialogue with Jews through the CCJ - that is via an established pathway. Possibly Norman was not aware of the Three Faiths Forum in Oxford which is another pathway for Muslims to interact with those of other faiths. It is significant that he has been the sole interviewee to address a possible cultural, class and racial difference between Muslims and Jews and Christians. There is no evidence to substantiate Norman's perception of this, other than

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

anecdotal.<sup>60</sup> The personal experience of interactions with Muslims are different from those illustrated by other interviewees so far. Norman has been able to develop a relationship with his Muslim colleagues through his work, so prior to any discussions or conversations taking place about their different religions, a relationship of trust and a knowledge of the other as an individual has already been established. Additionally, because of the environment in which they meet, although their background and culture differs greatly, there will be existing similarities in their education and social class. Norman is therefore not interacting with Muslims who are experiencing poverty and deprivation at this point in their lives.

When asked if he was involved in any formal interfaith activities, Norman replied that he only took part in the Interfaith Walk, commenting that he was not very proactive. He felt the situation between Jews and Muslims had eased because the Muslims now came on the walk and came to certain events held at the synagogue. To him, this was an indicator that they were beginning to feel comfortable. The interview probed whether he thought it was important for formal interfaith activities to include Muslims as well as Christians. Norman thought that both were equally important but that the imperative was different. He reinforced how much he enjoyed discussions with his Muslim colleagues. Norman related a poignant story about the distress of one of his colleagues during the Middle East war in Lebanon in 2006. His colleague's family lived in the Bekar valley and that during that incursion the family had no power, or electricity and thus were unable to charge the batteries of their mobile phones. This meant his friend was unable to be in touch with his family. Norman continued:

Shortly after that he was getting married in Lebanon and I was invited to the wedding. I must say I was a little concerned about it; how I would get there and how I would be received, but then my friend decided it would be too difficult for him to find

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<sup>60</sup> The anecdotal evidence is that of the current and previous Directors of CCJ and of the researcher, all of whom have travelled and interacted with all the CCJ Branches in the UK where they have identified a majority of middle class members.

someone there who could take care of me all the time, and he valued both me and his family too much to take the chance.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the 'problems' in Lebanon Norman maintained a good relationship with his colleague who was able to distinguish between the politics of the region and a friendship with a Jew in the UK. It is interesting that although Norman is not involved in formal interfaith activity, he is, in fact extremely motivated, involved in and committed to informal Jewish-Muslim relations with the people he knows. It is also significant that Norman refers constantly to and perceives his Muslim colleagues as 'friends', and has been able to deepen a working relationship into something more. This is an example of a special interfaith relationship based on friendship and trust as mentioned above between the Manor House Dialogue Group and the CCI Theology Group which has illustrated that dialogue can take place at a deeper level whilst still maintaining a respect for the Other when it is based on a relationship of trust. One could wonder why this informal but intense relationship has not transferred to a commitment to interfaith in general. It could be that Norman does class his commitment to his Muslim colleagues beyond that of a work relationship as his contribution to interfaith involvement, or it could be a more prosaic reason - because his work represents a huge time commitment in his life and he also needs time to be with his wife and the lives and education of his three daughters. Also a slight ambivalence can be detected about his attitude to formal interfaith, and there is a possibility that Norman does not usually class his social involvement with his Muslim colleagues as such at all, but he described this relationship because the interview was focused around interfaith relationships.

Norman was the first interviewee to address so fully the issue of intra-faith which, although he could understand and excuse, he still disapproved of. He introduced this issue spontaneously and confidently, and it will be important to explore if any other respondents also introduce this topic. In

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<sup>61</sup> Norman. Ref 51 Chapter 2.

addition Norman is the first respondent whose partner converted to Judaism from Christianity, which makes him different from the other interviewees so far. Of this he was very open, discussing the impact of his wife's Christianity and German origins upon his wider family, as well as the effect of his wife's conversion both on his own parents and his German in-laws.

Building up from those respondents introduced so far Norman's ideas are different from Yolande, Rabbi Michael and Eleanor in as much as he spoke as a Liberal Jew about intra-faith and also of his engagement of interfaith with Muslims. From Norman's ideas as a Liberal Jew we now we progress to an Orthodox respondent with another fascinating yet very different background. This is Anne who was aged 70 at the time of her interview.<sup>62</sup> Hers is yet another unique story as her Jewish travels went in the opposite direction from Rabbi Michael mentioned earlier. Anne was born during the war, and brought up by her mother in a town about twenty miles south of Manchester where there were very few Jewish people. Her father, a doctor, was away fighting in the Second World War. Anne's grandmother came to the UK from Odessa and she had no Judaism or Jewish practice in her life, although she would clearly define herself as Jewish. Therefore Anne's mother, likewise, had no Jewish knowledge, and she did not bring up her children knowing they were even Jewish. When Anne, the eldest of three girls, was about to start a convent primary school she was told rather confusingly that she was not Catholic and that she had to do what the Protestant children did. Once her father came home from the forces two years later when she was seven, then she began to realise she was Jewish, although she had little concept or understanding what that meant. She was then sent to attend the local *cheder* where there were about six or seven other children up to the age of 12 or 13. When she reached the end of the first Hebrew reading book, she had to teach the younger children from the

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<sup>62</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Anne in her home on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2012 in Oxford. Recording VN850024.

book she had just completed. Looking back she was surprised to say how much she enjoyed the learning at these classes.

Feeling a sense of, at least I had somewhere where I felt people were like me, because at school they clearly weren't.<sup>63</sup>

This small *cheder* began to give Anne her Jewish identity which she was pleased to receive. Following primary school Anne passed the exam and attended the prestigious Manchester High School, the girls' direct grant school, where to her astonishment she found there were many other Jewish girls. Initially at school Anne went in to the school assembly until another Jewish student told her that Jewish girls did not go into prayers. It was through these girls that she first found out about the concept of kosher food, because this was not part of her family custom as the Jewish girls at school did not have school lunches, something she had never previously heard about. She then attended *cheder* at a large synagogue near to the school which again she really enjoyed and where she later taught. Despite a lack of Judaism in her home she revealingly remembered:

So I had this sort of sword of Damocles hanging over my head from my grandparents and my parents about marrying out. So that was very firmly drummed in, you know, cut off without a shilling; never darken my doorstep, etc etc.<sup>64</sup>

After school Anne attended Manchester University where she met her Sephardi Jewish husband who was more knowledgeable and more observant about Judaism than she was, he having attended the only British Jewish boarding school. They married and came to live in Oxford in 1965. We discussed where she would place herself today on the Jewish spectrum and after some thought decided she was 'Middle of the road', she continued:

I'm the usual sort of hypocrite where I don't keep all the things I should ... I'm a bit irrational. I like the traditions which make me feel part of the community which is really what I think being

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Jewish is all about. I don't think it's anything to do with what you believe at all. I like the culture, the literature, the biblical stories, the background, the food and the people.<sup>65</sup>

She noted she had become more observant recently but was unsure as to why this was. Whilst one of her children had married a non-Jew, she did not make a connection as the reason could be similar to his father's, spoken of by Norman following, his own inter-marriage. Anne wondered if her observancy reduced the number of decisions she had to make thereby giving her life an imposed framework, for example she now only eats kosher food. She attends synagogue each Shabbat, is a past President of the OJC, used to belong to one of the Jewish synagogue societies, taught at *cheder* and was co-chair of the education committee.

The discussion then explicitly addressed the issues of interfaith, which she thought was important to engage in. This was because she thought it was helpful to make positive connections to people of other religions, providing there was no element of conversion involved. She thought it was good to be open about your own religion as well as to understand the religions of the Others. She thought it was important to socialise on many levels and to have some discussions and interaction on religion, about your own religion and about what the religion of the Other is about. She still goes into schools on behalf of the OJC to talk to children across the age spectrum about Judaism. Many years ago she was chair of the Parish Council. On Remembrance Sunday there was always a service at the local Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. Until her watch this service was an Anglican Christian service and wreaths were laid around the cross within the cemetery. Against much opposition she managed to establish that the service would become interfaith and include all the branches of Christianity as well as Judaism.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Anne gained support that the wreaths should be laid on and around the war memorial rather than the cross, so that all faiths could lay their wreaths together. She achieved this change despite vociferous opposition and the service remains today in this format. Anne did not explain her involvement with this initiative in great detail herself. The researcher remembers the detail of this event.

We spoke about how she felt regarding interfaith dialogue. She said that she always found the discussions between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbi fascinating, observing:

You know they're NEVER going to agree. It's great that they have these conversations but let's face it, one is oil and one is water. Both very valuable, both have a lot to give and I don't see anything wrong with that.<sup>67</sup>

However, she continued to say that she found the Chief Rabbi's presence on a Shabbat in Westminster Abbey attending the wedding of William and Kate most hypocritical.<sup>68</sup> When pushed further as to why she answered:

He's in a place of Christian worship. What is he doing there surrounded by crosses? He won't go into a liberal synagogue. He won't pray at the cenotaph on Remembrance Day, yet he wants to please his far right colleagues. You can't do that. That's my view.<sup>69</sup>

Anne thought the Chief Rabbi was not giving a clear signal of where he is on the religious spectrum. She said that he represented the Orthodox communities, but because half the Jewish population in the UK are not Orthodox he actually does not have any authority to represent the remaining 50% of British Jewry - a detail that is frequently not understood by non-Jews. Because it is the orthodox who he is really representing and he is orthodox, Anne thought he should comply with Orthodox *Halacha*. This is an illustration of a personal interfaith boundary which, as described by Anne in relation to the Chief Rabbi is inconsistent. She also addressed briefly the issue of intra-faith relations, like Norman, commenting on the Chief Rabbi's refusal to go to Hugo Gryn's funeral.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Anne. Ref 62 Chapter 2.

<sup>68</sup> In this study, the Chief Rabbi referred to is Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, now the Emeritus Chief Rabbi and his attendance at the Royal wedding, particularly on a shabbat was not universally accepted. See *Jewish Chronicle*. 9<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Anne. Ref 62 Chapter 2.

<sup>70</sup> Hugo Gryn was a well-liked and respected Progressive Rabbi. See "Leaked letter widens schism in Jewry", *The Independent*, 15 March 1997.

Anne expressed quite firmly that she felt 'he did not stick to his own rules'. Anne has not been the only respondent to consider the formalised civic involvement in interfaith engagement. Yolande is prepared to be involved in civic events, but Eleanor feels that these occasions are not appropriate for her to be a participant. Anne has been the only interviewee to criticise the previous Chief Rabbi because she felt he did not observe the rules of *halacha* supported by the Jewish religious group he represented. She described herself as traditionally modern orthodox, which was a common descriptor of the 1960s. She illustrated her views on intra-faith through the conduit of the then Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks and the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and although Norman also addressed intra-faith issues he did so from a different perspective. Anne was also actively involved in interfaith engagement at a grassroots level. It can be seen that Anne's Jewish journey was different from the other respondents; she began as a child with no knowledge that she was even Jewish to become by 70 a knowledgeable practicing Jew committed to her community, able to describe some of the decisions taken by the previous Chief Rabbi's as hypocritical and very active within interfaith engagement. She agreed that interfaith dialogue had a purpose, in common with Rabbi Michael, Dominic, Eleanor, Yolande and Norman, although she did emphasise her concern that these interactions must occur without any element of conversion, a concern which Dominic felt was unnecessary. She thought that interfaith was useful and fulfilled an educational need and she was involved in all these aspects of interfaith activity. She was prepared to act on behalf of the Jewish community on occasions when she felt there was discrimination against them, for example for the wreath laying ceremony on Remembrance Day. Her outstanding and diplomatic dialogue ability enabled the Jewish community to play an important part and participate at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, situated a mile from the centre of Oxford, on Remembrance Sunday. This gives her a prominent place in contributing to interfaith activities. Another respondent who is a regular attendee at the Remembrance Day service and very committed to

interfaith is one of the leaders of Liberal Jewish group at the OJC. This is Tessa, who was aged 61 at the time of her interview.<sup>71</sup>

Tessa was brought up in the London Liberal synagogue, where her parents were married. Her father came from a family whose father had been an Orthodox *chazan* in Vienna. Tessa's father, was not interested in Judaism and so although her parents were of the generation that were usually involved with the synagogue, she thought for her parents it was only peripherally. Tessa thought her paternal grandmother was serious about her belief in God, even though she never remembered seeing her going to synagogue. Her parents used to attend the Liberal synagogue regularly, and she attended Hebrew Classes from the age of five onwards. She described her Jewish background as 'a pretty straightforward Liberal background'. In common with Orthodox/Masorti Eleanor and Reform/Liberal Norman and Orthodox Dominic, Tessa grew up as a child of first generation German immigrants.

She said she found the Hebrew classes very boring, so did not take an awful lot of notice of what was being taught, and accepted that her Jewish knowledge was sketchy. It is interesting to track Liberal changes of practice over the decades, as when he reached the age of 13, Tessa's brother decided he wanted a *barmitzvah*. At that point it was not possible to be *barmitzvah* in the Liberal synagogue, so the family changed to the nearby Reform synagogue.<sup>72</sup> This illustrates a new perspective on the intra-faith debate, as subsequently, following her brother's *barmitzvah*, the family returned to the Liberal synagogue when Tessa was due to have a confirmation at 16. But after beginning her preparation for this event she decided:

It was meaningless. It was a sort of Christian type of concept. It was a whole group of people who had their confirmation

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<sup>71</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Tessa in her home on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012 in Oxford. Recording VN850051/52.

<sup>72</sup> At the ages of 15 and 16 Liberal Jews undergo the unique ceremony of Kabbalat Torah, an acceptance of Torah or Confirmation. Initially within the liberal movement this ceremony took place instead of the traditional Bar or Bat mitzvah, but more recently due to pressure from congregants, Liberal Jews also celebrate bar and batmitzvah at the age of 13 and then are encouraged to continue to learn to take their confirmation of Torah at age 15.

together... I just thought the whole process seemed pointless. A charade in a way. It wasn't one thing or the other. It wasn't that I wanted a *batmitzvah*, but I just thought a confirmation was a bit daft. So I took part in a service which wasn't a confirmation and to me that was satisfying. I'd always felt strongly Jewish. It wasn't anything to do with lack of Jewishness. I just felt that confirmation was without point.<sup>73</sup>

At around the age of 18 Tessa attended a service where a rabbi preached what to her was an appallingly bitter sermon about Jewish practice. She was shocked and outraged and to counteract this she found some different Jewish classes which discussed the Leo Baeck essence of Judaism which she found was totally fascinating and right for her. Tessa reinforced and stressed that she was very committed to Judaism. In her twenties she made the decision that she wanted to marry a Jewish man and bring up a Jewish family. This she did, and after their marriage came to live in Oxford where she said she 'quite' enjoyed the services. She said the Liberal group was already established but after a few years the numbers were dwindling. She observed:

I was really sad to think that we had this extraordinary opportunity to have a shared synagogue, and out of pure apathy it was just declining, so that's when I did my little bit of praying and - what on earth do we do, how on earth do we sort this out, and the word 'Food' dropped into my head, – who said there isn't a God! And I thought what on earth is food doing in it, and really it just occurred to me, we should have meals afterward the services, and that's what started that off, about 30 years ago.<sup>74</sup>

Tessa continued:

I seriously believe, although I never expect God to answer, that God moves in mysterious ways! So that got everybody back

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<sup>73</sup> Tessa. Ref 71 chapter 2.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

again, you know the incentive for getting together for food, and it just seemed to revive everything, and they all began to come back.<sup>75</sup>

This began to revive the Liberal group, possibly by providing an extra incentive which socially bonded the group inclusively together following the service. It can be seen that Tessa always had a strong affiliation towards Judaism, but she has been one of the few respondents to actually talk about her own personal belief and relationship with God. Anne described her belief and connection with Judaism as being unconnected with a spirituality, and to date the other respondents have not spontaneously mentioned 'God'. As her children reached Hebrew Classes age, Tessa again became aware of her lack of Jewish knowledge. She began to attend the Jewish conversion class in Oxford to remedy this, for two years until she took over the delivery of this course herself and is now qualified and is recognised to make Liberal and Reform conversions by these authorities.

Tessa described her understanding of 'interfaith' as:

The opportunity to mix with others of other faiths, or other people who feel strongly about their faiths, strong enough to stand up and be counted, and want to share partly in the need for those who do believe in God or at least in their religion to back each other up, because there are so many out there who don't, and it's getting quite aggressive. And I think it's more than just a polite sharing with each other, it's actually a backing up of each other.<sup>76</sup>

As with her openness about her relationship with God, Tessa has expressed her understanding of interfaith with a different emphasis from most of the other respondents. She included the concept of people of faith who feel sufficiently strongly about their religion to the extent that they want to ensure that people of religion, whether the same or different, are aware of

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

this facet of them. She felt that all people of religions should be able to bind together to address the increasing level of what Tessa perceived as 'aggressive secularism' as a united front. Eleanor expressed similar thoughts describing the deeper friendship that she was able to develop between people of religion, irrespective of what the religions were because it is the shared concept that creates the deeper understanding. Tessa's interest and involvement in interfaith began through Yolande, with an involvement in the Council of Faiths:

It seemed to be a really good concept that people in Oxford were there for each other. It was less of a religious organisation than one where people would support each other's needs. I've made some really lovely friends and I think it's a great organisation, but I'm terribly disappointed that it never seems to seep down beyond the people who are the members. I don't know how you do that, because it seems to me that they're the ones who are committed and interested and the other members of their community tend to be too busy. They can just about hang on to what they are meant to be doing for themselves so that the idea of going off and celebrating other people's festivals or taking part, just doesn't happen.<sup>77</sup>

Tessa shared this analysis with Eleanor, who likewise appreciated the friendships that were forged but regretted that some of the interfaith organisations failed to reach downwards and involve those at the grassroots level.

And I think that's a terrible pity because for me it's really been discovering that the Other is identical to us, they just do it in a different way and on a different day. Obviously that doesn't go for every religion, but the degree to which I discovered that has been very heart warming, but I think that it's very sad that we can't get it to trickle down better. There is the CCJ which has

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

been very nice, very enjoyable, but then again I am terribly disappointed that it also is the same.<sup>78</sup>

Tessa has enjoyed discovering the commonalities shared by the monotheistic religions whilst at the same time appreciating the differences in all religions. She reinforced her disappointment that the organisations had not involved people of other religions at grassroots level. She commented that although the CCJ had the Branches which operated at grassroots level, she felt this was insufficient. Tessa said how worthwhile and meaningful she felt Jewish-Christian relations were, how supportive and enthusiastic the Christians are, that she felt she carried some degree of responsibility that so few Jews were willing to be involved. This comment is diametrically opposite from the one stated by Rabbi Michael who thought that the minority faiths were in fact over represented.<sup>79</sup> Tessa expressed an involvement in interfaith as both a benefit to her, personally, to deepen her understanding of other religions, but also as a way of generally increasing knowledge and combatting secularism.

The last Liberal Jew with positive views is Ruby, aged 52.<sup>80</sup> Ruby grew up in a German Jewish refugee family, who were reform and who had been very active Jews in their home town of Breslau. Her parents each escaped the Nazis independently, came to the UK, met, married and settled in Birmingham, where the whole family are very active in liberal Judaism. Her elder brother is a Liberal Rabbi and Ruby is an active member of the Oxford Liberal community. Ruby was educated in non-Jewish schools in Birmingham and has retained very close friendships with friends from her school days who are not Jewish. She said that she was also very active at weekends at the Jewish synagogue youth club and has retained friendships there; she has the same attitudes in her work place. She works in a non-

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> It was shown on page 28 in section 1 that 31% of the members of CCJ Oxford Branch are Jewish whereas only 0.3% of the Oxfordshire population are Jewish. Rabbi Michael is thus correct in his assessment that Jews, as a minority faith are overrepresented in interfaith.

<sup>80</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Ruby in the researcher's home on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN50019**

Jewish environment and has friendships with her non-Jewish work colleagues. She comments:

I think it's important to meet people from all different walks of life.<sup>81</sup>

Ruby has been involved both as a child and as an adolescent in interfaith activities, and the family were also heavily committed to giving talks about Judaism in schools or demonstrating the Jewish festivals. In common with many of the interviewees Ruby also participates in the Interfaith Walk where she commented that there were 15 different religions walking together from the synagogue, via two churches and ending in the Mosque. She said the purpose of the walk is:

Purely to show and demonstrate to each other *AND* to Oxford about walking together in harmony.<sup>82</sup>

Ruby is the only respondent to assess and include an objective to the Interfaith Walk, that of creating friendships. Her background and upbringing has been steeped in interfaith, which she has continued, but it is her approach to church involvement which is of interest because she has had some original experiences and attitudes.

From a Liberal Jew actively involved in interfaith to the last respondent with positive attitudes towards interfaith activity. This is Yvonne who was 75 at interview.<sup>83</sup> Her childhood was steeped in Orthodoxy and although she has remained an Orthodox Jew has some original thoughts and ideas of the impact of Orthodoxy on her adult life.

She has had a remarkable life. She and her sister were the first generation to be born in this country from grandparents and their two daughters who came to the UK from Poland. Like Dominic, Yiddish was the language spoken at home. Different from the other respondents, her mother died when she was a child and she lived between her aunt and her grandparents. She continued through school with domestic responsibilities

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Yvonne in her home on January 16 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850038/Folder39**.

and whilst at secondary school she had to return home over lunch time to care for her grandfather. She attended the *Ashkenazi* synagogue of her grandparents each Friday evening, Shabbat and festivals. The attitudes of the family were narrow and life revolved around Jewish and synagogue activities. To illustrate this narrowness Yvonne mentioned that it was not until later life that she discovered the Sephardi Bevis Marks synagogue was very close to her home, she had no awareness of Sephardi Judaism nor of the existence of Bevis Marks synagogue.<sup>84</sup> The family lived in the East End of London in poverty; she developed a great love for opera whilst at school and she managed to escape without her family knowing and attend the Opera at Covent Garden obtaining cheap seats through school. She was able to continue to the sixth form and university in Leeds, the latter only being allowed because arrangements had been made for her to live with the local Rabbi in exchange for Yvonne helping care for the Rabbi's family. After completing her degree she returned to the East End and taught history. By this time she felt she was stifled by her family as she was living in two conflicting worlds. This was multiplied when she married a man from an educated Jewish secular German humanist background. She adopted two Jewish children, but conflict arose between her two families regarding the Jewish education for the children. Sadly her husband died very suddenly when the children were teenagers and several years later she remarried an academic who was also a secular Jew. When discussing how these two very different worlds Yvonne lived in influenced her attitudes towards interfaith issues, she commented:

I think what my childhood did was shut me off from was actually respecting and knowing other people, so that now I feel that getting to know other people and respecting them is very important. And I didn't have the opportunity and I wasn't allowed to do that until I actually grew up, as actually my first

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<sup>84</sup> The Bevis Marks synagogue is the oldest synagogue in the UK opened in 1701. It is a Sephardi synagogue, Jews who came from Amsterdam via Spain and Portugal. Their customs are different from the Ashkenazi Jews who came from Eastern Europe including Poland.

husband had lots of non-Jewish friends, and I think they were lovely people to be valued also.

She continued:

He introduced me to a secular world and really I'd got the best with him because he was 'Jewish' but he didn't behave as a traditional Jew, so his friends, his music, they didn't talk about shul affairs, but we had Lieder parties where they would play all this German music. It was much more openly cultural – an introduction to a different culture that was not Jewish.

Yvonne's marriage brought her into direct contact with a life well beyond the limitations of immigrant poverty Orthodoxy and greatly expanded particularly the musical experiences she had secretly begun to enjoy at Covent Garden when at school. However, concurrent with her enjoyment of secular life, and despite her two marriages to secular Jews, her background of a deep commitment to Judaism has remained. She now attends Orthodox services at the OJC regularly and contributes towards synagogue organisation. Thus it can be clearly seen that Yvonne has been both influenced and stimulated by her life events. To substantiate her desire to mix and get to know people of other religions, which was absent from her childhood, Yvonne is a member of the Oxford CCJ and has briefly worked on the Oxford committee. To maintain her fulfilment of her childhood experiences of Judaism and synagogue life, Yvonne is actively connected to the OJC. Yvonne has not rejected the Jewishness of her upbringing but in terms of her attitudes towards interfaith has rejected what she perceives as its narrowness. The final contributors to this section are the two university students.

The first student is Stephen, aged 20, who, at the date of his interview was in his second year at Oxford Brookes University.<sup>85</sup> Stephen described his upbringing within the typical United Synagogue type of family where they would sit together for a Friday night meal, say *Kiddush*, eat together and

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<sup>85</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler in College on 30 Jan 2012 with Stephen in Oxford. VN850007/8/9/11.

then sit down and watch TV. Even so, the family had a very strong Jewish identity. Stephen regularly attended Hebrew Classes, had a *barmitzvah* but following which he only attended synagogue spasmodically. Since leaving home he became more involved in the University Jewish Students' Society (JSOC), and he attends and contributes to services at the OJC. In common with many students who come to Oxford from large Jewish communities, he stated he initially found the structure of the OJC quite surprising. However he said that after he had become accustomed to it stated how much he enjoyed it:

I like the fact that it's all in one building and I like the fact that everybody gets together at the end. Also there's no pressure to go into one service. You can even go into one and then walk out and go to another and then even go back. It's very open and very free and relaxed.

This attitude is significant because it illustrates that he adapted to a structure that was very different from his previous experience of a Jewish community. When he first arrived at Oxford he attended Masorti and Orthodox services, but soon reverted to only attending those of the Orthodox, where he now frequently leads the congregation in prayer. Stephen had previously not experienced any grouping of Judaism other than Orthodox. However, after pausing to think more deeply about the OJC he continued:

I do think that for children growing up in a community like this, if they later join one that's not like that, they can feel put off and feel more restricted. If Oxford itself was the only community in the world for some reason, it would be a really good situation to have. I'm just not sure what effect it has on people if they're not in Oxford anymore and get too used to it. It's sort of pluralistic.

This is perceptive and the above issue of the potential problems Oxford young adults may experience after they have felt home and live in a large community is included here because it provides a vignette of Stephen's

thought processes. This illustrates the fact that his actions and attitudes are well considered. Significantly Stephen's perspective has also been expressed by several OJC members themselves over many years, who have brought up their families within the Oxford structure. When some of the children have left home in Oxford, they have, in fact sometimes found Jewish life in a large community to be too inflexible because they have to identify with a specifically denominated strand of Judaism. Although he found the intra-faith aspect of the OJC acceptable and interesting he spoke differently about his attitudes towards interfaith. He was not involved in any formalized interfaith involvement, but said he enjoyed discussions about religion with some of his non-Jewish friends on an ad hoc basis.

His opening comment about interfaith was revealing:

In the UK I think it's essential. I think that there's such a tipping point in this country based on ignorance in the non-Jewish community and if Jews stay insular it's going to get worse, so there does need to be some relations going on just for openness and education rather than anything else. Something has to be done.

Stephen is certainly commenting that he believes interfaith is important for both Jews and non-Jews, but could not offer any suggestions as to how. He moved on to consider if he thought that more 'older' people are interested in being involved with people of other faiths. Perhaps this was to take the onus away from himself and his generation, although what he did have to say was significant:

It depends on their background. It's difficult to generalise a 'Jew'. What I mean is a lot of Eastern European Jewish immigrants wouldn't want to ever speak to a non-Jew again, for obvious reasons, whereas some who at that time were brought up in this country were simultaneously being forced to live with people who weren't Jewish just for safety reasons when they were evacuated. So it depends on their background; it depends on their beliefs, it just depends on their world view. I think it changes person to person.

This is a fascinating generalisation of the 'old' by the 'young'. On the one hand he has the perspective noted by a young person about those of his grandparents' generation demonstrating that he is able to empathise, at least theoretically, with those outside his own peer group. However, there are and have been so many Holocaust survivors who have been actively involved in speaking about their experiences to subsequent generations to ensure the Holocaust is not forgotten. He continued:

I grew up in a very Jewish 'bubble' and I haven't done a huge amount to break out of that bubble, possibly for comfort reasons, so most of my friends in Oxford are members of the Jewish Society.

Then when I go back home - it's basically the same as it was before. Stephen expressed strongly that he thought interfaith was important but he was unable to go beyond that. He was expressing perceptive ideas but all were removed from himself and being involved in interfaith. For these reasons it was considered deeply as to whether he should be included in the section of those who held ambivalent attitudes as opposed to those with positive attitudes. However, because of his strong opening statement it was decided his place should be amongst those who held positive attitudes. This in itself is different from the other respondents. Why was he reluctant to take this debate further? It is probable that because of his youth and growing up in what he described as a Jewish 'bubble', he lacked a broad experience of mixing with peers of other religions as well as confidence, and it is this which has limited him to a narrow theoretic approach to interfaith engagement.

Now the attitudes of the second student who participated will be explored to discover if she has similarities or differences from Stephen in her attitudes. She is Natalie, then a first year chemistry student at Worcester College, University of Oxford.<sup>86</sup>

Natalie was brought up in a large Orthodox Jewish community in Barnett, North London. She attended a Jewish nursery and then a Jewish primary

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<sup>86</sup>This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler on 28 February 2012 with Natalie in college in Oxford. Recording VN850015.

school, and went to an Orthodox synagogue. She has also been deeply involved in a Jewish youth movement. She described the secondary school she attended as 'very interesting':

My school was about a third Jewish, a third Asian and a third Christian, but everyone was completely mixed, so it was really nice. We had different religious assemblies on a Thursday, but then the rest of the week we were sort of together. It was completely mixed. We had hymns every morning but we didn't have to sing them. It was a Christian school, but they didn't really do anything.<sup>87</sup>

When she arrived in Oxford she immediately joined JSOC because Yom Kippur occurred during her first week of term and she felt that it would be helpful to have practical support during this festival. She said she enjoyed JSOC in Oxford because it was small enough to enable all members to get to know each other. Her friends are both from JSOC as well as from college, with her closest friend fitting both criteria, college and JSOC, although she thought she probably went out more with her non-Jewish college friends. Although Natalie mixed with and had non-Jewish friends before she came to university she, like Stephen found difficulty in discussing interfaith in any depth. She, again like Stephen has a place amongst respondents who have positive attitudes because she was involved in Interfaith Week at university:

Yes. We had interfaith week this term, which was really good. We had drinks with the Catholic Society, then there was a discussion with the Muslim society and then Hindu Society came for Friday night dinner. Yes, it was really nice. I'm hoping to be on the organizing committee for next term, but I wasn't this term.

She thought that interfaith engagement was about learning to live with people of other religions and not being judgmental about each other and learning to respect each other's views. It was gratifying that Natalie

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<sup>87</sup> By using the phrase, 'they didn't really do anything' Natalie meant that other than singing hymns and Assembly, there was no specific teaching of Christianity within the school.

enjoyed her experience of interfaith to the extent that she wanted to become more involved in the organisation of Interfaith Week, but again, like Stephen she was either unwilling or unable to take her views further. Most probably, as with Stephen with whom there is a clear commonality, it is the limitation of life experiences which have not as yet given her the breadth of opportunities to enable her to discuss matters of interfaith. Like Stephen though, she deserves including within those demonstrating positive attitudes.

The reactions of the students is interesting because this was a group also identified within the Board of Deputies Community project, when six young people and students comprising of Jewish youth leaders, students and recent graduates, all under the age of 22 were included. However, the findings from their report cannot be compared because this specific group was not analysed, or reported on separately.<sup>88</sup>

All the interviewees in the Board of Deputies' project were committed to and involved in interfaith activities. Stephen was not deeply committed but nevertheless was certain that interfaith interaction was essential and he was content to initiate discussions about interfaith topics with his peers whenever it was convenient. Natalie was involved and was enjoying the interfaith aspect of her university life to the extent of showing a disappointment that she was not on the organising committee for this current term, but hoping this would change for the following term. With every respondent, all their experiences of childhood and upbringing are unique to them, as not only is each family dynamic different, but also so was their experience of life. Superficially there may be similarities in for example, the geographic location of upbringing as with Rabbi Michael and Dominic who both were brought up in Cardiff, or with Yvonne, Dominic and Eleanor, all children of immigrant parents, but in terms of deeper experiences all differed from each other. Despite the differences between them, all have a commitment to interfaith involvement.

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<sup>88</sup> Chapter 1: Ref 45 p. 15.

None of the interviewees came from an academic family environment, but even those who grew up in poverty in immigrant families from the early twentieth century, Dominic and Yvonne, whose families came before the First World War, and Eleanor, Tessa and Norman whose families came before the Second World War, have advanced strikingly. Those who grew up in poverty had families who wanted to provide a good education for their children so that they would be able to have a better life than they themselves had. It would seem the parents had been successful.

These respondents with positive interfaith attitudes belonged to all the different groupings of Judaism supported by the OJC, so the groupings did not influence the resultant attitudes in any way. It is particularly significant that the Orthodox, and Orthodox/Masorti respondents, Eleanor, Yolande, Dominic, Rabbi Michael, Anne and Yvonne, expressed positive attitudes because a frequent criticism made against Orthodox Jews is that they are reluctant to engage with those of other religions.<sup>89</sup> That the OJC membership is varied across wide backgrounds within its membership has been well illustrated. This spectrum of belief is also present across attitudes towards interfaith. From here, it is necessary now for the thesis to examine the respondents who held ambivalent attitudes towards interfaith engagement.

### **Interviewees expressing ambivalent attitudes towards interfaith**

To continue to reveal the complexity of the OJC membership is Mark, aged 65, a member who was born and grew up outside the UK in a small town in South Africa.<sup>90</sup> Although traditionally Orthodox, Mark said he did not have many Jewish friends and he felt he and his family were always outsiders, on the fringes of the community. He was brought up in a Zionist-oriented home and he grew up expecting to go and live in Israel as had his elder

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<sup>89</sup> This is an anecdotal observation frequently made by not only by non-Jews but also made by non-Orthodox Jews against the Orthodox. In fact a Reform rabbi made this comment to this researcher at a meeting very recently. These attitudes could have originated because historically it was Liberal Judaism who founded the London Society of Christians and Jews.

