

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bq\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php)

## The Challenge of our Jewish Neighbours.

"In multiplying will I multiply thy seed as the stars in heaven."

**T**HIS Old Testament promise and prophecy concerning the people of Israel from whom our present-day Jews emanate, seems to be approaching fulfilment. There are some 16,000,000 Jews in the world to-day. In spite of centuries of exploitation, persecution and attempted annihilation, they are more numerous than ever before; they have survived and outlived the peoples and nations—Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Old Spain, Czarist Russia—which endeavoured to annihilate them.

To-day the Jew is everywhere. No country is without Jews. The Jew is at home in all lands, but has no homeland of his own, not even in Palestine, where the Arabs begrudge him the right to establish a cultural and spiritual centre in accordance with the terms and provisions of the Balfour Declaration. Although everywhere, the Jew is wanted nowhere. He is the most scattered of peoples, yet the most united; without a nation of his own, he yet has a greater sense of racial oneness than any other people. He is the most international, but at the same time possesses the greatest national and cultural self-consciousness of all peoples.

**THEIR NUMBER.** All told, Europe has 9,282,000 Jews, America 4,650,000, Asia 575,000, Africa 550,000, and Australasia 30,000. European Russia has close to 3,000,000, Poland has more than 3,000,000; Rumania has 900,000, Germany 600,000, Hungary 475,000, Czecho-Slovakia 400,000, Great Britain 325,000, Palestine 185,000. The United States of America has 4,500,000, more than any other country in the world. One hundred years ago there were but 6,000 Jews in the U.S.A.

The wandering Jew of the ages has become our neighbouring Jew of to-day. And he has become our neighbour permanently, for no longer can we expatriate him or force him to move to other lands when we tire of him. To-day there are no more frontiers beyond which we can drive him. Immigration laws and restrictions prevent such now.

The Jew is, furthermore, essentially a city dweller. The persecution of centuries made him that. Thirty per cent. of all Jews live in fourteen cities; 45 per cent. of the total Jewish population of the world resides in seventy-three cities, each with 25,000 or more Jews. New York City has 1,800,000 Jews; one out of every three persons in New York City is a Jew. London has 175,000 Jews, Chicago 325,000, Warsaw 300,000. Jerusalem

has 53,000 Jews. In the cities, the Jew is no longer confined to ghettos; he is free to move about within our cities and does so. Thus we find him in varying numbers in practically every church parish in the larger cities.

His presence in such large numbers in our city church parishes challenges the Christian Church to include him in her ministry. The Church has gone to the ends of the earth to bring Christ to remote peoples, but has largely overlooked Christ's own people according to the flesh, on her very threshold.

**THEIR INFLUENCE.** Even more remarkable and significant than the increase in numbers and wide distribution of the Jews, has been their growing influence in every field of human endeavour. In law, in medicine, in journalism; in business and commerce; in the diplomatic, political and international world; in mathematics, physics and other sciences; in the fine arts as well as in the philosophic realm, everywhere our Jewish neighbour is wielding increasing influence.

Since 1921 seventeen Jews have been winners of the Nobel prize. International gatherings of scientists are very largely attended by Jewish scholars. Our conceptions of the universe have been profoundly, if not pre-eminently, influenced by Albert Einstein, a Jew. Modern psychology received greatest impetus, perhaps, from Sigmund Freud, also a Jew. Communism, which challenges all our concepts of and beliefs in God, derives most of its essential doctrines from the book *Capitalism*, by Karl Marx, also a Jew.

The influence of our Jewish neighbour is thus an important factor in modern society. Every world movement, and very especially Christianity, which is concerned with a world community, the Kingdom of God, must reckon with the Jew. As wise Christian statesmen we dare not ignore the Jew. We must accept the challenge our Jewish neighbour presents by his growing influence in moulding our modern civilisation and "Weltanschauung."

**ANTI-SEMITISM.** The growth in numbers and the wide distribution and growing influence of the Jews, which has characterised the post-war period, coupled with the economic crisis throughout the world, are rekindling the century-old discrimination against and persecution of the Jew. "Germany awake! Judea perish!" is the battle cry of Hitler's followers in Germany. Hitler is now chancellor, it remains to be seen whether he will attempt to fulfil his pre-election threats against the Jews. But whether or not he does, the fact of violent anti-semitism in Germany will long remain. Poland, Rumania, Austria, Greece, Hungary, have

all had violent outbreaks against the Jews within recent months. University strikes against Jewish students have occurred in Warsaw, Cracow, Lemberg, Berlin, Breslau, Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Bucharest.

In America increasing social, commercial and educational discrimination against the Jews exists; even England is not entirely free from anti-Jewish discrimination. Golding, in *Magnolia Street*, has made that clear; also Galsworthy in *Loyalties*.

This discrimination, ostracism and persecution of the Jew in our day, may no longer be done in the name of Jesus Christ as of old, but it is still very largely so-called Christians who are responsible.

Anti-semitism, no matter what its causes, is racial discrimination, and as such must challenge the reality of Christian neighbourliness. No longer dare we, as Christians, sit idly by and tolerate anti-semitism; we and the Christian Church are challenged to disavow anti-semitism and actively to endeavour to remove its causes and consequences. As Christians we dare do no less, for only so can we fulfil the command to "love thy neighbour as thyself," which is like unto the command to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind."

