OUR JEWISH BRETHREN:
CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO KRISTALLNACHT IN CANADIAN MASS MEDIA

Kyle Jantzen and Jonathan Durance

The discussion of Canadian responses to the Holocaust has unfolded largely in response to the work of Irving Abella and Harold Troper. In their study, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948*, they argued that “although some organizations and high-placed members of religious groups, such as the Anglican and United Churches, actively campaigned on behalf of Jewish refugees, most Canadians seemed indifferent to the suffering of German Jews and hostile to their admission to Canada.”¹ Their book takes its title from the now famous response of a leading Canadian immigration official in 1945 to the question of how many Jewish refugees Canada should take in. Despite Abella and Troper’s recognition that there were “a handful of concerned, dedicated citizens scattered across Canada,” they did not analyze Christian responses to the Holocaust in great detail, concluding that “the churches remained silent,” allowing the Canadian federal government to dismiss the few voices of Christian protest that did exist.²

It was this generalization of “silence” that caused Alan Davies and Marilyn F. Nefsky to survey Canadian Protestant denominational responses to the Holocaust. They found a mixture of anti-Nazi and, to a lesser extent, pro-Jewish figures, but much ambivalence and apathy as well. “No sustained universal outcry on behalf of the beleaguered refugees ever erupted from either the Christian or the Protestant rank and file,” they argued. “Neither Christian nor Protestant Canada spoke with a collective voice,”³ and few churches “understood the true dimensions of the evil.”⁴ Indeed, the Canadian Christian community was hindered by an inherent “negativity towards Jews and Judaism that embedded itself in classical Christian theology.”⁵ Other scholars of Canadian Jewish history, such as Gerald Tuchinsky, Haim Genizi, and Janine Stingel, have generally supported the findings of Davies and Nefsky.⁶

²Ibid., p. 284.
⁴Ibid., p. 131.
⁵Ibid.
United States historians Robert Ross and William Nawyn arrived at roughly the same conclusions when they surveyed U.S. Christian responses to the Holocaust. For Ross, despite the fact that the Protestant press openly opposed Nazi Jewish policy after 1938, there "occurred another kind of 'silence' that was more disturbing in its consequences, the 'silence' that followed the lack of intervention on behalf of the persecuted Jews and the almost total failure of such interventions as were attempted."\(^7\) Similarly, Nawyn concluded that "rhetoric predominated over action" among U.S. Protestants.\(^8\)

Despite their general pessimism, these Canadian and U.S. historians acknowledge that the brutality of the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 9–10, 1938, aroused widespread outrage against Nazism and some measure of sympathy for Jews.\(^9\) Their brief descriptions of rallies and radio broadcasts suggested that at least some Christians had spoken out for the Jews. This sparked our interest to examine more closely the post-Kristallnacht reactions in Canada—not least because we also regard the Nazi pogrom of November, 1938, as one of the significant "milestones on the road to Auschwitz."\(^10\) We view it as a watershed—an event after which no reasonable person in Germany or abroad could downplay the ideological importance or political radicalism of the National Socialists' Jewish policy. Indeed, the Kristallnacht pogrom marks a point of transition between the escalating Antisemitism of German politics in the 1930's and the massive violence associated with the Nazi wartime Holocaust.

In our study of the post-Kristallnacht reactions of Canadian Christians, we have sought to broaden the scope of the source material considered by Davies and Nefsky, who drew primarily upon denominational journals. To that end, we have undertaken a survey of nine leading Canadian newspapers in November and December, 1938: The Halifax Herald, The Gazette (Montreal), Ottawa Citizen, The Globe and Mail, Toronto Daily Star, Winnipeg Free Press, The Leader Post (Regina), The Calgary Herald, and The Vancouver Province. In the 1930's, that "golden age of print journalism," newspapers not only reported the news but

