

THE CRY THAT SILENCE HEAVES

Marilyn Felcher Nefsky

Centre for Religious Studies

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Introduction

In their book None is Too Many Harold Troper and Irving Abella laid a charge against the Church in Canada. The charge was that during the Nazi regime when Jews were being persecuted and later exterminated, no salvation came forth from Christian Canada. In the midst of the suffering and tragedy of the Jewish Holocaust one of the most deadening sounds was a silence -- the silence of the Church.¹ This is a charge that continues to lie in the minds and on the lips of many Canadians, both Jews and Christians. It is a charge that must finally be addressed: were the churches truly silent during this blackest period of human history?

For several years scholars have considered the questions vis à vis the European churches.² In his book So It Was True!,³ published in 1980, Robert W. Ross examined the American Protestant Church's response to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. To date, however, no one has attempted an indepth investigation of the position taken by the churches in Canada during this period.

Although in order to address this question adequately a comparative analysis of all the churches' responses is necessary, in this paper we will only discuss the response of the Presbyterian Church. Since various constraints preclude a comprehensive discussion,⁴ only the most pertinent issues will be considered, and at that in both cursory and tentative form.

The time period we are treating ranges from 1933 to the end of 1945. It was early in 1933 that Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and three months later instituted the first of the Aryan Laws designed to restrict and exclude "the Jews from

* Title borrowed from John Keats' Poems, I Stood Tiptoe, 1817, which reads "...the sigh that silence heaves".

public life, education, government, the arts and the professions".⁵ Although the period must be understood in its broader historical context, for our immediate purposes we shall work only within this time frame, that is, the period of the Nazi regime.

In order to adequately understand the significance of the Church's response during this period, the time frame itself has been subdivided into three units. The first stems from 1933, the year of the initial Aryan Laws, to September 1939, with the outbreak of the second world war. These are the prewar years; it was a time when there was evidence of persecution of the Jews in both the religious and the secular press, but it was also a time when Canada was not personally touched by the events nor Germany as yet the official enemy. Once war was declared, Canadians could no longer remain aloof; they had become personally involved one way or another.

The second unit ranges from September 1939 to the end of 1942. Along with the news of military campaigns and of those lost in action came reports of concentration camps, later death camps and mass murders of the Jews. These reports, which began to arrive in the latter part of 1942, were generally received by Canadians with skepticism and incredulity. This response was fostered by concern for caution in believing atrocity stories such as those reported during the first world war, stories which proved to be untrue. The more horrendous the details tentatively reported by the press, the greater the people's incredulity increased.⁶ By the end of 1942, after the release of a joint declaration by eleven governments confirming the mass murders of Jews, there was little doubt left that the atrocity

stories were true, though the details remained difficult to verify.

The last unit in our historical framework ranges from the beginning of 1943 to the end of 1945 during which time the evidence became increasingly clear. Throughout this period further atrocity stories were reported, often with caution and restraint. Though the horrible details remained difficult to verify, the press continued to publish the reports, unable to dismiss the information out of hand. By the summer of 1944 the first death camps were uncovered by the Russian army.⁷ With the liberation Canadians were brought face to face with the fact that the reports they had read and heard about were indeed true.

The issues examined within each historical unit are grouped into three categories: i) background; ii) recognition; iii) proffered solution. The "background" category includes the Church's view of the Jews theologically, Jews in general and in Canada specifically, and in terms of Jewish-Christian relations. The "recognition" category refers to the Church's awareness and recognition of the policies of Nazi Germany, the persecution of the Jews and others, the incidence of Anti-Semitism both in Europe and in Canada. The final category, "proffered solutions", consists of the Church's response according to their perception of the problems, generally in terms of their attitude toward immigration, refugees and Palestine.

