

PAPER 6

Christian/Jewish Relations in Australia.

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Preamble.

Any attempt to deal comprehensively with Judaeo-Christian relations must be founded upon an honest, if frequently painful, survey of our history. It is necessary to examine critically such records of the origins of Christianity as are available to us together with some logical deductions based upon our fairly extensive knowledge of the nature of Judaism at the time of the Roman occupation of Israel.

If, in so doing, I cause some of my Christian friends some discomfort or distress please believe that this is completely contrary to my own wishes and, indeed, contrary to long held Jewish principles. Especially I have no wish to dispossess any Christian of their faith, but, indeed, hopefully, to reinforce it.

It is a tragedy of history that so many of the crucial documents of the biblical period were either accidentally or deliberately destroyed: in the first place must be counted the huge library in Alexandria which was the principal repository of early Christian documents as well as a multitude of Jewish, Roman, Greek and Egyptian records. The whole library was destroyed by the Moslem invaders in 740CE, no doubt to enhance their own claim to possession of the final word of God. In addition there was a considerable repository in Rome but its disposition is still unclear.

However the whole of the Tanach, the Jewish Bible, incorporating the Torah (the five books of Moses) and other books, was preserved intact from its very inception due to the rigorous laws governing production of new scrolls anywhere in the known world by meticulously trained scribes who were, in turn, subject to expert scrutiny.

I am neither an historian nor theologian but I have, for more than 50 years, had a strong vocation to contribute what I may to better understanding between

the various branches of Christianity and the Jewish community. I have had some success in this area by contributing what, I hope, has been seen to be an objective and sensitive understanding of our mutual history.

Jewish settlement in Australia.

It is reliably documented that at least 17 and probably as many as 32 Jews arrived with Captain Phillip in the First Fleet in 1788. We know the names of all of these involuntary passengers and we also know that all of the first Jewish settlers were convicts.

London of the latter half of the 18th century could well have been described as the cesspit of Europe. Patrick Colquhoun, a distinguished magistrate of Georgian London writes that in 1796 the criminal population of London numbered over 100,000 out of a total population of not more than 1 million. Among these he numbers “2,000 itinerant Jews” plus a further twenty thousand whom he describes as “living by their wits”. It is known that many Jews were seeking refuge in the Britain of the eighteenth century as a result of violent persecution and destruction in central and eastern Europe. However, on arrival in their hoped for sanctuary they were bitterly disillusioned and desperate. They were denied entry into all but a few trades and professions and these only at the very base of the social structure. For most their very existence depended solely on criminal activities.

And so it was that of the 145,000 Britons transported to Australia between 1788 and 1852 at least 1000 were Jews. The largest number of Jewish convicts to arrive in one year was in 1818 when 28 out of the 2,550 can be identified as Jews.

The period 1788 to 1851, the beginning of the vast gold discoveries, may well be described as Australia’s seminal period, a period when the deeds of simple men and women assumed heroic proportions far beyond what their activities would have been valued at in other times and in other places. Some of the deeds and accomplishments of the Jewish transportees are worth recounting.

Among the first fleet Jewish convicts was one Joseph Levy, transported for stealing a copper kettle valued at 8 shillings. He had the dubious honour of appearing before the second ever court in Australia for allegedly stealing from another convict who was also his official prosecutor. Governor Phillip awarded him 100 lashes: two months later he was dead, the first Jew buried in Australia.

Another two Jews in the First Fleet were Esther Abrahams and John Harris whose history is well documented because of their extraordinary careers. Their children and grandchildren, despite their patriarchs’ criminal and religious origins,

went on to rank among the highest in the colony. She arrived in the same ship as a young Lt. Johnston who was actually the first European to set foot at Sydney Cove. Esther Abrahams, transported for stealing two lengths of lace, soon became Lt. Johnston's mistress, and twenty five years later, his wife. The young lieutenant went on to become Lieutenant-Governor of the colony after an incredible career shared by Esther. He had actually received his first commission as an officer in the Royal Marines where he saw service in the American Rebellion and other far flung reaches of the empire before being posted to Australia. Johnston and Abrahams had three children, the second, a son Robert Johnston was honoured with Governor Arthur Phillip as his Godfather and, in due course, became the first Australian officer to serve in the Royal Navy. Most of the Johnston/Abrahams seven children each went on to successful careers and marriages founding many of Australia's dynasties.