---


\(^9\)Davies and Nefsky did acknowledge that "the coast-to-coast post-Kristallnacht rallies" might have been exceptions to a generalized apathy—events at which Canadian Christians did speak out for Jews (Davies and Nefsky, How Silent, p. 128). Tuchinsky noted the "loud protests" after Kristallnacht across Canada and the presence of a Canadian Christian witness to the worsening plight of the Jews, but he characterized it as "fragmented, weak and inadequate" (see Tuchinsky, Branching Out, pp. 201–202; and idem, Canada's Jews, pp. 238–239). Bialystok outlined the widespread Antisemitism of interwar Canada but did not note any Christian (or Jewish) responses to the Kristallnacht pogrom (Bialystok, Delayed Impact, pp. 19–23). When Genizi examined the attitudes of Canadian Protestants toward Jews in the postwar period, he suggested that Protestant responses to the plight of the Jews under Hitler had been "few and vague" (Genizi, Holocaust, Israel, p. 19). Finally, Stingel explored the extreme fundamentalist Christianity and Antisemitism of Social Credit politicians in Alberta during the 1930's and 1940's, finding that leaders blamed "the international financial Jewish conspiracy" for many of Alberta's problems and thus resisted Jewish settlement in the province (see Stingel, Social Discredit, p. 4).

\(^10\)See Davies and Nefsky, How Silent, pp. 13 and 128; and Nawyn, American Protestantism's Response, p. 79.
also provided an important forum for public debate. They printed detailed accounts of public events (including church services), reproduced direction-setting statements from church judicatories and denominational leaders, and reflected popular Christian opinion, as filtered by newspaper editors.

Our examination of Canadian newspaper coverage of the Kristallnacht pogrom and its aftermath indicates to us that thousands of Canadian Christians became involved—either directly or as members of activist church congregations—in a movement to protest Nazi atrocities against Jews and to campaign for government action to ease the Jewish plight. Clergy and laity urged Canadians to put aside divisive denominational considerations in order to challenge their country to respond to the growing refugee crisis created by Adolf Hitler’s policies. In a wave of protest meetings, sermons, and letters that issued forth in the wake of the pogrom, this disparate group of lay and ecclesiastical Christians reached out to the Canadian Jewish community and declared its solidarity with them in their suffering.

This Canadian response to the Kristallnacht pogrom differed from the reaction of U.S. Christians in significant ways. In the U.S., Christians reacted swiftly and energetically and with much publicity. Under the rubric of “the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man,” U.S. Christians protested the brutality of the Hitler regime and lamented the plight of European Jews in a series of key events: the Armistice Day commemoration ceremonies of November 11, a national radio broadcast of protest that same evening, Sunday sermons on November 13, two more national radio broadcasts on November 14 and 16 (one interfaith and one Catholic), and a campaign of public interfaith prayer rallies across the nation on Sunday, November 20. In this endeavor, the Federal Council of Churches played a key role, issuing the call for prayer, soliciting and publicizing denunciations of Nazi Germany from leading church and public leaders, then organizing the national radio broadcast of November 14.

Canadian churches had no such national coordination. In keeping with the regionalism that so often shapes the Canadian experience, churches in widely separated centers—Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax (and in smaller communities in between)—responded in the first instance to news published in their local newspapers. Coverage of the Kristallnacht pogrom began as early as November 10, when The Globe and Mail led with a large, all-caps headline, “REICH SWEPT BY ANTI-JEWISH TERRORISM.” Other papers followed suit, and by the following week the Nazi pogrom and the ensuing Jewish plight were receiving regular attention on the front pages of newspapers across the country.

The first Christian responses to Kristallnacht followed quickly. In Regina, SK, The Leader Post reported that a few pastors referred to the pogrom in their

\[^{11}\text{Peter Desbarats, } \textit{Guide to Canadian News Media} \text{ (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), p. 53.}\]

\(^{12}\text{Kyle Jantzen, } \textit{“The Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man”: Mainline American Protestants and the Kristallnacht Pogrom,” in Maria Mazzenga, ed., } \textit{American Religious Responses to Kristallnacht} \text{ (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 31–56.}\]