In order to gather the necessary data we have examined

materials held in the Presbyterian Church archives: the Church press, the Presbyterian Record; the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly; the Hebrew Evangelist, a bulletin published by the Scott Institute; and miscellaneous materials in the collection entitled "Mission to the Jews". Often the material we found were reprints of sermons, addresses, speeches and the like delivered outside of Canada and/or by non-Canadians. However, since it was published in the general press of the Church, we presumed that it either represented a general consensus of the Church proper or was intended to provide worthy "food for thought". Consequently, all reports of this nature were considered as viable research data.

Period I: 1933-1939

General Background: Throughout this period the Presbyterian Church viewed the Jew theologically as burdened and blinded by the Mosaic Law.⁸ In a 1934 article in the Presbyterian Record the Pharisee was treated as an hypocrit and sinner;⁹ a 1936 article written by Dr. C.H. Kerr referred to the "blindness and foolishness of their attitude".¹⁰ In 1938 the Presbyterian Record published Lord Tweedsmuir's address to the General Council Alliance of Reformed Churches where he defined the Pharisees as "loyal to conventions which have lost any binding spiritual force" which "is no basis for virtue."¹¹ In a 1939 sermon entitled "A Great Confession", Reverend W.B. MacCallum portrayed the Jews as a group who attacked and betrayed Paul after he had joined them for a Jewish festival, and who in the end turned

Paul over to the Roman governor. The Jews, according to this sermon, "got their way with 'flattering tongues'."¹²

On the other hand, this Jewish characteristic was not perceived as irremediable. In the December 1936 sermon Dr. Kerr reiterated Paul's teaching that "in the believing Christian there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor barbarian; neither bond nor free."¹³ Throughout 1937 references were made to the Jewish background of Jesus and the apostles. In a March sermon Reverend Lewis Sutherland of Scotland referred to the apostles as a "handful of Jewish fishermen" by whose efforts "the pagan world was conquered."¹⁴ In a missionary play, "Bax Me that Bible", the character Reverend Hamilton maintain that the Gospel was first proclaimed "to the Jews, a people of real genius, dwelling at the heart of the civilized world."¹⁵ A book review of Thomas Walker's An Exposition of the Judaism of the Home of Jesus described the book as an attempt to acquaint the Christian "with religion as a righteous man like Joseph must have taught it to his family."¹⁶

In terms of contemporary relations between Jews and Christians the press encouraged such relations primarily for the purpose of "evangelizing the Jews". In the article "The Presbyterian Church and the Jews", published in 1935, Reverend John Stuart Conning strongly commended the Scott Institute, the Toronto home of the Presbyterian Mission to the Jews, and its director Reverend Morris Zeidman. He upheld the Institute as a "striking illustration of the accessibility of the Jews at the present time to a friendly and intelligent Christian approach".

The onus for evangelizing the Jews he placed on pastors who should inform themselves and educate their people more intelligently about the Jews so as to be in a better position for their evangelization. This is especially important since the Jews are falling away from their faith. The emergence of the Jews from the ghetto into the neo-pagan conditions of modern life has had a disastrous impact on their traditional customs and beliefs. Still there is a yearning among earnest Jews for spiritual satisfaction. The extent of anti-Jewish prejudice and Anti-Semitism in Canada and other lands underscores the urgency for their evangelization. Indeed, he argued, "Christians owe to the Jews personal kindness and goodwill. In no other way can the estrangement of Jews to the Christian faith be overcome."¹⁷

According to Reverend Zeidman's reports in the Presbyterian Record and the Acts and Proceedings the Mission to the Jews was achieving outstanding results. From a report in the Presbyterian Record, January 1933, to his report in the Acts and Proceedings, June 1939, Zeidman emphasized three factors in relation to his success in evangelizing the Jews. First, there was a breaking down of hostility and prejudice of the Jews against Christian missionaries.¹⁸ Secondly, there was increasing sympathy and support from various members of the Jewish community,¹⁹ and thirdly, there were the "unprecedentedly vast fields ripe unto harvest", resulting from the conditions under which the Jews were struggling -- in 1933, their spiritual and material famine; in 1938, their persecution in Poland, Germany and Roumania.²⁰