George Johnston sided with the famous John Macarthur in his rebellion against the then Governor Bligh. Johnston actually commanded the detachment of N.S.W. Corps sent to arrest Bligh at Macarthur's request. However, in due course, Johnston was arrested for mutiny, returned to England for trial and cashiered from the army. Although this crime would normally have brought an automatic death penalty, the officers of the court martial must have had some sympathy towards Johnston's plight and he was allowed to return to Sydney as a free settler .

One of Esther Abrahams fellow Jewish convicts in the First Fleet was John Harris. In his background of understanding of the criminal mind was born a novel idea. The early colony was plagued by corruption and immorality of all kinds leading to John Harris proposing a scheme to the advocate general to found a "nightwatch" of convict volunteers to guard the colony. The proposal, born out of desperation, was forwarded to Governor Phillip, who, after careful deliberation, approved it and appointed John Harris to form the watch. He thus became Australia's first policeman. Just for the record, so assiduous was Harris in preserving his Jewish identity that when he frequently appeared in court as the crown witness, he also insisted on being sworn on the Jewish bible.

Harris was succeeded as principal of the night watch and Chief Constable by another Jewish convict who had arrived with the Second Fleet in 1790. He was James Lara, of French origin, who gained his freedom, one of the first to do so, in 1800. By then he was holder of a liquor license with the aid of John Macarthur and built the first tavern at Parramatta, The Masons Arms. He became a firm, life long friend of Joseph Holt, one of the leaders of the Irish revolt in 1798 who was deported after the revolt was crushed.

One of the earliest permanent structures in Old Sydney Town was the Gallows, erected in Lower George Street at Brickfield Hill, later the site of the giant Grace Bros. Stores. It was there that Joseph Samuel transported for theft in 1795, was brought for execution for murder in September, 1803. Three times he was hanged and three times the rope broke. Pandemonium among the superstitious crowd of onlookers forced the Provost Marshal to hurry to the Governor for instruction. Governor King observed "it would seem there has been divine intervention", and commuted Samuel's sentence to life imprisonment. Another Jewish convict, Elias Davis was hanged in the same place in 1806. It is recorded that "another person of the mosaic persuasion gave him his Last Rites." As far as is known this is the first recorded instance of Jewish worship in the history of Australia.

It is a sad reflection that the times had so much to do with convicted Jews. But equally astonishing is how many of them rose above their initial station. Another such was Israel Chapman, transported for stealing a penny and halfpenny from a ship's captain. His death sentence was commuted and he landed in Sydney in 1818 at the age of 24. Within a year he was made chief wardsman at the prisoners' barracks in Hyde Park and then appointed principal overseer for the Government Lumber Yard. Like so many of his Jewish predecessors he found his way into the police force and was soon appointed as Australia's first commissioned detective. In 1827 he received an absolute pardon on Governor Darling's recommendation.

The youngest Jewish deportee on record was a John Morris, at the age of eight years sentenced to death for petty theft in 1813. His sentence was commuted to transport to Australia. He is recorded as being 3'10" tall when on the ship. At the age of ten he absconded into the bush and disappeared never more to be seen.

There were a number of Jews among the first free settlers who have historical significance. Barnett Levey built the first permanent theatre, the Theatre Royal, with a seating capacity of 1200 people in 1830. Joshua Frey Josephson, a child prodigy actor, went on to become a music teacher, publican and lawyer, Mayor of Sydney in 1848 and later, member of the Legislative Assembly, Solicitor General and before his death a District Court Judge.

There were many more Jewish free settlers arriving in the first half of the last century including many with considerable means who formed the core of the early economic and industrial independence of the colony.

I would like to conclude this period survey with a note on a less savoury but very prominent Jewish identity, Edward Davis (born George Wilkinson) who

arrived as a transportee in 1832 at the age of 18 years recorded as being only 4ft 11 inches tall on arrival. He had been a stable boy in England and was well versed in horsemanship. Soon after arrival he absconded from custody and together with seven others formed what may have been Australia's first bushranger gang. They rampaged through the New England and Hunter Valley districts for two years before capture. Their habit of distributing the proceeds of their robberies to the poor and disadvantaged gained Davis a sort of Robin Hood reputation. All were hanged in March 1841 before a crowd of more than one thousand.

Jewish settlement in Queensland.

From its early beginnings in Sydney, mainly sprung from ticket of leave or fully pardoned convicts, the Jewish Communities of Australia, now mainly free settlers, spread with the establishment of new settlements throughout Australia until by 1851 they were to be found in Hobart and Launceston, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Geelong, Penrith, Goulburn, Berrima, Tamworth, West Maitland, Bathurst and many smaller pioneering locations.