<sup>90</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Mark at his home on 24th October 2012 in Oxford. Recording VN850025/26.

sister. However he said that it did not work out that way and he gradually became assimilated and drifted away from his Jewish roots. His first wife, who died very young leaving him with two young children, was not Jewish. The family came to Oxford when he was in his early 30s, when his children were three and five. Because he began to feel his Jewish identity was important to him, he wanted the children brought up with a Jewish identity and he began looking for a connection with the community. After his wife died he said he found himself wrapped in the embrace of the community. He then met and married a Jewish young woman, she came to Oxford where they had a child. His wife became very involved in the community and both became more and more participatory. He commented:

Then I found myself, to my complete amazement, becoming involved in the religious services committee and I still can't work out how that came about! Me, who knew nothing from nothing found himself running Orthodox services in Oxford. So it was a pretty steep learning curve.<sup>91</sup>

He then described himself now 'as a fairly traditional Jew':

But it's a tradition, my tradition, as opposed to maybe what the Chief Rabbi's conception of what is a traditional Jew.<sup>92</sup>

Although he feels fiercely Jewish, here he is demonstrating an independent attitude towards his Judaism. As his two older children drifted away from Judaism, he became involved in the conservative Masorti community when their daughter reached *batmitzvah* age, as she insisted on doing exactly what the boys of the community did. (This daughter has now completed her training as a *chazzanit* at a Jewish university in Boston, America.) He thought this was one of the triggers which led him to become involved in the Masorti group being set up within the OJC. He also said that he remained very comfortable in the Orthodox service as well as in the Masorti service. He said he not feel particularly comfortable in Progressive services because of the style of the service. He continued:

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

It's totally irrational, but nonetheless it's how I feel. I don't like the statement and response even though we do it in Hebrew, but in English it feels too 'Churchified' to me. So that's a kind of prejudice that comes out. I wouldn't go by choice to a Liberal service, but I would go if there's a special occasion.<sup>93</sup>

It is compelling that he freely admitted the complex irrational practice and attitudes held by many Jews, and that he felt sufficiently secure to express these feelings so honestly. Here we also find another example of a personal interfaith boundary. He commented that he felt particularly comfortable with the traditional structure of the Orthodox and Masorti services with which he has become accustomed and familiar but thence had a discomfort with the Liberal service which has a different structure and different music from his service of choice. It is also significant that Mark has become more 'traditional' in his approach to Judaism. It is possible that this occurred following the rejection of Judaism by his first two children. This is a similar situation as that expressed by Norman after he married a non-Jew who converted to Judaism, his father became more observant and likewise with Anne following decisions made by her children she also became more Orthodox. Therefore not only do life experiences impact upon attitudes towards interfaith but experiences can be seen to impact on religious practice.

Mark was conscious that there are members of the Christian community who take Christian-Jewish relations seriously and do so with full respect for Judaism, and Jews, which he appreciated. He was also aware that in Jewish history as well as world history, there have been many occasions when Christians have persecuted those of other religions and particularly the Jews. Mark thought that in view of this, the more that Christians are willing to be respectful and defend the rights of Jewish people the more they should be encouraged. Despite these thoughts he said:

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

But I'm not good at the nitty gritty of interfaith relations. I mean I like the concept and I'll support the concept.<sup>94</sup>

By this he meant that he would not want to get involved in the organisation of CCJ for example, although he, like others described in this chapter, had been involved in the organisation of the Interfaith Walk, about which he commented:

I have to say I found negotiations of that tedious and complex – like walking on eggshells. I sometimes felt that some of the other faiths involved were there in a token way rather than in a wholehearted way. But then maybe I was there in a token way rather than a wholehearted way also.<sup>95</sup>

In speaking about his attitude towards being involved in interfaith beyond the communal level, at an Oxfordshire level, he showed he shared thoughts with Eleanor, who equally disliked being involved at a civic level. He said he found talking to Christians who are earnestly religious quite trying and difficult because he thought of himself as more of a cultural Jew rather than a deeply religion based religious Jew:

I can't talk about God in the same way that Christians would. I find it uncomfortable with anybody – something within me recoils from it. Then I think 'who am I to comment on how other people relate to God, given the way I relate to God'.<sup>96</sup>

This is unlike Tessa who very readily spoke about her personal relationship with God, but in common with the other respondents, particularly Anne, who likewise were reticent to mention a named spiritual entity. Mark then stated that he is a member of CCJ, but at a level of commitment he qualified by saying that he 'managed to remember to pay my subscription eventually each year'. He extended this comment saying that he often had the intention to go to CCJ events but somehow very seldom did. He admitted that CCJ was not high on his priorities although he

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

expressed a guilt because he thought CCJ needed more people. He is also expressing thoughts which, as will be seen, are similar to those given by the next respondent. However, despite his overall feeling of guilt because he was not supportive of interfaith initiatives, Mark showed a clear ambivalent attitude towards interfaith involvement:

I am glad that interfaith organisations exist, but happy to leave that involvement to other people.<sup>97</sup>

This is a significant statement and will be more so if the following respondent, who also is ambivalent to interfaith activities, expresses similar views. The next interviewee is Tilly, aged 64 at the time of interview, who is different from all the others introduced so far because she overtly declares her absence of belief in any spiritual concept of Judaism or within any other religion, but yet she is a very active member of the OJC.<sup>98</sup> It is important that Tilly's voice is heard because she is part of the diversity of the OJC and of the wider Jewish world of British Jewry. Some Jews do not believe in God, but nevertheless 'feel' culturally Jewish, perhaps because of their Jewish background and upbringing, or because of a deeper identification to and with other Jews. Jewish overt secularism is largely a modern Jewish phenomenon. It is inevitable that some Jews have a problem with this concept. Rabbi Romain has addressed this issue.<sup>99</sup>

What it may mean for such an individual is that they may remain within the community because they still value certain parts of Jewish tradition, albeit not others. They may not wish to take part in the spiritual life of the community, but still may play a leading role in the social and cultural heart

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Tilly in the researcher's home at her request, on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 in Oxford. Recording **VN850005**.

Romain thinks that the question which should be asked of them is 'What kind of Jew are you?' Writing in the *Jewish Chronicle* he commented:

This question highlights the fact that there are several different ways of being Jewish – for some it is a matter of race and descent, for others it is about faith and belief. For others it is to do with culture and the way we think, laugh, eat and behave.

<sup>99</sup>This is why communities may have members of synagogues who describe themselves as Atheist Jews, despite being *Halachically* Jewish, i.e., those born from a Jewish mother are Jewish whether or not they have a spiritual belief. There are many Jews who have Jewish parents, who subscribe to Jewish ethics, identify with Israel, support Jewish charities, appreciate Jewish history but do not believe in God. Romain says that Rabbis may not approve of them, but that does not make them non-Jewish.

of the community. It is this context which is appropriate to Tilly, who described her background as traditional, she continued:

My parents belonged to an Orthodox synagogue, and I was married in an Orthodox synagogue, although both my husband, when he was alive, and I are both atheists, so we don't go to any services at all. The only time we go into a synagogue is for social reasons. My parents became more Orthodox as they got older and I find I'm definitely not more Orthodox but I'm very much wanting to be part of the Jewish community.<sup>100</sup>

The last sentence, 'but I'm very much wanting to be part of the Jewish community', mirrors exactly the sentiment and ideas expressed by Rabbi Romain. Tilly has no spiritual beliefs, but has strong positive roots within Judaism which she does not want to lose. Her parents were members of the Communist party, which she joined as a teenager. She commented:

Belonging to Communist youth made all religion and spirituality irrelevant.<sup>101</sup>

By profession she was a counsellor and she has set up and trained several members of the OJC to become competent in being able to give bereavement and emotional support (BLESS) to any members of the OJC in need.<sup>102</sup> She has regular supervision contact with the BLESS counsellors she trained. Out of Bless grew 'Helping Hands', which offers practical help to people in need, particularly the elderly and housebound. She and her husband set up a social activity group for the community, she is an active and participative member of the OJC of the Third Age and regularly teaches groups to play Bridge. So it can be clearly seen, that although she has no belief whatsoever for spiritual input she is totally committed to and very much valued by the Jewish community.

The interview continued to discuss interfaith, she noted:

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<sup>100</sup> Tilly. Ref 98 Chapter 2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Bereavement, Loss and Emotional Support Services.

I've been to one or two events and what it means to me is a coming together of different faiths, sometimes for a secondary purpose but basically coming together to listen to each other.<sup>103</sup>

She stressed that when she did attend she went for social reasons, to meet and talk with other people. She is interested in meeting different people, with the proviso that she did not talk of spiritual matters. She reinforced the fact that, 'Yes, I am there as a Jew'. She commented that she had not spent a great deal of time thinking about interfaith and nor was she really involved in any related activities, saying:

I think theoretically, yes, I'm glad that there are interfaith events.<sup>104</sup>

This statement showed that Tilly has very little commitment to be involved in interfaith herself to which she is totally ambivalent. Significantly Tilly expressed views very similar to those verbalised by Mark. Tilly does not want to be involved, but said she is glad that there are some Jews who *do* care and *are* involved. It is helpful that Tilly's statements bear a close similarity to those of Mark because otherwise it could have been deduced that Tilly's ambivalence was linked to her lack of spirituality. Tilly has been briefly introduced because her attitudes and beliefs of interfaith are important and provide a further example of the diversity of both the Oxford membership and of attitudes towards interfaith. By admitting that she spent very little time thinking about interfaith was illustrative of the fact religion per se was insignificant in her life. What was important to her was that OJC members who may be in need received whatever was the appropriate support, and that she was prepared to be a leader in organising this provision. Her boundaries surpassed religion or faith but illustrated a compassion and interest for humankind at the same time as continuing her association as a 'cultural' Jew.

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<sup>103</sup> Tilly, Ref 98 Chapter 2.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

The last ambivalent respondent is Callum.<sup>105</sup> Callum was a complex interviewee to place on the spectrum because during his childhood he was steeped with friends of different religions, but as an adult living in Oxford his attitudes were different. It was decided he should be placed according to his adult attitudes. Callum was born and brought up in Gibraltar and Callum laughed when he was asked to describe his Jewish background.

It was categorised as Orthodox, but now when I go back and I see what they call Orthodox and I think it was Liberal Orthodoxy, because it was really quite stifling. I found it impossible to live with and from the age of around 15, the idea of going to shul twice a day and *shabbat* and being constrained by all sorts of things ... and because it was a small community, you couldn't be seen to be doing the wrong sorts of things either.

He compared the community as above with his impressions of it today:

You go to Gib and everybody wears a skull cap, everybody is sporting a beard and the women are all wearing wigs and it's all very very very extreme. Now it's the norm, because nobody wants to be seen to be doing anything different. And every son goes to Yeshiva and every daughter goes to seminary. And they're no longer interacting with the other religious denominations there.

The first school he attended was a Jewish school where he was taught secular subjects in the morning and Hebrew classes in the afternoon. After the age of 11 there was only one Grammar School which was a Catholic school where Callum was surrounded by boys he had never met before and it became a parental responsibility to organise the Jewish instruction. Callum was taught by a series of Rabbis for Ivrit, Mishna and Gomorrah, but by the age of 14 or 15 he began to rebel. Callum first left Gibraltar when he was 19 when he came to England as a student. He then returned to teach for three years, until he finally left Gibraltar in 1974 when he was

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<sup>105</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Callum at his home on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012 in Oxford. Recording VN850017.

about twenty-six. His response to being asked where he would place himself on the religious spectrum, was unexpected:

It's an interesting question isn't it? If the continuum was from extreme orthodoxy to extreme liberalism of one to ten I would probably place myself on the seven towards more liberalism.

Because whether we like to admit it or not, we still do what we used to do as children, so it becomes a kind of security blanket.

His reply was unexpected because his participation in the synagogue gives the impression of a knowledgeable and committed Jew, whose Judaism is his priority. He is knowledgeable and he is committed but under this exterior there is someone who would describe himself as possessing liberal attitudes. No doubt his self-description is influenced by the fact that his wife is not Jewish and who he described as completely faithless. He continued to describe his school days:

I wish I could transpose you back to my childhood because that was the epitome of what I think was interfaith, where people did not question what religion you were, you just simply accepted what religious practices they were putting into their own personal religious lives, and we just lived with it. I remember once a month was the confession day for the Catholics, and Wednesday was mass, so then the Jewish boys and the Hindu boys stayed in class, they had to look after themselves, whilst the Catholic boys went off . And for the Jewish New Year, Succot, whatever, we went off and did our own thing. And when you came back nobody said 'where have you been?' nobody questioned it. People always knew the Jews were having their festivals and we always knew that the festival of Corpus Christi was when the Catholics took out all their (err) idols and paraded them across the city. Nobody said 'why are we doing this?' That was the society we lived in. That was it. It was accepted.

Callum's hesitation is significant before he described the Catholic festival of Corpus Christi with the 'idols' - a typical response from an Orthodox Jew. When asked about any interest he may have in interfaith today his hesitant response was connected to his relationship with his wife:

No, I'm not. I'm not so sure why. I guess it's not one of those things that I am hugely interested in because it's never occurred to me as one of my main interests in life. I think a lot of it is because I'm focused on other matters, not just within the shul but within my profession, and I think within my family. Although we run a Jewish household, we always have to remember my position, that my wife is completely faithless and that doesn't actually help. She allows me to do whatever I want to do, but when, when it comes to doing something actually together proactively, I feel she also needs to have a belief in it and I think when you commit to someone on a person level these factors need to be considered.

It is for the several reasons noted that Callum has been classed as ambivalent towards interfaith, i.e., that it has never occurred to him to be involved, that his work has prevented him and because it is not an activity that he and his wife could be involved in together. He has not been classed as having negative attitudes because that is inappropriate and nor has he been classed as having positive attitudes despite his interfaith understanding in his schooldays because this did not continue into adulthood. Ambivalence is therefore the best location to place Callum's responses.

Both Mark, Tilly and Callum expressed clearly ambivalent attitudes towards interfaith, but all for different reasons. Tilly has no association with the spiritual side of belonging to the OJC, whereas Mark and Callum, contribute an active and valued role within the spiritual organisation of the OJC. Mark said he did not like talking about God, whereas Callum leads a life totally committed to Orthodox Jewish practice.

It is revealing to note the similarity in Mark and Tilly's last statement. Both express the same basic sentiment; that they are fundamentally pleased that interfaith activities exist, but both are content that they can dip in and out of these activities as they feel it is appropriate for them, although Callum said that being involved in interfaith had never occurred to him.

On the spectrum of attitudes towards interfaith, following those who have positive views and those who are ambivalent we now move to the respondents who do not believe interfaith involvement or activities are useful at all.

### **Interviewees expressing negative attitudes towards interfaith**

The first respondent in this section is Bernard aged 67.<sup>106</sup> Bernard was brought up in an Orthodox Jewish family. His father was a *Chazan* and all his family on his father's side were either rabbis or *Chazanim*. With this background he shares a commonality with Tessa, the Liberal Jew. Bernard's father's family came to England from Subotica in what is now Hungary shortly before the outbreak of World War Two. His mother's family were likewise Orthodox. They had originally come from Poland, but were not Rabbis or *chazanim*. After the war the family moved from Manchester, where Bernard was born, first to Shepherd's Bush and thence to Hampstead Garden Suburb, and it was there that Bernard grew up, in the same community as Eleanor. He remains Orthodox and revealed that he tries to maintain it as much as he can, although he does not follow as much of the *Halacha* in detail as he used to when growing up. He feels that his affiliations still lie strongly within the Orthodox communities. The interview discussed how he found the change from living in a large orthodox community in London, being surrounded by fellow Jews, to the very much smaller community in Oxford. He expressed this as follows:

Oxford is so completely different, it's difficult to know where to begin. If you're a member of a pure Orthodox community then

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<sup>106</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Bernard at his home on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850027/28**.

you accept everything is done in an Orthodox way. There is no need to accommodate people who are not Orthodox, or who practice to a much lesser extent. Everything is done according to the rules of an Orthodox community and there isn't a lot of room to modify the practices.<sup>107</sup>

These descriptions are representative of communities where there are numerically many Orthodox Jews, primarily in London, Manchester and Gateshead in the UK. He contrasted this 'London' approach with the practice in Oxford where he observed that Orthodox practice was able to be modified whilst still remaining within an accepted Halachic environment. He commented:

... there is lot more adjustment [*in Oxford*], to allow people who are less practicing to be able to join in, for example, when there are Masorti services some people who go normally to the Orthodox services will go and join in and take part in some of the Masorti services.<sup>108</sup>

He portrayed surprise at the actions of people who would reject the Orthodox service and attend the Masorti. This is most probably because it is something he would never do or would find too difficult to do and he cannot empathise with those who do. However, he also said that it worked the other way round, which is that people who by choice would attend a Masorti service will sometimes come and join in with the Orthodox services. He then added the proviso of 'where possible' meaning that to him the *Halachic* status of a member of the OJC was important to the point of allowing or not allowing a member to take part in an Orthodox service. Having established his own background approach to Judaism and Jewish practice he ended:

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

So I think that's quite a nice way of maintaining and of keeping the community all involved together and not being fragmented.<sup>109</sup>

This is an example of the uniqueness of the OJC which supports the three major strands of British Judaism, but in this context Bernard did not mention the fact that Progressive services are also held in Oxford. He did say that for a special family occasion he would be 'prepared' to attend a Masorti service, but that he would not attend a Progressive service. The *modus vivendi* of the OJC is a concept that had been totally outside his experience and in fact the idea that he could or would attend a service other than Orthodox was a challenge to him. The fact that he expressed this cohesion as 'quite a nice way' of keeping the community together, illustrated an experience which was new to him and which he had previously never considered. The most significant factor here is that his only reference to the Progressive strand of Judaism is negative - he would not attend such a service. This group is far removed from his experience of Judaism and is excluded from his interpretation of Judaism. Oxford thus represents a huge change from the experiences of Judaism in which he has been steeped. The discussion continued by addressing the concept of interfaith. Bernard's first comment relating to his idea about this was:

When I lived in London interfaith was something for other people. It wasn't anything I was particularly interested in, I didn't particularly want to know about it.<sup>110</sup>

He continued to explain that these were the attitudes he grew up with and was influenced by in London, saying it was decades ago although he continued to re-inforce his statement above repeating:

I didn't have much knowledge about it and I wasn't particularly interested in it. My feeling when I was growing up was very much like the ultra-orthodox have today. You know, it's nothing to do with us, we just want to be left alone to get on with our

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

own thing. Obviously as one grows up one modifies one's views about it, reads a bit more, more about it and hears a bit more about it.<sup>111</sup>

This view is not uncommon amongst very Orthodox and some Orthodox Jews. It was also the view expressed by Dominic as he grew up in Cardiff in an immigrant family. However, Dominic went on to lead a life very distant from a narrow Orthodox community of his childhood, so that, as has been seen, when he retired he became involved and committed to interfaith. Also it was the experience of Yvonne's upbringing. Both Dominic and Yvonne however, went on to be involved in CCJ and to have positive attitudes towards interfaith. The views expressed by Bernard are not necessarily unusual amongst Orthodox Jews as they could possibly reflect the historical persecution of Jews, when Jews segregated themselves for reasons of safety, and also a fear of mainstream assimilation through mixing with people of other religions. Bernard then defended his views by stating that his understanding and the understanding in general between all the different religions, is happening in a more liberal environment now compared with a hundred years ago. This is challenging for Bernard because he has only been introduced to an understanding of different religions since he moved to Oxford about ten years ago. And it is only since he moved to Oxford that the concept of interacting and understanding interfaith has affected him:

My understanding of it now, I suppose the point of it is there's greater understanding between all the different religions in a more liberal environment nowadays compared to hundreds of years ago. Yes, it's perhaps important to understand more of each other's faiths. ... History has shown that very often, these sorts of things in the past, have in Spain, in pre-inquisition time when the Jews were fairly well integrated or some of them were well integrated, and it back-fired a bit for our people and

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

caused a lot of damage. At the back of my mind is always the fear that somewhere along the line, interfaith is going to backfire, so although in principle I think it's a good idea, and I've even been to one or two meetings and it's interesting to talk to people of other faiths, I do have my worries or my doubts about it.<sup>112</sup>

By his use of the phrase 'suppose' in 'I *suppose* the point of it is...' and the word 'perhaps' in '...it's *perhaps* important...' implies that he is not relaxed about Jews being involved in interfaith activities. This is illustrated by the way he then continues to relate what happened in Spain in the medieval era, using the word '*backfired*' to almost justify his deeper thoughts. This thought showed that he was apprehensive of the Jewish community and particularly himself, being involved in interfaith and, that such an involvement clearly cannot have a guaranteed successful outcome. He then reported that he had '*even*' been to one or two meetings of CCJ. On this topic he continued:

That's why we have the CCJ and why the Chief Rabbi's the head of it, although I'm not sure how often he does actually go to meetings.<sup>113</sup>

Thus he justified the Chief Rabbi's presidency of CCJ, but again doubted his interest or involvement in the organisation, thereby minimising its importance. This interview appears to demonstrate that Bernard's consistent use of positive language relating to interfaith is then followed by a statement which retracts any positivity. The interview then moved to discuss the aspect of whether he thought it was important for Jewish communities across the UK as well as in Oxford to be involved in interfaith activities. He opened these comments with the word 'Logic', i.e. 'Logic tells me that inward looking is not always a good thing.' This confirms the dichotomy between his intellectual and emotional feeling about interfaith. He then continued with his intellectual reasons why interfaith was

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

beneficial to the Jewish community, namely, the issues of students, Israel and kosher meat. He felt that interfaith co-operation might help with the political issues of the attempts to have religious slaughtering of animals banned because the Muslims have a similar ritual method:

Politically speaking there are a lot of things happening which are affecting the Jewish people, for example, the issue of *kashrut* and slaughtering of animals. There has been over the years and continues to be, a constant battle or fight to have kosher slaughtering banned and I think there's room for Jewish people who want that and the Muslim faith who have similar issues of slaughtering of animals and there's some issues that could be useful if there's some more interfaith dialogue.<sup>114</sup>

Here Bernard is finding ways in which interfaith co-operation could help the Jewish people. In this instance the fact that the Muslims have a similar issue about Halal meat is almost an afterthought. He then continued that he thought interfaith was important in Oxford because of the University where he felt it was necessary that a Jewish voice was heard to help the students. He mentioned that interfaith involvement may also help address the difficult political issue of Israel. This is an exceedingly difficult issue because the CCJ has been accused of being the mouthpiece for British Jews for the support of Israel at the expense of Christian based projects. All the reasons he gave for a possible positivity of interfaith were all based within Judaism. He did not address any possible reciprocal engagement where by Jews would be able to be of help towards non-Jews. The discussion progressed to focus upon the possibility that there might have been specific events which encouraged him to think that it was a good idea for interfaith activities to exist, even if he did not wish to be deeply involved himself. His response was immediate:

All right. Coming to Oxford, I suppose opened my eyes more to the issues of interfaith and, yes generally being in Oxford. It's a much

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

higher environment. The whole subject is much more open and discussed on a weekly or monthly basis, because in London it came up one or two times a year as a discussion point or something that was mentioned in the Jewish community. One didn't really hear much about it to be honest.<sup>115</sup>

It is significant that Bernard opened this comment by saying 'All right', which almost implied his reluctance to accept that Oxford had altered the attitudes he had held for most of his life. In these discussions, Bernard did not address the issue that Jews could in fact help people of other religions throughout the world who are also experiencing religious discrimination.<sup>116</sup> Nor did he express an interest or wish to find out more about the theology of other religions nor any desire for any further education. Above all Bernard's interview illustrated sharply the difference between the community in Oxford and his experiences in the larger Jewish communities of London, which because of the numbers of Jews there, the community is able to become and indeed is encouraged to become much more self-focused. Significantly this is an attitude which endorses Rabbi Michael's concern that a congregational rabbi should be involved in interfaith because of the positive influence this can have on their congregation. It was also highlighted by Norman, who has a Reform background and who spoke about the larger London Jewish communities being only inward looking. Additionally, because in Oxford there is no community rabbi, lay members of the community take on the different responsibilities and roles which are usually undertaken by clerics in larger communities. This in itself broadens the base from which the community operates. The policy in larger communities, which have a rabbi and probably also additional professional religious leaders, will reflect the views of those of the leaders. These leaders most probably have extremely busy commitments to their community so that interaction with other religions may fall low down on a

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Following the persecution of Christians in the Middle East. CCJ have initiated a project called 'If not now, when?' asking Jews to pray and reflect on the situation of Christians in the Middle East.

priority list. Inevitably an Orthodox Jew will follow the prescribed writings and teaching offered by orthodoxy, whereas in Oxford where the community is a cohesive unit of the three strands of Judaism, more flexibility is embedded and built into the community. Bernard is influenced by his life time spent living in large Jewish communities in London, but the next respondent has similar attitudes towards interfaith as those held by Bernard, although his background and life experiences and journey could not be more different. He is Victor who is aged 58.<sup>117</sup>

The background experiences of Victor is different from most of other people included in this study. Like Mark, he did not come to the UK until he was a young adult, but that is the only commonality between them. Victor is a *Sephardi* Jew and one of the most religious Jews belonging to the Oxford community, a facet he shares with Rabbi Michael and Eleanor. Victor grew up in a small village in Algeria until he was seven.<sup>118</sup> He remembers attending a French school during the day and then going to *Cheder*, Hebrew school, afterwards. He emphasised how different the *Cheder* was from Hebrew schools today in the UK, as the children just sat on the floor, repeating by heart what was said by the rabbi, rather like Arabs do when they learn the Qu'ran, he said. The community was not large:

I would say it was about 50 or 60 families, and they were all related - which I only realised much later on when we were in France. We were going to synagogue but it wasn't like our shul here. What I do remember are the events of the war in about 1960 when I was six, when the Arab teacher was killed for helping the French, so then we didn't have any school anymore. We used to go to the synagogue.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Victor in his home on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850021/22/23**.

<sup>118</sup> The Virtual Jewish World: Algeria. [Online] Available at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/Algeria.html> [Accessed 28 April 2015].

<sup>119</sup> Victor. Ref 117 Chapter 2.

Victor's background is so different from most members of Anglo-Jewry that it is revealing to follow his early recollections of North Africa and of the family travels. He has a vague memory of a special event at the synagogue in North Africa at the age of five, when he wore his first *kittel* and he went with his father and other young boys to the shul as a right of passage. He was unable to remember the significance of the ritual itself and had not come across it in Europe, but saw it as part of the continuum of Jewish ritualistic practice towards adulthood following the *brit milah* and then at age three a boy's hair is cut marking a change in the child's educational status.

During the Algerian war the family, together with the other members of the village, relocated to Paris.<sup>120</sup> There he attended a secular secondary non-Jewish school. Pupils had Thursday and Sunday off school when Victor attended *Cheder*. He went to the synagogue on a Saturday where the congregation was mainly North African, from his village, so that congregational synagogue practice remained the same as if the community had never been uprooted. He said that he much preferred the silence in synagogue in Oxford particularly when the Torah was read, which was very different from North African culture. He described his mother as being more observant, more religious and having more knowledge of Judaism than his father, although his father did attend synagogue every Shabbat and festival. Of his father, Victor said:

He liked pleasing himself, doing what he liked on *Shabbat*.

Switching on the light was not a big deal for him, but my mum liked keeping all the laws, so that's how we learnt - from my Mum.<sup>121</sup>

Victor said that he enjoyed learning Hebrew, because it was very much like Arabic which was his mother tongue. Arabic was the language spoken at home and remained the only way to converse with his grandmother. When he arrived in Paris in 1962 his French was minimal and at Primary

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<sup>120</sup> Stein, S. A. 2014 *Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria*. Chicago, Swidle University of Chicago Press.

<sup>121</sup> Victor. Ref 117 Chapter 2.

school he remembers being able to sleep in class in the afternoon because he could not understand the stories being read to the children.

He expressed the view that the further one may move away from one's roots, the more some people can cling to them. He felt this might be true in his case because he said he feels very much *Sephardi*, possibly because he lives amongst Ashkenazi Jews. He thought people tend to categorise others, for example his colleagues at school (Victor teaches French in a Secondary school), think he knows all about French food, but in reality he said all he knows about is North African food because that was the food he was brought up on in France and he never ate in a non-Jewish house because of the laws of *kashrut*.

In common with the previous interviewees, Yolande, Bernard, Dominic and Norman, Victor spoke about Jews who belonged to a different community from himself, stressing that although he is perceived as Orthodox because keeps *Halacha*, because that is what he and his family have always done, to him this is just 'normal', just conventional Judaism and not Orthodox:

Now, 'Orthodox' Jews are the people with really black hats who have no time for me or for you, for instance.<sup>122</sup> They wouldn't talk to me or to you because we're not good enough for them. I am only Orthodox in the same way my grandfather was or my uncle was or my Dad is now, but not Orthodox in the sense of being too harsh on anyone who isn't like me. There was room for manoeuvre for the others, but now when you are 'Orthodox' the word is much harsher, if you don't wear the right *kippa* you don't belong. And that's not what I like at all.<sup>123</sup>

Victor shared this dislike of being categorised as 'Orthodox' with Eleanor because of the implicit connection with *Charedi* Jews whose Jewish practices are sometimes perceived by non-*Charedim* as intolerant and inflexible. It is an outlook which neither Victor nor Eleanor wanted to be

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<sup>122</sup>The Charedi Jews are frequently referred to as 'Black Hats' because that is the head covering they wear. It is perceived as a rather derogatory descriptor.

<sup>123</sup> Victor. Ref 117 Chapter 2.

associated with. Norman also commented on the attitude he had experienced of 'tribalism'. In terms of religious observance Victor is very influenced by his North African and French background and particularly by the religious observances of his mother, but has a tolerance of other Jews less practicing than himself and his own family.

Victor now mixes and works in a non-Jewish world, but his experiences growing up in Paris exposed him to a world very different from his North African roots. The discussion then focused on interfaith issues:

Interfaith for me is to understand one another, Islam possibly, or Christianity, When we arrived in France I knew very little about Christianity, I knew a little bit about Islam because in my village we saw all these people going to the mosque and we knew about Ramadan because of the market. I really only saw Christianity when we came to France because my friends at school were Christian.<sup>124</sup>

Victor is the only respondent who grew up alongside Muslims rather than Christians, but because he was young when he left Algeria he had little memory of them other than living in parallel. He stressed that he did not mix with the Muslim children but just remembered observing some of their religious practices. Religion was not taught in French schools so he was only exposed to Christianity through his school friends. His school was closed on a Thursday to enable the Catholic children to attend confession. Victor used to accompany his friend to church after they had played football and initially was surprised when his friend told him that he could not confess. After his friend had explained exactly what confession was and he saw how confession was carried out, Victor found the concept very strange, and still does, that another person can offer the forgiveness of God on God's behalf. He commented that his friends never asked him about Judaism. Thinking about it as an adult he wondered if it was because they could not understand what Judaism was. Also, he said that when his

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

family arrived in France, to the French, they were not Jews but Arabs. He thought they could not understand that Jews could live in North Africa and yet were different from French Jews. However, Victor corrected himself saying:

...but there were no Jews left in France any more as they had been all killed anyway and so they didn't talk too much about the Jews.

This is Victor's perception that there were very few Jews in France when he came to France, as in 1945 180,000 Jews were living there but by 1951 the French Jewish population reached 250,000.<sup>125</sup> As a child Victor knew the French played a large part in rounding up the Jews, particularly in Paris, during the Shoah, but he said that he had only learned about this much later because he never heard it spoken about in France. He only once heard it spoken about in school when he was 17 and the history teacher, who was from Eastern Europe, mentioned that her father had a shop, but he was in competition with a Jewish shopkeeper who was more successful and her father had to close his shop. She told the class that that was why she did not like Jews. Victor said he replied:

'I'm sorry, miss, but I can't come to your lessons anymore because if you don't like the Jews, I can't stay here because I'm a Jew myself' - and I never went to the lessons again.<sup>126</sup>

From the perspective of those from Britain, Victor's direct experience of spending his childhood and teenage years in a country where so many Jews had been rounded up and sent to the camps only fifteen years before his arrival in France is outside their experience. It is also exceptional, although probably not surprising, that he was classified as an 'Arab' by his Catholic peers at school and his religious difference went almost unnoticed other than the fact that he was not Catholic. It is noteworthy to find someone who was directly affected by the Shoah after the end of the war, when one of his teachers, who one might think should be aware of a 'Jewish' Arab,

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<sup>125</sup> Hand, S., Katz, S. (Eds) 2015 *Post Holocaust France and the Jews*. New York, New York University Press.

<sup>126</sup> Victor. Ref 117 Chapter 2.

would still pass comments upon the French Jews from the war period. Or perhaps this was the very reason why she did make the comments about her father's shop, which she guessed, correctly would make Victor exclude himself from her classes.

The discussion then narrowed as Victor considered if he thought interfaith activities are important to the Jewish community in the UK. He thought for some time and then replied:

I'm not sure. I think in theory yes. In practice I see that it's not making much difference because people still seem to be set very much in their idea of what a Jew is and what Judaism is about. They haven't moved on and to me they seem to mix Israel and Judaism, and Israel and Jews in England, and whatever Israel does politically, whether they like it or not, somehow it reverberates on the Jews here. It seems to me that it's a nice exercise but I don't believe in it.<sup>127</sup>

Victor's attitudes towards formal interfaith activities are different from the respondents identified in the sections above. Victor states strongly that interfaith involvement does not produce encouraging results, ideas which he expresses more strongly than does Bernard. Bernard, feels he 'ought' to be involved but is reluctant to do so. However, Victor is quite prepared to say that he does not believe interfaith activities contribute towards an improved understanding and tolerance between people of different religions. However, Victor was unable to say what in his view successful interaction between people of different religions looked like and how it was possible for this to be achieved, or even if he had any specific expectations of any outcomes which may be realistic. It is likely that this is because he is influenced not only by his background experiences in North Africa and France, but also by his experience with his colleagues' attitudes towards Israel within the school where he teaches. He continued:

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

Well I am thinking, that recently when the Christians have said that they're going to ban anything coming from Israel, and ban Israeli academics... And this is from the Church, where people are educated. So what do you expect from the rest? I don't believe that the Christian thinking has changed much, unfortunately, even though they have only just recognised that it wasn't the Jews who killed Jesus but, there is too much history where it [*persecution*] has been done. There is hope of course maybe it will be a possibility. You know when you talk to them they understand, but ... when it comes to ...I don't know.<sup>128</sup>

Firstly, Victor here is equating all British people with Christianity which is not the case, but again he is influenced by his background experiences. Secondly he is responding to the negative Israel/Palestine opinions which can be linked beyond reasonable criticism of Israeli politics to become antisemitic to which he has been exposed. The discussion progressed as he spoke about whether he thought that, as a result of his comments above, Jews are going to have to stay together and live for safety reasons in a closed society. Victor's considered reply was that he did not think this would be necessary as he thought Jews *did* integrate well into British society, however, he then immediately commented that he thought there was still a stigma and that even 'people' (i.e., non-Jews) with a higher education made unpleasant comments. He elaborated that some of the teachers in his school who have a degree, a post-graduate degree and even a doctorate, have for example the idea that all Jews are rich. He said he replied to them, 'If all Jews are rich, well what am I doing here?' He also said that some of his colleagues used the historic antisemitic teaching of *the Protocols of Zion*, e.g., that Jews want to rule the world.<sup>129</sup> Again, Victor gave the same reply as above. These conversations had occurred in the staffroom and he said that he had tried to tell his colleagues that in Israel

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ben-Itto, H. 2005 *The Lie that wouldn't Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Vallentine Mitchell.