Not everyone affiliated with the Scott Institute during this period shared Reverend Zeidman's enthusiasm. In a report on the "Scott Institute -- Mission to the Jews", March 1938, Zeidman's assistant, Carolyn McArthur maintained that the cross was still a stumbling block for Jews. "Wherever there is aggressive evangelizing there is opposition." She argued that "There is still with them that awful fear of persecution and they have good reason to fear."²¹

During this period Jews were seen not only in light of their evangelistic potential. In a report in the Acts and Proceedings, June 1936, the Presbytery of Chatham requested that the leaders of the Presbyterian Church be forerunners in inviting leaders of Judaism to meet with the view of "developing a deeper spirit of friendship between Judaism and Christianity".²² Does this mean that the Presbyterian Church was actually aware of the persecution occurring in Europe at this time?

Recognition: In 1935 the Presbyterian Record published a series of articles by Dr. Stanley of Stamford, Connecticut, which examined the issue of persecution in Europe. In the February address he explained that these days for economic security a "people will surrender everything, even religious liberty." Germany "is a nation to fear because of the fantastic projects of its leaders and the susceptibility of the people in their present distress...."²³

Economic insecurity and religious enslavement were not the only issues treated by the Presbyterian Record. In May 1936 an article "Germany and the Jews" brought to light the details

and real nature of the persecution of the Jews in Germany. The article dealt with Mr. James G. McDonald, former High Commissioner for Refugees who resigned his post in order for the world to see "the horror and tragedy of it all". The article claimed that the Nazi regulations designed to persecute and destroy the Jewish population were not only an outrage to Jewish feelings but robbed Jews of their rights as human beings. Though life had been made intolerable for them in Germany, McDonald asked the readership, where could they go? He brought the issue to light as "a problem of serious international concern..." and pleaded that "world opinion...move to avert the existing and impending tragedies."²⁴ Later that year, with this information at hand, the Presbyterian Record still published "The Light of the World" in which Dr. C.H. Kerr asked: "Have you ever considered that the Germans are now treating the Jews exactly as the Jews once treated other peoples whom they thought might contaminate them? That is to say, they set out to exterminate them."²⁵

In spite of Reverend Kerr's query, or perhaps because of it, the Presbyterian Record continued to print reports about the persecution of the Jews. In an article in February 1938 Reverend Zeidman spoke of the Jew as "the most hunted, the most persecuted and the most helpless creature in the whole of Central Europe". In Poland the Jew is the most miserable of all beings, treated with less consideration than animals in Canada. In Germany, in Roumania and even in Palestine, he continued, Jews are subjected to physical violence and persecution.²⁶ In the same year

Zeidman referred to the "hatred let loose in Europe against the Jewish people".²⁷ A report on "The Jews in Roumania" explained that although religious hatred had been the motive for hostile action against the Jews for generations, now blood and race had become factors in the policy of persecution, and Nazi propaganda was adding fuel to the fire.²⁸

In November 1938 the Presbyterian Record printed a review of the British publication Youth and Anti-Semitism. As an indication of the timely nature of this work, the nameless reviewer wrote: "The tragic life of the Jews in certain parts of Central Europe may well elicit the sympathy of the Christian Churches. About this sympathy there can be no doubt, and the problem is to give it suitable expression."²⁹

An article in January 1939 entitled "Germany and The Jews" repeated the earlier protests of James McDonald, adding that the horrors described in 1936 was being re-enacted and accentuated. Not only were the Jews victims of social outrage but with this new outbreak were subjected to very serious physical abuse.³⁰ The editor of the Presbyterian Record reported in March of the same year that hundreds of thousands have been driven forth from their country through no fault of their own.³¹ In July Reverend D.M. MacMillan wrote a statement which he felt the "Christian people may well take to heart in these times." "In certain quarters brute force seems to reign supreme. Hundreds of thousands of human beings have been ruthlessly persecuted for no other reason than that they have been born Jews."³²