\(^{13}\text{The Globe and Mail, November 11, 1938, p. 1.}\)
November 11 Remembrance Day services. Further west, *The Vancouver Province* noted that “many preachers in Christian churches made protests against Germany’s treatment of a ‘non-Aryan’ race.” During the following week, various papers announced special evening meetings or featured letters to the editor in which individual Christian leaders and laity spoke out against the Nazi brutality. The Dartmouth and Halifax Ministerial Association meeting received the most significant coverage among leading Canadian daily newspapers. *The Halifax Herald* featured front-page coverage of the local clergy’s formal protest to Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. The newspaper went on to report that the Dartmouth and Halifax clergy challenged all Canadian Christians to rise up and give particular attention to the Jewish plight on Sunday, November 20. Other newspapers across Canada supported this call by announcing the upcoming event, publishing advertisements, or printing notices for clergy who were responding to the pogrom. For example, *The Vancouver Province* reported that Dr. Clem Davies of the Centennial Methodist Church planned to speak on the plight of the Jews prior to evening worship, while the “Realms of Religion” section in the *The Globe and Mail* listed several accounts of pastors who had preached on or held information sessions regarding the Jewish persecution.

On Sunday, November 20, Canadian Christians and Jews turned out en masse to condemn the Nazi government and plead the case of Jewish refugees. Through the organizational efforts of the Canadian Jewish Congress and the League of Nations Societies, Jewish and Christian clergy and laity and community leaders came together for interfaith prayer and protest rallies held in most of the major cities in Canada. The largest took place in Toronto, where 17,000 Jews and Christians filled Maple Leaf Gardens, with 3,000 more assembled in nearby overflow meetings. As the advertisement for the Toronto gathering explained, “citizens of Toronto, of all religious denominations, will meet ... to express their grief at the misfortunes which are befalling the victims of Nazi brutalities.” The event was to feature “prayers and liturgical renderings, messages and addresses by Church, Rabbinical, and lay leaders.”

The next morning, in *The Globe and Mail*, the leading Canadian daily, front-page headlines read “20,000 TOLD ALL RELIGION THREATENED” and “Toronto Rally Expresses Sympathy with German Jews, and Hears Nazis Are Danger to Church.” Readers were informed how “Jew and Gentile, rabbi and Christian minister, made common cause yesterday with nearly 20,000 Toronto citizens of both faiths in expressing sympathy with the victims of Nazi persecution in Germany.” The report went on to describe how Torontonians from all parts of the city—men and women, rich and poor—were drawn to the rally, filling the arena an hour ahead of time: “It was not so much a protest meeting,” *The Globe and Mail* suggested, “as a gathering of citizens of divergent religious beliefs, but possessed of a joint conviction—which the speakers

Christian Responses to *Kristallnacht* in Canadian Mass Media

stressed—that the right of all religious belief was being threatened. Speaker after speaker stepped to the front of the platform and emphasized that the Nazi regime constituted a real danger to the Church as well as the Synagogue.” In short, the rally called for all races and creeds to come together to preserve the freedom of religious thought and expression. The loudest applause came when the Rev. Crossley Hunter of First United Church and other speakers urged “that Canada adopt an ‘open door’ policy in dealing with the Jewish refugee problem.”

The *Toronto Daily Star* also led with a front-page story about the rally, noting how it “was one of the most cosmopolitan Toronto has ever witnessed. Seated side by side on the platform, financier and workingman, rabbi, Protestant clergyman and Roman Catholic layman voiced heartfelt sympathy for the hundreds of thousands crushed beneath the swastika.” Under the headline, “JEWS SOB IN SORROW, 20,000 TORONTONIANS PROTEST PERSECUTION,” the *Star* captured the spontaneous power of the demonstration and the prominent role of Christian leaders as speakers.

While the Toronto rally was by far the largest in Canada, interfaith rallies were attended by 5,000 in Halifax, 4,500 in Montreal, 2,500 in Hamilton, 1,200 in Kitchener, and 1,700 in Vancouver. Various newspapers also reported protest meetings in Kingston, Niagara Falls, London, Kirkland Lake, Winnipeg, and Lethbridge, and the *Toronto Star* claimed that at least sixty meetings took place across the country. Other cities—most notably Calgary and Edmonton—held large rallies a week later, organized largely, if not exclusively, by Christian leaders.