In the earlier stages of settlement the more dangerous and rebellious convicts were sent to Norfolk Island or Van Diemens Land to keep them isolated and escapeproof, but as these developed, first Newcastle then Port Macquarie were established for the recalcitrant. Again progress caught up with these so Governor Brisbane sent John Oxley to explore further north and, if possible, find a more isolated and escape resistant location. He found Moreton Bay and named its river Brisbane after his sponsor. Sir Thomas Brisbane sailed north, inspected and approved the site so the first convicts were shipped to Moreton Bay in 1824. The new settlement was the ultimate in despair and misery. The Commandant, Captain Patrick Logan was said to have been appointed at the suggestion of his fellow officers in order to get rid of him. The first register of convicts at Moreton Bay indicates about 23 Jewish convicts among the first 2,373. The first of these was Lewis Lazarus, the first Jewish resident of Queensland. He escaped confinement twice; on the second occasion made his way alone through hostile territory all the way to Port Macquarie. His account of his journey aroused so much official interest in a new overland route that, although he was returned to Moreton Bay he served the rest of his time as a "trustee" in the hospital. When the hated Commandant Logan vanished from the settlement, Lazarus was given the task of finding him, and find him he did although Logan had been dead for ten days, speared by aborigines

One of the first settlers in Ipswich was Hyam Alexander while still a prisoner but finally received his ticket of leave in 1857. The Moreton Bay settlement was opened for free settlement in 1842 due to the diminishing numbers of convicts

available for duties. The colony's first Jewish free settlers were Judah and Isaac Solomon and hotel keeper Benjamin Lee, all of whom arrived with the first free settlers. Judah's first son Moss was the colony's third free-born child. In the first year George Mocatta, who had previously settled in Bathurst, moved to Moreton Bay. He, together with Lee, consigned a herd of 1,600 cattle overland from N.S.W. to Moreton Bay, a journey of three months' duration, the first cattle in the region.

In due course Mocatta opened up a large sheep property at Grantham near Toowoomba. He later moved even further north to the Burnett district. Benjamin Lee, holder of a victualler's license, first operated the Shepherd and Flock Inn in Brisbane North and later the Sovereign Hotel in Queen Street. The 1848 census indicated the grand total of eight Jews out of a total population of 2,257 in the Moreton Bay district. Marcus Berkman became one of the first settlers in the Warwick district. They were joined by a Joel Henry Asher who owned the California Store near the river.

Famine, drought and economic depression dogged the colony's early years and it was not until 1865 that fifteen Jewish families joined to form a congregation. It was to be another twenty-five years in 1890 that Brisbane's first Synagogue was built in Margaret Street which still is in use to-day.

However, the first Synagogue in the state was built in Toowoomba ten years earlier and examination of the Toowoomba Jewish Cemetery indicates what appeared to be a larger and more vigorous congregation than in Brisbane at that time. The site of the Toowoomba synagogue is now occupied by the Lutheran Church.

To-day, between 6,000 and 7,000 Jewish people live in Queensland with three Synagogues in Brisbane, two on the Gold Coast and smaller communities along the coast right up to Cairns which has the largest Jewish community outside the south-east.

The first sixty years of Jewish settlement in Australia were marked by the gradual erasure of religious and family ties in the pressures of penal life. The struggle for their very existence precluded the development of communal life.

The birth pangs of Australia's Jewish Community are recorded in the lives of a comparatively few, disoriented and lonely men and women who, like so many Jews in other countries, laid the foundations of a new communal life in an alien land.

The fact that the misery of their existence was so often due to the hostility of their non Jewish environment is well documented. The ambience of the anti-semitism was perpetuated and inflated by the stereotyping to which they were collectively subjected. The classic tragedy of Ikey Solomon, the model for Dicken's Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, whose every breath was a primitive struggle to survive until he eventually succumbed to the lash in Australia is now well understood as the best example of this ambience.

I will deal with the early and current relations between christians and Jews in Australia in the next section.

Christian Jewish relations from settlement to now

For Europeans in general and certainly for Britons in the 18th and 19th centuries, religion was more than an abstract requiring lip service and a tenuous adherence such as is the case for most in this late 20th century.

Belief in a supreme being who watched over every human activity was deeply ingrained in all of the varieties of monotheism. However, unfortunately for Roman Catholics, Jews and Non-conformists, the supreme being of the penal settlements was exclusively a Church of England God. Most of the colony's administrators had an abiding fear and hatred of Popery after centuries of religious warfare.