As for the situation of Jews in Canada during this period

we find an article in the Presbyterian Record of February 1938 in which Reverend Zeidman complained that "during the last few years, as missionaries to the Jews, we have had to engage not only in preaching the Gospel to the Jews but also in combatting anti-Semitism among Christians. Of late," he wrote, "several half-baked Bible teachers in the United States as well as in Canada, under the pretext of prophetic studies have been guilty of vile, anti-Christian teaching of hatred against the Jewish people."³³

Solutions: Given the degree of information the Presbyterian Church reported regarding the conditions affecting the Jews in Europe in this period, the stance it was prepared to take at this time is very significant. In an editorial in January 1939 W.M. Rochester wrote: "A serious question has thus risen which must give concern to every Christian country, namely, To what place of refuge shall these people turn?" The article then quoted a plea issued on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Moderator of the Federal Council of Evangelical Free Churches, and other non-Canadian religious leaders. It reads:

In Great Germany there remains not fewer than a million Jews, of whom about half are Christians, many of whom are the so-called Non-Aryans....We appeal to our own Government and to the Dominion Governments to give a lead to the world in this matter. We beg them in the name name both of our Christian faith and of common humanity to open their doors generously to refugees before it is too late....

The quotation goes on to say:

The Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and

Central Europe has been formed for the express purpose of appealing to Christians to help these refugees, especially Christian refugees of whom there now is not fewer than half a million. The Jews have helped their own Jewish brethren most liberally and also many Christians of Jewish descent. Most earnestly do we entreat our fellow Christians to help their Christian brethren in like manner.

The quotation ends with the critique that "Canada as a nation must not be wanting at this time in such a grave crisis when man's brotherhood has such a splendid opportunity for expression."³⁴

Two months later in another editorial Rochester referred to the nearly one and a half million people living in indescribable misery who "are knocking at the doors of the world for mercy". The knock is heard loudly at Canada's door; "in the name of our common humanity it must not continue unheeded." Very critical of the Dominion Government's excuses for preventing refugees from entering Canada, Rochester argued that "as a Christian nation we ought not to stand upon ceremony or be daunted by material considerations. Help is needed. Let us give it and at once." For those still of a dubious bent, he suggested that history could demonstrate that it might prove profitable to Canada to provide homes for these refugees.

In conclusion, he referred to the resolution passed by the Committee on Correspondence of Other Churches: "That this Committee placed on record its conviction that with respect to these refugees a wise and well-controlled immigration policy be adopted by the Dominion Government."³⁵ The significant word here is "wise", for Troper and Abella will testify that the immigration policy was in fact well-controlled but hardly wise.

Though the war clouds were gathering during this period,

war had not as yet been declared and Canada remained still relatively untouched by the incredible events occurring in Europe. Once war was declared, however, Canada armed herself to defend Britain and the Allies and all that stood for truth and justice. The attitude of the Canadian Churches likewise changed at this time and their concerns took new directions.

Period II: 1939-1942

General Background: Despite increasing knowledge of the persecution of the Jews, Reverend John Pitts of Toronto implied in a September 1940 article that the blindness of the Jews was the cause of their present suffering. In discussing the term "Messiah", Pitts suggested that although the Jews of old believed that God would send His Anointed to deliver His people and establish a kingdom of righteousness, the Jews conceived of the kingdom in terms of Jewish domination, so that when the Messiah did come to inaugurate a kingdom in which all peoples would equally serve God, the Jews "in their blindness rejected and crucified him."³⁶ However, about a year later Reverend Henry W. Edmonds wrote a very poignant article in The Hebrew Evangelist. Addressed "To the Jew", it reads:

We have damned you for the very attitude which we ourselves have made inevitable. We have robbed you and now criticize you for being secretive. We have driven you together like sheep in a storm and now call you clannish. We have accused you of materialism because you have been successful in business. Your prosperity has been an evidence of a mercenary mind, ours an evidence of the favour of God....Through all the Christian centuries our ritual has rested upon yours and in these days of enrichment of worship

we discover once more how rich yours is -- but
no intimation of thanks.
We have called peace a Christian attitude,
forgetting that it was a Jew who first used
those words, which now belong to humanity,...³⁷