25% of the population live below the poverty line, but Victor felt his colleagues held preconceptions that they were not open to modify. He said he accepted that Jews try to integrate, that they are hardworking but he felt the false image of the rich and successful Jew is still held by many educated people. Victor then volunteered that he had non-Jewish friends, but then interestingly qualified this saying:

The ones that have time for me are people who go to church and funnily enough, they show a bit more understanding.<sup>130</sup>

This statement appears to contradict his earlier thoughts that it was 'Christians' who held the antisemitic characteristic views of Jews. It is probable that his initial immediate response about the opinions of non-Jews towards Jews are coloured by his childhood in North Africa and his background in France where he faced the descriptor of Arab, rather than Jew, by his Catholic peers at school in Paris. Also he said that he had been confronted by the 'old' antisemitic stereotypical views of Jews in the staffroom. Perhaps he generalised white British people unthinkingly as 'Christian'. This is probably another different, but nevertheless consistent influence of background on currently held generalised attitudes. He then continued by comparing the tolerance of his non-Jewish British friends with the lack of tolerance to his Orthodox practice by some of his Jewish French friends and family and came to a remarkable conclusion of how he coped with some of his family's Jewish practices which are different and less orthodox from his:

If I say to my Brother in France, 'I'm sorry I cannot eat in your house' he will tell me that that is old fashioned, and that it's just a way of life. I don't want to hurt people's feelings but sometimes I find it much easier with non-Jewish friends than with some Jewish friends. It's interesting, though we call them friends... it's different. It's a different kind of relationship.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Victor. Ref 117 Chapter 2.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

It is significant that the friends he identifies with are also people with 'religion' who show him an understanding and tolerance. This contradicts his initial comments both of an earlier period of his life when he was living and mixing with a Catholic population in France, and also, as above his experiences within the staffroom at school. However, when he considered these issues more deeply he did realise that he was able to classify his non-Jewish friends as true 'Christians', although he does qualify these friendships by distinguishing this friendship from the less than tolerant attitudes towards his Jewish practice by his French friends and family. Again, this demonstrates an example of intolerant intra-faith attitudes expressed by his family towards him, which has a similarity to the intra-faith comments expressed by Norman. Bernard expressed similar views regarding a potential positive effect on tolerance between religions, but Victor initially expressed this much more strongly. However, he maintained this initial strong belief that formal interfaith activity would create a lasting or meaningful tolerance.

In support alongside Bernard and Victor, a third interviewee will be briefly introduced. This is Dennis, a 71 year old who is very knowledgeable about Judaism and a scientific academic.<sup>132</sup> Dennis is of Sephardi background who was educated at Carmel College School, the only Jewish boarding school that existed in the U.K. His initial comment towards interfaith mirrored those expressed by Victor:

I'm not sure that the people who are involved in interfaith activities are actually making a difference, that's I suppose my big point.<sup>133</sup>

However, he continued to make a comment about people who were involved in interfaith activities that was not mentioned by anyone else which was, 'you're talking to likeminded people, but not influencing other people'. It is a comment that has validity, as it is indeed a difficult task to

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<sup>132</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Dennis in his home on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850042**.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

enthuse people with the necessity for and importance of interfaith involvement in today's world who do not already have an interest. In one way it is an obvious comment. People who are involved in any organisations do so because they have an interest in it. The difficult factor is to inspire people who are not involved to develop such an interest. It is one of the aspects those involved in interfaith need to address. He continued on this theme by stating:

I don't hear statements from the Church of England, or the Catholics or the Methodists, which really are reaching out. What I tend to hear are fixed positions.<sup>134</sup>

Dennis did not explain further what he meant by 'fixed positions', as there have been a number of documents produced by church organisations which can be seen as a rejection of church attitudes of the past, an acknowledgement of the need for new relationships between Jews and Christians and a search towards a new dynamic of growth and relationship through dialogic encounter.<sup>135</sup> However, there have been criticisms made of the Christian Bodies which have been perceived to link the politics of Israel to antisemitism in this country, particularly regarding the boycotts of Israeli goods and Israeli academics, and Dennis was a respondent who expressed this firmly and succinctly, as did Victor. The three respondents, who have all expressed negative views about interfaith, have all been Orthodox Jews, but this was the only commonality as all spoke about very different reasons why they thought this. There is now another respondent to be introduced, the final interview in this chapter and this is 48 year old Robert, whose background is considerably different from all the previous interviewees and whose experiences and attitudes make him difficult to place within these categories for reasons which will become clear as the interview progresses.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> The Roman Catholic Church addresses Jewish-Christian Relations through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The Commission of the Holy See for Religious Relations with the Jews is an important document. The Church of England has also produced a publication by the interfaith Consultative Group of the Archbishop's Council, titled, *Sharing One Hope? The Church of England and Jewish-Christian Relations*.

<sup>136</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Robert in his home on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850031/32**.

Most Jewish communities include someone who has converted to Judaism, so no research into the attitudes of its membership would be complete if a convert to Judaism was not included. Robert is one such member of the OJC whose conversion to Judaism was officially recognised by Progressive Judaism in 2011. His journey to this point is significant and he completes the broad backgrounds of the respondents included in this study who all represent the diversity of the OJC. Robert's childhood was inevitably different from the other respondents as he was brought up in a very conventional Church of England background. He boarded at a preparatory school, where he attended a Christian form of worship every day:

I'm aware that as a child, I had absolutely no awareness of other religions. I actually didn't really know that they existed.

Up to the age of 13, I didn't know that there was such a thing as Judaism, or Islam or anything else. I would have no clue.<sup>137</sup>

It is revealing to compare Robert's experience with that of Yolande. One could speculate whether without Yolande's strong and overt commitment and declaration of her Judaism, her peers at her school would, likewise have had little or even no knowledge of Judaism. Because of Robert's knowledge and familiarity of the Gospels, and the stories about Jesus, the discussion focused on how he thought he had no awareness of Jews. He responded:

But there was no question that this was a Christian story, as if the whole world was Christian, the Bible was a Christian story.

We call it the Christian Bible. There was no sense it was anything else.<sup>138</sup>

He first came across Judaism without knowing or being aware of what it was. He had a distant, not close friendship in his last year at preparatory school with another boy who asked him and another friend to come to

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

what he now knew was the boy's *barmitzvah* where he sat in this strange building in what he later knew was an Orthodox synagogue. He continued:

I'd no idea what was going on. Nothing was explained to us. We went to the party afterwards. That was my first experience. I didn't even know what it was. I now recognise it as Judaism. I don't think it would even have been clear to us that that's what it was. I'd no idea what I was experiencing or what was going on, and nobody explained to me.<sup>139</sup>

Whether the fact that he had no concept of what was happening or of the environment he was in at the *barmitzvah*, or whether he had or had not received any explanations is immaterial. This is his perception of his first exposure to Judaism. For someone who is highly intelligent, has a deep knowledge about Christianity and took part in services and sang in the chapel choir it is likely that this was the case. Perhaps he received no help to understand this from home because significantly he revealed:

I was being brought up in a middle class Cotswold town where the only way the word 'Jew' features, and I say 'Jew', I don't mean Jewish, was as abusive. It was a way to bully somebody else. If you wanted to upset them you called them a Jew. If you called someone Jewish, what you meant was that they were selfish, mean minded. That was my experience, and I still feel horrible about it.<sup>140</sup>

In a paper by Carlos Fraenkel discussing Nirenberg's book *Anti-Judaism: The History of a Way of Thinking*, Fraenkel stated:

Nirenberg suggests that pervasive anti-Judaism is often not directed against 'real' Jews, but against Jews of the imagination. He believes that people who have 'a score to settle' accuse opponents of 'Judaising', where 'Judaising' means to display stereotypical features associated with

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Nirenberg, D. 2013 *Anti-Judaism: the History of a Way of Thinking*. London: Zeus Ltd. p.68.

Judaism that the person making the charge holds in contempt'.<sup>141</sup>

This concept is outside the home experiences of all the other interviewees, but may well have been a part of their experience from the receiving end. It is, nevertheless an example of the inherent historic background antisemitic teaching of contempt and ignorance that still exists throughout the world today.

Robert stated that his father was openly antisemitic and remained so until he died. Unsurprisingly he said this was an issue with which Robert struggled. In his secondary school he continued to take services, daily assembly, morning prayers, and Sunday services and continued to sing in the choir. Robert always attended services and was then confirmed. He said his family and parents were not at all interested in his commitment to Christianity and his mother used to joke and refer to him as 'The Bishop'. Regarding higher education, the school suggested he should apply to Oxbridge, but he was unsure how to do this and what it meant. It was suggested he might apply to sing, and although he thought of himself as an instrumentalist he successfully became a choral scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, and sang in their internationally known choir. There he sang daily in services for the full service of Matins, followed by the full service of the Eucharist, and finally each evening, Evensong. He participated in these services for the three years of his undergraduate study. He said:

I was deep in, and during that time I learnt the liturgy inside out, and the psalms – you cycle through all 150 psalms once a month.<sup>142</sup>

He thought he was fortunate because Christ Church had some of the most eminent theologians and he was able to spend some considerable time discussing and arguing Christian theological questions with them. It was during this time that Robert had a deep rift with his parents, so that when he left university he was then forced to decide how he was going to fund

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<sup>141</sup> Fraenkel, C. 2015 *We hear and We Disobey*. *London Review of Books*. 21 May 2015 p. 31.

<sup>142</sup> Robert. Ref 136 Chapter 2.

himself. He became a lay clerk in York Minster, which was a professional singing post and he then also began to work in a Christian Church in a professional capacity. He knew the liturgy very well, but he was unable to find solace within that Christian existence. He continued:

As a lecturer I was trying to make sense of it, but as a human experience I found that cathedrals were quite a dysfunctional environment... There was no sense of human warmth or safety. It was all about politics and bitchiness. It was very very horrible.<sup>143</sup>

Because of the rift with his family he was seeking something from Christianity to help him repair this separation:

You are supposed to forgive them. If you don't, there's something wrong with you, you're the bad guy. That seemed to me a very inadequate, what I call technology of forgiveness, of redemption. It didn't give any space for exploring 'how' does one achieve that? What process does one go through? What does forgiveness mean?' There's no guidance on that. Simply you're supposed to and if you don't, that's confirmation if you like, that you are sinful. That for me is what I experienced of Christianity.<sup>144</sup>

He described poignantly that at that point in his life, this was his experience of Christianity. Whilst he was in York he trained as a teacher, and took assemblies and was very involved in Christian teaching in schools. He returned to Oxford, became a head of department and once again took the responsibility for assemblies:

So there was always this side of me, which if you like, was in to – what would you call it? Active prayer, sacred purpose and that God directedness... but I began to feel that I couldn't find, I didn't know what it meant to be in a holy community, unless you were in a monastery or a convent, and that to me is

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

inadequate because it seemed to me that holy life had to be possible within ordinary relationships, in family life in community life.<sup>145</sup>

He left teaching but continued to maintain his link with Christianity by playing the organ, becoming the Precentor and singing for Holy Week for an Oxford convent. At the same time he explored other Eastern religions and attended a course which happened to include Jewish wisdom which he found spiritually, psychologically and emotionally inspiring. Additionally, he met the woman who later became his wife, who was Jewish and with whom he began to attend a *Chavura* group. There he felt he discovered a group of extraordinary human beings who lived open heartedly and were hugely supportive of each other, he said that he felt strange at first, because of the other religions and sects that he had previously explored:

So to be with a Jewish group was actually quite extraordinary ... I got more and more of a feeling for it, and in my whole life I had never known what it meant to be in a group of people who I could feel safe with. And to do that in an environment of prayer and Torah study and song and learning values ...<sup>146</sup>

After he had belonged to his *Chavura* for about three or four years, one *Yom Kippur*, Day of Atonement, a day he described as, 'a day of prayer and forgiveness', Robert felt the time was right for him to forgive his sixteen year estrangement with his family in order to be at peace with himself. He expressed this process of his forgiveness in some detail discussing how he thought *Yom Kippur* had given him what he called the 'technology', or what he now thought of as '*Heshbon haNefesh*', the study of one's own soul. He examined what he thought constituted forgiveness, the processes through which one could progress to reach forgiveness, or at least end the hatred, and there he found great wisdom and richness:

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

I think Judaism was one of the key things that if you like, saved my life... There are many other vignettes I can give you particularly since I got more and more involved in the *Chavura* and ended up leading services and leading Torah study.<sup>147</sup>

Robert and his wife had some difficult instances in their life when he felt they both received such support from *his Chavura* and by then their OJC friends:

Those things stay with you. That's what Jewish life is about, and it's the rhythm of Jewish life, and part of what I felt, for example at that awful period in our lives between Chanukah and Pesach. Life throws so many curves, but there is something about the emotional, psychological and spiritual holding that you get from the rhythm of Jewish life.<sup>148</sup>

It is significant that relating his journey chronologically from Christianity to Judaism, he is now defining the *Chavura* as *his Chavura*, thereby endorsing his own Judaism. We continued to discuss the official formalisation of Robert's conversion to Judaism in 2011 through Liberal Judaism when he said:

The *Chavura* is a very interesting community as when I announced I was going to do this [*convert*] most of my friends said, 'Why? You're Jewish, in everything you do. You lead a Jewish life, Jewish practices, you lead services, what's the big deal?' But I decided I actually wanted to take that formal step because it was a statement of myself, also, as well as to other people as there will always be those who would say, 'Well you're not really Jewish because you haven't got that official stamp'.<sup>149</sup>

He thereby illustrated that as well as it being important for himself to have his status recognisable officially as a Jew, it was equally important to him

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

how other people, particularly other Jews, and specifically his father, viewed his religious status. It is also revealing that he continued by addressing the same issues of intra-faith brought up by Norman:

There will be always those who would say, 'Well you're not really Jewish because you haven't got that official stamp'. And I understand, given the complexity of Jewish life and identity, that there are plenty of Jews who would still say that I'm not Jewish, because Liberal Jewish doesn't count. I can live with that.<sup>150</sup>

Robert expanded on this intra-faith topic by commenting that 'Judaism' is not a homogenous group, nor in fact is Christianity. The discussion then concentrated on his interfaith attitudes and involvement and how his conversion to Judaism had possibly influenced his views. He began by saying that he had mixed feelings about it because he saw interfaith as practiced by some, as 'a load of nonsense, and it's not serious'. He expanded on this by saying that he thought it was mainly about 'political correctness' and not about true engagement with the other'. It would appear that Robert based these views on his first experience of interfaith when he took part in a music event at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) when he felt the thrust of the work was to find commonalities between faiths. He said:

It was about 'well we really are chums aren't we'? There's no difference between us, there's only one God, and let's all just listen to each other's music and have a nice chat' and it's all just warm and fuzzy. But there are deeper important points of connection and we need to find those.<sup>151</sup>

However, he later amended this attitude following an Oxford CCJ meeting when the speaker was a co-author of the report on Jewish and Christian

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

Mission.<sup>152</sup> Following the talk Robert began an informal discussion with a group of Christian young people:

Now I found interfaith was really starting to happen; now we're finding a way to dialogue about the things where we hurt, and where we feel we are not reconcilable, and where we actually feel active discomfort in the presence of the other. And I think we should then see if we can have a real encounter. That is a much deeper account of what interfaith is really about.<sup>153</sup>

The interview probed Robert's experience further with this young group of Christians and particularly how they had received the information that he had converted to Judaism. He said that there was one person who was clearly challenging him saying, 'But if you didn't actually believe that Christ was the living God, then you weren't really a Christian originally.' Robert felt this was a simplistic response, but that nevertheless thought that there are still right wing Christians who might still say that, and therefore would probably class a lot of Christians as not really Christian. In discussion, Robert firmly confirmed that he had, without doubt, previously definitely been Christian re-affirming:

I actually led prayer services, I led Christian union, I was a Precentor for a convent, I took communion. How Christian do you have to get? I thought, well I was as Christian as the next person.<sup>154</sup>

Robert is an intense person who has little interest in superficial interactions, and so it was predictable that he would progress a conversation, or dialogue quickly onto a deeper level. Not surprisingly, Robert then felt the way the conversation progressed illustrated the group were becoming fearful because he was challenging their world views but he thought that fear may put interfaith dialogue on a much deeper level. However, he continued that this should be an opening conversation when

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<sup>152</sup> Silverman, R, Morrow P., and Langton D. 2011. *Jews and Christians: Perspectives on Mission*. London, Lambeth-Jewish Forum.

<sup>153</sup> Robert. Ref 136 Chapter 2.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

much more time was required than was available and at this point he was not prepared to progress the conversation further with issues they found difficult. It has generally been accepted that in order for 'difficult' subjects to be discussed without causing offence, a relationship of trust and respect needs to have been developed amongst the group, so that dialogue can take place safely.<sup>155</sup> The speaker of the event spoke about the difficult issue of the accusation in the Gospels that the Jews killed Jesus,<sup>156</sup> and Robert considered whether any of the people in his group might agree with that doctrine saying:

Well actually there are Christians out there who would actively still preach that message, and some of them may have been in the room that night, I don't know.<sup>157</sup>

The discussion then focused on his interest in interfaith and CCJ now he has become a Jew.

You see when I first heard about CCJ about three years ago, I felt huge discomfort. I didn't want to know. I didn't want to be part of it. It's not because I'm Jewish, and not because I'm against interfaith, but because of my personal woundedness around my experience of Christianity. Around the failure of Christianity, and the failure of Christian leaders. I really sought help and guidance but I felt it was utterly inadequate.<sup>158</sup>

The discussion continued to probe if he thought his reticence to become involved or connected with CCJ, could have been because of a division of his identity, or a lack of security of both sides, or a lack of 'preparedness' to put forward Judaism. He said he did not think those were reasons because

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<sup>155</sup> Bayfield, T., Race, A., Siddiqui, A. (Eds) 2012. *Beyond the Dysfunctional Family*. London: The Abrahamic Dialogic Manor House Group.

<sup>156</sup> Justification of the charge of Jewish deicide has been attributed to Matthew 27:24–25. Jewish deicide is a long-held Christian belief that placed the responsibility for the death of Jesus on the Jewish people as a whole. This deicide accusation is expressed by "Christ-killer," which has been used by mobs over many centuries over pogroms and other violent attacks on Jewish communities around Europe.

<sup>157</sup> Robert. Ref 136 Chapter 2.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

he didn't feel any lack of security in his Jewish self. He confirmed that he thought it was hurt towards Christianity, stating:

I understand that interfaith has got to happen, but right now it can't include me. I've left Christianity a long way behind, years behind, but as I discovered when the question of joining CCJ came up, I thought the sense of hurt is still there. There is a deep sense of betrayal.<sup>159</sup>

He returned to the Christian concept of sin in the way it had affected his life which led to his rejection of Christianity, and introduced a new vignette of how becoming Jewish had changed what he did in life, saying:

As a young man, being a professional singer, I yearned to be considered good enough and significant enough as a soloist to be allowed to sing the Verdi Requiem, and I then got my chance. I've done it a few times. Do you know NOTHING, NOTHING would persuade me to sing it now. I could be asked to sing it as the soloist at the Albert Hall at the Proms, and I wouldn't do it... The text - 'I groan. Shame reddens my face. I am a worthless sinner.' That is the core text for the tenor soloist. No, I'm not going to out that in the world. Not even as a work of art, because I don't want to, in any way, affirm that concept. I still want to say something significant with my music and the words that I share with people, so it's been really important to find my way to saying something important, so now I'm composing and singing Jewish texts.<sup>160</sup>

He continued more calmly to say that his first contact with CCJ made him uneasy and that he was reluctant to be drawn into an interfaith process because he did not feel well disposed towards Christianity. However, he felt that as he became more knowledgeable in Jewish thought, he has found himself able to have inspiring conversations more frequently with Christians, helped by his knowledge of Christianity. He said that he told the

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

Christians with whom he was having dialogue why their theology towards sin had been the catalyst for him to become Jewish and how now he read the stories quite differently from the Christian way. He thought it was discussing these differences that made sharing knowledge a possibility:

Christians have actually put a different meaning on these texts and on these ideas, so I find it really enriching now, to have those conversations. And part of interfaith may be actually saying here are differences where we just do not see things the same.<sup>161</sup>

This showed that Robert now began to look more objectively at the purpose of interfaith dialogue and how there are instances where each partner will not be able, nor should, compromise their own theological and interpretive differences. The interview explored whether he thought interfaith involvement was important to the Jewish community. However, there is a chance that by challenging Christians about their religion will not lead to a positive outcome. He thought it was because there are so few Jews proportionately to the rest of the population and he felt ‘hugely strongly’ that Jews need to be visible, and need to say that we exist. He continued:

We have an important world view to include in the diversity and to say that we care about it. Also if a Christian and a Muslim turn up to an interfaith meeting, what message are we giving if we don’t turn up? You know that really disturbs me.<sup>162</sup>

Finally the interview focused on whether interfaith involvement should go beyond Jews and Christians. He thought the starting point of dialogue should be ‘between any two people who don’t see eye to eye’. At times his use of language is confrontational. By using the language, ‘eye to eye’ the implication is *disagreement*, i.e., that people of different religions disagree.<sup>163</sup> Beliefs of Jews and Christians are different, but within an

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Do *not* see ‘Eye to Eye’, the negative, is used when something is viewed in a different way from others. Its origin is in Isaiah 52:8 when it is expressed in the positive.

interfaith setting there needs to be an element of acceptance of the *different* belief being appropriate for the Other. He also thought that there is a special relationship between, Jews and Muslims, and that because of what happened historically and continues to happen today in the Middle East, a part of the world Jews and Muslims share, it is important also to work towards a Jewish Muslim relationship.<sup>164</sup> He thought that it was important to have dialogue with those who are a secular, as did Victor. He described that as ‘another kind of interfaith’.

As has been shown Robert’s story and background are very different from the other OJC members examined in this section as, with the exception of Anne who spent the first few years of her life not knowing she was Jewish, all grew up in a Jewish world. Robert grew up and lived within a strong Christian environment, in school, university and in his career, that is, the Christian influence came from outside his home. Within Judaism, it is the home which is frequently an intrinsically important setting for Judaism. Robert is the only interviewee who came to Judaism by choice following a search for spiritual knowledge, initially of other faiths and finally settling on Judaism. It could be thought that Judaism would be a difficult choice for Robert as his father held antisemitic views, but after a rift with his family, it is possible that this, in fact created the attraction. The family separation has influenced Robert enormously because he kept returning to the Christian issues of sin and forgiveness in relation to his family with which he could not be reconciled. It could also be that the examples of support and family experiences which is a focus of Judaism, created an attraction. From his background it could be assumed that he would have few shared attitudes with the other respondents in this chapter. However this has been shown to be not quite the case. He showed attitudes in common with Victor, an Orthodox Jew, towards interfaith, initially describing interfaith as

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<sup>164</sup> There are Jewish-Muslim interfaith groups, e.g. The Jewish-Muslim Building Initiative. [Online] Available at: <http://www.jmcbi.org/who-we-are.html> [Accessed 2 January 2016], as well as organisations which include all the Abrahamic faiths, e.g., The Three Faiths Forum. [Online] Available at: <http://www.3ff.org> [Accessed 2 January 2016]. Also, the Woolf Institute in Cambridge addresses the relationship between Jews, Christians and Muslims from an academic perspective [Online] Available at: <http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/> [Accessed 2 January 2016].

a 'load of nonsense'. He then spoke about his discomfort with CCJ, as did Bernard, another Orthodox Jew, albeit Robert's reason was due to what he saw as a 'failure of Christianity', whilst Bernard was concerned with a possible motive of Christian mission and a discomfort of mixing with non-Jews. Another significant factor is that, as a Christian, and an intelligent person, Robert had never heard of CCJ, and it was only after his interaction with the Oxford Jewish community that he knew about the organisation. One might ask, where were all those Christian clerics with whom Robert mixed before his conversion? One can only assume that interfaith involvement and Judaism in particular played no part in their Christianity. Robert went through a progressive thought process about interfaith during this discussion. His starting point was that he only thought negatively about the whole issue of interfaith. This later began to change to an ambivalence until following his conversion when he began to participate in interfaith discussions with Christians through CCJ. It would seem that Robert's deepening knowledge of Judaism enabled him to move beyond the view that Christianity had failed him so that now he had the confidence to discuss Jewish-Christian relations at the deeper level he desired and from a more confident starting point.

Like Yolande, Robert was educated in a strong Anglican school where it would appear that there was no teaching about other religions and in particular Judaism. Yolande's environment persuaded her to devote her voluntary capacity to interfaith. Robert's deep knowledge and commitment to Christianity, coupled with difficulties within his family situation, ultimately pushed Robert away from Christianity. However, the effect on Robert was not for him to become actively involved in interfaith soon after his conversion but, as he gained confidence about his Judaism, he began to enter into discussion along his preference for deep conversations without first developing a relationship of trust which does not lead to successful interface. Because Robert's musical and religious life were initially bound up with Christianity, he not only changed his religion when

he converted, but he changed the direction of his musical career, so his conversion to Judaism created a fundamental difference to his life.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

As this chapter developed and the respondents were introduced, their 'stories' were built together and compared with each other. Each of their backgrounds and life experiences, with the exception of Robert, had some similarities, for example city of birth, parental origin, with another respondent but the influence of these experiences exerted differed greatly in each person. One of the important purposes of this study was to determine if background and life experiences had influenced the resultant attitudes held by the interviewees to interfaith issues.

To summarise the findings; Yolande, Rabbi Michael, Dominic, Eleanor, Norman, Anne, Tessa, Ruby and Yvonne plus both the students, Natalie and Stephen all agree that interfaith in principle, is important. Mark, Callum and Tilly have ambivalent attitudes to interfaith although both are happy for other people to be involved but have no wish to do so themselves. Bernard, Victor and Dennis expressed negative views towards interfaith, having decided that there was no positive outcome from an involvement. Robert, who converted to Judaism, progressed through all the three of the different views during his interview. All these respondents expressed different reasons for their attitudes towards interfaith involvement, whether that was positive, ambivalent or negative.

Next it will be helpful to examine the religious affiliation of these respondents linked with their attitude towards interfaith. Of the eleven respondents who held unequivocally positive attitudes to interfaith, six were Orthodox, two were Masorti and three were Liberal. It is significant that six, including the students, were Orthodox as it has frequently been a criticism leveled at Jewish-Christian relations that the majority of the Jews involved are not Orthodox. (This is because of theological reasons, as previously explained.) The Board of Deputies found that 68% of the

Orthodox included in their study were involved in interfaith activities compared with 84% of those who were Progressive. This study and that of the Board of Deputies are not statistically comparable because the numbers included in this study are small and the objective of the methodology of this qualitative study as opposed to a quantitative study is different. However, if the Orthodox with positive attitudes are compared with the Masorti and Liberal likewise with positive attitudes, for this study the differential is only 4%. This is not a statistically viable result but it demonstrates that within the Jews of Oxford included in this study there is no significant difference between the Orthodox and Liberal who are positive towards interfaith. Looking at those with negative views presents a different picture as although there are only three respondents who have negative attitudes, all are Orthodox and those who are ambivalent include only one Orthodox respondent. It could therefore be said that this study is not representative of British Jewry. However, the distribution of Jewish affiliation of this total sample was broadly representative of British Jewry and the attitudes of the interviewees could not have been predicted. It will be crucial to discuss if the uniqueness of the OJC has had an impact on the respondents attitudes in the Conclusion.

Of the three who were ambivalent about interfaith, one was Masorti, one Orthodox and the other a secular Jew. Again, this finding is unexpected because it might have been predicted that this is where the Orthodox participants would fall. There could have been a possibility that the observant respondents who were uncertain about following the traditional *Halacha*, could have decided that expressing an ambivalent attitude reflected an acceptable compromise and enabled a specific decision to be avoided. However, it would appear that categorisation goes beyond a simple linkage to a particular denomination.

In contrast, those with negative attitudes towards interfaith were all Orthodox Jews. Their negativity might have been predicted at a superficial level because of the *Halachic* interpretation of the Trinity as accepted by many Orthodox Jews. However, none of these respondents offered this as

reasons for their negative attitudes and this is contrary to the majority who had positive attitudes in this study. Although there does not appear to be a pattern or explanation to link Jewish affiliation to the attitudes held within this study, with the possible exception of those with negative views it was necessary that this should have been explored. It is pertinent that the attitudes of all the respondents in this chapter, whether positive, ambivalent or negative did not comply with the stereo-typical images given to Jews and interfaith involvement. The reasons for this are not easily found with the testimony given and it could reflect upon the singular ethos of the OJC.

Those with positive attitudes all agreed that interfaith is important, but how they arrived at this conclusion is different in each case. However, in all of them it appears that the resultant attitude towards interfaith involvement has been influenced by their childhood or experiences in later life as an adult. With Yolande the greatest influence was that of the Christian boarding school where she learnt all about Christianity and realised that the other girls neither knew, nor were taught anything about Judaism. Indeed Yolande was so affected by the negative portrayal and teachings about Jews that she felt compelled to act to remedy this situation. It was this which influenced her to the extent that interfaith work has dominated her life. It is the opposite in the case of Bernard. He grew up in a large Orthodox community in which the non-Jew was someone that you came across at work or at school, but with whom a relationship was seldom allowed to develop. Within the large community in which he grew up, the ethos was very much that the non-Jew had 'nothing to do with you', and in fact Bernard avoided any relationships outside work with anyone who was not Orthodox for all his life until he came to live in Oxford. Although he is still not actively involved in interfaith activities, it was this move to Oxford and his first experience of a more outward looking community that made him realise that in fact, interfaith was probably important to the Jewish community in the UK. Even so he was content to leave this work to others.

By contrast, Victor and Dennis did not believe that interfaith work actually achieved any positive results. Victor was influenced by the experiences of his early life in North Africa and growing into adulthood in post-war Paris where less than twenty years previously the Jews had been rounded up sent to in Drancy and thence to the camps in Eastern Europe. He spoke about the ignorance of his colleagues about Judaism and how, in his view, the old prejudices against the Jews were still present. It was a combination of these experiences which influenced him to think that overall interfaith activities were not constructive and did not achieve a positive outcome.

Both Dominic and Rabbi Michael grew up in Cardiff, albeit a decade apart. Dominic's family came to the United Kingdom following the First World War and he was brought up in a Yiddish speaking household where the traditional Jewish Orthodox practices and rituals were a fundamental part of his life. He was the first generation in his family to be born in the United Kingdom, and during his school career the non-Jew was represented by other boys at school and his neighbours. It was his experience of entering the vastly different environment as an undergraduate at Oxford that introduced him to people of other religions and cultures. After an international academic career he returned for his retirement to Oxford and it was then that he became interested, involved and active in interfaith activities through CCJ. In Dominic's case it can be seen that the influence and breadth of his career experiences brought him to appreciate the positivity of interfaith relations. Rabbi Michael's experience of Cardiff was different from that of Dominic's as he grew up in a very Jewish, but not particularly *Halachic* practicing family. He became committed to Judaism when still a child, developed an interest in theology which he found through reading Christian literature. He is the only respondent to demonstrate an interest in Christian theological thought and it was this which subsequently introduced him to Jewish theology. He then continued his education at Cambridge where he would have had similar experiences to Dominic, but following his graduation Rabbi Michael dedicated his life to the rabbinate and following his retirement at fifty became immersed in

academic Jewish-Christian relations. These are two similar stories, two similar endpoints, each strongly influenced by their very different journeys along the way.

There is also a commonality of upbringing and background between Dominic, Yvonne and Bernard. All were brought up by immigrant parents in an environment with similar closed attitudes where the non-Jew had 'nothing to do with them'. However, Dominic moved beyond this environment and as shown above was exposed and interested in the Other, whilst Bernard's upbringing was to marginalise people of other religions as being irrelevant to Jews. He is still influenced by these thoughts despite intellectually understanding that interfaith might be beneficial in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For most of his life he has maintained the attitudes towards the Other which had been established from childhood and reinforced by the large Jewish community in which he lived. Both he and Dominic came to Oxford in later life, Dominic returning and Bernard for the first time. This experience for Bernard has begun to encourage him to look outwards a little and begin to appreciate that interfaith involvement may contribute something positive, albeit only from the Jewish perspective. Dominic, as has been shown, became committed to interfaith work. Yvonne was influenced firstly by her secular education particularly with history and the opera, although at university she did not mix socially outside the Jewish circle. It was her marriage which introduced her to the culturally secular Jewish outside world. Again it can be seen that experience has affected the resultant attitudes towards a willingness to engage in interfaith activity.

Norman was not involved in formal interfaith activities, but he was totally committed to Jewish-Muslim relations through his work colleagues, many of whom came from the Middle East and who were Muslim. He grew up in a large open Jewish Reform community where his family was open to people of other religions. His wife is German and she converted to Judaism, so there is now a strong element of Lutheran Christianity in his family life. So Norman's background and experiences have influenced his interest and

ability to develop relationships with people of different religions. Anne began life being unaware that she was even Jewish. Her Jewish journey has brought her towards Orthodoxy where she holds very clear ideas about the structure of Judaism and the role it plays in her life. She attended a convent primary school where she gained some knowledge of Christianity, but after she discovered that she was Jewish, she felt different from her peers. It was not until her secondary education at a school with a large component of Jewish girls, that she began to feel 'at home', comfortable with her Jewish status which she then began to learn about Judaism in greater depth. She came to Oxford upon her marriage and subsequently became committed to the OJC, holding several executive positions. She also became very involved in interfaith activity which was through the OJC as opposed to any formal interfaith society, e.g., CCJ. She was also prepared to comment on the communal and public role of the chief rabbi, an aspect not mentioned by any other respondent. Yet again, it can be seen that life experiences and Oxford has played a part in Anne's resultant interfaith commitment.

Victor, like Bernard does not believe that interfaith activities have positive outcomes, although, unlike Bernard, he mixed in Paris with his Catholic friends from school. It is possible that the motive for his attitudes arose from his experiences at school in Paris when Judaism was the religion that was marginalised both by his school friends and teaching staff, where he so strongly disliked being categorised by the generic label as an Arab, which has had a lasting effect.

Anne and Mark both had periods in their lives when they were not at all involved in Judaism, in the case of Mark by a positive rejection and by Ann because in her early childhood she was unaware she was Jewish. As adults, both came to similar places within Judaism and are committed members of the OJC, although Anne has for many years been involved in interfaith work whilst Mark has remained on the periphery and is somewhat ambivalent Robert, who converted to Judaism following a professional life within the church, was the respondent whose background had no commonality with

the other interviewees introduced in this chapter. It was noteworthy that from the beginning of his introduction to Judaism he progressed from avoiding interfaith to becoming a member of CCJ within just a few years. However, it was important that his voice was heard in this chapter as most Jewish communities do include a member who at some point in their life have converted to one of the different strands of Judaism.