Additionally they had a millenial old hatred and contempt for Judaism born of Christianity's 1800 year old campaign of Anti-Judaism. As well as Jews a high proportion of the prisoners were Irish Roman Catholics of whom most were political prisoners, victims of the struggle for Irish independance. So the established Church in Australia was regarded as one of the bulwarks of law and order as well as the way to salvation, a way which was administered just as much from the magisterial bench as from the pulpit.

Week after week Roman Catholics, Jews and Non-conformists sat through compulsory Sunday Church Parades in which only Anglican beliefs and practice were observed. Magistrates proclaimed "When I mention religion, I refer only to Christianity, when I mention Christianity I refer only to Protestantism of which I recognize only the established Anglican Church."

For decades, this church ministered haphazardly to the spiritual needs of the whole population. For the first thirty years Roman Catholics were baptized and married by parsons ordained by Canterbury. Even Presbyterians had to wait 20 years for permission for their first church to be built.

In 1810, the colony's Chaplain, Samuel Marsden, described to the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Law "Roman Catholics, Jews and persons of all persuasions are required to send their children to public schools where they are all instructed in the principles of our established church.

In 1818 a new tract of ground was set aside in the "sandhills" beyond Brickfield Hill consecrated to the Church of England as the Official Cemetery. It may have been purely coincidence that this was conveniently adjacent to the gallows place. In 1820 a corner of this ground was allocated "to the Hebrews". It was not until about 1830 that Jewish marriages started to be conducted according to Jewish Rites. The first circumcision was performed by a free Jewish settler in 1829.

The first Jewish community was formed about 1832 mainly to service the requirements of Jewish funerals. There are records of early Passover celebrations in the 30's and 40's. The first Synagogue was established in York St. Sydney. Until then all Jewish weddings had been conducted in the Church of England churches by Church of England ministers. Now continuity of a Jewish community in Australia despite establishment strictures became a possibility.

What they could not resolve however was the continuing virulent anti-judaism of all of the branches of Christianity which combined the twin evils of successionism and decide to determine their position. Much of this was based upon some portions of Christian scripture which, with the most tolerant possible interpretation, could only be viewed as virulently Anti-semitic, passages which would have brought the most horrified denunciation from Jesus and his Jewish disciples. As a brief selection I refer you to:

"John 5:16-18, John 7 :1, Acts 13:45, Acts 17:13,
I-Thessalonians 2:15, John 8:44, Titus 1:16, Acts 18:6, Titus 1:10-11"

See appendix "A"

It is noteworthy that those sections of the Christian Gospels which reinforced the adherence of Jesus to his Judaism were carefully avoided or distorted by Judaism's detractors. In Matthew 5:17-18 Matthew reports Jesus as saying "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am come not to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Matthew 4:10 "For it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." Other areas of the synoptic gospels frequently refer to his

attendance in Synagogue and Temple. His criticisms were never directed at the Torah but to the defaulters from the Torah.

All of this of course is background to the universal mores of the time. What is true is that this universal Christian position vis a vis Jews in Australia prevailed until well after WWII. Despite the fact that the Jewish population, numbering about 2000 by 1850, only increased slowly to about 25,000 by 1939, the part played by Jews in the Australian society was remarkably far above their numbers.

Their numbers included some of the most distinguished Australians in the fields of government, law, education, science, sport, military service, industry, commerce, and entertainment. And yet, in the middle of this century there were still many clubs and other institutions who refused admission to people of the Jewish faith no matter how distinguished their service.

It is however fair to say that anti-semitism in Australia, while widespread and sometimes virulent, never reached the levels obtaining in Europe in the last two centuries which inevitably culminated in the Shoah, the Holocaust. Its major expression in Australia was represented by social ostracism and printed media especially in *Smiths Weekly* and the *Bulletin*. It is however a matter of deep regret that much print anti-semitism had its greatest outlet in church publications.

A survey of the Christian press by the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs prepared by an expert panel under the chairmanship of professor W.D. Rubinstein, Professor of Social and Economic History at Deakin University, covering the period March 1986 through September 1987 is remarkably informative.

The specifics the committee researched were references to Jews and Judaism on the one hand and to Israel on the other. The study covered all of the major church journals and some of the minor ones, being thirteen in all.