The Pharisaic concept, however, still proved problematic.
In "The Courageous Candor of Jesus", August 1942, Reverend H.
Beverly Ketchen described the Scribes and Pharisees not as
hypocrits and sinners but as "very conscientious in keeping
the letter of the law", meticulously careful about all tradi-
tional requirements of the religion of their fathers. "Externally
and mechanically they were righteous" but, he argued self-
critically, they at least took their religion seriously.
"Speaking generally even of the so-called Christian community
we have not been even as righteous as the Pharisees."³⁸ Here
we have an apparently subtle change in view regarding the
Pharisee. Did this subtle change in view affect Christian
relations with Jews during these war years?

The earliest reference to relations with Jews in this
period is found in the Acts and Proceedings of 1940 in a report
on the Scott Institute. As was common in most reports on
Jewish-Christian relations there was a concern here with
evangelizing the Jews, particularly in this case with spread-
ing the gospel among the refugees when the flood gate would
open after the war. Reverend Zeidman reaffirmed the Institute's
good relations with and support from the Jewish community in the
city.³⁹

In the "Quarterly Report on Jewish Work" in December of
the same year Carolyn McArthur, Zeidman's assistant, wrote

that "world conditions have had a tendency to arouse the Jewish people...[who] acknowledge their only hope is in God and they are beginning to wonder if they had not made a mistake in not accepting Jesus as their Messiah."⁴⁰ In March of 1941 Reverend Zeidman reiterated his optimism in an article entitled "Evangelizing the Jews" but admitted that "it is still pioneer work. It is still a matter of softening the stoney hearts that have been hardened by centuries of prejudice and persecution, but the hearts are being softened and ready to receive the seed of the Gospel."⁴¹ "As we look at world conditions today," wrote Carolyn McArthur in her "Quarterly Report" of August 1941, "we little know how long we may be privileged to give the Gospel message to the dear Jewish people who need it so much."⁴²

Two months later the Presbyterian Record severely denounced the scarcity of Hebrew and Yiddish New Testaments: "First the shutoff was affected in Germany for of course everything Jewish or Hebrew was under the Hitler curse." This denouncement, however, was merely another expression of concern for evangelizing the Jews. "The war has cut deep into the heart of the Jewish nation" which provided an opportunity rarely found by the Church to present the Gospel to the Jews.⁴³

In the fall of 1941 Reverend Zeidman resigned from his position as superintendent of the Presbyterian Mission to the Jews.⁴⁴ The subsequent report on the mission in 1942 was written in an entirely different tone. Expressing frustration in attempts to convert Jews, the nameless writer undermined

Reverend Zeidman's optimism: "Even the poorest Jews look upon the Gentiles as Gayim [sic] -- heathen -- and worshippers of a dead carpenter. They despise our saviour, sneer at His miraculous birth and deny His resurrection. To them, He is the cause of all the sorrows of the Jewish race." The writer further condemned Zeidman's methods for evangelizing the Jews. It is "dangerous to make use of doles of any kind or give financial support or promise of remunerative employment [for] the Jews instinctively know where to find their profit and readily avail themselves of it. So they come suddenly and disappear suddenly, just as soon as their profit is exhausted or they develop into sham Christians without any backbone."⁴⁵ Clearly this writer's perception of the Jews and the Church's mission to the Jews differed considerably from that of Reverend Zeidman. The question arises as to whether this altered view of the Jew affected the Church's perception of the persecution of the Jews in Europe.