It is thus seen that experience, whether from upbringing and environment or from later life choices, has clearly influenced the attitudes of all of these 12 people. However in each of the cases their motives, as has been shown, for holding these attitudes is different. The largest influence which created this change in the case of Dominic, Bernard, Robert, Norman and Anne, was coming to Oxford and joining the OJC. As Norman commented, it would seem that the size of a community is important and there appears to be a critical mass over which a community can afford to be inward looking to reflect the ethos of the membership and leaders. A small community like Oxford cannot exist in isolation from Others; it is not large enough to do so. Because the ethos of its membership is from a homogenous group of Jews, and as there are always several international Jewish visiting academics to the university who join the OJC, who come from many different cultures and backgrounds, the community has to be outward looking and accommodating to include the different strands of Judaism as well as to engage with the Other, in order to survive.

The reaction of the respondents to the interviews was also revealing. Several people were extremely thoughtful and were careful to think matters through before expressing their thoughts. Dominic particularly, showed a great deal of thought, and said that he was looking at issues that he had not, but should have, considered previously. It was also significant that although Bernard and Dominic have differing resultant attitudes towards interfaith, along their journey they shared some ideas. Both expressed an understanding and concern about the historic role played by Christianity in antisemitism and both addressed the perceived risk held by some Jews of the potential for conversion of Jews through interfaith

interaction. However the conclusion of each was very different. Bernard did not release that fear, whilst Dominic did not think this created a problem. Also, in contrast with each other Dominic thought it was necessary for each to have an understanding of the Other, whereas Bernard did not.

Eleanor shared a background of being brought up in the same community and synagogue as Bernard, both being steeped in Orthodox learning and practice. But as regards their respective attitudes to interfaith, they could not be more different. As a child Eleanor had direct contact and friendships with non-Jewish children which broadened as she grew into adulthood from Jewish-Christian relations to include Muslims. Eleanor's and Bernard's orthodox practice remains similar but Eleanor has a much more independent and open attitude to Jewish learning. Why is this? Perhaps it was the narrowness of Bernard's family background which actively discouraged an outward looking life style and it was not until he came to Oxford that he began to have experience of other religions, and belong to a community where some of the members were active in interfaith that he began to think it might have a purpose. However, he addressed some interfaith issues, he gave the feeling that emotionally and spiritually he was not comfortable with these thoughts.

Above all, these interviews demonstrate that the particularity of background, random life experiences and individual personality have a huge influence upon the resultant attitudes towards interfaith of all these interviewees. The testimonies also demonstrate a breadth of different thoughts and implications towards their attitudes to interfaith involvement which are impossible to predict.

This is most probably not surprising but it is advantageous to have, for the first time, the evidence to show this. The diversity of the respondents' lives and the spectrum of their attitudes is fascinating and may well point the way towards future interfaith action.

The following chapter will analyse two further issues which have been highlighted by the testimonies. The first will consider the respondents

attitudes towards Israel and how they feel the politics impact upon their lives and upon Jewish-Christian relations. The second will examine the interviewees' membership of CCJ. This will be significant because it will either endorse or refute the classifications of positive, ambivalent or negative attitudes towards interfaith expressed in the testimonies by the interviewees.

## Chapter 3

### Attitudes of Respondents towards the Issues of Israel and CCJ Membership

#### Israel

The issue of Israel within interfaith in the UK has been briefly addressed in Chapter One at a general level. In fact the subject of Israel has been mentioned by almost all the respondents as a discussion point within interfaith activities and interaction with non-Jews. Because of the prominence of Israel/Palestine issues within interfaith an analysis of the respondents' views deserve detailed consideration. As attitudes of the respondents may differ according to the religious grouping attended by the respondents, the testimonies will be introduced by religious grouping beginning with those who are Orthodox, followed by those who are Masorti and concluding with those who are Liberal. It will be noted whether the interviewee holds positive, ambivalent or negative attitudes towards interfaith involvement. In common with the previous chapter, the respondents will be introduced, their thoughts and opinions discussed and then compared with each other one by one as each new interviewee is introduced allowing for an overall analysis. However, there are three respondents who have not been included in this discussion. One is Norman, a Liberal Jew, one Tilly, the atheist and the other, Dominic who is Orthodox. The reason for this is all of them only briefly alluded to Israel, did not express any clear attitudes or in fact any attitudes at all and were unable to contribute towards this chapter.

By the beginning of the twenty first century, some University of Oxford students were expressing strong support with the Palestinians at the expense of Israel. In itself this represents freedom of speech and a university can be deemed an ideal environment for its students to experience and be exposed to new ideas and ideals. However, in 2014 the Oxford University Palestine Society stated they were supporters of Hamas,

an organisation which calls for the destruction of Israel, and allowed placards to be carried on demonstrations stating 'Hitler was Right'.<sup>165</sup> As a result of the strength of this Society, by 2016 the fear of antisemitism has become deeply unsettling for the Jewish students. The interviews were collected in 2012 when, although there was a preponderance of support for the Palestinians, the overt anti-Israel demonstrations were less intense. Therefore it will be appropriate to begin with the two students, both of whom are Orthodox.

Beginning with Stephen, the first important topic for discussion was to discover if the subject of Israel had created any difficulties in his relationships with non-Jewish students. His response was encouraging albeit surprising:

No, not at the moment. But then if there is a spike in activities in Israel it might get quite serious. If there was another campaign then it might be different.

He thought that the fact that the Oxford Jewish Society and the Oxford Israel Society are two separate societies helped, as this meant the Jewish society is completely apolitical. He said that as a Zionist he would have preferred the two societies together, but understood why it was done like this. He continued to say that he thought many students did prefer the societies separated as this created a safety shield. He elaborated:

I think if the sort of non-Jews around me at the University knew the Jewish Society was Israeli rather than Jewish, then 'things' might happen more, but at the moment it's quiet, but then if something more happens, which inevitably it will...

Stephen stopped abruptly at this point and declined to continue. It was then explored if he thought the non-Jewish people at Brookes automatically assumed that as a Jew he was going to support all the politics of Israel. His reply was unexpected:

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<sup>165</sup> Boteach, S., Prager, D. Observer 28.11.2014.

It's strange, because the only people who I've had conversations with about Israel are people who are so apathetic that it makes no difference anyway. My flat mates from last year when I was living in hall, just didn't care and they would have assumed that I wouldn't have cared either. I think in general there is a presumption that Jews and Israelis support each other and back each other up – although actually it's not true. And like I said at the beginning, it's part of the whole sort of ignorance.

It is surprising that the other students Stephen has contact with are not interested, or maybe not aware of the situation in the Middle East, although the latter seems unlikely. Is it significant that Stephen himself appears to be disinterested in talking about Israel with his non-Jewish friends? A highly probable reason for this is fear that this subject will initiate unpleasant conversations in which he does not wish to engage or perhaps he does not feel sufficiently knowledgeable or confident to deal with. Stephen's views are unexpected particularly because of the publicity of antisemitism in the universities in general. He made an assumption that his non-Jewish friends all thought that Jews supported Israel. Stephen knew this was not the case, but did not correct them. His comments about Israel also reflect his general attitude in interfaith, which was that he will engage and enjoy the discussions if the subjects are initiated incidentally by his friends. It is possible that he is fearful of the consequences of engagement of both subjects, or that, as a young person, he is genuinely not interested because they do not impinge upon his life. It is also possible that Stephen has chosen his friends who he knows will not challenge him about these 'difficult' subjects

Following Stephen is the other student included in this research, Natalie, then a first year chemistry student at Worcester College, University of Oxford.<sup>166</sup> She was asked if she discussed Israel with her non-Jewish friends and if so had it been a difficult subject for her in which to engage.

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<sup>166</sup> Natalie. Ref 86 Chapter 2.

No, it hasn't caused any problems. I've had quite a lot of discussion with my friends about Israel, especially since I got here, and about Judaism but it's never in a judgmental way so I haven't had any problems.

Asked whether she thought her friends knew about what was happening in Israel, she thought they did and that they had mostly accurate information although maybe not the complete story. She thought because her friends have not visited Israel they had only heard what was on the news and they did not know any of the good things that were happening and when asked if she told them about the good things she said:

I tell them what I know. That's probably not enough either. But Israel hasn't caused any problems for me.

That was all Natalie would say about Israel, but it was in contrast from 2016 and the tension around students at Oxford University. Unlike Stephen, Natalie was actively involved in initiating discussions about Israel with her friends. Stephen thought that most of his non-Jewish friends were apathetic about Israel whereas Natalie felt her friends did know about the Israel situation but only from what they saw or read in the news. Both students were unable to expand their views and look at the wider picture, despite prompts and support from the interviewer. It is possible that their approach is immature, and that these views lack the perspective of the older respondents who are influenced by the broad experiences of life. Perhaps simplistically, the publicity given to antisemitism in Oxford is overstated by the media. Both Stephen and Natalie approach the issues of interfaith and Israel in a similar manner. Stephen will discuss both subjects if and when they arise but will not initiate either topic. Natalie, likewise has a similar approach to both interfaith and Israel in that she will initiate conversations with her friends about both topics.

It will be revealing to discover if the next respondent, Rabbi Michael for whom interfaith engagement played such a large part in his life, showed a

more expansive view about the impact of Israel.<sup>167</sup> He began with a very strong initial statement about the politics of Israel:

Oh Israel is very important. Yes, the mere fact of Israel, an amazing phenomenon. Well I'm not a politician. I think that a lot of the comments that are made are extremely facile. If you were the Prime Minister of Israel, what decision would you have to make in those circumstances? Well I don't know. First of all I haven't got all the information, the Prime Minister will have. So I don't make much comment on that. I am interested in the religious scene because that's much more my field. And then there's a surprisingly lively and tense conflict between the Charedim and the rest, which includes the modern Orthodox. But all sorts of wonderful things are happening and there are new ideas being generated, and at long last the religious authorities are being challenged, which they've got away with for a long time. So, I'm sure things are going to emerge which will bring Judaism into the contemporary world where it should be and the way it should be.

The noticeable difference here is that Rabbi Michael did not mention the Israel/Palestine issue which was the first and only matter discussed by the students. Not surprisingly Rabbi Michael comments that he is more comfortable addressing the Jewish religious aspect in which he talks about the relationship between the Charedim, the ultra-Orthodox, and the rest of the population. He then moved to discussing the place of the church in relation to Israel:

Why should the churches be involved in Israel any more than with anywhere else? That's very odd. I mean one of the curious things that I had to do battle with, when I was involved with international dialogue, and dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church was that the Jewish delegation was always 'banging on' that the Vatican must recognise Israel. Now I have mixed feelings on this because to me

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<sup>167</sup> Rabbi Michael. Ref 18 Chapter 2.

you cannot compare the church with a nation state. I didn't see why the Vatican should be in the business of recognising anybody or being recognised by any nation state. Either this is a question of philosophy or this is complete nonsense. I must say it was a bit offensive. If the Catholic Church was exchanging diplomatic missions in various countries why single out Israel as a place where they didn't have one. This is a strong opinion and certainly different from that expressed by the students who, as stated by Rabbi Michael above, wanted to see the Vatican accept the establishment of the State of Israel. Rabbi Michael felt passionately this was totally unnecessary and even offensive as the Vatican were then singling Israel out from most other countries and making it a special case. He said that the Vatican used to give excuses for not having a diplomatic agreement with Israel, one of which was 'that it was not a country with settled borders'. Rabbi Michael's opposition to this was that in the whole of Latin America everyone was quarrelling with everybody else and did not have settled borders:

I mean almost any country you take does not have internationally agreed boundaries. So this was obviously just a pretext.

Rabbi Michael began speaking about Israel by saying he preferred to talk about religious issues rather than politics, because that was his interest. However, he immediately introduced the politics of the Vatican. He then continued to discuss political views taken against Israel by the boycott of Israeli academics by UK universities. Rabbi Michael responded to this briefly, strongly and with derision:

These things are great stupidities, and should be pointed out. Look around the world today, there's talk of a boycott against Israeli academics. Look at the Middle East. The only country indeed where a Muslim can live without interference is Israel and attend university is Israel.

Again Rabbi Michael is the first respondent to address the issue of boycotts. His response is simplistic and dismissive encouraging one to think that the remedy is easy. Of course the way he expresses a Muslim's ability

to attend university only in Israel is not quite factual. These are the words he used but perhaps he did not mean them literally as he would certainly have known about other universities in the Middle East. It is possible he was referring to the fact that only in Israel in the Middle East are Jews and Muslims able to attend university together. He then continued voluntarily on quite a different line but still with oblique reference to Israel:

Well it's quite fun. As you know I've just had my 80th birthday. It's great fun looking back. I never thought I'd put the world right. A lot of people do when they're younger, and they blame the previous generation, and I'm sure my generation blamed the previous generation for making a mess of the world, and now two generations later the younger generation are about to take over blaming the one before for messing it up. Well let's hope they get it right.

Overall Rabbi Michael's interview was unique in the issues he voluntarily brought up and the way in which he addressed them. The topics he initiated were both broader and deeper than those of the students. Because of his academic interfaith background it was surprising that when he was discussing the Vatican's recognition of Israel, of which he was dismissive, it was fascinating that he did not discuss the link between Christianity and Israel through Jesus. Perhaps these views have been influenced by his rabbinic training coupled with his academic experience of interfaith. It now remains to be discovered if other respondents will deal with these issues in the same way. Rabbi Michael has positive attitudes towards Israel, just as he expressed positive attitudes towards interfaith issues.

The following Orthodox respondent is Bernard whose Jewish religious practice is similar to Rabbi Michael's, but whose views regarding interfaith engagement are, in contrast, negative.<sup>168</sup>

Although Bernard was initially reluctant to speak about Israel he felt that there were some Israeli political issues where the Jewish voice needed to be

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<sup>168</sup> Bernard. Ref. 106 Chapter 2.

heard. He then mentioned the difficulties students were having on the campus and thought there were a 'lot of things to talk' about when it came to Jews and Israel. He continued:

There are a number of Christian groups who appear to be very anti-Israel, and I think if you are consciously Jewish, then you have to have a Jewish base in the State of Israel. I think Christian Aid is one that has made anti-Israel or negative comments about Israel. There are problems which I don't think have been solved or resolved very easily for people who feel being Jewish means having Israel existing there in some form or another.

Bernard is uncertain about the politics of the Christian charity, but at the same time does not address Christian links to Israel through Jesus. He is also confident that Jews need a spiritual link with Israel. He continued to say that he tried not to get involved in conversations about Israel because he did not think it lead to anything good:

But I do think it affects my perception of how non-Jewish people view Israel.

Bernard like Rabbi Michael made comments between the attitudes of 'Christians' and Israel. Rabbi Michael defined the 'Christians' as the actions of the Vatican, whereas Bernard's was a generalised comment and he did not wish to elaborate further. He continued, however, by addressing an issue that is not unusual for Jews to discuss:

My feeling is that in this country the media have had 40 years of giving a rather one-sided view of what's going on in the Middle East. Therefore you've had a generation of people growing up reading and hearing a rather biased view of what goes on there and a biased view of Israel, and if I came across someone who has a biased view about Israel I think I would have to say something. I would try to even the balance out, but it does make how I feel about these people different.

Bernard has been the first respondent to mention the role and responsibility of the media, beyond the passing remarks of Natalie. The

surprise is that he is the first to do so as, anecdotally it would appear that it is a common view point. He also contradicted himself as he said he would try to say something if he had contact with a person making biased statements against Israel - earlier he had said that he tried not to get involved in these conversations.

All the respondents introduced so far continue to hold attitudes towards Israel which have different biases from each other but which include commonalities.

The next respondent is Callum who begins by talking, as had Bernard, about the role played by the media:<sup>169</sup>

I have had to argue the toss because I personally feel that the balance of media coverage and perspective is skewed, and when you do have a degree of both background and of relevant information I think you need to share it with others. But that's my personality. That (the media) has come up a few times, so I have to correct people and say this is what's happening, but this is not what you've been told. They say 'well why haven't we been told?' So I think you have to be an advocate. I think it's to do with my sense of injustice, and I try to put that right.

These comments by Callum do have overlaps with other respondents as he shares a criticism of the media with Bernard. However Callum expresses more strongly that he would counteract the media view point whilst Bernard was ambivalent and contradictory. Finally Callum addressed the social implications:

I think there have been many occasions when people reserve comment in my presence, so I have personally not experienced direct hate of Israel. This may be difficult to believe but I think that a lot of people are sensitive to my presence and so therefore they don't actually share what they might be thinking at that particular time,

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<sup>169</sup> Callum. Ref 105 Chapter 2.

but that hasn't necessarily affected our relationship with Christian people.

There are two differing concepts here, neither of which have been mentioned before. Firstly Callum is suggesting that his non-Jewish friends do not discuss some of the actions of Israel because they are aware that their thoughts would oppose his and they want to avoid a situation of conflict. As a result of their actions the second implication is that Callum does not raise these issues and his friends likewise also refrain from discussing Israel with him. Although he is not as equivocal as Bernard, perhaps he does not need to be as his friends are preventing him from initiating these conversations so as to protect their relationship. This means that their interfaith friendships remains intact and unaffected, albeit for as long as an agreed silence remains on specific topics. However, Callum is unable to resist actively correcting the views of his friends when he feels their views have been influenced by unbalanced media reporting. This he most probably does in a non-aggressive, non-confrontational manner in order to ensure their relationships are maintained.

Anne is the next interviewee to be considered. She is also Orthodox and has positive attitudes towards interfaith.<sup>170</sup> Whilst Anne was the chair of the Parish Council she successfully achieved that on Remembrance Sunday the service became an interfaith event whereby the wreaths were laid on the war memorial as opposed to the cross, thereby enabling members of the OJC to take a full part in the service. However for her it had not been easy as on the committee were ex-service people one of whom Anne described as:

Very anti-Israel, and furiously so. I think it was all connected with 1947/8 to the hanging of the British soldiers and the bombing of the King David hotel in Jerusalem. It was obviously very shocking and caused a huge wave of antisemitism and anti-Israel feeling at the time and I hadn't really registered this. The ex-service man was angry

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<sup>170</sup> Anne. Ref 62 Chapter 2.

about it and said ,’The Israelis, what have they ever done here, why should we have Jews involved in this service? The Jews, you know, they’ve done these terrible things.’ I said, ‘Remembrance Day is all about ex-servicemen and commemorating the part they played.’ I told him ‘My father was a serviceman and a Jew, and he’s British and he was part of the British army and he served in Palestine. What more can I say? He has served his country and been very patriotic. Most Jews are like that. And I was sorry about what happened.’ That was how it started and I remember walking out of one meeting because I was very angry with some of his reactions. It took a long time, but we got there in the end. I had a lot of backing from Malcolm Wiseman because there was another issue about the fact that we don’t have a Rabbi at the OJC.<sup>171</sup>

Anne is the first respondent to record that she has been directly involved in personal anti-Israel, antisemitic attacks. She persevered and overcame the opposition and ultimately achieved change in the format of the service for Remembrance Day which takes place at the local Commonwealth War Graves cemetery, which includes the grave of a Jewish serviceman. Senior service representatives attend from many countries including Germany, Italy, Poland and Austria. No other respondent reported a similar personal attack.

Anne then introduced the subject of the church and boycotts saying:

I certainly think the Church of England behaved absolutely appallingly with their boycotts. They were calling for Israel to be boycotted if Israeli food is made on the West Bank. I think there’s no understanding there. They are completely and utterly biased and prejudiced against Jews and against Israel. For me these are more or less the same thing.

Anne is also the first respondent to make the link between anti-Israel and antisemitism and to express these views strongly against the Church,

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<sup>171</sup>Rev Malcolm Wiseman is the minister for the small communities and the forces in the UK. He has provided longstanding support for the OJC where he is greatly respected.

although which church is not specified. So far Rabbi Michael has been the only other respondent to address the issue of boycotts, which he did with derision. However, he either has not experienced or chose not to relate any personal antisemitic attacks as did Anne as it is probable that her experience regarding Remembrance Day may well influence and make her more sensitive to other anti-Israel issues. The discussion then developed to include whether Anne thought that Israel created difficulty for Jews in the UK:

There's all sorts of things going on. Look even in Europe at Germany. Germany is now making a stand against B'rith Mila, circumcision, and the issue of kashrut, kosher killing of animals. It comes up again and again and then again and it's against Muslims as well as against Jews, but the Jews feel it very keenly and it's shocking. So it's not just about Israel for sure.

It is difficult to comment upon Anne's inclusion of the Muslims' reaction being different from that of the Jews, but she was very clear of the link between attempts to prohibit B'rith Mila and kashrut and antisemitism. Callum said that he refrained from discussing issues relating to Israel with his non-Jewish friends in order not to chance losing these friendships. Anne also considered this possibility:

Probably in the past I expect I did discuss Israel with my non-Jewish friends to a certain extent but I don't now. I'm not looking for rows. I guess I'm a bit of a coward.

Like Callum, Anne is preserving her non-Jewish friendships. She commented that she did discuss these matters in the past, but the past was a different world when actions from both sides were different. However, coward is probably not the appropriate descriptor for her, especially as she ended by reporting that she was shortly attending the local Co-Operative AGM meeting because they were refusing to stock any goods made by Israel in the West Bank. Without a doubt Anne is the respondent most involved against anti-Israel issues in this country by personally taking actions against them. This is significant because as well as

being such a strong supporter of Israel she has the balance to be also committed to interfaith, but is determined to be involved in both despite the tension this causes. She is also the only respondent to date to have broadened the discussion to include European issues, including the UK, such as objections to *kashrut* and *b'rith mila*, for which there is a fine divide between antisemitism, animal welfare and human choice.

The next Orthodox respondent is Yvonne who also has positive attitudes towards interfaith involvement.<sup>172</sup> Yvonne has said she finds the subject of Israel is 'absolutely taboo' with her non-Jewish friends because they are so vociferous in favour of the Palestinians. She continued:

I don't think they seem to realise the sensitivity and that how it's coming out can be antisemitic - but they don't think it is. They really and truly don't think it is.

This issue of being reticent to discuss Israel with non-Jewish friends Yvonne has in common with Callum and Anne. It is an understandable view point because friends are precious and it is difficult to initiate discussions about a subject for which disagreement will be the outcome. Yvonne continued to talk about the power of the church as a political body:

What I do think is dangerous is the political side of the Church, because they are a body with power in the House of Lords. I've lived through their attitudes after the war and I would say that in the 50s and 60s and 70s the Church was possibly more tolerant. What's changed a lot has been the success, the apparent success of Israel and Israel apparently not being the underdog. I think this works to all the prejudices - they are clever; they rule the world and they can organise the world. My feeling is however much they fight against it those irrational roots may be there too in the Church body, and we all know that we behave differently as a body than we do as individuals. So it's the group psychology and attitudes that seem to me to be dangerous. I don't like the institutional aspect.

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<sup>172</sup> Yvonne. Ref 83 Chapter 2.

Here can be seen many different aspects of the Israel debate. Firstly the political power of the body of the Church in the House of Lords. And again it is an aspect not brought up by the previous respondents. Secondly, Yvonne was the only respondent to consider the psychology and the power of group pressure. During her life spent teaching in a Catholic school, she became knowledgeable about Church practice and influence and she has been able to transfer this experience to the complex issues of the Middle East. She also made the link between the success of Israel today with the old anti-Jewish hatreds of the *Protocols of Zion*.<sup>173</sup>

Seven of the Orthodox respondents have been introduced, six of whom expressed positive views towards interfaith involvement. Regarding Israel there have been many different attitudes, albeit all defensive. None of the interviewees said they initiated conversations about Israel, one felt the subject was taboo and four of the interviewees have said that although they did not initiate discussions about Israel with their non-Jewish friends to avoid putting these friendships in jeopardy, they did respond to this topic. To continue examining the Orthodox responders, the next is Victor who has negative attitudes towards interfaith:<sup>174</sup>

I understand that there is a lot of talk by the Christians saying that they're going to ban anything coming from Israel, and also anyone who is involved in Israel activities, e.g., academics. And this is the Church, where people are educated who are doing it. So what do you expect from the rest.

Victor immediately mentions the boycotts and then the Church as an organisational body, as did Yvonne although Victor goes a little further than Yvonne by comparing the educational understanding of Israel with non-Church body people. He then began to speak of the media:

You know I think the press has a big role to play to try to make people aware rather than them always writing negative things. They need to be much more moderate in their writing especially when

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<sup>173</sup> Ben-Itto, H. 2005 *The Lie that wouldn't Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Vallentine Mitchell.

<sup>174</sup> Victor. Ref 117 Chapter 2.

things happen in Israel for instance. Not that I want to condone what the Israeli government is doing at all, but what I want them to understand is not all Jews agree with Netanyahu for instance. But I think that's where the press has got a role to play and politicians to try to make people understand it. I think it's a question of education. Victor makes many different points in this one succinct statement. Firstly, he continues with the media not reporting events in Israel in a balanced manner. Secondly, Victor ensures the interviewer is aware of his political stance on Israel and finally he insists that there is no one political stance taken by all Jews. Interestingly this is also what is being illustrated in this analysis - there are as many different attitudes to the question of Israel as there are respondents. So far Victor suggests that education would make people understand, and as a teacher himself it is not surprising that he would suggest this. He continued to elaborate about education:

People have to be much more aware and not forget what history is about. Not just take little bits of history in isolation. My Arab friends in France in my generation have no problem with Israel. It is the new generation in France that think Israel is bad because they don't know the history. For them all they know is what they read in the paper which is that the poor Palestinians are battered by the bad Jews. And it's not really like this because you know after all history is completely different in the Middle East and unfortunately here in Europe for us Jews that's what happening there, is causing big repercussion on us here.

Victor clearly states here the link between events in Israel and the knock-on effect in the UK.

The final Orthodox Jew is Dennis, who also had negative attitudes towards interfaith so it will be interesting to discover if his attitudes are individual. Dennis believes the actions of the Church against Israel is a sign that they're probably failing themselves.<sup>175</sup> Dennis is committed to Israel and

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<sup>175</sup> Dennis. Ref 132 Chapter 2.

played a key role in establishing Ben Gurion University in Beersheva and he commented:

One of the things that I actually always try to say when I speak about Israel and which really represents my philosophy, is that you have to be positive, you can always be against something, you can be negative, you can be against Israel, there are so many things wrong with Israel, but you must not only focus on the bad things.

This is a refreshing approach towards Israel. Natalie mentioned the 'good' things about Israel were not given enough publicity and Rabbi Michael enthused about all the new ideas in which Israel was playing a part, but Dennis expressed this concept more forcefully. It could also be commented that it was disappointing his positive philosophy was not transferred to interfaith interactions. He continued discussing the results of negative approaches as related to the Church:

I think there's a left wing trend these days to attack Israel. It's veiled antisemitism, to be frank, again, by not seeing the positive aspects, and only focusing on the negative ones. You have to suspect the Church's motives, and it's the old Church, the old Church's mantra coming back, but just in a different light. We've had two thousand years of this. The Crusades were just as bad. They went to kill the unbelievers. Is that what Christ wanted? Is that religion which says kill somebody that doesn't fit in with my views, or, shall it say we must tolerate, we must show them, the unbelievers, that this is the way to God, this is the way we live, this is who we are, and what we do, and that's what they don't do. So the Church, with all its great ability to do good is actually wrong on that aspect. Syria, worries me, because we've had more casualties there than the whole of the Arab/Israeli wars put together, but let's focus on Israel. But if they reached out to Israel they'd find a willing hand, I know that.

Again, there are many different ideas and values in this short statement. Dennis makes the link between those who speak negatively about Israel causing antisemitism, for which he holds the Church responsible, specially

referencing the Crusades. Also in a last short sentence he makes the valid point about what was happening in Syria in 2012, and still continuing today in 2016 and the death rate comparisons. The final sentence in this paragraph reverts to hope and positivity. He concludes this topic in his interview by speaking about the comparison of the number of questions brought in the House of Lords about Israel compared with Syria. Dennis speaks as did Yvonne by looking at the political power of the Church in the House of Lords and both express disappointment at the lack of support of Israel or even a balance between Israel, Palestine and other Middle Eastern Countries.

Within all the Orthodox respondents, Bernard, Victor and Dennis's attitudes towards interfaith are negative, whereas those of Stephen, Natalie, Rabbi Michael, Callum, Anne and Yvonne are positive. It is significant that those with negative attitudes do not appear to have attitudes towards Israel which differ from those who had positive interfaith attitudes. Bernard, Victor and Dennis have some views of Israel in common and some views which are different from the respondents with positive interfaith attitudes but this has also been found between those with positive interfaith views. For example Dennis and Victor have expressed institutional views about the church as have Rabbi Michael, Anne Yvonne. The only respondents who did not mention the negativity of the Church were the two students, Stephen and Natalie. Otherwise all the others were most critical. It is, therefore, impossible to say whether a negative interfaith attitude creates a different attitude towards Israel from those with positive attitudes towards interfaith. The implication of this finding reinforces the individuality of the Orthodox responders with reference to their attitude towards interfaith. All the Orthodox responders had definite views which they expressed about Israel and none expressed negative criticism of the politics of the country.

The analysis moves from the Orthodox responders to the members of the Masorti group, and the first is Yolande who began by considering how much she discussed Israel with her non-Jewish friends and colleagues:

They know how much I disapprove of what Israel's doing. I am not saying a Jewish state can't defend itself, but I can't see the point to a Jewish state that doesn't have unshakeable convictions that people are equal and deserve their human rights and respect. If Israel genuinely wanted to be friends with its neighbours, every Israeli child would learn Arabic.<sup>176</sup>

Yolande immediately addressed the issue of the politics of Israel, which she strongly disliked, but she continued to expand on how she thought communication between the Israelis and Palestinians might improve in the next generation by learning the language, literature and the culture of your 'enemy'. She continued:

I don't go (to Israel) just for holidays anymore. That's a conscious decision that I have taken. I will go if I have to go for family reasons or other, because I have family living there and I find myself incredibly uncomfortable with people who seem to be genuinely nice, kind, and gentle, but who have a total blind spot about the way the Palestinians are treated.

Anecdotally this is not an uncommon approach amongst Jews who live outside Israel and who dislike Israeli politics concerning Jews and Palestinians. However what is intriguing is her following comment:

That doesn't mean I would go round saying that in a Christian context, though I have said it. but when I am asked I will say that just because I am Jewish doesn't mean that I have to support everything a Jewish State has done, just as you, as a Christian don't have to approve of everything that went on in Northern Ireland I assume. I put it like that and they usually understand what it is you are talking about. So I am honest about it if I'm asked, but I will NOT defend what I consider to be the indefensible.

So far Yolande is the first respondent to address the issue of having a different approach when talking to her non-Jewish (as opposed to Jewish)

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<sup>176</sup> Yolande. Ref 1 Chapter 2.

friends about Israel but still managing to convey her feelings about Israeli politics. She is also the first to criticize the politics of Israel and to take a personal action to support her political views. This aspect was continued by talking about whether she had experienced the dividing line when anti-Israel becomes antisemitism.

Yes I have, and at that point you would defend the right of a Jewish State and you would also try and point out to that person that what is driving their comments is not logic but is prejudice.

It can be seen that Yolande has a well-rehearsed strategy to respond to those who breach the line of criticism of Israel becoming antisemitic.

Yolande's discussion of Israel is seen to be much deeper and responsive than particularly Stephen's or Natalie's. Yolande will initiate these conversations, has the confidence and experience to be able to cope and deal with criticisms and if engaging with Christians will defend the right of Israel to exist, concepts not mentioned by the students.

To date there are five respondents, all with positive attitudes towards interfaith who do not initiate discussion about Israel, but the two additional Masorti interviewees need to be examined before any differences might be explored.

The following respondent is Eleanor, the second Masorti respondent, who has positive attitudes towards interfaith. She lived in Israel and visits frequently.<sup>177</sup> She began by mentioning a film called 'O little Town of Bethlehem' which was linked to the Israeli wall erected to divide parts of Israel and the West Bank to prevent the suicide bombers gaining access to Israel. The wall passes through Bethlehem and in preparation for Christmas the Quaker movement was promoting this film. Eleanor said:

The Quakers were showing the Bethlehem film to Christian communities. That is so so complicated because you feel it does get strangely mixed up with the 'blame the Jews' thing, but I have my own sense of injustice about the wall about the government about

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<sup>177</sup> Eleanor. Ref. 36 Chapter 2.

the lack of peace process and all that. To me ultimately it's more important to be an activist about Israel. I care about what my people and my country (Israel) is doing and I want to fight for justice. What's important? More important is peace, more important is justice.

Eleanor spoke about the difficult time she had had interacting with Quakers and the anti-Israel statements they were making. She also spoke at length about to her the unacceptable politics of Israel both towards the Israeli Christians and Muslims as well as to some of Israel Jews, particularly the women. Eleanor has spent some considerable time taking part in marches in Israel in support of peace and justice. Here new attitudes have been introduced yet again by Eleanor, issues not previously spoken about. Eleanor is also the first respondent to have said she has been actively involved in marching against the politics of the Israeli government related to human rights in Israel, - certainly not an action nor an attitude anyone has taken or expressed so strongly so far. She also spoke in an anxious way about the anti-Israel actions of the Quaker movement as had the other respondents spoken about the churches.

The final Masorti responder is Mark who although a CCJ member was ambivalent about being involved in interfaith activities.<sup>178</sup> He began by speaking about the Church:

I think the Church does cause problems in the UK for the Jews, but mostly because of the Israel/ Palestine conflict, the very partial taking sides in this conflict. I find that threatening and worrying.

When asked if he was aware of specific political statements issued by any of the Church bodies he replied:

I'm aware of statements and attitudes as regards Israel. Recently, I think there was the synod, or whatever they call it, when their support for the ecumenical accompaniment programme to be led by the Quakers, was passed. I had a terrible - Oh you were there at a meeting - at The Friends' Meeting House, ostensibly it was open to

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<sup>178</sup> Mark. Ref 90 Chapter 2.

people who were supporters of the grassroots Quaker project. Right so this was an event which was advertised as being in support in *N'eva Shalom, Waat al Salaam* and other grassroots initiatives promoting peaceful contacts and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, and we were treated to a presentation by one of the ecumenical accompaniers to Palestine, to a presentation that was prejudicial and provocative and distorted in many ways. When I tried to put the record straight I got shouted down and abused. I was conscious that there was a whole table full of literature - all of it was anti-Israel. It was the lack of balance that was so blindingly obvious that I found offensive. I then wrote an open letter to *The Friend* the Quaker publication. I had an acknowledgement from some administrative assistant saying the editor had received it and would get back to me in due course, but I never heard from them again, and as far as I know the letter never got published at all, or disseminated in any way. I did mean to follow that up in a quite aggressive way, but my daughter's health problems intervened and so that all went out of the window.

This is another example, like that of Anne and Eleanor, of active intervention to promote a more balanced view of Israeli actions towards the Palestinians with non-Jews. Mark is the only Masorti respondent to have ambivalent attitudes towards interfaith so his view of Israel cannot be directly compared with the other Masorti respondents in this study. But like Eleanor, who is Masorti, and Anne who is Orthodox, Mark was actively involved in support of Israel.