The *Christian Science Monitor* reported that these Canadian protests not only condemned Nazi brutality but also called on the Canadian government to open the doors of Canada to Jewish refugees. The *Ottawa Citizen* concurred, reporting that, “Sheafs of telegrams came to the government this morning [November 21] urging that it do something by opening the doors to Jewish refugees.” In Vancouver, the Rev. G. H. Villett called for Canada to assume moral leadership among the civilized nations of the earth: “‘The duty that faces us today is as compelling as it was in 1914,’ he said. ‘Surely we are not going to ask Africa or Alaska or South America or Austria or some other place to do the work. We ought not to stand by for a moment and let England bear the burden. We should offer to do our share.’”

Perhaps the clearest expression of both the aims and ardor of the Canadian rallies comes from the note sent from the interfaith rally at Kirkland Lake, ON, to Prime Minister Mackenzie King:

---

20 “JEWS SOB IN SORROW, 20,000 TORONTONIANS PROTEST PERSECUTION,” *Toronto Daily Star*, November 21, 1938, pp. 1 and 3.
22 “JEWS SOB,” p. 15.
25 “JEWS SOB,” p. 15.
Our hearts go out in prayer for the persecuted, maligned, wretched Jews in Germany, to all those who are reduced to poverty and slavery and who are driven into exile from their centuries-old homeland because of religious and racial differences. No expression of sympathy without the alleviation of suffering can suffice in this tragedy. We therefore appeal to the government of Canada and to the people of Canada, that the doors of this great freedom-loving country, which helped many exiles to find happy homes within its shores, be opened to an appreciable number of German and Jewish refugees. Let Canada be a haven of refuge to all those whose treatment is a blot on our civilization, to all those who are hunted, slaved, and morally massacred. May God help them!26

The chief speaker at that Kirkland Lake rally was the Rev. Claris E. Silcox, a prominent leader in the United Church and a tireless champion for Canadian intervention in the Jewish refugee crisis. Earlier in the year, Silcox had pressured the Canadian government into sending a delegation to the Evian Conference. After that, he worked with the Canadian Jewish Conference and Anglican Canon W. W. Judd to form a nonsectarian pressure group on behalf of refugees. As Genizi has shown, in the weeks after Kristallnacht, this led to the creation of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution, on whose executive committee Silcox sat. The Committee met with the prime minister and federal cabinet members to appeal for a humanitarian gesture on behalf of refugees of Nazism. Meanwhile, Silcox also authored Committee material, such as the pamphlet, “Should Canada Admit Refugees?” and a radio broadcast, “Should Canada Provide Sanctuary for European Refugees?” Along the way, he argued that “anti-Semitism is in essence anti-Christianity” and demanded that the church “must make the fight against anti-Semitism its own battle.” Church leaders who toyed with Antisemitism were “traitors to the deepest things in their own faith”27.

Whether as individuals or at mass rallies, Canadian Christians responded, we would argue, in two theological modes—one liberal and one traditional. First, some Christians perceived the events in Germany as an attack on Western civilization and its Christian foundations. Implicit in this liberal theological mode was the idea that there was a fundamental connection between Christianity and the values of modern civilization. Accordingly, Nazi Germany’s persecution of the Jews was interpreted broadly as an assault on a common humanity that united Jews and gentiles. For liberal Christians, the Kristallnacht pogrom was an affront to “the brotherhood of man,” an attack that called for people of all races and creeds to rise up and defend humanity. It was in that mode that Msgr. Michael Cline, rector of Toronto’s Holy Name Catholic Church, lamented Nazi bestiality, declaring that “such a cult of robbery and bloodshed is proof positive that Hitler is a victim of dementia Teutonica.”28 Similarly, the Rev. Dr. R. G. Stewart of St. John’s Presbyterian Church, moderator of the Toronto and King-

27Genizi, Holocaust, Israel, pp. 55–56.
ston Synod, invoked the jingoistic language of the Great War when he argued, "We are dealing with the same Hun of 1914–1918. I am not so sure the people of Germany are not largely to blame for this mass persecution. They have the kind of government they sought and no government could endure without support from a large section of the people. It is a movement of roughnecks and barbarians." Putting a halt to such uncivilized behavior was a common demand expressed in the November newspaper coverage. As The Halifax Herald put it, "Christendom expects something better in these modern and 'enlightened' times." At November 20 and 27 prayer and protest rallies, there were frequent denunciations of Nazi Germany rooted in this liberal theological mode. The former moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Rt. Rev. Peter Bryce, employed this rhetoric at the Toronto rally when he stated, "The United Church believes that anti-Semitism is one of the greatest foes of freedom for all people [applause], and is a scandal to civilization." Continuing in the theme of cultural regression, he added that "it could not have been worse in the middle ages." In Calgary, the Rev. E. Melville Aiken of Central United Church voiced his conviction that the Nazis were "thumbing back the pages of history," returning to a barbarism that had no place in the twentieth century.