Recognition: In September 1940 an article appeared in the Presbyterian Record entitled "Is Hitler Anti-Christ?" This article indicates that there was knowledge of Nazi persecution in Germany and German-occupied territories. Referring to Hitler as the supreme ruler of the kingdom of evil, Reverend John Pitts maintained that Hitler had made a "covenant with death", an "agreement with hell". Hitler, he concluded, is "the pinnacle of anti-Christianity". He has elevated himself to a position of a god, arrogates to himself complete control over the bodies, minds and souls of the German people. Not only have there been

"cruel outbursts against the Jews" but also "the rape of Austria, the destruction of Czechoslovakia and now the murderous attack upon Poland...."⁴⁶ Further evidence of Nazi persecution appeared in February of the following year. An article in the Presbyterian Record described the closing of Czechoslovakian universities and colleges and the "physical tortues" suffered by faculty and students -- a grim picture of a culture scarcely a year after Germany's entry.⁴⁷ A September article responded to the new role Hitler had claimed for himself; that is, "the champion of Christian civilization". Including a quotation from a British publication the article states: "There are a thousand witnesses to deny him, though they cannot speak, for they are in prisons and concentration camps under German rule."⁴⁸

In these and subsequent articles there is little doubt about the nature of the Nazi regime. The Nazis were referred to variously as imposing "their anti-social, anti-Christian and anti-human wills upon much of the world," as using "fiendish force and diabolical scheming".⁴⁹ In 1942 an article reprinted from Magazine Digest presented a British view of Nazi Germany. Under few illusions, Sir Robert Vansittart wrote: "Of course there have been, and are, Germans who may not have liked executing the programmes of the leaders; but...the fact remains that the programmes of their leaders always have been executed."⁵⁰

As for the persecution of the Jews during this period next to nothing can be found in the Presbyterian Record or the Acts and Proceedings. Only in the ^{the} November 1941 issue of The Hebrew Evangelist was the problem addressed. In "Behind the Nazi Lines"

Reverend Zeidman related the incident of the massacre of five hundred Jews in Jassy, Roumania as an "horrifying example of Nazi savagery". In addition to reports on the serious anti-Jewish excesses in Kouno and Vilna (the two largest cities in Soviet Lithuania) Zeidman informed his readers of the thousands of Lithuanian Jews moved off to Soviet Mongolia and Eastern Siberia and the one hundred thousand Ukrainian Jews -- "the aged and ailing Jews and Jewesses and the young children" evacuated to Bino-Bidjan".⁵¹

What was to be done, what could be done during this period? One possibility was presented by Reverend William T. Elmslie, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church. In a 1941 article, "Europe in the Furnace", Elmslie described what he felt was "perhaps the most courageous and striking act of all... the protest against anti-Semitism, formerly presented by the leaders of the Church [in Holland] with the support of almost the whole membership -- a protest which was not ineffective in spite of the demonstrations to which it indirectly led and the shedding of blood in order to suppress it."⁵² Yet in the article by Vansittart in the following year, of the three full pages on Germany, only one small reference was made concerning the treatment of the Jews. In his comparison of the Kaiser's Germany with that of Hitler, he wrote: "Then as now anti-Semitism was strong, though of course not so violent."⁵³

As for the treatment of the Jews in Canada during this period, only Reverend Zeidman dealt with the question. In his article "Fresh Air Camp Evangelism", he defended his camp for Jewish children on the grounds that "the radical discrimination

which festers in the most unexpected places, can become very evident in the more or less limited space of a camp community. Closing our eyes to this situation unfortunately does not alter it, and until Christian hearts become entirely so, our Jewish children enjoy their holiday best by themselves."⁵⁴ According to Zeidman then despite the events in Europe Anti-Semitism remained more or less a problem in the Presbyterian community.

Solutions: The evidence, though hardly definitive, indicates that the Presbyterian Church attempted through its press to inform its readership not only about military events and Nazi activities but also, though certainly less so, about the mass evacuations and persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe. Given the information the Church possessed in this regard, what sort of solution, if any, did they suggest to their membership?

In his 1939 article "Palestine and the Jews" Reverend John Stuart Conning in consideration of Jewish rights in Palestine maintained that: "The interest of Christians in the future of Jews in Palestine will always be sympathetic and sincere." For Conning the immediate and most urgent concern was the establishment of friendly and co-operative relations with Arab neighbours. Although he suggested that cordial relations between Jew and Arab would have progressed much faster but for Arab self-seekers and foreign political propaganda, he also wondered if "placing of limits on the materialistic ambitions of nationalistic Jews may not in the end work for the advantage of the whole Jewish people."⁵⁵

Palestine was obviously not the only or the most adequate solution to the problem of war-torn refugees. The question

remained: Where could these Jews turn? Who would give them refuge?