The first Liberal representative is Tessa who is positively involved in interfaith.<sup>179</sup>

She began by describing her involvement in an Israel/Palestine group

It was this small group of a few Jews who joined the Gaza group which was trying to talk to people who were very pro- Palestinian

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<sup>179</sup> Tessa. Ref 71 Chapter 2.

and anti-Jewish, well anti-Israel, and we were trying to get it a bit re-balanced. That has sort of fizzled out now but everybody is now on very good terms and I would say the few of us that are left feel comfortable with each other and I think we have all felt that we have achieved something but we are not quite sure what it is or how one did achieve it, but there is a sense of appreciation and decency between us.

Tessa, like Anne and Mark was active in trying to build positive relationships between the Palestinian and Jewish members of the Gaza Group. Unlike Mark's experience which was entirely negative with no positive outcome, and Anne's experience which was extremely difficult but ended positively, Tessa's experience was positive both in belonging to the group and within the relationship which continued after it finished. However, unlike Anne's experience the outcome from Tessa's involvement was friendships between the individual group members. It was not, however, a huge step forward in terms of major Israeli/Palestinian projects.

The composition of the group was briefly discussed in order to discover if there were any Quaker members. Tessa stated:

Yes, there were quite a lot of Quakers but it was quite an uphill struggle with them. I do think that it's been worth the effort to try something to show the Quakers in particular that not all Jews are violently pro the things that have been going on in Israel and Gaza. So they can see there is a different side.

This is intriguing and most important so that at least some Quakers who were involved in the Gaza Group will have come to see Jews in a different light from the way they believed all Jews were. Discussing whether events in Israel had any impact about how Tessa thought of the non-Jews in the Gaza Group. She replied:

I felt that I was, in a sense more able to do this because I was so ignorant. I had so little connection with Israel, so it was more of a sort of common sense role than a deep personal agony and angst

which I know the other Jewish members were going through. I just think the whole Israel situation is tragic on both sides to such a massive degree with all the leaders being so incredibly stupid. But I haven't got that personal connection, so it is very remote, and I feel rather sad about that, because I'd love to have more connection with Israel. Except perhaps I'm quite glad I haven't because of the mess. You know, I've got completely mixed feelings about it.

Tessa is the first respondent to declare that she does not have an emotional tie to Israel and so it is even more surprising that she is prepared to be actively involved in attempts to repair relationships between those who place Israel in the 'wrong'. Perhaps she does this in an attempt to create a spiritual bond for herself with Israel, or perhaps she has been influenced by her family who were not Zionists. This is intriguing because Tessa is the person who was able to find spirituality in the space of other religions but she admits that she has no association or feeling of spirituality to Israel. She does manage to turn this positively to enable her to be more objective. It will be important to discover if any remaining interviewees have similar feelings.

The next Liberal respondent is Ruby who, when considering if she had been exposed to antisemitism answered:

When I immediately think about this, I think about not so much about my faith, but about Israel. I've been in situations where non-Jewish people have spoken very unfavourably about the State of Israel and especially politically about how they are treating the Palestinians today, and I feel in a bit of a dichotomy. Do I stand up to represent Israel as a Jew, or do I stand up as Ruby who herself doesn't fully agree with how Israel are treating the Palestinians, and that makes it very difficult.<sup>180</sup>

Ruby immediately linked antisemitism to the Israel problem. She also expressed her difficulty of comparing her own humanitarian beliefs

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<sup>180</sup> Ruby. Ref 80 Chapter 2.

towards the treatment of the Palestinians with her emotional tie to Israel when discussing these issues with her non-Jewish friends. This provides not only information about attitudes towards Israel but also is an example of the integrity of Ruby's responses

She then considered how she had resolved this dichotomy:

Well I'm a bit of a coward so I always try and stay clear of it. But, no I think I've had very difficult conversations with people about it. Then I have to say I've had very difficult conversations with ultra-Orthodox Jews about Israel too, and where I stand politically, so it's in both camps.

Ruby was able to consider the views of Charedim as well as those of non-Jews and had experience of both. No other respondent had considered the political views of Charedim as compared to non-Jews, but she was, not surprisingly unable to resolve where she stood politically and with whom she identified. She continued by exploring whether she thought non-Jews can understand the place of Israel within Judaism:

The concept of Israel is very difficult in itself, because of what it represents. Is it just a haven of security for the Jew, is it a biblical right of ours, and I think it's so complex for the Jew to understand that for someone who is non-Jew, it must be extremely difficult. They see it more as a land as a political country. There is no emotion in it, the same way as it is for a Jew.

Ruby is able to empathise with these different groups which is different from previous interviewees. However, although she approaches the difficulties for non-Jews to understand the Jewish link to Israel, she does not make the Christian association with Israel via Jesus. She is expressing different emotional links to Israel compared with Tessa who does not feel any spiritual ties. Ruby moved the discussion to consider if some non-Jews used the political issues of Israel as a mask for antisemitism and thought about whether she had experienced this:

I've seen it. People have said very difficult things about Jews taking power, not treating the Palestinians properly, being the aggressors. Yes. It has been done, and it is done. It's difficult.

Ruby in common with Yvonne alluded to the accusations of Jewish international power, as are discussed in the Protocols of Zion and she agreed with the other respondents that the politics of Israel can be used to express antisemitism.

The final respondent is Robert who converted to Liberal Judaism and he holds revealing attitudes.<sup>181</sup> Discussing the place of Israel in Judaism he responded:

Israel is a significant part of the collective Jewish self, Jewish identity, I find it one of the most embarrassing parts of the Jewish collective self. I don't see it personally as the 'mother ship'.

Here we see a second respondent in addition to Tessa who does not 'personally' hold Israel in a special place. Discussing this issue to a deeper level he commented:

I haven't so far visited Israel. I suspect it will be a very significant experience for me to do so, to be surrounded by Israeli society and a Jewish cultural life whatever that might be. But I don't like to refer to the Diaspora. I've not been dispersed from anywhere. I'm Jewish here, thank you very much. I don't belong ultimately anywhere else. Somewhere else isn't my home at all. The Jewish family is my home and Britain is my home and that's as far as it goes.

There is no doubt here that Robert has a strong allegiance to his Jewishness, but certainly not to Israel. He said he will be interested to experience visiting a country where he, as a Jew, will be in the majority, but he made it very clear that he is a Jew in Britain and has no personal links and no spiritual links to Israel. These attitudes are different from all the other respondents discussed in this section. It was almost superfluous for the others to state a spiritual link with Israel. By their strongly held

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<sup>181</sup> Robert. Ref. 136 Chapter 2.

views and by their defence of Israel it was unnecessary for them to confirm that Israel held a special place for them. Many did not wish to lose their non-Jewish friends by discussing Israel but the implication that this could happen if they did was proof that any such discussion may become emotional and confrontational and would be bound up with a spirituality. Returning to Robert, his family life would most probably have excluded Israel completely, and because his father was antisemitic, should the topic of Israel have been raised it was unlikely it would have been with positive opinions. Thus Robert had grown up hearing little or nothing about the idea that a special non-political relationship between Jews and Israel existed. This reason could also reinforce the suggested reason for Tessa's lack of a relationship with Israel.

This analysis which includes the students, illustrates how they are less able to discuss issues to the same depth as the older interviewees. This maybe because they have less confidence coupled with limited experiences and have not as yet developed their ideas to the extent of being sufficiently confident to share them particularly via an interview.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

Overall all the respondents expressed a wide range of issues regarding Israel. Some overlapped with each other which will be discussed, but there were also several who had specific beliefs. Most importantly there was no common thread identifiable between the ideas held by those belonging to the different religious groupings. Each person was speaking as an individual and their comments remained their own. There was only one topic which was discussed and agreed by the 12 interviewees. This was that some anti-Israel comments expressed by either Church bodies or individuals or other organisations can be deemed in their view to represent overt antisemitism. Those who explained this concept were Anne, Bernard, Yvonne, and Dennis, all Orthodox; Yolande, Mark and Eleanor, all Masorti; Ruby (Liberal) and Tilly who was the atheist. Expressed in a different way, Anne, Yvonne,

Yolande, Eleanor and Ruby all had positive attitudes towards interfaith, Mark and Tilly were ambivalent and Bernard and Dennis had negative views. It can be seen that there is no pattern between either the religious grouping or interfaith attitudes held and that each respondent is speaking entirely as an individual.

In terms of overall trends, none of the respondents initiated discussions about Israel. There were six interviewees who would respond to conversations if the topic of Israel was brought up. These included Anne (Orthodox), Callum (Orthodox) Yolande (Masorti) and Ruby (Liberal), and both the students (Orthodox) who all had positive attitudes towards interfaith. Also Bernard (Orthodox) and Victor (Orthodox) who both had negative attitudes towards interfaith would respond to conversations about Israel, but not initiate such discussions. Yvonne (Orthodox), who said for her these conversations were absolutely taboo. Cowardice was certainly not an appropriate description of either Ruby or Anne as both were heavily engaged in interfaith exchanges covering all topics including Israel. Callum (Orthodox) and Yolande (Masorti) both stated that although they did not initiate difficult conversations about Israel if they were in a situation where non-Jews, friends or colleagues, were discussing these, then they would not hesitate to put forward a more balanced perspective. Ruby (Liberal) and Bernard (Orthodox) have been mentioned earlier as those who tried to avoid these conversations. However, both also commented later in their interview that they would defend Israel from what they considered was unjustified criticism. These contradictory comments mean that by choice they would not engage with their non-Jewish friends in criticism of Israel because these discussions can become exceedingly difficult. Neither of them are naturally confrontational and nor do they wish to argue with friends. However, should they be pushed to a situation which they feel is not justifiable or is becoming antisemitic, then they feel sufficiently distressed to defend Israel.

There were four respondents who were or who had been actively involved in projects connected to Israel. These were Anne (Orthodox), who enabled

members of the OJC to participate fully in the local Remembrance Day service at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, and also challenged the local Co-operative store regarding boycotts of Israeli goods. Eleanor (Masorti), actively participated in Israel to oppose treatment of non-Jews. Tessa (Liberal) belonged to a group who were supporting the Palestinians in Gaza, and Mark (Masorti), attended the meeting when a Quaker gave a biased report of her time as an accompanier in the West Bank. Mark was not the only responder to consider the role of the Quakers regarding Israel as Eleanor (Masorti), and Tessa (Liberal), had also undertaken informal meetings with a small group of Quakers in an attempt to put forward a balanced view of the situation in Israel/Palestine.

Only Bernard, Callum and Victor, all Orthodox, criticised the bias of the media. The fact that they were all Orthodox is incidental although in view of the anecdotal information criticising the media it is surprising that more respondents did not make reference to it. A possible reason may be because most respondents were anxious to impart their own specific views about Israel that the issue of the media was overlooked. Although there were few who even thought about this topic it is significant that Bernard (Orthodox) addressed the fact the he believed that the State of Israel was a spiritual essential as a support for Jews in the Diaspora. It was significant that Tessa (Liberal) and Robert (Liberal, Convert) did not accept that such a link was necessary or a part of their lives. Tessa commented with regret and sadness whilst Robert was much more aggressively against this link. For Robert this was most probable because although he converted to Judaism by choice and has now become learned in much of Jewish philosophy, the intrinsic role played by Israel within Judaism has not been part of his life and he sees Israel as 'just another political country' - albeit with a Jewish majority.

Another significant issue which was considered was the political power of the Church and how this power had been used against Israel. None of those who did address this explained what they meant about the 'Church' or to which Christian denomination they referred. For example Yvonne

(Orthodox) spoke about the power of the Bishops in the House of Lords, but did not mention that they represented the Anglican communities. Altogether ten of the respondents thought the Church showed sympathy for the Palestinians at the expense of Israel. These were Rabbi Michael, Callum, Anne, Yvonne, all Orthodox with positive attitudes towards interfaith; Bernard, Victor and Dennis, all Orthodox with negative interfaith attitudes and Eleanor and Mark, Masorti with Eleanor who was positive and Mark who was ambivalent about interfaith.

Finally there were just three interviewees, all Orthodox who thought Israel should be spoken about positively. Natalie (student) wanted the 'good' things about Israel to be publicised. Rabbi Michael commented that there were 'wonderful things happening in Israel' and Dennis who spends much of his time working as an academic in Israel strongly stipulated that so much of what Israel is doing is contributing to an improved life of all its population, that his philosophy is to concentrate on this positivity.

Overall eleven of the fifteen respondents specifically expressed a dislike of current Israeli politics, of whom five were Orthodox, three were Masorti, one was Liberal, one atheist and one was a convert; none expressed approval. Additionally eight had positive attitudes towards interfaith, all of the three respondents who had negative attitudes, one was ambivalent and the convert. It will be important to make a deeper comparison between attitudes towards Israel and interfaith involvement concerning the respondents' interactions and discussions about Israel. This is what was found.

Beginning at the basic level, the only respondent who said she engaged in discussions was Natalie. However, none of the other respondents would initiate discussions about Israel with non-Jews irrespective of their attitudes towards interfaith engagement. Undoubtedly this was because there was much concern that any such discussions would be confrontational and aggressive and would run the risk of spoiling existing positive relationships with their non-Jewish friends. It was felt that there was too much at stake to lose. However, when non-Jews were making

statements that respondents felt were factually incorrect, some could not help but respond. These were, Stephen, Callum, Yolande, Eleanor, Tessa, and Ruby, all of whom had positive attitudes towards interfaith, and Mark who was ambivalent. Those who would not have any discussions at all were Anne and Yvonne who commented that interfaith discussions were absolutely taboo, despite otherwise having positive interfaith attitudes and Bernard who had negative attitudes.

Thus it can be seen that the attitudes of these members of the OJC to Israel do not depend on the religious grouping of their choice. Neither do their attitudes towards interfaith influence their views. Each is speaking as their own self which is confirmed by the number of different issues in total brought forward. It is on this positive note that this issue is complete. This chapter will conclude with a new focus which may further analyse the respondents attitudes towards interfaith – their membership of CCJ.

### **Respondents Membership of CCJ**

It is crucial to explore the respondents who are members of interfaith organisations. The students will not be included for two reasons. Firstly, it cannot be expected that young people would join an organisation with a much older membership than themselves, and secondly, the students are fully occupied with their university commitments.

Overall nine out of 17 (60%) respondents were members of CCJ, two of whom were also involved with the Three Faiths Forum. Of the 17, not surprisingly, 15 have positive attitudes towards interfaith; one was ambivalent, and one was Robert who converted to Judaism. All the Masorti respondents are members of CCJ, three out of the five Orthodox respondents who had positive attitudes were members of CCJ and both the Liberal Jews were also members. When the sample was selected, interfaith organisational commitment was not one of the criteria so it reassuring that membership of CCJ has endorsed the findings of the sample: the majority with positive attitudes were members of a recognised interfaith organisation.

Of the remaining two who were members of CCJ Mark was ambivalent. It is likely that he had associated himself with CCJ because he did not wish to be actively involved and by belonging and paying his subscription his conscience was assuaged. The final CCJ member was Robert. Because he converted to Judaism from actively and professionally being committed to Anglicanism, his motivation is likely to be complex. He probably wished to associate and identify wholeheartedly with Judaism and by belonging as a Jew to CCJ completed his conversion formally. Possibly he also felt that he would develop further by being in a situation where he could discuss Judaism with Christians.

All the respondents who were members of CCJ were able to take discussions about Judaism to a level beyond the superficial. This is probably the result of receiving information regularly from CCJ which maintains their interest level. The only two who had positive attitudes and were not members of CCJ were Anne and Norman. Anne is the only respondent who is involved actively in interfaith who is not a member of a national or local interfaith organisation. She has non-Jewish friends, but these she will have personally selected. Perhaps she has no interest in mixing socially with non-Jews she has not personally chosen and prefers to avoid interaction based upon a specifically religious agenda. Norman may not be a member because his interest lies in Jewish Muslim interfaith and the Jewish Muslim Forum does not include a grass roots element within its organization. Not surprisingly, but again another aspect of the honesty of the respondents, all those with negative attitudes were not members of CCJ.

None of those who held negative attitudes were members of CCJ or any other interfaith organisation. This would be predicted but these results reinforce the reliability of the testimonies gathered and the allocation to this group.

Examining these two very important issues - Israel and involvement in a formal interfaith organisation - reveal the further complexity of the attitudes expressed by the respondents. That there is a clear relationship

between support for interfaith and formal involvement is not surprising, though that some still reveal unease and lack of commitment for it is. The politics of the Middle East is a more complex issue in terms of classifying the respondents. Whilst categorising by religious affiliation does not reveal a clear pattern, it is evident that whatever their views on Israel, all the respondents believed it was important in terms of interfaith relations. This is an issue that formal bodies cannot ignore.

Chapter Four will examine further issues which have an importance for Jewish-Christian relations and that is the behavior, beliefs and attitudes of the respondents towards entering into the religious 'Sacred space' of the Other.

## Chapter 4

### Jews in Pews and non-Jews in Synagogues

#### 4.i Background

This chapter will consider Jewish attitudes towards Christianity from a different perspective, but nevertheless one still intimately linked to interfaith. It takes and develops further respondents' attitudes to consider a different but equally important aspect of interfaith towards the Other. By a series of progressive steps, the topics discussed became deeper and will often become increasingly difficult for some of the respondents. In the first section of this chapter, four different aspects of 'Jews in Pews' will be considered.<sup>182</sup>

Initially, the attitudes of the included respondents will be examined as to whether they will enter a church to look at the paintings and sculptures when there is no Christian service taking place. The discussion at interview continued to consider if the respondents would attend an interfaith service which was taking place in a church; it then probed more deeply to consider if the interviewees would actually take part in such an interfaith service in a church. Next it examines respondents' attitudes towards attending a Christian church service in a church, maybe to commemorate a life event of a Christian friend or associate, for example a wedding or a funeral of a friend or colleague, and finally it considered whether the attitudes of the Jewish respondents enabled them to participate in a Christian service to commemorate such a life event. These stages will enable a resultant personal interfaith boundary to be identified for each respondent.

The Torah states very clearly, beginning with the Ten Commandments, in Ex.20:3-6, 'You shall not have other Gods'.<sup>183</sup> Through rabbinic

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<sup>182</sup> It may appear that no introduction to this topic was given to the respondents. This was not the case, as the background was fully explained. The identification of this information was a part of the interview process as the issues were discussed, developed and prompted by specific and focused questions. This chapter will focus only on the responses to these specific topics.

<sup>183</sup> In the Torah, the 'Ten Commandments' are called Aseret Ha-Devarim (Ex.34:28, Deut. 4:13 and Deut. 10:4). In rabbinic texts they are referred to as Aseret Ha-Dibrot. The words d'varim and dibrot come from the Hebrew root meaning word, or speak or thing, so the phrase is actually translated as the Ten Sayings, or The Ten Statements

interpretation this includes the prohibition against the worship of other Gods as well as the prohibition of improper forms of worship, such as the worshipping of God through an idol instead of directly to the one God. A rabbinic consensus was developed, based on the *Talmud* (*Avodah Zara* 78<sup>184</sup>), devoted to interaction with those of other religions who practice idolatry and Christianity, through the Trinity was not clearly defined as being monotheistic. In the twelfth century the philosopher Maimonides was one of the many rabbinic authorities who supported these Talmudic writings which rejected the monotheism of Christianity. He was also supported by the lesser known Rabbis Solomon ben Adereth, Yom Tov Ibn Asevilli and Asher ben Yechiel as well as contemporary *Halachists* including Rabbis Moshe Feinstein, Ovadia Yosef and Eliezer Waldenberg. However, in parallel with these views, some rabbis also argued that Christianity is not a form of idolatry, e.g., the 13th century Catalonian Rabbi Menachem HaMeiri.<sup>185</sup> Rabbi Meiri viewed Christians as ‘people whose lives are governed by religion’, and because Christians are encouraged by their religion to exercise free will and live worthy lives, Meiri argued most of the laws prohibiting idolatry and consorting with idol worshippers do not apply to Christians. These two approaches have led to Jews having different practices. Today there are differences of opinion between the three groups of Jews. Many Orthodox Jews tend to follow the teachings of the Talmud and Maimonides, the implication of which means that for some Orthodox Jews the entering of a Church can be questionable. Many Masorti and most Progressive Jews tend to follow the teachings of Rabbi Meiri which allows them to enter churches. For the Orthodox the implication of following Maimonides means that it may be prohibited to go into a church even for

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or the Ten Declarations, or the Ten Words or the Ten things, but not as the Ten Commandments, which would have written as *Aseret ha-Mitzvot*.

<sup>184</sup> *Avodah Zarah* 78, The Perusch of Maimonides says, ‘Be it known to you that it is beyond a doubt forbidden by law to pass through a Christian city in which there is a house of vanity, that is a house of idolatry, much more to live therein. But we today, as punishment for our sins, are subject to them, and are forced to live in their countries, as it was foretold in *Deut. IV:28*. This if it is allowed as predicted, to pass around a Christian city, much more so must we pass around an idolatrous temple; nor is it allowed to even look inside and above all to enter in.’ i.e., A Jew is forbidden not only to enter a Christian church, but even to go near it, except under certain circumstances.

<sup>185</sup> Goldstein, D. 2002. *A Lonely Champion of Tolerance: R. Menachim Ha-Meiri’s Attitude Towards Non-Jews*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.talkreason.org/articles/meiri.cfm> [Accessed 31 March 2015].

cultural reasons, for example, to view works of art; to attend an interfaith service; to take part in an interfaith service in a church or to attend a Christian religious ceremony, e.g., to attend a Christian wedding. As stated, this difference of opinion is predicated on the fundamental interpretation and Jewish discussion concerning whether Christianity should be considered a monotheistic religion, or a religion of idolatry, because of the concept of the Trinity, that is that God may be more than a single entity.

Because differences in attitudes in these topics may be identified between the different Jewish groupings of the respondents, i.e., Orthodox, Masorti and Liberal, the analyses of these topics will be structured by Jewish practice, and not as in Chapter Two where the responses were divided by the positive, ambivalent and negative attitudes held. This difference has been used because as the issues discussed become progressively deeper in terms of interaction in the space of the Other, the progression of the views of the respondents can be more easily tracked. Table 3 reveals this progression as a tabular format as this illustrates this progression graphically and the personal interfaith boundary will be clearly illustrated. It can be seen that there are many layers relating to these issues which deepen as each stage progresses. Not every respondent will be included in each of these sections because it may have been that they were uncomfortable or reluctant to express their beliefs or thoughts. It is an important topic and this chapter will briefly introduce some respondents not previously included. The second section will look at respondents' attitudes from the differing perspective and examine how the respondents feel about non-Jews attending a synagogue service. Some of the respondents may find these topics quite difficult and some may be hesitant to feel comfortable in expressing their feelings. Should this occur this will also be significant, as it might be a possibility that if the reasons are emotional or spiritual, the respondent could be diffident to verbalise why they do not feel comfortable entering into the space of the Other. The resultant attitude a respondent may hold could also be dependent upon

background or life experiences. The respondents associated with the Orthodox group of the OJC will be considered first, followed by those from the Masorti and finally those from the Liberal group. Two new respondents will begin these analyses and they are two Jewish university students, one from Oxford Brookes University, the other from Oxford University.

#### **4.ii Jews in Pews**

##### **The Investigation and responses of interviewees' attitudes to**

- 1. entering a church;**
- 2. attending an interfaith service in a church;**
- 3. participating in such a service;**
- 4. attending a Christian service held in a church;**
- 5. participating in a Christian service held in a church;**

The analysis will initially consider the two youngest respondents in this study, both of whom are students at the Oxford Universities. Stephen was a second year student when we met in College to talk.<sup>186</sup> He was brought up in a large Orthodox Jewish community of 1500 families in Hertfordshire, although his family were not particularly practicing.

Stephen regularly attended Hebrew Classes, had a *barmitzvah* but following this he only attended synagogue spasmodically. Since leaving home he is more involved in both the University Jewish Students' Society (JSOC), and attending and contributing to services at the OJC. In common with many students who come to Oxford from large Jewish communities, he stated he initially found the structure of the OJC quite surprising. However he said that after he had become accustomed to the structure he stated that he enjoyed the OJC:

I like the fact that it's all in one building and I like the fact that everybody gets together at the end. Also there's no pressure to go into one service. You can even go into one and then walk

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<sup>186</sup> Stephen. Ref 85 Chapter 2.

out and go to another and then even go back. It's very open and very free and relaxed.<sup>187</sup>

This attitude is significant because it illustrates that he adapted to a structure that was very different from his previous experience of a Jewish community. When he first arrived at Oxford he attended Masorti and Orthodox service, but soon reverted to only attending those of the Orthodox, where he now frequently leads the congregation in prayer. Stephen had previously not experienced any grouping of Judaism other than Orthodox, so it is good that he did experience Masorti services before making a positive decision to continue attending the Orthodox group. However, after pausing to think more deeply about the OJC he continued:

I do think that for children growing up in a community like this, if they later join one that's not like that, they can feel put off and feel more restricted. If Oxford itself was the only community in the world for some reason, it would be a really good situation to have. I'm just not sure what effect it has on people if they're not in Oxford anymore and get too used to it.<sup>188</sup>

This is a perceptive and is included here because it provides a vignette of Stephen's thought processes which illustrate the fact that his actions and attitudes are well considered. Significantly this has also been expressed by several OJC members themselves over many years, who have brought up their families within the Oxford structure. When some of the children have left home in Oxford, they have, in fact sometimes found Jewish life in a large community to be too inflexible after the OJC because they have to identify with a specifically denominated strand of Judaism. Although he found the *intra-faith* aspect of the OJC acceptable and interesting he spoke differently about his attitudes towards interfaith. He was not involved in any formalized interfaith involvement, but said he enjoyed discussions

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

about religion with some of his non-Jewish friends on an ad hoc basis. His views on entering churches was revealing:

I've been into some. I've been into some fancy famous ones.

I'm not really sure why and I'm not really sure why I'd want to.

I'd never go into a church during a service.<sup>189</sup>

Stephen made a very clear distinction here between going into a church to look at paintings and sculptures, even though he was uncertain about his motives. He said strongly that he would never go into a church when a service was taking place. The discussion focused on why he had these thoughts, and he replied:

Because I personally have issues with Christianity as to whether it's idolatry or not. I think the varying denominations definitely have idolatrous aspects to them.<sup>190</sup>

Stephen demonstrated he has a strong spiritual allegiance to the rabbinic Talmudic teachings. The discussion moved to consider whether his belief, or uncertainty was because he thought there may be an element of idolatry which was specific to only Christianity, and he considered if he would enter for example, a Buddhist or Hindu Temple. He replied:

Again probably not during a service or when they use incense or stuff, but just going in and discussing stuff there's no reason why not to in my mind.<sup>191</sup>

It is significant that he is prepared to enter a non-Christian place of worship without feeling uncomfortable. This maybe because the surroundings are so far removed from a church and from Christianity of which he has a basic understanding, or maybe that he is interested in discovering something which is entirely new to him. However, it would appear that he is equally uncomfortable at the prospect of being exposed to the ritual practices and theology Eastern religions in addition to Christianity because of his conflict

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. As has been shown the whole tractate of the *Talmud*, Tractate Avodah Zarah, is devoted to the laws against idolatry and idolatrous practices. However, hardly any attempt is made in the classical Jewish sources to distinguish between different kinds of pagan or primitive worship such as animism, fetishism, and polytheism. All forms of worship that are not purely monotheistic are treated together as idolatry and severely condemned.

<sup>191</sup> Stephen. Ref 85 Chapter 2.

with Talmudic law. When we spoke about the possibility of him attending a special interfaith service in a church, e.g., the Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration held in the chapel at Keble College, he gave the matter a lot of thought before replying:

Depends ... [Another long pause] I'm not sure. It might be the sort of thing I'd go to and if something happened that I had a problem with I might sort of walk out for five minutes then maybe come back in.<sup>192</sup>

The discussion continued to consider what might have occurred to make him feel sufficiently uncomfortable to leave, and following another long pause he added:

'Jesus our Saviour' sort of stuff. I do have a problem with that. I've got this weird sort of thing with interfaith where I do have a personal problem with some other religions all of which I can justify but yet it never affects my views on the people of that religion or that faith, so whilst I DO have a problem with going to a church service I wouldn't have any problem with someone who completely believes in everything their church tells them to believe. Perhaps it kind of doesn't make sense.<sup>193</sup>

He also noticed that:

I have nothing wrong with Jews going to service in a church, it's something that I wouldn't necessarily be comfortable with. I think if it's something the person wants to experience – and I've seen it happen in Oxford quite a lot – then there's no reason why they can't be there.<sup>194</sup>

The long and frequent pauses whilst Stephen was considering these issues indicate some level of uncertainty of his emotions regarding his theological beliefs and his attempts to make sense of the Talmudic teaching with reference to being in a church, even for an interfaith service. He was

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

expressing discomfort for himself, but he was happy for other Jews to do what they felt was right for them. Stephen's personal interfaith boundary is narrow and does not progress too far, despite showing a contradiction within himself by noting a difference between non-Christian and Christian spaces. These are the attitudes of one of the Jewish students and it will be helpful to compare Stephen with the other student, Natalie.<sup>195</sup>

Natalie is exceptionally musical and plays several instruments in different orchestras and groups. She immediately associated going into churches with participating in concerts given in churches:

Yes, yes. I have done concerts in churches and cathedrals.

There's nothing wrong with that.<sup>196</sup>

By the addition of 'there's nothing wrong with that', Natalie somewhat self-critically was justifying her action of going into a church, and by implication qualifying that the reason she was in the church was not connected to Christianity. It also felt that she was seeking approval from the interviewer. Her response meant that the discussion needed to become more focused about how she felt about going into a church for reasons apart from music. She then added:

I have been. I think it's interesting to see how others are as well. Some of my friends have come to JSOC events and they have really enjoyed seeing a Friday night. I don't think there's anything wrong with that.<sup>197</sup>

The repetition of 'there's nothing wrong with that' emphasizes that she is again reinforcing her own actions and giving herself permission to hold these views. It is possible that discussions about this topic had occurred between other students (Stephen for example), so she felt she needed to justify her attitude to the researcher. The discussion continued about whether she would participate in an interfaith service that was held in a

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<sup>195</sup> Natalie. Ref 86 Chapter 2.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

church if she was specifically asked, if it did not involve her in music. Her reply was revealing:

Probably not, but just because I don't like doing readings in public, but in principle, yes but I just probably wouldn't do it.<sup>198</sup>

Here there are two students, with broadly similar backgrounds who grew up in large Jewish London communities; both still meaningfully involved in Jewish student life in Oxford, but holding very differing attitudes towards their Judaism. In the case of Stephen it deters him from going into a church, whereas in the case of Natalie it does not. Probably Natalie's experiences as a musician and taking part in concerts in churches has given her the experiences of entering into the space of the Other without the attached traditional Orthodox attitudes laid down by Maimonides and without feeling threatened by a Christian environment. Although she was nervous about being there even as a musician, she possibly felt that she had more control so that under these circumstances neither Christianity nor Talmudic Judaism could influence her. It is significant that again this experience of Natalie's in her youth has continued to impact upon her attitudes as a young adult. Natalie took her personal interfaith boundary to a deeper level than Stephen. Her involvement in music may have influenced her comfort in the space of the Other, but nevertheless she was prepared to attend different services even if she preferred not to take part. Having considered the views of the two students, both Orthodox but with different views and attitudes, who took part in this study, this section will now continue with another Orthodox respondent, Bernard, and examine his attitudes to assess if he follows Stephen or Natalie, or indeed takes a third path.<sup>199</sup>

Bernard is the Orthodox Jew brought up in a large Jewish community in London, largely separated from the non-Jewish world. Discussion about this issue was very short as he did not appear to be comfortable or wish to expand upon his initial replies. The discussion began by Bernard saying he

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Bernard. Ref 106 Chapter 2.

would go into a church to look at art but not to consider any Christian religious artefacts. His reply was unexpected:

Oh yes I do that. I've done that many times. I still do. Yes, I'm interested to see those sorts of things, how a church, or monastery looks like inside, how it's been built and the architecture and what goes on.<sup>200</sup>

Because of Bernard's strict Orthodox background it is perhaps surprising that he demonstrated an open attitude to entering a Christian place of worship and being curious and interested in these surroundings. It might have been expected that he would have held views which supported those expressed by the rabbis in the *Talmud*.

However, as we progressed to talk about the possibility of his attendance at an interfaith service in a church, his immediate response was different:

I would find that probably difficult. I've never been to one, so it would depend on if it was an interfaith service. I presume the service would be composed in a way not to cause offense to other faiths. If I was asked or invited to I probably [long pause] would.<sup>201</sup>

It is significant that there is a large difference between his approach and interest in the physical architecture of a church and the leap to attending an interfaith service in a church. These responses showed traits that were consistent with his views expressed in the previous chapter. He responded to the issues of attending interfaith services, with an unhesitating reply of a definite 'No', but then as he thought about the issues as he spoke, he paused, modified his reply and decided he would if he was specifically asked. His reply in itself is complicated by the fact that because the interfaith service, in which the OJC and CCJ are directly involved, is the Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration, i.e., based around the suffering of the Jews, is organised by and held in Keble College Chapel. The address is given alternately each year by Rabbi and a Bishop and members of the

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

OJC choir, *Oxfordshir* sing both together and separately with the Chapel choir in Hebrew and English. Members of OJC participate in readings and the *Kaddish* is traditionally sung in Hebrew. Notices for this event abound within the OJC, written, via digital communication and verbally, and no person has been specifically and directly 'invited'. He continued to qualify his desire to be specifically invited by saying:

I don't think I haven't been because it was in a chapel, it's probably because it wasn't convenient.<sup>202</sup>

In common with his previously stated attitudes towards interfaith involvement, it appears he experiences some internal conflict between his desire to attend because this service was commemorating the Holocaust and his spiritual conscious. He was justifying the reason he did not attend, by deciding that the date was not convenient. Bernard concluded that he would find it difficult if were to be asked to read any text in the Chapel. Because of his background, and his beliefs, Bernard remains influenced by the views of the rabbis as included in the Talmud. Even so, and against a contradiction of the Talmudic discussion, he *will* go into a church and has a curiosity about Christian places of worship from a secular heritage perspective, providing no services are taking place. Here can be seen a similarity with the attitudes of Stephen, and a similar personal interfaith boundary with Stephen which is revealing in itself, rather than with Natalie. Bernard expressed a curiosity about the interior of a church, whereas Stephen, although he did go into a church, was uncertain as to why he felt uncomfortable. Bernard then appeared to be uneasy about discussing these issues in greater depth, so he was not pressed further, but another Orthodox Jew, Dominic allows further analysis of these issues through his testimony.<sup>203</sup>

As noted previously, Dominic is the elderly gentleman brought up in Wales in a Polish immigrant Jewish environment with Yiddish as his first language. After school he went to Oxford University and became an academic.

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Dominic. Ref 28 Chapter 2.