Samuel Factor, a member of the federal parliament speaking at the Toronto rally, adopted the same universal language of civilization when he reasoned, "All Canadians—Protestants, Catholics and Jews alike—have reacted to these hideous accounts from abroad with a feeling of personal hurt. The Jew, throughout the ages of persecution, has maintained his faith in the God of all mankind. This faith in the sovereignty of eternal justice and the ultimate triumph of eternal truth stands as the common heritage of man." In Vancouver, the Rev. Canon Cooper of St. James Anglican Church stood on the same basis of Christian civilization when he maintained that "the Christian and the democrat stand beside the Jew in the face of a hostile world."

It was not only Christian clergy who spoke or wrote against the Kristallnacht pogrom. Political leaders, labor leaders, and other laity also responded to the plight of the Jews. Many of these people, including a sizeable number of women, wrote letters that were published in Canadian newspapers. One, writing in the women's section of The Globe and Mail, lamented the weak Canadian response: "Here we are in Canada. Oodles of idle land; natural resources in unknown quantities; land to spare for all the homeless ones of earth; a Christian (so-called) country; ready to criticize every one who either goes to war or remains at peace; quite satisfied that 'we' are all right, and letting the other fellow get along as best he can." From her perspective, it was important for Canada to live up to its civilized tradition and not fall prey to self-interest: "Oh! If only

31 "JEWS SOB," p. 15.
33 "JEWS SOB," p. 15.
34 "1,700 Vancouver Folk Vote to Invite Jewish Refugees to Canada," The Vancouver Province, November 21, 1938, p. 5.
Canada would do something really big and generous—something that would show that we are not a dog-in-a-manger, I would forgive some of her picayune politicians for their pettiness, and hope that some day we might build a Dominion that would not have Mammon for its one and only god.”35

If the liberal theological mode embedded in the values of Western civilization was the most common form of Christian response to the Kristallnacht pogrom, a more traditional theological mode drew on explicitly biblical concepts and language. This enabled some Canadian Christians to frame their response to the Nazi persecution of the Jews in terms of the biblical injunction to serve Jesus by caring for others, in certain cases appropriating the parable of the Good Samaritan as a call to bind up the wounds of their beleaguered Jewish neighbors. Others highlighted historic and theological links between Jews and Christians, not least Jesus’ earthly Jewish identity and the ancient status of Jews as God’s chosen people. Still others portrayed the cosmic battle between good and evil as a battle between God and Satan.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. John W. Woodside, moderator of the United Church of Canada, warned soon after the Kristallnacht pogrom ended that “Hitler was putting the Christian church ‘on the spot,’” and that his actions were “denying the fundamental tenets of Christianity.”36 He declared, without equivocation, that Nazi Germany’s active persecution of the Jews was fundamentally a Christian problem and one that to which Christians must answer. The Rev. F. H. W. Wilkenson, an Anglican minister, took up the cause of Christianity and its fight against the evils of Nazi Germany in a sermon he delivered on November 20 in Montreal. He reminded his congregants that they lived in a universe in which God defended God’s laws:

“People sometimes forget that the world is governed by moral principles as much as it is by physical ones,” he added in reference to the persecution suffered by Jews recently. He wondered if what is happening in this connection in Europe may not lead to the “outbreak of a plague.” There is a side to the “love of God” which he termed the “wrath of God in the face of evil. Not only should there be an expression of sympathy for the suffering but any action to help relieve this by the Canadian Government should be supported by Christians there.”37

Often in Christian rhetoric God’s wrath has been invoked against Jews, but here Wilkenson argued that God’s wrath would be unleashed against those who were persecuting Jews.