In a 1940 address Dr. Adolf Keller, the Secretary of the Central Bureau for the Relief of Evangelical Churches in Europe presented the problem in bold light: "On a thousand European roads a caravan of despair winds its way slowly toward an unknown goal." He spoke of tens of thousands of refugees -- "there is no end....From destitution to despair they go homeless, forsaken" only because "a demonic power decrees to these people who are like ourselves: 'Die! There is no place for you among mankind!'" This, he argued, is "an intolerable wrong....No one of us is responsible for this ruin, but we all share the responsibility for our fellowman in terrible anguish. Perhaps the travail of this time will bring forth a new world -- but will the Refugee live to see it? Not unless we raise our voices for justice and extend our hands for mercy."⁵⁶

The only reference to the refugee problem in 1941 was a May article in the Presbyterian Record which examined the problem and concluded that "Unoccupied France is the gravest problem facing all the European relief organizations today."⁵⁷ Dr. Keller's "Farewell to America" was the only article in all of 1942 that mentioned the refugee problem. Here he discussed the European countries most in need of aid for refugees, particularly Switzerland, Great Britain and unoccupied France. "Wave after wave of hapless exiles" are pouring over the frontiers and they must be aided with food and shelter, he argued.⁵⁸ After his return to Europe the problem almost disappeared from the pages of the Presbyterian Church press.

Period III: 1943-1945

General Background: During this period the Presbyterian Church provided far less coverage of Jews generally. Theologically, the perception of the Jew was hardly different. In 1943 an article on missions in the Presbyterian Record reminded its readers that "The Cross tells us we are in the same condemnation, black and white,...Jew and Gentile", a reiteration of the previously cited Pauline tenet.⁵⁹ The Pharisaic concept was likewise perpetuated. A February 1945 radio address, printed in the Presbyterian Record, discussed the question of the salvation of the "soul that does not feel any need." "The Scribes and Pharisees of Christ's time were not wicked people," claimed J.B. Skene over CBR radio Vancouver. "Their history had been an honourable one...but the firm stand they were compelled to make at many times tended to harden their hearts." As their rules crystallized into legalism and formalism, "these virtuous men became men of closed minds and the enemies of Jesus."⁶⁰

Reports on Jewish-Christian relations of any nature were likewise fewer to be found. After Reverend Zeidman's resignation in 1941, only one further article on the Scott Institute or the Presbyterian Mission to the Jews appeared in 1942. There were no reports subsequently printed on this issue. In the spring of 1945, however, there was mention of good relations between Jews and Christians. This took the form of news regarding Protestant, Catholic and Jewish army chaplains working together "in the hell of war" and thereby welding a significant unity.⁶¹ "Protestant, Catholic and Jew -- united in service, united in common prayer,

undivided in death...."⁶²

Recognition: Despite the intensity of European activity during this period, the Presbyterian press presented the reader with only a few reports of Nazi persecution and terror. Nevertheless, these reports are highly significant. Reverend Samuel McCrea Cavert reported in March of 1943 that "...the church [in occupied France] after a period of confusion, is finding its soul again in connection with the issue of the treatment of the Jews. When the Vichy regime under the demand of its Nazi master adopted the policy of deporting Jews for forced labour, it was the Church which found the clearest voice in their defence."⁶³

Far more significant is W.M. Rochester's commentary in June of 1943 on the address by Reverend H.J. Cockburn of Scotland at a meeting of the Associated Church Press of Canada and the United States in New York, May 3-6th. Rochester argued that the readership must believe Cockburn's statements. In the address Cockburn "directed attention to the atrocities which have marked the present war....when you think of the treatment of the Poles, the Jews and others, at the hands of the Nazis, you stand aghast. It is unbelievable that such brutish treatment should be accorded men by their fellows. The savagery of it all afrights us." The reason for it, Rochester explained in his commentary, is that the Nazis believe they are a superior race and may therefore deny to other peoples the right of existence.⁶⁴ The printed words seem hardly able to convey the profound sense of tragedy felt by both Cockburn and Rochester.