Dominic was very open to the idea of going in to a church to see the art and architecture and is happy to attend a service if it is for specific purpose, e.g., the wedding or funeral of friends. He also is a regular attendee at the interfaith commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day in Keble college chapel, of which he commented:

Yes, I go every year, especially bearing in mind that my parents' family were victims as well. When you get a man like Richard Harries having the courage to say what he does say, I admire that, and if he says it in a church so much the better.<sup>204</sup>

Dominic is an Orthodox Jew whose attitudes towards entering the space of the Other is very different from those of both Stephen and Bernard in relation to attending an interfaith service in a church. There is more commonality between Dominic's views and those of Natalie. It can be seen that there is a range of attitudes beginning to be revealed within the Orthodox responders, so it will be important to analyse the views of Rabbi Michael.<sup>205</sup> Rabbi Michael responded without pause to say that he has, and did go into churches to look at the art, and has attended funerals also. He replied to the researcher's question about whether he felt quite comfortable with this by telling about one of his experiences. (This is a typical method of rabbinic response to a question – that of a reply based around a story, and is a common occurrence in the Talmud.) First he thought that his reaction to the environment within a church was dependent upon the denomination of Christianity the church represented, and to illustrate this view he related a particular event when he was travelling with a number of Anglican Bishops in Poland:

We stopped at various places including churches where they had icons and I was fascinated by the reaction of these churchmen to these Catholic icons, because icons are very

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. And Richard Harries is the retired Bishop of Oxford. He was a previous chair of National CCJ, has been deeply committed to interfaith and written extensively on the culpability of the church towards anti-Semitism. He gave the address at HMD commemoration at Keble College in 2007.

<sup>205</sup> Rabbi Michael. Ref 18 Chapter 2. Rabbi Michael, aged 80, was also born and brought up in Wales, like Dominic, and who, after attending Cambridge University trained as a Rabbi in London. Latterly he became committed to academic Jewish-Christian relations.

strong in Poland in a way that they aren't in this country. There were some who thought they were beautiful, really wonderful. Others, who I could see, they were shrinking from them, as I was, as they felt themselves in the presence of idolatry. No, we make a mistake to think of this as a Jewish and Christian issue. Clearly Christians are very divided, as historically we know they have been, and also tend to have different reactions, but personally my reaction was very, [Rabbi Michael hesitated] I don't like it. I feel very uncomfortable with it. Some of the Anglican Bishops and I went out of the church.<sup>206</sup>

This is a very significant response from Rabbi Michael, a rabbi who has dedicated many years of his career to establishing good relationships between Jews and Christians, both at an academic and grass roots level for someone who will go into a church. It would appear that his response to the icons was a spiritual and emotional response - a response for which his views, and indeed those of some of his Anglican Bishop fellow travellers, must be respected. It is also significant, that as an academic working in the field of Jewish-Christian relations, his reaction to the icons was the same as some of the Anglican Bishops and this came as a surprise to him. He continued by saying that he does feel more comfortable in a low Anglican Church environment rather than a high Anglican cathedral, but commented:

But I wouldn't feel very comfortable in the Temple if they rebuilt it! It's just not my scene.<sup>207</sup>

We then discussed how he felt about attending an interfaith service in a church:

I'm not sure. I suppose I just might, but I would hesitate.<sup>208</sup>

Rabbi Michael thought this might be because it could give the wrong messages to his congregants and other rabbis, and that he would have to

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<sup>206</sup> Rabbi Michael. Ref 18 Chapter 2.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid .

way up the circumstances carefully. Although the reason is very different, the end decision he came to was the same as that arrived at by Stephen and Bernard, rather than Natalie or Dominic, and thus his boundary is in a similar place as Stephen's and Bernard's. It is revealing that his doubt about attending an interfaith service in church appeared to be based upon how his action would be interpreted by his congregants, rather than his own Orthodox spiritual allegiances. The researcher felt he was reticent and slightly uncomfortable to continue down this avenue, so the subject was changed and the last Orthodox respondent in this section will continue the analysis further. This is Anne who was not aware she was Jewish until she began school.<sup>209</sup> Anne is definitely comfortable to go into churches to look at works of art and the church itself. Also she has attended Christian weddings and funeral services, as well as Harvest Festival services and 'even' Christmas Carol services when her children were at school. The addition of the word 'even' in her sentence shows that her attendance at the Christmas service represented something slightly larger than that of her attendances at other events, perhaps because of the inclusion of Christmas Carols at these school celebrations. However, she drew a very firm line of demarcation against attending a Christian baptism ceremony. She expressed a hatred of this ceremony and continued:

Well I went once and I was horrified. You're bringing a child out of darkness into the light, ... somebody makes a huge amount of promises on behalf of this child, and it's definitely so rejecting of any other form of religion or non-religion that it made my flesh creep to be honest.<sup>210</sup>

On the surface, Anne is showing some inconsistency of attitude towards Christianity and interfaith here. She was determined, as has been seen in the previous chapter, for changes to be made to the wreath laying ceremony during Remembrance Day Services which would enable Jews to participate. However, a Christian baptism by its very nature, must reflect

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<sup>209</sup> Anne. Ref 62 Chapter 2.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

the religion into which an infant is being received. Baptism is one of the two Sacraments universally recognized among Christians as instituted by God and necessary to salvation.<sup>211</sup> By baptism, a person is made a child of God, becomes a member of Christ's Body, and is cleansed and reborn in the Spirit.<sup>212</sup> Anne's reaction here is understandable in that she found the ceremony to be specifically Christian, but the concept of expecting that a family would consider having their baby baptised in church into any other form of religion or no-religion makes an oxymoron of this event and is not representative of interfaith dialogue.<sup>213</sup> Anne also reported that her husband had been invited to be a Godfather of a child of a non-Jewish friend, but because of her strongly held attitudes towards Christian baptism, her advice to him was to look at the text of the service before he replied. This he did and decided against so doing. Thus for the respondent Anne, the essence of prevenient grace - as a Jewish concept first and foremost, appeared to be missed or at least at odds with her observed experience of Christian infant baptism. Again this would indicate a significant role for interfaith encounters because it would appear that superficial encounters do not cover the deeper eventualities. In contrast, Anne said she would and does attend an interfaith service held in a church, for example, the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration in Keble chapel. Anne sings in the choir of the OJC, and the choir participates in this commemoration, but she replied:

Well I have done. Obviously I've attended because I'm in the choir and if I wasn't I probably wouldn't bother. I mean, not because I've anything against it, but it probably would be

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<sup>211</sup> Baptism is based upon Christ's command to the Apostles, Matthew 28:19, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'.

<sup>212</sup> Baptism : [Online] Available at: <http://christchurchanglican.org/anglican-faith/sacraments/> [Accessed 21 March 2015].

<sup>213</sup> Prevenient grace is a Christian theological concept. It is divine grace that precedes human decision and exists prior to and without reference to anything humans may have done.

Also at a theological level, infant baptism - and not all mainstream Christian denominations agree on infant baptism, the predominant theological position is the concept of prevenient grace, i.e., that God's love and grace towards humankind was there before we even knew it or were aware of it. Thus an infant baptism is a sign of that prevenient grace. It is less Catholic and more Armenian and as such was a big influence in the work of John Wesley and the Methodist Church. This is not inconsistent with Jewish teaching as seen in *Torah* and *Neviim*.

something I'd kind of put on my calendar and think I must go to that, but then not go.<sup>214</sup>

Anne did not want to explain her reasons for this further so the discussion moved to consider whether she thought the Jewish choir *should* take part. She commented:

I'm very lukewarm about it to be honest. I don't know. I don't think there's a should or shouldn't. If it happens it's happening. People like it. It's become a tradition and the music's nice.<sup>215</sup>

Although Anne does participate in the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration, she is ambivalent about it and is not committed to this event, only attending because she sings in and had a commitment to the choir. She also has a strong dislike of the Christian baptism ceremony, but for some reason felt she could not, or chose not to consider asking the family if they would be able or willing to adapt or change the text. Anne's responses are overall complex. She will go to a church for a wedding or funeral, but not a baptism because of the theological content of the service, but she was ambivalent about Oxfordshire singing at the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration in the chapel, for reasons she either could not or would not express. It is found that the position of her personal interfaith boundary is in a very different place from the Rabbi Michael, Stephen and Bernard, and nearer to Natalie, even though all describe themselves as Orthodox.

As the Orthodox respondents progress to the deeper levels of the implication of interfaith engagement through the space of the Other, it can be seen that there is no clear consensus of opinions. Stephen is the only respondent who felt uncomfortable in going into any church irrespective of a service taking place, because of the Talmudic interpretation of the possibility of Christianity being a idolatrous religion. Rabbi Michael found going into an Orthodox Church in Poland likewise uncomfortable because of the presence of the icons, which again he felt spiritually at odds with.

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<sup>214</sup> Anne. Ref 62 Chapter 2.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

This is interesting because in the foreword of the previous Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams' book about Icons of the Virgin, the Bishop of Diokleia Kallistos Ware wrote:

The icon reveals to 'The utter strangeness of God' ... In the world, but not of it, the icon bears witness to the nearness yet otherness of the Eternal. It introduces us to a world of mystery, yet at the same time we discover that this mystery is not far away, but is hidden within each of us, closer to us than our own heart.'<sup>216</sup>

The above is endorsing Rabbi Michael's emotional response of discomfort to the paintings of the icons, because they are, in fact, more than just a painted representation, they include an emotion of their own which Rabbi Michael understood. Therefore it is not surprising that he left the display because he showed that although he was comfortable to go into a church to look at paintings and works of art, he was aware that the icons were something deeper and went against Maimonides Talmudic teachings. Bernard, Natalie, Dominic and Anne were all happy to enter into a church but they had not been exposed to the issue of icons.

As the scenarios deepened to attending an interfaith service in a church, Stephen and Rabbi Michael were unsure whether they would and Bernard thought he would find this difficult. Anne said she would if she was involved in the service itself, whereas Natalie and Dominic were happy to attend. Rabbi Michael and Stephen's uncertain responses are surprising. It could have been predicted that Rabbi Michael, because of his past involvement in academic Jewish-Christian relations would have come across and addressed this issue. Perhaps he, like Anne, was showing an uncertainty based upon the actions of Sacks' attendance on Shabbat at the royal wedding and the confusing messages which emanated from that. As the discussion deepened to the next step to the possibility of participating in an interfaith service held in a church, again Stephen and Rabbi Michael

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<sup>216</sup> Williams. R. 2002. *Ponder These Things: Praying with icons of the Virgin*. Norwich, Canterbury Press. p.5.

responded with definite 'No's. Following the uncertainty of the previous level, it is understandable that this was their response. Bernard said he would find this difficult, again not a surprising response and Anne said she would attend on the proviso that the choir was taking part, and that as long as she was a member of the choir she would participate and attend. This cannot be taken as a strong theological or interfaith response. It demonstrates more of a social responsibility. As the layers progressively deepen to the responses to whether they would participate in a Christian service, there is only Dominic who said he would, Natalie was unsure, but not due to religious conviction, whilst Stephen, Rabbi Michael, Bernard and Anne were very clear that they would not.

Following from the Orthodox it will be revealing to look at the Masorti responders to see if there is more similarity between their responses, beginning with Yolande.<sup>217</sup> Yolande was the interviewee who, after her education in a Christian boarding school had influenced her greatly and left a huge impression on her, has focused her voluntary work within the interfaith field. Because of our discussions previously regarding Yolande's attendance at chapel whilst at school, it was already known that she continued to be prepared to enter a church and attend a service.<sup>218</sup>

However, she immediately qualified this by saying:

Whenever I've been asked to preach in a church or be a participant in a service, I have always laid my own ground rules. I will always go to any service, but I won't kneel, I won't sing, although I no longer shout my own words to the hymns, but I just won't sing some of the hymns as they are. If somebody wants me to participate, there are prayers that they and I can say which don't have to finish with 'through Jesus Christ our Lord', because for a so called inclusive religion it's an incredibly

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<sup>217</sup> Yolande. Ref 1 Chapter 2.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

exclusive way to finish your prayer as it means that anybody who doesn't believe in Jesus can't actually pray.<sup>219</sup>

However, she elaborated on the above by approaching the issue positively and constructively saying that she always offered to help whoever was involved chose appropriate hymns that she was able to sing, and prayers that she was able to say, the criteria being that they were not exclusive hymns and prayers to Christianity, and thus they enabled her to participate. She commented:

Now that to me means I'm not making compromises. They are using their own liturgy, they are using their own hymns, which is absolutely fine. But if they want me to be part of it, genuinely part of it, then they will select something that I can fully take part in.<sup>220</sup>

She argued quite firmly that Christians should not believe they are holding a genuinely participative interfaith service if these criteria were not met and unless they were met she would not participate. Yolande stated that she would always *attend* Christian services, for example she has always been invited and attended the inductions of the Bishops of Oxford. She said she will always continue to attend such events because she has been invited, but she stressed that she 'participated' only in the sense that she was there, she would not participate in the sense that she would say the prayers. This compromise arrived at by Yolande was dependent upon the decision or understanding by the Christian organiser of the service.

The discussion moved onwards as she began to speak about an address she had given to a group of Ordinands when she was asked 'what do you do in your services to bring everybody in to be part of the service. What do you change?' Yolande replied that she did not understand the question because within the structure of Jewish Orthodox services changes are usually disallowed and in Masorti and Progressive services only minimal

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

choices may be made between different texts or formats. She replied to the question:

Surely people are there because they want to be there. It doesn't matter whether you go to a Liberal service or a Masorti service or an Orthodox service, the liturgy is always the same in Jewish services. What makes it different is the combination of people who are there. It's whether people are being attentive or not; it's whether there's a celebration going on; it's whether it's a festival or not; It's all to do with the community you belong to, who you're sitting next to, which community you're with, so the change in the service comes from the people who are there, and the need to be there comes from the participants. It doesn't come from outside.<sup>221</sup>

The response from the Ordinand was interesting as he made the comment, 'do you mean all the people who are there, are there because they want to be there'. Yolande's response to this further question was:

But you don't know what their reasons for wanting to be there are. It might be totally different. It might not be spiritual. It might be to do with community. It might be because they're lonely. It might be for a lot of reasons. And that's what affects the way the service is.<sup>222</sup>

She conjectured it was being part of a community that is more important to Jews than anything else, and that is what takes people to synagogue, particularly in the small community of the OJC as specifically in her personal experience the community had been extremely caring and compassionate. She felt this was a novel idea for the Ordinand to grasp, that people were not harassed to attend services but were there because they wanted to be there for, as mentioned above, a huge variety of reasons, about which they were not questioned. Their presence was accepted at face value. She elaborated upon the fact that Jewish liturgy did

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

not change according to the people who were attending, for example, for a youth service, the Shabbat service did not change in order to accommodate the youth. The youth came because they had a part to play within the existing structure of the service that was already taking place. Yolande felt this illustrated a very different approach between Christian and Jewish services, mainly due to the fact that, unlike Christianity, Judaism was not a religion of mission, and it was this which gave Judaism the freedom to reflect on what is needed for a community rather than concentrate on involving more people. The latter concept (of Judaism being free to focus on providing for the needs of the community because they were free of the theological direction for mission), will be interpreted a little differently though by Christianity. Within Christianity there is a separation between mission and worship so Yolande's comment that within worship Judaism is not constrained by mission is not strictly as would be interpreted by a Christian since within Christianity, worship and mission are two different and separate concepts.<sup>223</sup>

Overall Yolande was prepared to attend any church service whatever the event. However she qualified this firmly because she would only take part in prayer and the hymns even as a congregant, if they were not exclusive to Christianity, e.g., did not end with 'Jesus Christ our Lord'. Unless this was the case, she felt that non-Christians were excluded from taking part, something she thought some Christians were not aware of. For Yolande to play a public part in a church service, she laid down her criteria as to what

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<sup>223</sup> Whilst Jewish mission may not be the case in Oxford, recently there has been an initiative suggested to attempt to locate the disparity of census statistics which shows that there is a mismatch of self-identified Jews who live in Oxford compared with those who are members of the OJC. Additionally, although Jews do not proselytise non-Jews, new movements have been formed to attract Jews who are not Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox, i.e., Reform, Progressive and Masorti, although there are organisations which try to tempt Jews back to Orthodoxy, for example, AISH, [Online] Available at : <http://www.aish.com> [Accessed 23 March 2016] and Chabad-Lubavitch. [Online] Available at: [http://www.chabad.oeg/library/article\\_cdo/aid/36226/jewish/About-Chabad-Lubavitch.htm](http://www.chabad.oeg/library/article_cdo/aid/36226/jewish/About-Chabad-Lubavitch.htm) [Accessed 23 March 2015] This is the first time that Yolande has expressed a view that she perhaps wishes was the case, as has been seen above, even in Oxford, Jews may be asked if they would commit to being at a particular service at a particular time in order to make a *Minyan*. However, in the 1960s, certain ultra-Orthodox groups began a co-ordinated effort to increase religiosity among Liberal and Secular Jews – a category that includes Reform, Masorti and Reconstructionist Jews, all of whom are willing to interpret Jewish law broadly. Living in tight knit communities, ultra-Orthodox Jews seldom interact with this side of Judaism. Organisations like Aish and the Chabad-Lubavitch movement are exceptions. Noah Weinberg, an American rabbi founded Aish in 1974, when he decided that Jewish outreach was best practiced not by lifelong Orthodox Jews, but by those who had become religious as adults.

she was able to participate in at an early stage of planning, and was prepared to offer alternative suggestions taken from the Christian liturgy which would then enable her to take part if necessary. Thus Yolande marked her own very specific, fixed boundary which was set beyond Anne and nearer to Dominic. This is a concept which was not considered by any of the Orthodox responders so far and it will be interesting to see if Mark aged 65, another Masorti respondent reveals anything similar.<sup>224</sup> Mark was very specific and very brief in this topic saying that he had no inhibitions about going into any church to look at art, furthermore he would and has attended and participated interfaith services held in a church. He will attend a special service in church to support life events for personal Christian friends, unconditionally. Mark was very quick to answer these questions and did not feel a need to qualify or expand upon his responses. He was very clear about all these issues, which is unlike Yolande who laid down detailed conditions about the service content with respect to prayers and hymns before she would participate in a Christian service. Mark said he felt quite 'completely' comfortable with attending and taking part in a service for a non-Jewish friend, a wedding or a funeral. He did, however, state:

There are some Jews who wouldn't set foot in a church.<sup>225</sup>

This demonstrated he had the knowledge that some Jews would definitely not enter a church, but that he did not accept these restrictions were relevant to him, which implied that he did not abide by the Talmudic discussion of Maimonides. He did not see Christianity as a threat but initiated a discussion about its different denominations. He stated that he was more aware of the differences in America than he was here:

And I do often wonder, you see the Evangelical church and the Methodist church and the Baptist church and the Unitarian church. You kind of wonder how they see each other. How do I see them?

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<sup>224</sup> Mark. Ref 90 Chapter 2.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

How do they relate to each other and I suspect not always terribly well?

Mark has been the only respondent to address directly the different Christian denominations and wonder if they created similar responses in Christianity as the different Jewish groupings. (He described Liberal services as too 'Churchified'.) Although Mark's responses were brief, it was important he be included because his attitudes were different from those expressed by the other Masorti respondents to date and his personal interfaith boundary was the same as Dominic's. The attitudes of the third Masorti Jew to respond, Eleanor, will now be explained, placing her views on the continuum.<sup>226</sup> Like Mark, Eleanor responded immediately and enthusiastically to say how much she loved going into churches to look around. For other purposes, she thought it would depend on the reason, a concept Dominic would also question. She would go into a church for a meeting, and has told a Talmudic story in one of the Oxford chapels during Evensong. She will also go into a church for a service, but was aware that it could give her feelings of discomfort:

I mean one thing is 'what are they going to say next'? What is this prayer going to say next? Do I join in or not? In other words do they or do they not include Jesus? Are they monotheistic hymns? I would very much enjoy singing those. But nowadays it's not so clear, so I guess there is some apprehension.<sup>227</sup>

Eleanor expressed an uncertainty and a concern about attending a service in a church because she felt she was unable to predict when she would or would not be able to join in a prayer or a hymn. Something she was unable to anticipate, because, like Yolande she was concerned about not joining in and singing the hymns which are exclusively Christian. The difference occurred between their childhood attitudes and practice, as Yolande had sufficient confidence in her Judaism, even as a child, to sing different words to these hymns, whereas Eleanor only participated in a weekly school

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<sup>226</sup> Eleanor. Ref 36 Chapter 2.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

assembly where the hymns on that occasion would be non-Christian. She continued:

It's probably because of my childhood discomfort around Christian antisemitism and the feeling that as a Jew, of not belonging there in some way, not being acceptable, being different. What are they going to say next?<sup>228</sup>

Her attitude was laid down with her as a child, and is an example of a background continuing to exert an influence on practice and attitudes far into adult life which has continued to today. Also Eleanor's discomfort about how to behave in a church can be compared with the views expressed by Dominic, when he considered the possible discomfort a non-Jew may feel when attending a Jewish service in a synagogue. The discussion continued to focus on Eleanor's thoughts towards attending an interfaith service in a church:

I'd want to know a lot more about how it was going to go as there are interfaith ministers who run interfaith services, but I do find them a bit confusing sometimes because they're so broad, but I'm definitely open to the idea.<sup>229</sup>

Eleanor is concerned about the content of a service in a church, even though it may be billed as 'interfaith' this may be superficial. To her, on previous occasions, unless there has been a Jewish input in the content of a service, events have taken place which some Jews found difficult, because the true meaning of interfaith has been misunderstood. It may not happen deliberately, but it has occurred through a lack of empathy and misunderstanding. Eleanor has not attended a Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), commemoration held at Keble College Chapel which is organised primarily by the college chaplain, primarily for this reason, although the chaplain does seek advice from the director of *Oxfordshir*, the Jewish choir. However, as she expressed in the quote above, it may be that she would need to know about the detail of the content of the commemoration

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

before she would feel sufficiently comfortable to be able to attend. Eleanor has, however, attended a Yom HaShoah Commemoration, a bi-annual event which is organised by Oxford CCJ, which is held in the synagogue. This is different, not only in venue from the Holocaust Memorial Day event, but it avoids the issue of 'entering into the space of the Other' with which she has some concerns. Also she has confidence that the content of the commemoration will enable her to attend because the opposite structure from HMD occurs for the organisation, i.e., the commemoration is organised by Jews from CCJ and the OJC and non-Jews participate in readings which have been selected by the Jews which will thus not cause her, or indeed any other Jews any problems. She has attended a Chanukah/Advent celebration held in the chapel of Harris Manchester College, an event again organised by Oxford CCJ of which she commented:

It's not a question of not wanting to go to interfaith services, it's a question of getting the tone right, and that demands really intelligent thinking and I thought the Chanukah/ Advent was brilliant. I thought that was wonderful.<sup>230</sup>

As a Masorti Jew Eleanor's attitudes towards these issues have a commonality with some of those of Yolande, and with some of those of Mark, both whom are Masorti, as well as those of Dominic who is Orthodox, rather there is a greater consensus between the Masorti respondents than with the Orthodox. All the Masorti Jews will go into a church, all will attend and participate in an interfaith service held in a church, albeit with the proviso by Yolande and Eleanor who needed to be sure of the service content for both scenes. Moreover, all will attend a Christian service, and all will participate in a Christian service, again with conditions set by both Yolande and Eleanor. Eleanor was apprehensive of attending an interfaith service held in a church, so her personal interfaith boundary, whilst similar to the other Masorti responders had an overlay which was different and personal to her.

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

Ruby expressed a most significant and different approach to this topic.<sup>231</sup> Her background and upbringing has been steeped in interfaith, which she has continued, but it is her approach to church involvement which is of interest because she has had some original experiences and attitudes.

At university in Leeds she went to a Catholic college where there were just two Jews. She said that she sometimes used to attend Mass and became great friends with Father McGuire who was very prominent within the college and they became great friends. She said that she enjoyed being involved in other religion services.

Ruby said that she grew up in a home where the church was the same as a museum when travelling:

*We always always had to go into the church of where we were visiting in order to see the beauty of the art, or the stained glass windows or the lovely sculptures and statues.*<sup>232</sup>

With this background and interfaith involvement it is not surprising that she felt comfortable to attend services in a church particularly for a specific occasion. No other respondent has expressed this so positively, as Ruby said:

*I've been very lucky to be involved in church services.*<sup>233</sup>

She stands alone in expressing a concept of feeling privileged to have been able to participate. This appears to reflect her background of being brought up to respect people of other religions and to develop friendships with all irrespective of religious affiliation both inside and outside Judaism. An illustration of this respect occurred when she continued to say that she is the Godmother to her Catholic friend's child and that she participated in the Christening where she was involved in the service:

*The priest at the beginning advised me that I would have to say 'in the eyes of Jesus Christ our Lord', I said that I wouldn't be able to say that – I wouldn't say it publicly and I wouldn't say it*

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<sup>231</sup> Ruby. Ref 80 Chapter 2.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

privately and he was great. He understood and he said that I could just say 'in the eyes of God', which I did, publicly and privately.<sup>234</sup>

Ruby expressed a similar difficulty to Anne, who would not attend a baptism service, but Ruby had a positive and constructive attitude, with a wish to be able to participate in such a service and so suggested alternatives to the standard Christian liturgy which were acceptable to both religions. She clearly set boundaries beyond which she would not cross, in common with Yolande. Ruby continued to discuss how she had dealt with some of the exclusive Christian liturgy when she had taken part in another religion's services providing she accepted the liturgy in totality. In common with Yolande she said that she did not sing those hymns or say the prayers which were exclusively Christian, but she also expressed a similar concept to Yolande:

I am present in the service which is different.<sup>235</sup>

The concept of being 'present' at a service as expressed by both Yolande and Ruby is important in two ways. Firstly, on a personal level, they are physically in the church supporting the people who are the celebrants and secondly, at a communal level, they can be seen by all the other congregants that they are in fact present in the church. Ruby has an open attitude towards people of other religions, will take part in Christian services, but in common with Yolande, will see the service content first and if necessary will insist on changes or substitutions which make it possible for a Jew to pray. The next Liberal Jew to be included is also the final interviewee. Ruby's personal interfaith boundary is set at a similar position to that of Yolande's. She is not only one of the most significant Liberal Jews, but also one of the most committed members of the OJC. This is Tessa, aged 61.<sup>236</sup> Tessa is the respondent who leads the Progressive group at the OJC, who was brought up within Liberal Judaism and has an interest

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Tessa. Ref 71 Chapter 2.

in interfaith involvement. Tessa is very comfortable to go into a church to look at the art which is not surprising because by profession she is an artist. She is also happy to attend a church service. Tessa uniquely of all the interviewees, concentrated on how she felt attending services of other religions, and spoke about how her spiritual experiences were different from those she experienced in a synagogue. She said that at times she found a church service an extremely spiritual experience, particularly when attending a service in Westminster Abbey because of the physical beauty of the surroundings and the music:

These instantly take me straight through to God, that is as long as I'm not having to respond to the Jesus orientated responses. Otherwise, I am very comfortable praying to God in a church. I have no problems about there being a cross there, and some of the most spiritual places I've ever found have been non-Jewish places, the mosque in Jerusalem, the rock at the Temple and at the Wall.<sup>237</sup>

Tessa is intriguing in how open she is about her belief in God and how and where she is able to find a link to her spirituality. She is the first respondent to be so open and so willing to express her relationship to her divinity and spirituality in such detail, and specifically within a non-Jewish physical environment. She continued on this theme:

And I'm really shocked at the degree to which I've felt Wow there is a real sense of God there, and again in chapels like Arundel chapel. Another one was a Greek Orthodox Church. When we were in Greece, I was just bowled over by the sense that you walked through the door and it was sort of instant. A tap into God, and it was all being done behind a curtain, but the atmosphere and the smell, and everything was an extraordinary instant access. You didn't have to get used to the service, you didn't have to get to a certain point before you felt

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

you were into spirituality. Just walk through the door and there you were. I was really impressed.<sup>238</sup>

Tessa certainly felt some spiritual links outside Judaism and a Jewish service. It is notable also that she drew a comparison between the structures of a Jewish synagogue service and the immediacy of the impact in the Greek Orthodox service. Within the structured approach of a Jewish service one gradually progresses through certain prayers and sections to the heart of the service, the reading from the Torah, which is what Tessa was referring to when she said, 'you don't have to get to a certain point'. She was the only respondent who referred directly to her own spiritual relationship. Because of Tessa's acknowledgement that she can access a spirituality through the space of the Other, she also sets herself a unique personal interfaith boundary. By implication Rabbi Michael addressed this issue indirectly through his response to the icons in the Russian Orthodox Church. Stephen alluded to it, but his attitude was based upon the rabbinic laws of Halacha.

This concludes the input from and the analyses about the respondents. It is important to be able to compare differences and similarities when they are expressed in an easily identifiable manner. It was mentioned in the introductory chapter, that there may be occasions when it would be appropriate to include some quantitative analysis. This is one occasion, as it is helpful to be able to compare *visually* the attitudes of these respondents towards going into churches and discovering to what extent they feel they are able to attend or participate in a non-Jewish service, with immediacy. Table 3 shows a summary of the attitudes of the respondents described above. However, it is important to stress that when the respondents attitudes are expressed in this format, the richness of the dialogue is lost. There is no deeper information for the journey they have travelled which has influenced their resultant attitudes. Table 3 provides an additional tool through which to assess the respondents' attitudes.

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

**Table 3: The Attitudes of Respondents towards the Sacred Space of the Other**

Name	Will go into a church to see the building and artefacts	Will attend will attend an interfaith service in church	Will participate in an interfaith service in church	Will attend a Christian service in church	Will participate in a Christian service in church	Jewish practice
Stephen	yes with discomfort	unsure	no	Never	never	O
Natalie	yes	yes	unsure	Yes	unsure	O
Rabbi Michael	dependent on Christian denomination	unsure	no	no	no	O
Bernard	yes	difficult	difficult	no	no	O
Dominic	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	O
Anne	yes	yes, if involved	yes	yes	no	O
Yolande	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes with conditions	M
Mark	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes, no conditions	M
Eleanor	yes	yes, with conditions	yes, with conditions	yes	yes with conditions	M
Ruby	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes, with conditions	L
Tessa	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes, with conditions	L

Where: L – Liberal Judaism: O – Orthodox Judaism: M – Masorti Judaism

Most significantly, it can be seen that when the attitudes of the respondents are expressed in this tabular format, overall there is a 'sliding scale' of attitudes across the different Jewish groups, albeit, within certain respondents, some overlap. Overall, as a generalisation, the Orthodox have responded progressively negatively to the scenarios and as one passes from Orthodox, through Masorti to Liberal responses the attitudes become more positive. The conclusion will now discuss these differences and similarities in further detail.

#### **4.iii Chapter Conclusion**

As the involvement with the physical space and services of the Other, becomes deeper, the respondents are having to assess more directly the implication of their attitudes towards Christianity and the space of the Other. They are unable to hide behind generalities as the issues began to involve them more directly in Christian services and liturgy. It can be seen that the Orthodox interviewees become less able to play a part in sharing a sacred space together and become more uncomfortable as they travel progressively through the steps. It is only Dominic who is Orthodox, and Mark, who is Masorti, who said they would be prepared to participate unconditionally in a Christian service. It is possible they argue this because the alternative of 'negotiation' of changing the text of the prayers from being specifically Christian to a more inclusive spirituality of One God, had not occurred to either of them in their interview situation. Dominic certainly spent time pausing to think before he replied, but because he admitted earlier that this whole area of interfaith engagement was relatively new to him, it is probable that he had not been able to think laterally about the detail of some of these issues. Of the Orthodox responders Stephen, Rabbi Michael and Bernard are doubtful whether they would attend an interfaith service, irrespective of the format; Anne would attend if she was involved in the service, e.g., as she does through the

choir, and Natalie is the only Orthodox person who said she would attend an interfaith service, whereas with the exception of Eleanor, who had some reservations which were dependent on the content of the service, all the Masorti and Liberal Jews would attend. When the issue becomes deeper and the respondents are asked if they would participate in an interfaith service in a church, amongst the Orthodox, Natalie now becomes unsure and Dominic and Anne would participate. The Masorti and Liberal remain constant, all would, although Eleanor remains consistent in that she would still wish to know the content of a Christian service. Stephen, Rabbi Michael and Bernard were very clear that they would not, whilst Natalie, Anne and Dominic would and all the Masorti and Liberal Jews would. It is significant that Rabbi Michael introduced into his response that he would not wish to go into the Temple any more than he would wish to go into a church displaying icons. One could consider why he introduced this unlikely concept. One reason could be that having been explicit in describing his reaction to the church in Poland he felt that if he equated these feeling with a place within Judaism, which he also would not like to enter, he thought he was demonstrating a more equal attitude to both religions. The researcher also intuited by his expression that he felt somewhat relieved when some of his Anglican Christian Bishop colleagues also felt uncomfortable about being in a place of worship with icons which, for them, put the monotheism of Christianity in doubt. Whether Rabbi Michael was introducing these issues for himself or for, as he saw it, for the benefit of the researcher remains unknown. However, what is also significant is that when we were discussing Jewish artists who painted Christian themes Rabbi Michael became extremely distressed when he saw Chagall's painting of the 'Yellow Crucifix' which shows unmistakably Jesus who is a Jew on the cross being crucified. Likewise his reaction when he saw Emmanuel Levy's painting which also shows a Jew being crucified, where the message of the painting is to illustrate what was being done by the Nazis to Jews, in the name of Christianity. Rabbi Michael could not bear to look at the paintings which he described as 'disgusting'. He then turned the

copies of the paintings quickly face down on the table. This strong reaction can be equated to his walking away from the exhibition in Poland of icons which he, together with some Anglican bishops, also felt spiritually too difficult.

As with respondents' attitudes to interfaith in Chapter Two, it was impossible to predict the personal interfaith boundary of any of in the interviewees with respect to the levels of involvement with the sacred space of the Other.

Table 3 highlights clearly the difference in attitudes between the Orthodox, Masorti and Liberal Jews. If one considers the increasing depth of the issues as an increasing progression of involvement in interfaith, it becomes clear that with the exception of Dominic all the Orthodox found difficulty or discomfort with the deepest level of participating in a Christian service in church. In contrast, the Masorti and the Liberal, taken together are all prepared to participate providing the service content is acceptable. One could wonder whether these differences between the Orthodox as compared with the Masorti and Liberal attitudes could contribute towards the issues expressed in the section about interfaith, that some Orthodox did not recognise Liberal Jews as being 'proper' Jews. It is possible that because some Orthodox feel very strongly against entering the space of the 'Other, those 'Jews' who are prepared to do so cannot be 'proper' Jews because they are not following the *Halacha* of the *Talmud* as interpreted by Maimonides. It is Table 2 which makes this clear as although the background reasons and detail have been lost in this format the important point is the clarity of the outcome of the respondents' decisions.