The special nature of Jewish persecution was a theme picked up by many laity. One woman wrote a letter of thanks to The Globe and Mail for its recent discussion of the Jewish refugee crisis. Agreeing with the paper’s pro-refugee position, she wanted to emphasize that she and her husband were “interested in world affairs and as Christians we felt we could not shut our eyes to the persecu-

36 “Christian Church Is ‘Put on the Spot,’” Ottawa Citizen, November 14, 1938, p. 3.
37 “Immorality Label Pinned to Germany,” The Gazette, November 21, 1938, p. 5.
tion of the Hebrew race." Marie Brunger of Winnipeg linked Jewish persecution to the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Matthew 25 parable of the sheep and the goats:

Have the churches failed, and have the Christian people failed to do their duty? What is the matter with the world? It is a disgrace to Christianity that the people from whom Christ came should be persecuted in any country when we remember Christ's words: "All that ye have done to others, have ye also done to me," we must realize that these words also mean "All that ye have done to the Jews have ye also done to me."

Later in her letter, Brunger reiterated her condemnation of Canadian apathy. Canada was no better than the Nazis "if refraining from persecution is all we do," since Christians must "try to right the wrong that is being done." In her opinion, the church should cease to send missionaries or build churches "as long as Jews are without a country" and, particularly, as long as a supposedly Christian people was persecuting them.

Time and again, the close relationship and shared familial identity between Christians and Jews were emphasized by Canadian Christians. At the Toronto protest rally on November 20, the Rev. E. Crossley Hunter expressed his understanding that "never has there been an hour when Jew and true Christian have been closer together than now." The Rev. Dr. James Parkes, an English divine (and ally of Claris Silcox) speaking at St. James Anglican Cathedral in Toronto was so confident in his idea of Christian-Jewish solidarity that he claimed that "the simple truth is that the talk about 'different religions' is a downright contradiction of terms." Furthermore, he did "not believe that there is a fundamental difference between Jew and Christian in either theology or ethics.

Pro-Jewish clergy pointed out that Jesus himself was Jewish and that the Christian Bible emerged from and was rooted in the Hebrew Scripture. That reality was a call to work for justice for Jews. As the Rev. Dr. Warwick Kelloway of Knox United Church in Calgary—a speaker at the Calgary protest rally—declared: "We stand on this platform because we would like to undo some of the injustices done against the Jewish race throughout the centuries by Christians, but not [done] in the Christian spirit. This false racialism, this neo-paganism, stands for everything which the Christian church does not stand for. Therefore, the Christian church must stand unrelentingly against state totalitarianism."

Indeed, this battle against Nazi barbarism could take on cosmic dimensions. Certainly it did for prominent Toronto Baptist minister T. T. Shields, who railed in a post-Kristallnacht sermon about the utterly anti-Christian nature of Antisemitism and racialism, identifying Hitler as "the devil's chief representative
One of the consistent themes of Canadian Christian responses to the Kristallnacht pogrom was the presence of calls to aid Jews, particularly by allowing refugees entrance into Canada. The United Church of Canada, for instance, was keenly interested in saving Hitler’s victims (both Jews and non-Jews) and was arguably the greatest institutional ally of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees, thanks to the outpouring of editorials, letters, resolutions, and sermons. Kristallnacht also focused the attention of Canadian Anglicans on the issue of Antisemitism, leading to bold headlines in The Canadian Churchman that called on Anglican Christians to pray for the “Jews of all lands” who were the “stunned, desperate, tortured victims of demonic hate,” many of whom were being “slowly starved out of existence.” Before the end of 1938, the Anglican diocesan synods of Niagara (in Ontario) and Rupert’s Land (in Manitoba) restated Anglican sympathy for the Jews, and the Manitoba synod even pledged material as well as moral aid, offering Jews a “place on the earth where they can live in peace and enjoy the freedom which is rightly theirs.” Presbyterians protested against the “stupid” and “un-Christian” and “inhumane” Canadian refugee policy, participating in the many large post-Kristallnacht rallies and calling repeatedly for Canada to take in refugees. Baptists Shields and Watson Kirkconnell repeatedly called for generous quotas of refugees to be allowed to come to Canada.