- Church Scene (Anglican)
- See (Anglican)
- C & N (Uniting)
- Australian Presbyterian Life
- The Lutheran
- Victorian Baptist Witness
- The Vineyard (David House Evangelical)
- Signs of the Times (Seventh Day Adventist)
- Australian Friend (Quakers)
- The Beacon (Unitarian)
- In Unity (Council of Churches)

The Advocate (Roman Catholic)
News Weekly (National Civic Council-defacto Catholic)
National Outlook (left wing Roman Catholic)

I cannot condense into a few minutes a 120 page report but for this particular occasion it is fair to say that the Catholic media and the Lutheran were completely free of anti-semitic references and, in fact vigorously opposed it on occasion. The Catholic Advocate was more reserved on issues concerning Israel, understandably so in the light of the precarious position of the Church in Arab countries. On social and moral issues which were strongly left-wing in the Anglican and Uniting media, the Catholic Press was almost identical to the Jewish position being very conservative on homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia among others.

Most of the fundamentalist publications were strongly successionist and millennial in character, leading to generally anti-Jewish positions with the exception of the pro-Israel messianic churches.

Overall the scrutineers found the Catholic Advocate is probably the most pro-Jewish mainstream church publication in Australia.

The post WWII relations of Christians and Jews have been steadily improving and there is now considerable dialogue in train with most churches. The declaration by the Lutheran Church of Australia in which I was proud to be a consultant, was unique in the whole Lutheran world and has since been taken up by Lutheran branches in other countries.

While our relations with Anglican and Uniting Churches still leave much to be desired we are at least talking regularly in a congenial atmosphere.

But it is certainly the Roman Catholic Church in which the most revolutionary, dare I say almost miraculous, changes have occurred. Commencing with Pope John XXIII, Vatican 11, the current Pope John Paul (who must be the most revered and popular among the Jewish people in all of history) the church has moved strongly to repair what it declares to be 2,000 years of injustice.

The numerous Vatican pronouncements from “Nostra Aetate” and on have included the freeing of the Jewish people from the charge of deicide, the continuity of God’s Covenant between God and the Jewish people in which the Church shares through the ministry of the Jewish Jesus, the origins of the Church’s faith and election founded in the Patriarchs, Moses and the Prophets (Pope John Paul) and the declaration that anti-semitism is a great sin against humanity and the church.

The final triumphal event was the mutual recognition by Israel and the Vatican.

In his public declaration on January 7, 1997 Pope John Paul appointed a commission to study the anti-semitic acts of the past and in its final finding to formally apologize to the Jewish people. In his words "The commission will tackle the delicate question of the roots of anti-semitism in the New Testament where the Jews, especially in John's Gospel, are represented as the enemies of Christ."

I was personally happy to be among a small group of Jewish leaders who met last year with a group of Catholic Bishops led by our own Archbishop Bathersby at the Great Synagogue in Sydney where we discussed issues of common concern to both our faiths in a warm and understanding environment. It is our understanding that this will become an annual event.

To-morrow.

The problem with religious faith is that it isn't enough just to know. You have to be convinced that your knowledge isn't self delusion. The birth and development of Judaism and the subsequent branching of Christianity were, together, the greatest achievements in social technology in all of human history whether you perceive it as of divine or human origin. And yet, there is mass desertion from the major monotheistic faiths throughout the world especially by our young. It has nothing to do with the advance in education or science because many are choosing to flee to cults, obscure eastern disciplines, false messiahs, drug societies, paganism, astrology, numerology, scientology and political extremism; also evidenced by the dangerous growth of Islamic fundamentalism which chooses to deny the humanistic and moral laws of their own Koran.

I have said often enough in the past when challenged on the credibility in modern society of our ancient laws and codes that I cannot believe that God sits in his heavenly cabinet room considering amendment laws. The populists move to legitimize many of those things which God declared to be forever banned and an abomination.

If some consider that some of his law can be amended or cancelled then why not all?

We Jews are renowned for the skill of prophecy so I will conclude with my own forecast. Unless the world's major monotheistic religions stop struggling for pre-eminence and the sole repositories of God's Truth, seeking by persuasion or force to compel others to their way and at the same time return without reservation

to God's revealed law in its essential simplicity, then we will surely see the obliteration of all we hold to be the truth in common. I believe passionately that we the Christian and Jewish people are closer to an agreed understanding of our relationship to God than we have ever been before.

Appendix "A"

Some of the New Testament Sources of Anti-Semitism

Christians have persecuted and sometimes exterminated all sorts of people in various eras of history: Natives, Witches, Pagans, Muslims, and numerous other groups. Yet one group of people singularly stands out, having been persecuted viciously and constantly from the very first days of Christianity in the time of the ancients, right down to the modern era: the Jews.