The deepest involvement with the Other was represented by the issue of whether the interviewees thought they would participate in a Christian service. It is not surprising that other than Natalie who was unsure, and Dominic who would, all the other Orthodox responders would not. It is significant that all the Masorti and Liberal respondents would be prepared to participate, but on the proviso that the prayers or liturgical text they were reciting were not exclusive to Christianity. This 'sliding scale' between

the Jewish religious affiliations of the respondents is not surprising but it is revealing, and perhaps reassuring of the validity of the sample, as this sample illustrates that it is broadly representative when examined in this quantitative format.

## Chapter 5

### Respondents' Attitudes towards Non-Jews Attending a Synagogue Service at the OJC

Having discussed the interviewees' attitude to their own attendance and presence in a place of worship that was not Jewish, the discussion was broadened to look at these issues from the other end of the telescope and find out, as far as possible, how they felt about a non-Jew attending a synagogue service. Natalie, Bernard, Anne and Eleanor did not address this issue; that is, three Orthodox and one Masorti respondent did not respond. Therefore Callum and Victor, two additional Orthodox members will be included in this section. Stephen, the second year student at Brookes University will be the first respondent to consider this issue.<sup>239</sup> After Stephen had thought about this situation he responded:

My main drawback of it is if people [*i.e.*, *the Jewish congregants*] didn't know that they [*the visitors*] weren't Jewish, they might sort of presume that they were Jewish and can that affect something in the service?

What is he fearful about when he mentions that members of the community may not be aware that the visitors are not Jewish? Perhaps Stephen, in the unlikely event of the *Gabbai* unwittingly offering a visitor a role in the service, would be firstly intensely embarrassed or secondly, he would be extremely concerned that a non-Jew would have been invited to participate in the service when he is not allowed to do so. For a man to be given an honour in the Orthodox he must be *halachically* Jewish according to Orthodox interpretation. According to Jewish Law, a child born to Jewish mother, or a woman who has converted to Judaism is considered a Jew. The Torah does not specifically state that matrilineal descent should be used. However, there are several passages in the Torah where the child of a Jewish woman and a non-Jewish man is considered a Jew, and several

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<sup>239</sup> Stephen. Ref 85 Chapter 2.

other passages where the child of a non-Jewish woman and a Jewish man is not considered a Jew. Perhaps he also felt that the presence of a non-Jew would be a distracting element in the service. Or maybe even a third unmentioned personal reason, but whichever it may be, Stephen is the only responder to express these possibilities. He continued:

And also depending on the attitudes of the community how open would it be and how helpful; would the service be too long because Jewish services can be a little bit tricky if you don't know what's going on. So I think that making them comfortable in the service would be more of an issue than whether they could be at the service or not.

Stephen is distancing himself from a 'visitor' and does not consider the possibility of a visitor being his guest or someone who might ask Stephen if he could attend out of an interest in Judaism. Stephen is also only considering a 'distant' visitor attending an Orthodox service, which is the service of Stephen's choice. One possibility is perhaps this illustrates that Stephen has never attended a service at the OJC at the same time as non-Jewish visitors, but the researcher would be surprised if this were the case, because at most *b'nei mitzvah* held in Oxford the celebrant has invited his or her non-Jewish school friends to attend the service. Perhaps Stephen is doubting the helpfulness of the members of the OJC to sit with a visitor and explain the service. Again another point not raised by any of the other respondents, because almost all the other respondents mention that a visitor needs to have the service explained. It would appear that Stephen has not, and does not intend to invite any non-Jewish friend to accompany him to the synagogue. Additionally, he did not mention the fact the non-Jewish visitor, particularly to an Orthodox, could have been one of his friends. It could have been, but from his responses it would probably be an unlikely scenario. He also did not consider the possibility of a visitor attending a progressive service which is a much more accessible service because much of the service is in English. No doubt this is because Stephen himself has not attended such a service, at least during his time in Oxford.

Natalie, the other student did not express any comments about this issue so it will now be interesting to progress to Dominic to discover if his attitudes are similar to those of Stephen. Like Stephen, Dominic began this theme with a long pause and it was interesting to follow his thought process whilst he considered the issues and remembered specific events from his life which were relevant.<sup>240</sup> Following the pause, he responded:

If you ask me do I object to non-Jews being present, the answer is No, I don't object at all. I would want to consider though in what sense would they want come?

He decided the options that may bring non-Jews to a service were that they would come as a guest for a specific event, e.g., a *barmitzvah* or wedding. Dominic said had seen Catholic priests in the synagogue. He continued:

After all if I'm prepared to go to a Christian service in a church, why shouldn't they come to a Jewish service.

This observation was only voiced by Dominic and is an interesting example of an equal approach. He then considered the Christian theology to think about the possibility that there may be a theological reason why Christians should not attend a synagogue service. He was deciding whether, Christianity had in their texts or interpretations writings which prohibited Christians going into a synagogue as can be found within Jewish Orthodox theology which has prevented some Jews from going into a church.

I suppose I feel that it's all right for them to go to a Jewish service because there's nothing that you can disbelieve if you're a Christian. We don't say in our prayers 'Jesus wasn't the son of God', we just say our prayers which are the same as theirs, whereas in a Christian church, people say 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit', and that gives one a bit of a jolt.

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<sup>240</sup> Dominic. Ref 28 Chapter 2.

Dominic is stating quite clearly that there is nothing in a Jewish service which would prevent a Christian from joining in with the prayers because unlike Christian prayers for Jews, there is no theology which forbids Christians from participating. Dominic was also the only respondent to discuss the possibility of Christian theology preventing a Christian from attending a Jewish service. After thinking about what he had said, he returned to restate that for some reason which he could not easily identify he felt he needed to have a reason to attend a church service because some of the prayers were exclusive to Christianity, whereas for a Christian, the reverse was not the case. He thought they should come and see what happens and hear what we say. He then related a vignette about the time he took a devout Christian colleague of his to synagogue in Birmingham:

He was a very fine scholar, and afterwards I said to him, 'did you enjoy the service?', he said, 'Oh yes very much. I'm so interested in how like our prayers yours are' and I said, 'You mean, the other way round, how like our prayers yours are.' It's the psalms we were talking about. I said, 'Your prayers are our psalms', and he said 'I never thought about it like that'. I reckon that was thoroughly worthwhile.

Dominic has been the first respondent to consider the issue of non-Jews attending synagogue from the view point of Christian theology and the content of Jewish prayers. The issue of Christian surprise at the similarity of the prayers based on the psalms in both Judaism and Christianity is an example of how a devout and educated Christian has not questioned the origin of his prayers, and maybe even the impact of the fact that Jesus was a Jew. Dominic spoke about the limitation placed upon Jews attending a church service to be able to pray or participate in the service because of the intermediary of Jesus as the Son of God. Dominic gave a thoughtful response to these issues which included considering the difference between Christian and Jewish theology and prayers. This leads well into

examining the responses of Rabbi Michael.<sup>241</sup> Rabbi Michael was very quick to respond to these issues, it was a topic on which he made it obvious that he had very strong thoughts and opinions:

Well the way people (*i.e.*, *Jews*) behave sometimes in the synagogue, the answer would be ‘No’, but if people behaved as they should do in a synagogue, then ‘Yes’.

He described the Jewish behaviour he classed as unacceptable as coming late; talking; treating the synagogue as if it was somewhere without respect or dignity. He said that he could hold forth on that theme for a long time. He was encouraged to do so, and began:

There are those who think the whole purpose of going to *shul* is social – well perhaps it is, but not at the service. Why does everybody come late? Actually I blame the services, and it’s happened for a very simple reason. When, back in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century which was the time when we consolidated our liturgy, it was simple, straightforward, and didn’t take very long. Then as centuries went on people added bits.

He then related a situation which occurred to illustrate this issue of adding to an existing service, when he was temporarily working in Birmingham. He was asked if *Yehudi Nefesh*, a popular hymn, could be introduced at a Friday night service. He then asked the community what they were going to leave out if they wished to include another hymn. This, he said ‘astonished’ them. Using the rabbinic tradition of relating a situation as a story he calculated that *Yehudi Nefesh* took about three minutes to sing, and continued:

We don’t do this sort of thing very often, [*i.e.*, make additions to services], maybe once every 50 years, but three minutes every 50 years over 2,000 years, and what do you get? You get a service which is so long, that nobody can stand it; nobody can focus their minds for that long; so either they leave early, or

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<sup>241</sup> Rabbi Michael. Ref 18 Chapter 2.

turn up late. And our custom is to turn up late. And all they turn up for are extra hymns at the end, which are not even part of the original service. It is absurd. People come for the end of the service and they miss the important part, which nobody even knows, the whole thing is completely crazy.

He detailed the parts of the service which the 'latecomers' did attend which he classed as 'not even part of the service'. This is the section in the repeated *Musaph* which includes the prayers for restoration of the Temple and animal sacrifices. He reiterated:

This is absurd. People come for the end of the service and they miss the important part, the *Shema*, and the beautiful psalms at the beginning which nobody even knows.<sup>242</sup>

Rabbi Michael felt that by arriving late for the service, congregants were missing the heart of the service which meant so much to him, particularly the *Shema*, the declaration of Jewish belief in monotheism, the One God. By including the words 'it's absurd' and by the strength of his expressions, he felt a deep regret that some members of a community would take a deliberate action to arrive late and thereby miss what he considered to be the heart of the service. Before he began to speak about how he felt about additional prayers or hymns being added to an existing service, he said that he did not want to make this decision for this community in Birmingham because he was acting temporally as the rabbi, until the permanent rabbi came into post. He did not wish to pre-empt this decision which he thought should be made by the new rabbi. This illustrates Rabbi Michael's empathy and understanding, including the broader implications of pastoral care, of the responsibilities which are essential for a community rabbi. He ended this 'story' which he told with great emotion by saying, 'OK got that off my chest'.

It is revealing that he related his very strongly held view that Jews tend not to respect the service taking part in a synagogue, and it is this aspect of a

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

certain lack of decorum which Rabbi Michael dislikes per se, and if non-Jews are present it is probable that he feels even more aware and embarrassed by congregants' behaviour. Callum, will follow Rabbi Michael as he is also a learned Jew who attends and takes an important part in the synagogue service on a very regular basis, including leading prayers and reading from the Torah.

When the discussion moved to consider his attitudes towards non-Jews attending a synagogue service, he responded with alacrity:

OK. Now I have something to say about this because I don't think we do it very well. I'm only talking from the perspective of the Orthodox and Masorti where we pray in a language which is foreign to a lot of Jews, let alone Christians, so accessibility to the service is difficult.

He confirmed that there are small bits of paper that we hand to people when they arrive for a *barmitzvah* or something, but I don't think we do that job well enough. He felt that the OJC were not sufficiently organised in this respect and the community should be able to produce something which would explain an Orthodox and Masorti service adequately. He continued:

The reverse is not the case because the language of accessibility is there, in place. And this is why I think we need to work harder to make our services more understandable, not necessarily accessible but understandable, because the language is not accessible. But you could say the same thing about Jewish people.

By his last sentence he was referring to the inaccessibility of the *Charedim* or ultra-Orthodox Jews, who live apart from the rest of society. So far all the Orthodox respondents have expressed some reservations about non-Jews attending a service, but interestingly all have slightly different reasons for these attitudes. Stephen was concerned about what could happen if the other Jewish congregants were not aware that the visitor was not Jewish, and the effect this might have on the atmosphere of the service, or

the possibility of the visitor being asked to take part in the service, something men are not allowed by Jewish law to do. In the Orthodox service this will only be relevant to men and boys over thirteen because women cannot take part. Dominic commented that there was no Christian theology which prevented a Christian from attending and praying during a Jewish service as there may be for some Jews in a church. Rabbi Michael was visibly upset by the lack of respect and general behaviour of Jews in a service which he was reluctant and embarrassed to let Christians observe. And Callum felt the OJC was insufficiently organised to support visitors in a service where the language prevented accessibility. Callum is the last Orthodox Jew to be included in this section and the next group to be assessed in this subject are the Masorti respondents, beginning with Yolande.<sup>243</sup>

The discussion progressed to how she felt about non-Jews attending a service in the synagogue. She said she was very comfortable with this providing there were not too many visitors. She thought it was possible to have say, 50 visitors providing there were 150 Jews because:

Otherwise what you end with is a service that's not a Jewish service, it's a service that some Jews are doing and other people are trying to be part of. When you have visitors, I think you need to have enough people there to take the service forward to make sure it's got the flavour of an Oxford service.

Yolande then interrupted this topic and asked if she could bring up a subject on which she wished to comment. This was with reference to her discussions with Christians who told her they had lost their religion and no longer attended church. This she found upsetting. She reported that she asked them:

'Why don't you keep on going to church? You like the music and you like the people. Well what's wrong with going to church and liking the music and liking the people and being part

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<sup>243</sup> Yolande. Ref 1 Chapter 2.

of that community? You aren't going to get your faith back if you don't go to church. If you want to get your faith back, go on going to church.'

She continued to comment forcefully that because there is an emphasis on faith and truth within some Christian communities, those who have lost their faith, or are seeking truth, or are unsure that Christianity represents truth, stop going to church. Her final comment on this topic was:

And that's nuts, because you get your faith back from recognising truth in other ways, or getting your faith back because it results from other ways. I'm sure that 50% of the people who go the *shul* on a Saturday morning, don't believe in God, but they're there.

Yolande's end comment ties in with her previous thoughts that Jews may have their own personal reasons for attending the synagogue which may well have little connection with a spiritual context. She felt the important aspect of this was that the Jews were not questioned about their motives for being in synagogue. Is she transferring an aspect of Judaism which she, personally, finds particularly helpful, to Christianity? The attitude of Yolande's that if one stopped attending church then it would be even more difficult to reconnect with God, is an interesting concept with much scope for disagreement. Tessa, in the previous section has already said that she has found an instant route to the One God outside of Judaism altogether. Following the sequence of the previous section the next Masorti respondent to consider these issues is Mark.<sup>244</sup> The discussion continued about non-Jews attending a Shabbat morning service and Mark thought the community should be open to having visitors. Here he did add the proviso that visitors are properly greeted and accompanied because:

Unless they happen to be one of those rare Christians who know Hebrew, they'd be completely lost in a service that has no explanation that accompanies it, but I certainly think it's

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<sup>244</sup> Mark. Ref 90 Chapter 2.

very important for non-Jews to see how our services function.<sup>245</sup>

The two Masorti responses continue the trend of introducing different aspects of this topic. Yolande did not see non-Jews attending a synagogue as difficult. She felt the difficulty may rest with the Jewish congregants if the ratio of non-Jew to Jew was too great.

To complete this section are the attitudes of two Liberal Jews and it will be important to find out if any of their attitudes have a commonality with those expressed to date, by the Orthodox and Masorti respondents, or if, because of the structure and the English content of Progressive services, their attitudes are different. Starting will be Ruby.<sup>246</sup> The discussion began concerning the issues of non-Jews attending synagogue services, when Ruby related an event which happened at the OJC which no other respondent has either related or had a similar experience. Ruby is involved in the organising of the Liberal services and received an email from a Muslim who was particularly interested to come and 'experience' a *shabbat* service. The issue was brought before the Liberal committee to see if they felt this was appropriate. Because nobody knew this individual Muslim, it was decided to put the issue before the students' chaplain, an Orthodox rabbi, for him to meet him in advance. Ultimately it was decided that the Muslim should not attend the service. Ruby immediately considered the response of the committee and considered what would have happened if the request had been from an unknown Christian. Because Christians are frequent visitors to the synagogue her own reply was:

And suppose that letter had been from a Christian to say he would be interested, would we have had the same committee

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<sup>245</sup> Mark said he had frequently helped and explained the service to visitors and was happy that their observations had almost always been very positive and very appreciative. Mark believed this was a very positive route for the OJC. Mark attended and took part in both Masorti and Orthodox services and considered visitors only attending these services, like Stephen. He did not consider that he might suggest that they attend a Liberal service.

<sup>246</sup> Ruby. Ref 80 Chapter 2.

meeting, would we have had the same angst about it? I think we wouldn't.

From all that Ruby has previously said about her involvement, her interest and her enjoyment of interfaith, her speech intonation expressed regret at the outcome of this event. She returned to the subject saying that the Liberal movement actually encourage people of other religions to come and join our Shabbat services, so we considered why she thought that the request from the Muslim produced the response it did. She thought there was much fear of Muslims at that particular time, which was shortly following the children recently murdered at the school gates in France. She thought this was a physical fear as opposed to a spiritual fear. She continued:

I felt very responsible about it. I felt we had to do the right thing, both for him and also in terms of our community, because for all synagogues world-wide, security is top of everybody's agenda. In Oxford we always have volunteers outside to ensure that we are safe while running our services, so it would have been highly irresponsible of me just to be casual. I didn't feel casual about this. I thought we had to take it seriously.

Ruby did take a responsible attitude to this issue even though she was far from comfortable with the resultant decision. Could it have been handled differently in any way or did the community feel their hands were tied because of the juxtaposition of the terrible events in France? It is most probable that following the French murders the objective of every Jewish community, rightly, became focused and concentrated on keeping its members and particularly its children safe. It did not mean that those taking this decision were necessarily comfortable with how the matter ended, but no doubt the uncertainty of a possible horrendous outcome meant that the issue of safety had to be respected above religious tolerance. Ruby ended this topic by reaffirming:

I'm very proud to be Jewish, and very keen to let other people know about my religion – definitely not in a missionary way, but more in the terms of wanting people to see and share the joy of what Judaism is about.

Ruby is the first interviewee to mention the 'joy' of Judaism. She has an extrovert fun loving personality and it is revealing that she wishes to share her deep, positive commitment to Judaism and to ensure that other people are aware of this. She expressed another very different but important and so far unique experience attached to this issue. Whatever the outcome of the decision taken by the committee with the advice of the chaplain, there would have been problems, but it was a difficult issue to debate. The last respondent is Tessa, the leader of the liberal group at the OJC.<sup>247</sup> The discussion continued on whether she thought non-Jews should be invited to attend a service in a synagogue. She said that she had hosted many visitors in the Liberal service and all had replied to say how delighted and pleased they had been to attend. However, she felt it was more difficult for them to connect into the Orthodox service because of the Hebrew, although this should not exclude them from being invited. She continued to say that she thought they were also surprised at attending a service because:

I think it's this thing of the Other. What are they doing and what are we allowed to do. What will happen if we do something wrong, will it upset them? And I think there's this huge business about being fearful about another's religion, and not to do something that would be offensive and not knowing when you are going to overstep the line. I think that's a big issue. From experience I think everybody has a much greater sense of offense of the Other than they need.

This final respondent introduces yet another very different and significant aspect relating to attending a service of the Other's religion. It is always

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<sup>247</sup> Tessa. Ref 71 Chapter 2.

difficult to enter a new situation and environment and never more so when that environment is a religious setting. Whether it is a Jew attending a church service, or a non-Jew attending synagogue can be equally challenging. Firstly, because by being there at all, interest in the Other's ritual observances in a house of worship is exhibited even if the customs are unknown, but secondly, because of the unfamiliarity of the ritual and the desire not to do the 'wrong' thing, it can be rather stressful. Tessa stated that she felt this attitude was unnecessary, as offence could not be caused. For example a Jew attending church who did not kneel but still showed respect would not cause offense, and likewise in similar circumstances when a non-Jew attends synagogue. For Tessa what was important was that a non-Jew should experience a Jewish service. Tessa was the only respondent to express an empathy with how a non-Jewish visitor might feel when coming to experience Jewish worship. Also, she has only received positive comments from visitors attending a Liberal service. This is a very different experience than a visitor attending an Orthodox service as in the Liberal service at least half the service is in English and thus accessible to all. Many non-Jewish visitors to a Liberal service express surprise that many of the prayers have a commonality with their own prayers.

As mentioned earlier there are points in this thesis when it would be appropriate to include some quantitative analysis. This is another occasion, as it is helpful to be able to compare visually the attitudes of these respondents towards non-Jewish visitors attending a synagogue service, either an Orthodox, Masorti or Liberal service. Table 3 shows a summary of the attitudes of the respondents described above but again it is important to stress that when the respondents attitudes are expressed in this format, the richness of the dialogue is lost. Table 4 provides an additional tool to assess the respondents' attitudes.

**Table 4: Jewish Attitudes towards non-Jews attending Synagogue Services**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Accepts non-Jew attending synagogue</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Jewish Affiliation</b>
<b>Stephen</b>	<b>unsure</b>	<b>Possible confusion by other congregants of religion of visitor</b>	<b>Orthodox</b>
<b>Dominic</b>	<b>yes</b>	<b>Jewish prayers not exclusive for Christians. Would want to know why a visitor wished to attend</b>	<b>Orthodox</b>
<b>Rabbi Michael</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>Because of lack of respect for service by Jewish congregants</b>	<b>Orthodox</b>
<b>Callum</b>	<b>yes, with reservations</b>	<b>The OJC does not help, inform and look after visitors adequately</b>	<b>Orthodox</b>
<b>Yolande</b>	<b>yes, with reservations</b>	<b>That visitors do not numerically dominate the number of Jewish congregants and change the ethos of the service</b>	<b>Masorti</b>
<b>Mark</b>	<b>Yes, important</b>	<b>Need adequate explanations if attending Orthodox or Masorti because of language of service</b>	<b>Masorti</b>
<b>Ruby</b>	<b>Yes. Important for non-Jews to share the fun element of Judaism</b>	<b>Had a difficult experience with a request from a Muslim wanting to attend</b>	<b>Liberal</b>
<b>Tessa</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Difficult for them to attend Orthodox or Masorti because of the inaccessibility of Hebrew. Felt visitors were uncomfortable of doing the 'wrong' thing and upsetting the Other</b>	<b>Liberal</b>

## Chapter Conclusion

The first factor that draws attention is the final column. It shows whether respondents, when considering the issue of a non-Jew visiting a synagogue service the respondents decided whether the visitor should be brought to attend a denominational service other than the one they personally usually attended. The significance of this is that although some of the respondents were aware that a visitor would probably find an Orthodox and Masorti difficult because the service is in Hebrew, none suggested that they take, or they should find someone else to take a visitor to the Liberal service. Attending a Liberal service for the first time a non-Jew attends synagogue would be a more accessible experience because about 50% is in English, is very much more accessible. It is difficult to reach an explanation for this. The nearest two respondents who came to suggesting this were Callum (Orthodox) who said that he was only talking from the perspective of the Orthodox and Masorti where we pray in a language which is foreign to a lot of Jews, let alone Christians, so accessibility to the service is difficult; and Mark (Masorti), who said unless they happen to be one of those rare Christians who know Hebrew, they would be completely lost in a service that has no explanation. However, neither actually took that further step to suggest that the visitor first attended a Liberal service. If they themselves were uncomfortable to accompany a visitor to do this, it would not be a difficult task to find a willing volunteer from the Liberal group to act as a mentor. Following an attendance at a liberal service, which would give a visitor an initial understanding of the structure of the liturgy, a visitor could then attend a Masorti and Orthodox service if they so wished. Superficially, it could appear that for Jewish people, particularly those involved in interfaith, the attendance of a non-Jew in a synagogue is something to be shared, encouraged and without issues. It is significant then, that with the exception of Dominic who is Orthodox, all the other respondents expressed concerns associated with non-Jews attending

synagogue services. Stephen was the only respondent who perceived a possible *halachic* difficulty and described a scenario that such an attendee may confuse the other Jewish congregants and inadvertently be asked, as a Jew, to participate in the service. All the remaining orthodox and Masorti respondents expressed reservations, but interestingly most of these reservations were based upon criticisms of the OJC congregation. The difficulty for a non-Jew attending an Orthodox or Masorti service is the language of the service itself which is Hebrew and therefore it makes the service less accessible to a non-Hebrew reader or speaker. However Callum and Mark felt the information given to visitors was inadequate, visitors were frequently not welcomed adequately which meant that if they were sitting on their own, would receive inadequate guidance during a service. Yolande was happy for visitors to attend but felt that not too many should attend at any one time as this would change the atmosphere and ethos of the traditional Oxford service. Yolande also addressed another important aspect under this topic, that of the undisclosed motive for Jews attending synagogue compared with a Christian who has lost faith and then no longer attends church. This comparison between the two religions is interesting. Because Jews are a minority religion in all the world with the exception of Israel, it could well be that this is the motivation factor which encourages them to be involved in a Jewish community as a means of expressing their identity as a Jew. Christianity is the religion of the State in the UK and until the recent increase in secularism, has been the majority religion. Therefore Christians attended church because they had faith. Their identity was established automatically because of their nationality so that those British who did not believe in Christianity did not feel a need to attend church. The two Liberal responders brought up two unrelated comments. Tessa felt that a visitor should be given reassurance that they could not do anything 'wrong' during the service as she felt too much angst was invested in visitors being overly concerned that this might happen. Ruby addresses a different issue, that of a request from a Muslim to attend a service. After giving the responsibility of the decision making process for this issue to the

synagogue council who decided that following the terrorists attacks at the Paris synagogue, the Muslim should not be allowed to visit, Ruby felt most uncomfortable with this outcome, but she was then not in a position to challenge their decision.

There is the greatest compliance between the respondents with the issue of Jews accepting visitors to their services. Each of the respondents has a definite opinion about non-Jews attending a service, particularly an Orthodox service, at the OJC, most commenting that the Jewish members have a responsibility to mentor, support and explain the service as it progresses if a non-Jew is invited.



## Thesis Conclusion

This thesis has provided detailed evidence about Jewish attitudes to interfaith work, formal - and informal evidence which was not previously available – and which has extended knowledge about Jewish involvement in interfaith relations and activities. Therein lies its primary importance. When the personal testimonies were analysed it became apparent that upbringing, background and life experiences of the interviewees affected their resultant attitudes towards other religions and interfaith involvement. These three factors appeared to influence attitudes, irrespective of whether these were positive, ambivalent or negative. The testimonies demonstrated the importance of the personal background of the era and culture of upbringing, the Jewish religious affiliation of the family including the religious education and life experiences. All these factors influenced the dynamic, further complicating the resultant attitudes. It is the close reading of the testimonies which has enabled these nuances and complexities to be identified and addressed. It might have been assumed that such a link between background and attitude to interfaith was obvious. However, prior to this research such a conclusion was entirely presumptive. Now this assumption is supported by empirical evidence.

As has been illustrated, when the results between the link of Jewish denomination and involvement in interfaith are compared, amongst those with positive attitudes there is no statistical evidence to show that fewer respondents who are Orthodox are involved. This is demonstrated by examining the 12 respondents who all had positive attitudes, of whom seven were Orthodox, two were Masorti and three were Liberal. What is most significant is that all the respondents, irrespective of Jewish denomination or attitude are engaged in dialogue. What has also been identified is the extent to which each respondent engages in interfaith encounter. That extent to which they do so appears to be personal and self-determined.

This thesis has also shown that the respondents have very different personal interpretations of what interfaith engagement means. Each of the respondents demonstrate what can best be understood and described as a 'Personal Interfaith Boundary.' This was determined by the factors identified in their interview narrative. At one end of the spectrum this boundary will be drawn very close to the respondent's personal spiritual space whereas at the opposite end it will be distant.<sup>248</sup> This has been illustrated by all the respondents. For example, Rabbi Michael, who enthusiastically embraced academic interfaith encounter and dialogue, would attend a celebration of Hanukah and Advent focused on a thematic interpretation of these two Festivals and held in a Unitarian Chapel of Harris Manchester College. By contrast, he would not attend an interfaith Holocaust Memorial Commemoration held in the Chapel of Keble College, because this exceeded his personal spiritual space; in other words, in this case his personal interfaith boundary. This can also be seen to reveal a dichotomy and conflict within himself. At the opposite end of the spectrum is Mark who imposed no limitations upon himself in terms of visiting and participating in a service in a church. His personal interfaith boundary illustrated the widest boundary. This study has enabled the identification of the complex differences not only between the individuals, but also the conflicts within each individual. How could interfaith use this other than accept that this is the case? It is maintained that this has implications for interfaith practice both in the design of interfaith dialogic programmes - as currently offered by organizations like CCJ, Board of Deputies of British Jews or Mitzvah Day – but also in the expectation of any individual interfaith encounter. The central principle is that 'one size will not fit all'. Some will enter wholeheartedly into discussion on, for example, Biblical issues and authority, but this is not to be assumed. This research has shown that each individual will have his/her own personal interfaith

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<sup>248</sup> *Personal Spiritual Space* is defined as that level of acceptance, seen in spatial terms, where an individual understands and operates within his or her sacred/spiritual phenomena, ideas and practices.

boundary and those designing or delivering programmes of interfaith encounter will need to make provision for this dependent upon what is discussed and who is participating.

A further significant finding is that all the respondents described in Chapter Two were involved either formally or informally in one way or another in interfaith activities, regardless of whether their attitudes were positive, ambivalent or negative. Most noteworthy is that two of the interviewees who held negative attitudes, Victor and Dennis, continued to engage in informal discussions about interfaith with their non-Jewish friends and colleagues, *despite* holding views that such conversations did not produce positive results. This would suggest that constructive interfaith dialogue is possible on an informal basis as much as within a formal, institutional framework. Here the respondents would appear to subconsciously guide and direct interfaith conversation within the parameters of their personal interfaith boundary. It has also been assumed that the majority of Jews involved in interfaith engagement were from the more Liberal stream of Judaism. This research demonstrates that this is not the case. There were 12 interviewees who all had positive attitudes towards interfaith of whom seven were Orthodox, two were Masorti and three were Liberal. It was not possible to predict any of the resultant attitudes of any of the respondents. This is a significant and new finding, if frustrating from a policy perspective.

A pertinent comment was made by the respondent Dennis. He commented that it was only likeminded people that were involved in interfaith. A response to Dennis's comment is warranted. People who share similar interests meet and engage in that interest. This may be sport, human rights campaigning or indeed a whole plethora of interests. It is acknowledged that interfaith dialogue is one such 'interest'. This implies that the interest must be present *before* an organisation is formally joined. Dennis' plausible comment should be built upon to influence CCJ policy (or indeed any interfaith organization) regarding its membership. There needs to be a concerted attempt to take the interfaith messages out into schools and

communities particularly where there is little diversity, to stimulate and develop an interest in such issues.

It would seem that the unique structure of the OJC exerts an influence on the interfaith behaviour of all the respondents, since every respondent was involved in either formal or informal dialogue with the Other. It would appear that a small congregation, below a critical mass, is more open towards other communities by necessity. Although it cannot be suggested that other communities emulate the Oxford model, it would seem that because the internal intra-faith structure of this community is familiar and comfortable with interacting with different Jewish denominations, its membership is more accustomed to an outward looking emphasis - of which dialogue and interaction with the Other becomes an accepted part. It would be revealing for similar further research to be undertaken within both larger and smaller separated communities.

This research also highlighted the importance that the leadership of a synagogue or a Jewish community influenced the resultant active engagement in interfaith activities. Having leaders who allocate a value to interfaith will create what may be described as a concept-awareness-creep effect on the community and will enable change within members of that community. Interfaith activists conducting interfaith programmes and events within the Jewish community provide more opportunity for interfaith encounter and education so that members of the community have, over time, increased their awareness of the presence of and the need for interfaith.

This study has revealed much of significance. It has not only provided detailed information where there was none, but because of the testimonies it has been able to nuance the attitudes of all the respondents. This enabled a spectrum of different beliefs and attitudes to be highlighted, attitudes and involvement with interfaith which ranged from Yolande who was deeply immersed to Victor who thought nothing could be achieved through interaction. Because this research has highlighted many different attitudes, so interfaith projects should reflect this and become more

versatile and diverse in approach to accommodate these differences. Interfaith education and dialogue need to take cognisance of as well as reflect the nuances found in the testimonies and become in themselves subtle techniques. Contemporary society dictates that we must engage with the Other and establish relationships of trust. The principal way to do this is through dialogue. Fundamental differences do exist between the beliefs of people even within the same religion, over what is permissible and what is not. It is a 'given' in this thesis that these differences can never, nor ever need to be reconciled. But an understanding of the Other will both equip and enable people to live together with mutual respect in the context of difference. This has been a central principle of this thesis.

On the practical level what can we do? There is a need for religious literacy in schools. We need to ask if 'religion' needs to have well defined borders in schools and synagogues or be taught as a porous subject which goes into every aspect of life, as so often we are talking to pupils who know very little about Christianity, the faith of their own country. Interaction though should not be restricted to schools or interfaith organisations but go beyond these boundaries out into society.

But where does this central principle become policy and praxis? Reference has been made to the Roman Catholic *Nostra Aetate*, the 1988 Lambeth Conference, the Jewish *Dabru Emet* and the work of the Council of Christian and Jews and other interfaith organisations. These publications, conferences and organisations have each contributed to new policies which have led to changed attitudes, stimulated discussion and have been catalysts to changed praxis, such as in Christian liturgy and Religious Education in Schools. However new policy and contemporary praxis is best underpinned with the findings of this thesis: that of awareness of the diverse individual antecedents that influence a person's receptivity and the extent to which they engage in interfaith encounter. It is this embrace of the fundamental but all important individual differences in matters of interfaith encounter and dialogue which this thesis ultimately points to and calls for.

Finally this thesis has been strengthened by its methodology that is utilising a life story approach rather than a questionnaire. The latter approach was adopted by the Board of Deputies' research Communities in Conversation<sup>249</sup> and its findings are limited and suspect. Whilst some of the findings of the Board of Deputies' research have been confirmed, the qualitative approach, and close reading of testimony adopted in this thesis have revealed much greater nuances and ambiguities towards interfaith work. Most fundamentally, it argues that much interfaith work happens informally and on a day to day basis. It is of equal importance if not of more importance than that carried out by bodies such as the Council of Christians and Jews and the Three Faiths Forum and needs to be recognized as such.

### **Policies and Praxes**

The research conducted has indicated challenges to presumptive positions on individual personal perceptions regarding interfaith encounter held by selected members of the Jewish community in Oxford. Already inferences have been made to how these findings may affect policy<sup>250</sup> and praxis<sup>251</sup> by groups or policies engaged in interfaith programmes. Here some of the effects on policy and praxis are suggested.

Both the school curricula and interfaith organisations are involved in education projects. For schools this is principally the domain of Religious Education and this is predominantly the learning of facts of religious practice of other Faiths. It is fair to say that dialogic encounter will be rare. Understandably the case may be made that knowledge is a pre-requisite to any dialogic exchange. Interestingly the early years of CCJ strongly promoted and campaigned for this in schools and provided materials on

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<sup>249</sup> Chapter 1 p.20: Ref 45

<sup>250</sup> For the purpose of this thesis *policy* is defined as: "a set of ideas or plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organisation, a government or political party." <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/policy>

<sup>251</sup> For the purpose of this thesis *praxis* is defined as: "the process of using a theory or something you have learned in a practical way." <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/policy>

Judaism for schools. However, it may be asked: does CCJ need to maintain this emphasis in the 21st Century?