In communities small and large, calls went out to open Canada’s borders. The Rev. W. T. Steven of the Moose Jaw, SK, Baptist Church drafted a resolution asserting that Baptists offer refuge to Jews (“those persecuted people”) based on the fact that such persecution was “entirely opposed to the principles of Christianity, democracy and freedom which are dear to the hearts of Canadians.” Higher up the denominational ladder, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec urged the federal government to admit “carefully selected individuals or groups of refugees” based on both the “human and ethical standpoint” and, they argued, for the economic good of Canada.

Finally, so many of the themes of Christian universalism, Jewish-Christian kinship, and calls to action were captured in The Gazette’s report on a meeting of Christian leaders at Emmanuel Church on November 24. These were church leaders who wanted to carry on the Christian protest against the Nazi persecution of the Jews. As The Gazette reported:

“The tragedy of the Jews in Germany is not a purely domestic affair,” Rev. Canon W. Davison of the Church of St. John the Evangelist, said. “When the

43Davies and Nefsky, How Silent, p. 84.
44Ibid., p. 46.
45Ibid., p. 54.
46Ibid., p. 55, quoting “Germany and the Church,” The Presbyterian Record 58 (December, 1933): 365.
47Ibid., p. 73, quoting Abella and Troper, None Is Too Many, p. 59.
48Ibid., pp. 86–88 and 91.
Germans ask us to mind our own business we should reply ‘this is indeed our business; I am my brother’s keeper.’ We do not want simply to denounce. We are called on as human beings to play the part of the Good Samaritan to the stricken and suffering Jews in Germany.”

Davison’s comments capture the range of Christian protests about the plight of the Jews. He emphasized the universal humanitarian nature of the cause of Jewish refugees but rooted that sentiment in biblical injunctions both not to harm others and to come to their aid. His comments, like those of so many others, demonstrate that there was much more to the Canadian response to the plight of European Jews than apathy or antagonism. There was also benevolent concern and a vigorous call for the Canadian government to open the doors of Canada and let Jews come in.

Perhaps the final word is best left to poetry. Clara Bernhardt, a contributor to the women’s section of The Globe and Mail, wrote a moving tribute to the kinship of Jews and Christians and the responsibility that Christian Canada had to aid persecuted Jews:

I am the Voice of the voiceless,
Of those lips are mute,
Whose homes are ravaged and destroyed,
Of a striving lifetime’s fruit.

I am the Voice of the outcast.
I seek a friendly door.
Ah, do not say there is no room
Upon Canadian shore.

I am the Voice of the hungry,
Of all who sadly weep
For bread which is now denied them.
“If ye love Me, feed My sheep.”

I am the Voice of the Saviour,
Crucified anew.
Has the world forgotten, ceased to care
That Christ was born a Jew?

I am the Voice of the voiceless,
Will no one heed their cry?
Stripped bare of hope and home and love—
We dare not let them die!

In conclusion, while we acknowledge the Antisemitism endemic in the Canadian society and politics of the 1930’s, we would assert that there were many Canadians who spoke out forcefully against Nazi barbarism and on behalf of
suffering Jews. Among the Christian responses we have surveyed, some were motivated by liberal notions of the "fatherhood of God," the "brotherhood of humanity," and the essential tie between Christianity and Western civilization. Others were moved by conservative theological concern for Jews as a covenant people of God—a people with whom Christians were inextricably bound and to whom Christians owed a considerable debt. Most importantly, many of the lamentations and protests recorded in Canadian mass media included direct calls for the government to intervene on behalf of Jewish refugees in Europe.

These calls to action were not lost on Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who recorded in his diary on November 17, 1938, that "I feel myself very strongly that it may come to a time where if one is Christian at heart, it is felt that Christian principles be put in practice in official affairs as well as personal, if we are to be true to our convictions regardless the cost." That no positive change in Canadian refugee policy followed the post-Kristallnacht protests from across the country suggests that other political factors overshadowed the plight of Jewish refugees, particularly after the onset of the European war in September, 1939. Indeed, the breadth and depth of Christian (and, of course, Jewish) protests in late 1938 demonstrate that Canadian inaction in the face of Jewish suffering had less to do with the "silence" of the churches than with the "deafness" of the government.

---