POST-WAR CHANGES. The war has brought about phenomenal changes in Jewish life, notably in the "Pale of Settlement," where two-thirds of world Jewry lived. In this area revolutionary transformations have taken place. New nations and new free peoples—Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania—have sprung up over-night, where formerly foreign domination and subject peoples existed.

In Russia, Communism rules with disintegrating consequences for resident Jewish life as for all other peoples. The Austrian Empire has been dissolved, and new problems and environments thereby created for the Jews now in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and former Galicia.

In the wake of these political upheavals and geographical changes, the ghetto walls have largely crumbled and disappeared. The old isolation and seclusion of Jewry in the middle-age atmosphere behind the ghetto walls, has suddenly been interrupted. The ghetto Jew has passed almost overnight from his sixteenth-century environment into the twentieth century with its rampant modernism and eruptive mechanism. Emerging thus abruptly from the calm haven of the ghetto, he is now being buffeted about mercilessly on the storm-tossed sea of the modern world with all its bewildering and upsetting influences.

Caftan and ear-locks are disappearing. Confusion and distraction prevail. Necessary readjustments to the new order prove disastrous to the old order. Synagogal allegiance is weakening. The law is no longer the final authority. The materialising world calls to Jewish youth as it calls to non-Jewish youth. Jewish youth is forsaking the God of Israel, to worship at the shrine of other gods created by the secular drift away from divine worship. Many are losing completely all sense of religious need. With the surrender of the ceremonial aspects of Judaism, they surrender or lose all religious interest in Judaism. Some go to the other extreme and join the ranks of the atheists or anti-religious radicals of our day. Others seek satisfaction in communism or socialism. Still others drift to ethical culture, new thought or Christian Science. And all spiritual leaders of Judaism are concerned. A real crisis in Jewry and Judaism exists to-day. Zionism is striving to maintain the racial and cultural integrity of the Jew, Judaism having failed to maintain the religious integrity of the Jew against the impact of the modern world. All sincere Christians should have the greatest sympathy with those spiritual leaders of Jewry who are endeavouring to halt this rising tide of Jewry away from God.

**JESUS CHRIST AND THE JEWS.** This crisis in the religious life of Jewry seems, among other things, to be forcing the personality of Jesus into Jewish consciousness. Jesus Christ, whose very name has been taboo among Jews for centuries; who, when referred to at all by Jews, was always spoken of as "that man," or "the hanged one," even such reference being occasion for all orthodox Jews within hearing to spit on the ground; this same Jesus Christ is now not only being freely referred to by Jews and their religious leaders, but is also being made the subject of extensive study and interpretation. Whether it be in the liberal temples in America or in the orthodox synagogues of Poland and Rumania, or among the modernised Jews of our day, everywhere, one can now discuss Jesus Christ with Jews. The literature on Jewish views of Jesus is growing rapidly. Beginning with Professor Klausner's significant book on *Jesus the Nazarene*, written in Hebrew for Jews to read, the number of books on Jesus by Jews is becoming legion. Sermons on Jesus by rabbis are not uncommon in the synagogues. Recently a rabbi preached in his synagogue a sermon on the question as to whether the synagogues could claim Jesus Christ. He gave six reasons why he felt the synagogue could and should claim Jesus.

It is true that in all these books and sermons by Jews Jesus is referred to only as man or prophet, even as the greatest son of Israel, but not as Son of God or as the Christ.

But even such interpretation of Jesus by our Jewish neighbours is a challenge to the Christian Church and to Christians. It should challenge us to more Christ-like living, lest by our actions, in particular our relations to our Jewish neighbours, we repel them anew from further consideration of Jesus Christ, and anti-semitism can cause such repulsion; that is another reason why anti-semitism is such a challenge to Christianity.

THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO THE JEWS. The International Missionary Council has recognised and accepted the challenge of our Jewish neighbours as set forth above. Its Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews is its answer to the challenge.

It believes that, important and essential as special missions to the Jews are, the real responsibility rests with the Christian Church corporately and locally. It appeals to the Church to assume that responsibility. It is convinced that the primary task of the Christian approach to the Jews concerns Christians and not the Jews. Christians must be made more Christ-like in thinking and in relation to the Jews. And fundamentally that is the task of the Christian Church. We believe it is the spontaneous friendship of Christians towards Jews rather than direct evangelisation, necessary as that may be, which, in the long run, will accomplish most in leading Jews to Jesus Christ. Exemplary Christ-like living in the home, on the street, in the market-place and in our universities will serve best and most effectively in revealing the divine nature and power of Christ to our Jewish neighbours, and thus in leading them to an honest and sincere consideration of His claims. And we must believe that when our Jewish neighbour so considers Jesus Christ, he will discover, as men and women of all climes in all ages have done, that in Him is the Way, the Truth, and the Life which is in God.

Our primary concern in all this is not that our Jewish neighbours should necessarily become members of our church, but that they should know Jesus Christ. Indeed, should we not prefer to see Christ in the synagogue and there made available to all Jews, helping them to a fuller knowledge of God, rather than to see the Jews in the Church, where they are largely lost to Jewry, if not entirely excommunicated by their own people? We are furthermore convinced that the Jew with Christ is no less a Jew, but rather more a Jew, for, in Jesus Christ our Jewish neighbour finds fulfilment of his religious faith.

The Jew, our Jewish neighbour, challenges the Christian Church, our Church, to action—What will be the Church's answer?

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blest."

CONRAD HOFFMANN.