It may be argued that this original paradigm promoted by CCJ has been adopted widely in schools and the CCJ might now more usefully shift to a newer paradigm emphasising dialogic encounter in schools. This might entail the provision of new educational materials offering experiential learning; developing inter-personal skills in the classroom that may be used in everyday living. A policy change would be required to broaden the methodology of interfaith education in schools.

The findings of the research demonstrated that each person has their own personal interfaith boundary: that the basis for individual differences in response to interfaith encounters are formed in childhood. It is suggested that early engagement in dialogic exchange with the Other could lead to greater openness to interfaith in adult life.

This thesis found that all the respondents actually involved themselves in dialogue anyway. How much further could this be taken, how much wider could personal interfaith boundaries be drawn if new paradigms of experiential education were to be included in policies of interfaith education and the school curriculum?

It is noted that The Board of Deputies project Communities in Conversation also highlighted this policy suggestion above, suggesting a wider range of interfaith activities beyond education and dialogue<sup>252</sup>

In a broader praxis therefore, community interfaith meetings might usefully move away from non-participatory programmes, for example lectures and talks, and move towards events where attendees can be involved and interface in groups: in other words the paradigm shift to experiential rather than didactic learning, A good example of this might be the successful Mitzvah Day or the popular Interfaith Walks which attract and involve huge numbers across the UK. It was observed that in Oxford a CCJ lecture meeting may attract around 20 people whereas the Interfaith

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<sup>252</sup> See chapter 1 reference 45

Walk will involve about 1,500. Interfaith dialogue arises naturally in an experiential context.

This all suggests that further research in other Jewish and Christian communities with reference to personal interfaith boundary might usefully be undertaken. The notion that no 'one size fits all' has already been mooted and it may be asked if personal interfaith boundaries can really be changed or widened. There is a continuum of attitudes in relation to interfaith, in which some attitudes may well not change because any one person's personal interfaith boundary appears to be intrinsically bound up with that person's antecedents – and may be part of that person's identity and persona. However, an assessment can be made of where an individual sits on this continuum so they can then be included in interfaith encounter and activity on their own terms without feeling challenged or threatened.

A principal conclusion of this thesis has been the notion of personal interfaith boundary. It is suggested that this notion might usefully be included in much wider discussion of interfaith exchange. It might even be proposed that an awareness that all people involved in interfaith will have a unique personal interfaith boundary should underpin any policy recommendations by Central Government, National Churches or Central Jewish Authority to local authorities, churches or synagogues engaged in promoting interfaith encounter and dialogue. It becomes imperative that those involved in interfaith respect these personal interfaith boundary limits even if they themselves do not share a common boundary. It may be argued that if people have confidence that they would not be asked to move beyond the limit of their personal interfaith boundary they might become open to interfaith encounter, exchange and dialogue.

This thesis has shown that, overall, the Orthodox respondents were no less likely to be involved nor to have fewer positive attitudes toward interfaith engagement than non- Orthodox Jews. All the respondents were open to engagement but to varying degrees. This in itself does not point to an issue of policy but it does advise those involved in the design of interfaith

programmes that a broadness of approach with an open opportunity for dialogic encounter is possibly more likely to find acceptance than one that is too presumptive and prescriptive. The interfaith praxis then becomes informed, and it is suggested, respectful as well as experiential.

For those organisations involved in interfaith education at local level, like CCJ, their branches become a vital conduit for greater potential engagement. Whilst membership of many organisations is a downward trend, they still provide opportunities for community and individual non-formal education and even behavioural change – as in the case of CCJ and interfaith encounter. As identified above, policy changes to encourage experiential learning takes cognisance of individual differences and personal interfaith boundary.

It was considered by the researcher that this was one of the most important findings in this study. Several of the respondents initiated discussion about the Branches of CCJ and the desirability, even the necessity, of an interfaith organisation having access to a population beyond its Head Office.

It might be observed that CCJ, as the only interfaith organisation with Branches around the UK, should value and build on this unique advantageous access to a large population. Understandably the efficiency and effectiveness of the Branches is dependent upon the quality of the volunteers, but where appropriate help might usefully be offered to increase the potential of a CCJ Branch.

It would appear that the Board of Deputies project, Communities in Conversation also recommended that strategies should be established at a grassroots level which should be organised from outside communal leadership. CCJ and the Branches are a perfect fit to support this recommendation.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid

The last two important findings, that of the structure of the OJC and the Israel Palestine situation are beyond the remit and control of any interfaith organization.

The integrated structure of the OJC appears to have encouraged interfaith engagement. No suggestion is being made that other communities should follow the Oxford model despite the interfaith advantage, but the findings of this research are able to be used by both synagogues and churches to enhance their existing involvement with interfaith encounter. A community could be encouraged to have contact with other congregations from within their religion of either the same, or where appropriate, differing congregations. This will, to a certain extent, mirror the ethos of the OJC and hopefully encourage the congregants to become more outward looking and make contact with those of other religions.

Whilst policy making decisions may not be an appropriate route to address this controversial issue, lessons can be learned. The polarisation of views on Israel / Palestine is easily observed: the Christian community generally supporting Palestine whilst the Jewish community generally supporting Israel. Interfaith engagement in this issue taking on board the rejection of presumptions, would advocate experiential learning programmes that address the above mentioned polarisation. Current CCJ experiential education programmes involving groups of Christians, Jews and Muslims visiting Israel and Palestine are both to be admired and encouraged, This issue must not be avoided because it is one which frequently discourages Jews from mixing with those of other religions. It may be said that this has become one of the most difficult issues dealt with within an interfaith setting. Between Jews and Muslims as well as Christians there exists direct difficulties which reflect the violent conflict in the Middle East. Perhaps the CCJ experiential learning programmes in situ (Israel/Palestine) indicates an important direction for future interfaith praxis in controversial, highly sensitive, potentially divisive and complex issues.

The methodology in this thesis, that of in depth life stories linked to attitudes is more revealing and has generated more personalised, detailed

findings than the quantitative questionnaire approach of the Board of Deputies study. This thesis has enabled nuances to be identified and ambiguities to be queried. It has also been able to show that the dialogue and religious exchanges which are happening outside formal interfaith organisations and activities are equally, if not more meaningful than those which take place for example within the Council of Christians and Jews and the Three Faith Forum.

Thus it can be seen that there is still much work and research to be undertaken. This thesis is only the beginning.



## Appendix 1

### Interviewees who were not included in the main study

The respondents now briefly introduced have not been included in the above 'stories' because there were overlaps with the backgrounds and attitudes between these respondents which replicated those already included. However, in terms of linking background and life experiences to interfaith attitudes they have a part to contribute.

Laura was 66 when interviewed, was brought up in Manchester in a nominally orthodox family who did not attend synagogue. Her mother had little or no knowledge of Judaism. Laura had little connection with Judaism until after she married and came to live in Oxford. After many years of problems she finally had a baby when she was 39 and it was this event that returned her to the community. She had very little knowledge of Judaism but began to learn and at the same time learnt about other religions. She joined a local informal interfaith group in her area and said that she thought it was always a good thing for people to understand each other to prevent persecution. It is clear that having her longed for baby encouraged Laura to become interested in Judaism and develop an interest in other faiths.<sup>254</sup>

Elizabeth was 51 at the time of interview and was one of the few people in Oxford today who grew up there<sup>255</sup> Elizabeth's father escaped from Czechoslovakia just before the war, and her mother was a niece of Cecil Roth. She had an orthodox upbringing which she said was a positive experience. She thought the *cheder* was rather 'alternative', so much so that following her *batmitzvah* she and a small group from her class stayed on at

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<sup>254</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Laura in her home on February 6 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850012/13/14**.

<sup>255</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Elizabeth in her home on March 19 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850044//45**.

*cheder* and when asked what they wanted study, chose the New Testament. She was very involved in *Habonim*, went on their camps in the UK and between school and university went on a one year *Habomin* leadership course in Israel.<sup>256</sup> There she witnessed a very different sort of Judaism, as she realized that the middle of the road Judaism, the Oxford practice, did not exist in Israel. She commented that she 'lived and breathed' *Habonim*, came back to the UK. She became a doctor, married her *Habonim* sweet heart and returned to live in Israel for five years, where she was involved with Muslim friends and patients.

Her interfaith interest is through the choir, *Oxfordshir*. When her children were young she went into their schools and to talk about the Jewish festivals. She has been on a couple of Interfaith Walks and now her main interest is with Jewish Heritage which has helped to raise the profile of medieval Jewry in Oxford. Now she and her family are not regular synagogue attenders but they do mark Shabbat and the festivals at home. It can be seen that Elizabeth's experiences have changed the level of her Orthodox upbringing observances, although she has remained firmly grounded in Judaism. It was likely that she always had a curiosity about other religions as she was pro-active in learning about the New Testament whilst attending *Cheder* and her time in Israel encouraged her interaction with her Muslim friends. These interests and involvements have been influenced by the experiences she had working in hospitals in Israel and through *Habonim*.

Mia was 83 at the time of interview and had an interesting immigrant background.<sup>257</sup> Her maternal grandfather was born in Hungary, was a Jewish scholar and became Head of Jews' College in London. He and his wife kept a strictly Orthodox lifestyle which was observed by their six children. The family maintained an intellectual and Jewish cultural society life. Mia's father, one of the sons, went to St Paul's school and then to Oxford but later all the six children rebelled against Judaism. Her father married a Russian

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<sup>256</sup> *Habonim* is an international Jewish Socialist-Zionist youth movement, which was founded in the UK in 1929.

<sup>257</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Mia in her home on May 16<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850048**.

emigre and then Mia was brought up with her mother's extended family without Jewish observation. Sadly her Mother died and they returned to the paternal grandparent's home. Mia expressed this change as:

My religious background - from the freedom of pork and shellfish we went to Jewish *Halacha and Kashrut*.

By the time she had finished her 'O' levels she took her father back to their old home. She went to university and married someone who at that point was also not interested in *Halacha or Kashrut*, although this all changed following the birth of their first child. Mia found this change extremely difficult. By this time her husband was an academic and they were living in Edinburgh. They had three children very close together and after five years in Edinburgh moved to Norwich where there were very few Jewish people. There Mia taught at the small *cheder* but her husband taught their own children. Five years later found them in Oxford where she integrated into the community quickly, becoming a teacher at Hebrew Classes where she introduced O level/GCSE Jewish studies and *batmitzvah* for the girls. She has been involved in interfaith at the level of being very active talking to schools and adult groups about Judaism from when she lived in Edinburgh. Her view about whether Jews should learn about other faiths was different from all other respondents. She commented:

I don't think it's as important because we are the minority faith. It's not important for Jews to have an understanding of Christianity because Christians, are the majority group. The Jews are not going to be anti-Christian or cause Christian suffering. I don't think there's any danger – well it would be interesting if there was.

Mia has experienced the extremes of Judaism in her early life and is now traditionally Orthodox. Her background experiences have influenced her involvement in interfaith work which began when she was happily integrated into the Edinburgh community and continued until her eighties.

Alice is the daughter of Eleanor and thus another of the few members of the OJC today who was brought up in Oxford.<sup>258</sup> As was heard from Eleanor, Alice was brought up in an observant Jewish household, and although when she returns home she respects her mother's practice, once she left home she is no longer as observant regarding cooking and switching lights on and off. She attends Masorti services. She said that she was not involved in any interfaith but on further questioning said she participated in the Interfaith Walk and Mitzvah Day. At the time of interview she was a newly qualified teacher and felt all her time and energies went into her job and said was really nervous about taking time off for the *chagim*. However she then said that she now takes traditional food into the staffroom e.g., honey cake for *Rosh Hashana* and has done assemblies about *Chanukah*. It is noteworthy that she did not class these activities as 'interfaith'.

Harry was 59 at the time of interview.<sup>259</sup> Harry was the son of immigrant parents who came to this country from Vienna and he grew up within Liberal Judaism. He has spent the last twenty-five years as being a principal of two different Quaker schools in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. That in itself is a complete involvement in interfaith as each school was aware that he was Jewish, and because the schools were boarding, he and his wife and family lived on the campus and the pupils then became aware of their Jewish practice. He is a member of CCJ thereby supporting interfaith but does not attend any of the Branch meetings. He established *Oxfordshir*, which he directs and it is through the choir that he is involved in Oxford branch events, e.g., *Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Memorial Day and *Chanukah/Advent*. It is his choice of professional environment which has influenced his involvement in interfaith.

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<sup>258</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Alice in her home on November 25 2012 in Oxford. Recording **VN850033/34 FolderA**.

<sup>259</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Harry in his home on June 7 2013 in Oxford. Recording **VN850055**.

Abigail was aged 65 at the time of interview.<sup>260</sup> She was born in South Africa in a nominally Orthodox family but when she was still quite young the family went to live in Israel, returning to S. Africa where she went to university to read Jewish Studies. She later married there, had children and the family then came to live in Oxford, and it was here, away from her family roots that they became less observant. Although a member of CCJ she is not active or formally involved in interfaith. She observed that it was the Jewish community who reached outwards towards the other faiths rather than the other way round, although she felt that it would 'wonderful' if we all went to each other's services. This was the view shared by Mark, the other respondent who was also brought up in South Africa.

Linda was 70 at the time of the interview.<sup>261</sup> She grew up in Liverpool in a traditional Jewish environment. Following her marriage the couple lived for some years in Geneva and then in California so that Linda's horizons were broadened quickly from the closed community of Liverpool. She is not involved in formal interfaith and does not participate much within the OJC. She has both Jewish and non-Jewish friends between whom she does not distinguish but with whom she is readily identified as Jewish.

Isobel was 55 at the time of interview.<sup>262</sup> Isobel was born and brought up in Germany from German parents and she became the wife of Norman. She converted to Liberal Judaism before her marriage. She is not involved in interfaith, is not a member of CCJ but was hesitant to speak about these issues in depth.

Oliver was 38 at the time of interview.<sup>263</sup> He was born and brought up in Germany as a Christian. He became a Jew following a conversion in Germany when he was in his early 20s, moved to Oxford and now regularly

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<sup>260</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Abigail in her home on May 17 2013 in Oxford. Recording **VN850049**.

<sup>261</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Linda in the home of the interviewer on November 19 2011 Recording **VN850004**.

<sup>262</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Isobel in her home on March 15 2013 in Oxford. Recording **VN850040**.

<sup>263</sup> This interview was carried out by Wendy Fidler with Oliver in the home of the interviewer on April 4 2013 Recording **VN850046/47**.

attends and participates in Masorti and Orthodox services. He is not directly involved in interfaith events and does not belong to CCJ.

It is not surprising, but worth reporting that three respondents who have converted to Judaism do have difficulties in becoming involved in interfaith issues. It must be concluded that this change of faith has influenced the comfort of their faith-based interactions.

## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire

This document includes all the possible topics for discussion with the respondents. This does not mean that each topic has been discussed with every respondent. Background and Judaic affiliation and attitudes towards interfaith were discussed with each respondent, but the later topics in the questionnaire were introduced dependent on the richness and depth of the interview. Within the constraints of this thesis it was unfortunately impossible to include many of the issues initiated by all the questions. The format of the questionnaire was to provide prompts for the interviewer.

1. How would you describe your Jewish upbringing and background and where you would place yourself now on the Jewish spectrum?
2. Can you tell me what you understand by 'interfaith'?
3. Are you involved in any interfaith activities? What/why/why not
4. Do you believe interfaith involvement is important to the Jewish community in the UK? why/why not
5. Were there any specific events which sparked either your interest or wish not to be involved in interfaith?
6. Do you think interfaith should go beyond Jewish-Christian relations and should include Muslims as well as other faiths?
7. Do you think Christianity poses a problem for Jews in the UK? If yes, what?
8. Would you go into a church to look at the paintings, sculptures and art?
9. Would you attend an interfaith service in a church?
10. Would you participate in an interfaith service in a church?

11. Would you attend a special Christian service in a church e.g., a friend or colleague's wedding/funeral
12. Would you participate a friend or colleague's wedding/funeral held in a church?
13. Do you think it is OK for non-Jews to attend a service in a synagogue?

The following six questions were about paintings, photographs of which were presented to the interviewees.

14. What do you see when you look at the paintings?
15. What was your initial feeling when you first realised that the pictures were painted by Jewish artists?
16. How do you feel about Jewish artists painting Christian themes, especially the crucifixion?
17. What do you think about the use of Christian and Jewish images, e.g., a cross and a Menorah, or tallit, represented in the same painting as Jesus?
18. Do you find it difficult when artists of any faith or none, use each other's religious symbols?
19. How do you feel when non-Jewish artist use Jewish symbolism in their work?
20. What do you see when you look at the paintings?
21. What was your initial feeling when you first realised that the pictures were painted by Jewish artists?
22. How do you feel about Jewish artists painting Christian themes, especially the crucifixion?

23. Do you find it difficult when artists of any faith or none, use each other's religious symbols?
24. How do you feel when non-Jewish artist use Jewish symbolism in their work?
25. Can you describe you circle of friends? Do you have non-Jewish friends? If yes, find level of friendship, e.g., do you visit their house/ Do they visit your house? Do you eat and drink together?
26. Has any interaction you have had with people of other religions ever made you feel uncomfortable? Dependent on response, take further
27. Do you think rabbis and leaders of congregations should be involved in interfaith?
28. Are you concerned that by mixing with those who are not Jewish, your Jewishness or that of your families might be weakened?
29. Have events in Israel had any impact upon how you think about non-Jews of interfaith engagement? In what ways?



## Appendix 3

### Constitution of OJC - Oxford Jewish Congregation

The Oxford Jewish Congregation was founded in 1841. In 1974 it co-operated in the incorporation of the Oxford Synagogue and Jewish Centre Ltd, and is entitled to nominate three members to that Company and three members of the Committee of Management which administers the day-to-day affairs of that Company and of the Oxford Synagogue and Jewish Centre

#### 1. NAME

The name of the Congregation is "The Oxford Jewish Congregation".

#### 2. OBJECTS

The objects for which the Congregation is established are the advancement of the Jewish religion by the maintenance of regular Sabbath and other religious Services, the establishment and maintenance of Hebrew and Religion Classes and of such other activities as may promote the religious welfare of the Jews of Oxford and its neighbourhood and other charitable purposes not inconsistent with the foregoing.

#### 3. TRADITIONS AND USAGES

- a) The Congregation shall conduct its affairs in accordance with established Jewish traditions and usages.
- b) There shall be a Secretary of Marriages, who shall hold the Marriage Register of the Congregation and shall not register in it a marriage which has not received the Chief Rabbi's Authorisation of Marriage.

#### 4. MEMBERSHIP

*Membership of the Congregation shall be open to any person of the Jewish faith who satisfies the appropriate criteria (see Appendix, section 1).*

#### 5. GOVERNANCE

- a) The Congregation shall be governed by a *Council that shall comprise*
  - I. no fewer than 10 nor more than 14 members to be elected by the general body of paid-up and honorary life members in Annual General Meeting;*
  - and*
  - II. not more than 6 further members to be co-opted by vote of Council.*
- b) The elected members of the Council shall always include the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer for the time being of the Congregation.*
- c) All members of Council must be paid-up members of the Congregation.*
- d) Whilst on the Council, every member, whether elected or co-opted, shall be a Trustee acting for the benefit of the Congregation.*
- e) Elections and appointments to, and the business of, the Council shall be conducted in accordance with the regulations given in sections 2 and 3 of the Appendix to this constitution.*
- f) Council shall have the power to propose amendments to existing regulations and adoption of further regulations and bye-laws for the conduct of the business of Council and the Congregation, including the conduct of elections, the rights and privileges of the members of the Congregation and the general administration of the affairs of the Congregation, provided that no regulation or bye-law may be inconsistent with the provisions of this*

Constitution. *All such regulations proposed by Council shall be submitted to the next Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting for ratification by the general membership.*

*g) Any member of the OJC may propose a change to the Constitution or Regulations at the AGM provided that the proposal is seconded by another member and submitted to the Hon. Secretary 21 days before the AGM.*

*h) Changes to the Constitution and Regulations accepted at an Annual or Special General Meeting shall come into effect at the next meeting of the OJC Council.*

*i) Eight members of Council shall constitute a quorum.*

*j) No member of the Council may receive payment for his or her services as Council member, but reimbursement of expenses may be made where appropriate.*

## **6. INVESTMENT AND OTHER ASSET MANAGEMENT**

*a) All securities, real property and cash reserves held or acquired for or on behalf of the Congregation shall, unless the Council otherwise directs, be vested in an Investment Committee, comprised of at least three members of the Congregation. Each member of the Investment Committee shall be appointed by and may be discharged by a resolution of the Trustees. Fourteen days' notice shall be given to all members of the Council of any resolution for the appointment or discharge of an Investment Committee member.*

*b) The Investment Committee may invest assets and trust moneys from time to time in their hands in the purchase of such stocks funds shares securities or other investments of property as they shall in their absolute discretion think fit provided that any such investment shall be made with reasonable care and for the benefit of the Congregation.*

*c) The Investment Committee shall take reasonable regard of advice offered to them by the Trustees in their performance of their functions.*

## **7. ACCOUNTS AND AUDITS**

*a) The Council shall cause proper books of accounts to be kept with respect of all sums of money received and expended by the Congregation and the matters in respect of which such receipts and expenditure take place, and with respect to the assets and liabilities of the Congregation.*

*b) Accounting and audit will be in accordance with the requirements of current Charities legislation.*

*c) The accounts of the Congregation will be certified by a qualified Accountant appointed by the Congregation in General Meeting.*

*d) The period covered by the annual accounts shall be 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> July.*

*e) Following approval by the Trustees, the annual accounts shall be presented to the Annual General Meeting for formal adoption.*

## **8. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

There shall be an Annual Meeting of the general body of paid-up and Honorary *Life* members, which shall be held not more than fourteen months after the previous such meeting, for the purpose of approving the accounts, electing new *Council*

## **9. OTHER GENERAL MEETINGS**

The **Council** shall, if it thinks fit, or on the request of **ten** members of the Congregation submitted to the Secretary in writing, summon other General

Meetings. Seven days' notice shall be given of such a meeting and of all business to be transacted at it.

## **10 AMENDMENTS OF CONSTITUTION**

Any proposed alterations or modifications of the Constitution shall be considered at a General Meeting. Subject to a quorum being present, such alterations or modifications shall be adopted if approved by a majority of the members present and voting, provided that they do not compromise the charitable status of the Congregation.

**This amended OJC Constitution together with its associated Regulations were adopted by unanimous vote at the Annual general meeting.**

**25<sup>th</sup> January 2015.**

## **OXFORD JEWISH CONGREGATION (OJC)**

### **Appendix to the 2015 Constitution – Regulations**

**Regulations for the governance of the OJC, including the eligibility for membership;**

**election and appointment procedures; and the conduct of business of the Council and associated Sub-committees and other Groups**

#### **1. Membership**

1.1. The Oxford Jewish Congregation is based at the Oxford Synagogue and Jewish Centre, which premises are available for all forms of Jewish worship.

Application for membership of the OJC is welcomed from any person of the Jewish faith. Members are free to attend the form of worship of their choice.

1.2. However, all members should be aware that, in respect of life-cycle events and religious rites, their (and, where relevant, that of their children) personal and individual status in the Jewish Law of the appropriate tradition will determine the nature of their access to OJC facilities and services. These may include brit milah (circumcision), bar/bat mitzvah, marriage and burial. (n.b. There is no impediment to non-orthodox marriage ceremonies being held at the OJC.)

1.3 Children of OJC members shall be regarded as members until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, following which they are invited to apply for membership in their own right.

1.4. Spouses/partners of full members of the OJC, who are not of the Jewish faith, may become Associate members through Family membership.

1.5. Individuals who want to join the OJC, but whose Jewish status cannot be defined under the terms of any denomination/religious group described in the Constitution as 'being in accordance with established tradition and usages', may become Friends of the OJC.

1.6 The Membership Secretary shall submit all applications for membership of the Congregation, together with appropriate documentary evidence, to Council for its consideration. (Note: While the membership secretary will make every reasonable effort to obtain verifiable documentary evidence of an applicant's individual status in Jewish Law,

there are occasions when Council will accept that such evidence is not available for valid reasons.)

## **2. Council elections and appointments**

2.1. *Elections.* Anyone wishing to stand for election to Council, whether as honorary officer or ordinary member, must be proposed and seconded by full members of the OJC<sup>1</sup>.

2.2. The AGM shall normally be held in January, and the normal timetable for elections shall be:

<sup>1</sup>

Note: Charity Commission guidance requires every member of the Synagogue Council to be a Trustee of the OJC. The Charity Commission requires that trustees ensure that their charity operates within the constraints of its constitution, charity and other appropriate laws, that it remains solvent, and is well-run and efficient (see [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/detailedguidance/trustees-staff-and-volunteers/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3/#d1](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/detailedguidance/trustees-staff-and-volunteers/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3/#d1))

1<sup>st</sup> November: Nominations forms available from the Secretary.

4 weeks before AGM: Closing date for nomination of candidates.

3 weeks before the AGM: Closing date for the submission of seconded resolutions from OJC members.

2.3. Nominations (and, where appropriate, any written statements provided by the candidates) shall be circulated to the membership together with the Agenda.

2.4. Council or the AGM may vary this timetable in response to unexpected events or circumstances.

2.5. Where an election for an honorary office or other Council seat is uncontested, the nomination must be confirmed by affirmation. In the event of a contested election, the secretary will distribute ballot papers and members will have votes for the number of people to be elected from the list.

2.6. Candidates for the position of honorary President must either have served on Council for a minimum of one year or have been a full member of the OJC for at least 3 years. The President's term of office shall normally be two years, but may be extended to a third year in exceptional circumstances, subject to nomination and election in the standard way. An outgoing President may not stand for re-election to Council for the subsequent two years, but shall be eligible for co-option during that period.

2.7. Except for the President, the term of office for all elected Council members shall be three years, with the option of standing for election for a second three-year term. Thereafter they must take a break of at least 1 year before standing again, although they shall be eligible for co-option during that year.

2.8. *Co-options.* The appointment of each co-opted member requires a simple majority of Council members present at the appropriate meeting. Co-opted members shall hold their seats until the subsequent AGM and must then either stand for election or be co-opted again.

2.9. *Vice-president.* The President may nominate, from among the elected or co-opted Council members, a vice-president whose job is to deputise for the president when he or she is not available (e.g. to chair council and attend external events) and to assist him or her. Such a nomination must be approved by Council through a majority vote.

2.10. Dismissals and vacancies. Council may dismiss an honorary officer, but doing so requires a two-thirds majority of the full Council. In such a case, Council may elect, by a simple majority vote, a replacement officer who must stand for election at the next AGM if he or she wishes to continue in that post. In the event of any other unexpected vacancies, for example as a result of resignation, incapacity or extended absence, Council may take such temporary measures as it deems fit for the protection of the continuity of Council business and the interests of the Congregation.

### **3. Conduct of business**

3.1. At its first meeting after the AGM, the new Council shall normally review all OJC appointments to and representation on other bodies and responsibilities, including the Oxford Synagogue and Jewish Centre Ltd ('the Company'), the Centre Management Committee, the Oxford Jewish Chaplaincy Board, the Investment Committee(s), and the Marriage Secretary. Except for the Company, such appointments will normally be for three years, but may be renewed. For the Company, appointments shall normally be for five years (renewable).

3.2. Co-options to Council, and filling of vacancies that arise in representation on other bodies may be made at any stage during the year. The co-optees shall normally include the Chair of the Education Committee and the Membership Secretary. The immediate Past President shall be invited to sit on Council for up to two years following his/her term of office, following which he/she shall be eligible for election or co-option. Where appropriate, and if not otherwise already represented, representatives of the Congregation's main religious affiliations shall also be considered for co-option.

3.3. All activities undertaken in the name of the OJC are ultimately the responsibility of the Trustees (Council).

3.4. Within this over-riding constraint, all sub-committees and other approved activity groups should have reasonable autonomy in employing their skills and talents for the benefit of the congregation and the wider Jewish community of Oxford. Sub-committees and activity groups can therefore expect to operate with the full confidence of Council, provided that:

- they report regularly (at least once a year) to Council on their activities;

where appropriate, they seek Council's advice on controversial matters, on financial commitments and on issues of principle; and they send copies of all minutes (where available) to the President, who shall make them available to Council at his/her discretion.

3.5 Investments will be handled by a standing committee, in accordance with section 6 of the Constitution.

d) Subject to the agreement of Council, the Investment Committee may, if it deems it appropriate, divide its asset-management responsibilities between two Investment Sub-Committees, each comprised of at least two Investment Committee members.

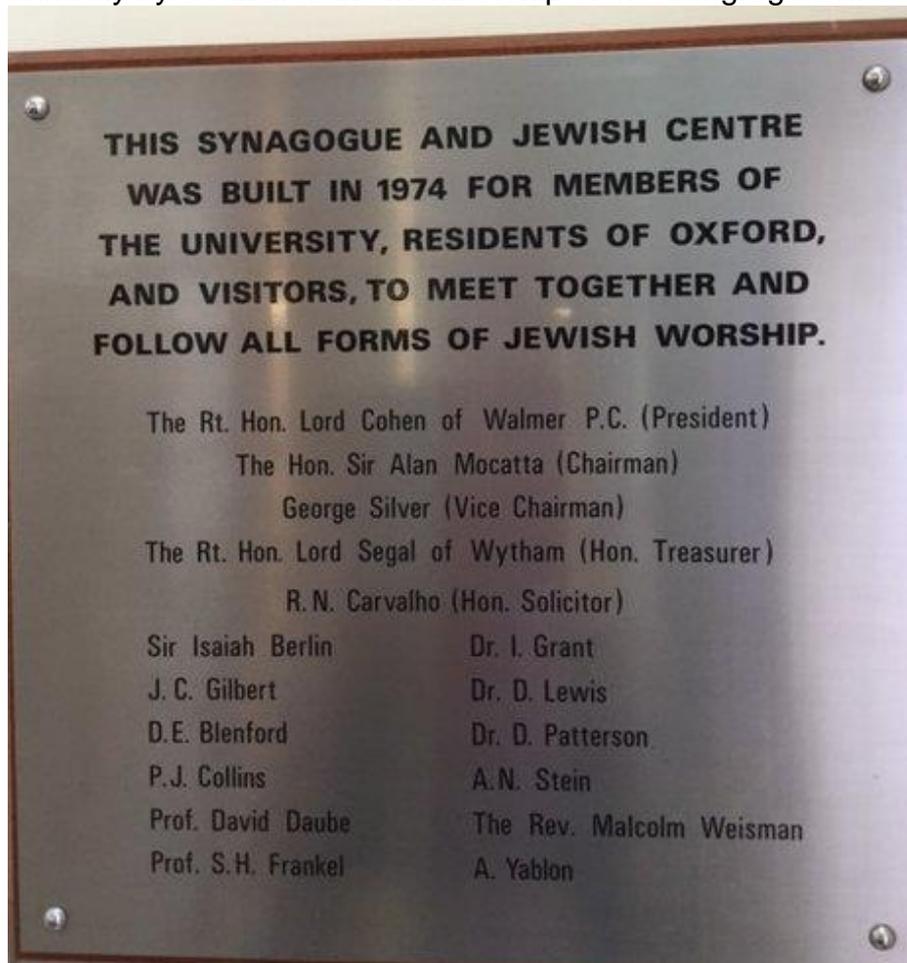
e) The Investment Committee shall report in writing directly to the Trustees every 6 months, including details of the separate work of any subcommittees. The Committee(s) shall be willing to respond to subsequent written questions received from Council.

f) The members of the Investment Committee(s) shall also meet collectively with the Trustees once every year, at a regular meeting of the Trustees, to account for their stewardship of the OJC's assets.

3.6. The honorary President of the day shall be entitled to attend any sub-committee meeting or activity.

3.7. Chairs/Convenors of all committees/activities shall have the right to submit and then present agenda items for discussion by Council.

3.8. A report on the activities of the Congregation and, where appropriate, its associated bodies and groupings shall be presented annually by Council to the membership of the Congregation.



**Plaque in main entrance of Oxford Jewish Centre**

## **Appendix 4**

### **Dabru Emet Statement**

**1. Jews and Christians worship the same God.** Before the rise of Christianity, Jews were the only worshippers of the God of Israel. But Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; creator of heaven and earth. While Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel.

**2. Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book -- the Bible (what Jews call "Tanakh" and Christians call the "Old Testament").**

Turning to it for religious orientation, spiritual enrichment, and communal education, we each take away similar lessons: God created and sustains the universe; God established a covenant with the people Israel, God's revealed word guides Israel to a life of righteousness; and God will ultimately redeem Israel and the whole world. Yet, Jews and Christians interpret the Bible differently on many points. Such differences must always be respected.

**3. Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel.** The most important event for Jews since the Holocaust has been the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Promised Land. As members of a biblically based religion, Christians appreciate that Israel was promised -- and given -- to Jews as the physical center of the covenant between them and God. Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics. As Jews, we applaud this support. We also recognize that Jewish tradition mandates justice for all non-Jews who reside in a Jewish state.

**4. Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah.** Central to the moral principles of Torah is the inalienable sanctity and dignity of every human being. All of us were created in the image of God. This shared moral emphasis can be the basis of an improved relationship between our two communities. It can also be the basis of a powerful witness to all humanity for improving the lives of our fellow human beings and for standing against the immoralities and idolatries that harm and degrade us. Such witness is especially needed after the unprecedented horrors of the past century.

**5. Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon.** Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians. We recognize with gratitude those Christians who risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews during the Nazi regime. With that in mind, we encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people. We applaud those Christians who reject this teaching of contempt, and we do not blame them for the sins committed by their ancestors.

**6. The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture.** Christians know and serve God through Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition. Jews know and serve God through Torah and the Jewish tradition. That difference will not be settled by one community insisting that it has interpreted Scripture more accurately than the other; nor by exercising political power over the other. Jews can respect Christians' faithfulness to their revelation just as we expect Christians to respect our

faithfulness to our revelation. Neither Jew nor Christian should be pressed into affirming the teaching of the other community.

**7. A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken**

**Jewish practice.** An improved relationship will not accelerate the cultural and religious assimilation that Jews rightly fear. It will not change traditional Jewish forms of worship, nor increase intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, nor persuade more Jews to convert to Christianity, nor create a false blending of Judaism and Christianity. We respect Christianity as a faith that originated within Judaism and that still has significant contacts with it. We do not see it as an extension of Judaism. Only if we cherish our own traditions can we pursue this relationship with integrity.

**8. Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace.** Jews and Christians, each in their own way, recognize the unredeemed state of the world as reflected in the persistence of persecution, poverty, and human degradation and misery. Although justice and peace are finally God's, our joint efforts, together with those of other faith communities, will help bring the kingdom of God for which we hope and long. Separately and together, we must work to bring justice and peace to our world. In this enterprise, we are guided by the vision of the prophets of Israel:

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

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