The Christian Jew-hatred is based upon numerous scriptural passages; for example, the Gospel of John and Acts are among the most antisemitic of all New Testament Scriptures: persistently the Jews (in general!) are depicted as hostile to Jesus or the Apostles, plotting and scheming, "*the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him... the Jews sought the more to kill him*" (John 5: 16-1 8), '*the Jews sought to kill him*" (John 7:1), "*they were filled with envy, and spoke against ... Paul, contradicting and blaspheming*" (Acts 13:45), '*the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women*" (Acts 13:50), "*they came thither also, and stirred up the people*" (Acts 17:13) and many more.

In reality of course, *the Jews* could not have cared less about Jesus or the Christians as neither the Talmud nor Jewish historians indicate that Jews of the first century were really interested.

Everyone knows from Scripture that "*the Jews ...killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets*" (I Thessalonians 2 -15), yet everyone knows just as well that Jesus, if he ever existed, was executed by the Romans, not by Jews (one sometimes wonders why Christians are not thankful for this execution: had Jesus not been executed there would be no Christian religion, not to mention so-called "salvation").

The Jews even descend from the devil (John 8:44), are 'detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good' (Titus 1: 16), they "displease God and are

hostile to all men” (I Thessalonians 2- 1 5), and consequently, already Scripture threatens Jews with what later generations of Christians then carried out, for example ‘Your blood [be] upon your own heads” (Acts 18:6), and “especially those of the circumcision group ... must be silenced’ (sic! Titus 1; 10-1 1).

Appendix “B”

Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

6 - 8 September 1996

MINUTES

PO Box A2266. Sydney South NSW 1236 Telephone (02) 0287 0900
Fax (02) 9287 0999

it was resolved to:

96.87.06 Anti-Semitism

- (a) issue a statement requesting that Uniting Church buildings not be used for anti-Semitic or other racist purposes:
- (b) communicate this decision to the appropriate councils of the church and to the Council of Christians and Jews in Sydney,

Appendix “C”

A Statement by the Council of Presidents of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

Judaism, like Christianity, is one of the world’s living religions. Although Jewish people have settled around the world, the state of Israel and the city of Jerusalem still hold a central place in the faith and life of most Jews. Jewish people have lived in Australia from the earliest times of European settlement, as have Lutheran Christians.

We need to recognise that Christians over the centuries have often mistreated and persecuted the followers of Judaism and so have failed to live by the faith

they profess. We Lutherans must also acknowledge that the anti-Jewish writings of Martin Luther were used by persecutors of Jews to justify their position and practices, and could be used by anti-Jewish extremists by tearing them out of their historical context.

Here in Australia, Lutherans have often been unaware of Luther's anti-Jewish writings and of their impact. Fortunately, perhaps because of greater tolerance under the mateship banner, and perhaps because both Lutherans and Jews were minority groups, there have not been any occurrences of direct confrontation between Lutherans and the Australian Jewish community.

It is true, however, that before and during World War II, our Lutheran church papers naively and uncritically published German propropaganda against the Jews. It is also true that the stress in Australian Lutheranism on the doctrinal gulf between Judaism and Christianity has led to instances of unloving attitudes by Lutherans who through ignorance, envy or fear accept bigoted information put out by extreme right-wing groups about Jews, for example, that Jews control the international finance markets, or that there is a conspiracy among leading Jews to take over the world through a one-world government.

We declare that all forms on anti-Semitism are contrary to the Christian way of life. We urge the members of the Lutheran Church of Australia to repent of and to confess our silence over the Holocaust and other such attacks on Jews, and our sins of prejudice and misunderstanding against the Jewish people. We also thank God for those of both faiths in Australia who have modelled the way of peace, love and friendship in the past.

We call on members of the Lutheran Church of Australia to make the following commitment:

- to respect and defend the rights of the Jewish community to observe the faith of their ancestors;
- to live out their Christian faith by showing love and understanding towards Jewish people;
- to engage in open and honest dialogue with Jewish people about our common Old Testament heritage and our distinctive religious beliefs; and
- to oppose in word and action religious bigotry of whatever form both within the church and in the wider community, and to join with members of other faiths in working for harmony and tolerance in Australia society.

At the same time, since we believe that Jesus is the saviour of all people, let us all continue to confess him publicly as God's promised Messiah.