The most significant statement which in part confirms the charge of "the silence of the Church" but also in part exonerates the Presbyterian Church from this charge appeared in the Acts and Proceedings of June 1943. It is a statement issued by the Presbytery of Saskatoon for transmission to the General Assembly. Entitled "On Behalf of the Jewish Race", it is is worthy of being quoted here in full.

Whereas, never before, perhaps in the history of Christianity have the ancient race of Israel been tortured and persecuted as at the present time, and

Whereas, the Protestant Churches of Europe have gone on record as being sympathetic to that race, and anxious to be of help to them in the dreadful predicament in which they find themselves in almost every part of Europe, and

Whereas, as far as we are aware, no Church in Canada has taken a like stand,

We, therefore, petition the Venerable The General Assembly to go on record that we, as a Church, are sympathetic to the Jewish Race in their trials and persecutions in every part of Europe,... 65

Solution: The same statement goes on to offer at least a partial solution to the intolerable situation facing European Jews:

...and we further petition the Venerable The General Assembly to communicate with the Government of Canada, urging it to do all in its power to mitigate the suffering of God's ancient Race, to open the doors of our Dominion to a fair share of the refugees as opportunity presents itself, and to provide as far as possible for the immediate necessities of such refugees as may come to us from time to time during the war, and in the immediate postwar period. And we would still further petition the Venerable The General Assembly to urge the people of our Church to denounce anti-Semitism wherever found, and to remember at all times that "The Author and Finisher of our Faith" was born of Mary, a Jewish maid. 66

Notwithstanding the ambiguous phrase "a fair share of the refugees", this statement demonstrates more fully than

others what Reverend Zeidman had referred to as a truly Christian heart. Yet an article in February 1944 indicates that this statement did not have a wide-ranging impact on the Presbyterian community as a whole. In "On the Rampart -- Open Canada to Refugees" we read that "our board received a request from the Canadian National Committee on Refugees...that we favour the admission of refugees into Canada. A statement had come from our Moderator Dr. Ketchen, Primate Owen, Archbishop McGuigan and Moderator Dr. J.R.P. Sclater approving the same. Our Board, after considerable discussion of a knotty point, agreed also to approve."⁶⁷ Although the article did not elaborate on the "knotty point", the fact that considerable discussion was required/despite the support of the leadership of the Canadian Churches in general is also significant. This was the last word in this period concerning the plight of the Jews in Nazi dominated Europe.

Conclusion

What we have conveyed in this paper must be regarded as tentative. Because sermons, addresses, minutes and the like have in many cases been retained by the individual churches or ministers, the collection in the Presbyterian Church Archives is somewhat limited. Given that the circulation of the Church press at that time was small, its impact was likely correspondingly weak. What we have related here then expresses less the official attitude of the Presbyterian Church than the attitude of its writers and editors. Still these were men who were honoured by the Presbyterian community and, in most cases, members of the

Presbyterian ministry.

One of the most important questions that arises in regard to this research rests on the definition of the term "silence" ⁶⁸ used in the charge against the Church. Does it mean lack of written statements, lack of vocal demands? Does it mean lack of attempt to put words into action, to pressure the government, to arouse the people? Clearly the Presbyterian Church did not remain entirely silent; clearly, though perhaps not frequently, they published demands of their church leaders, church members, and the Canadian government. However, there is no indication that the Church attempted to or was prepared to take action in order to implement their demands.

Given the historical context, what action could the Church have taken? What actions would have been effective? These questions are of course retrospective but must nevertheless be addressed on behalf of Canadians at large, the Canadian Church as a whole and the Presbyterian community itself. Based on our research to date, we can argue at least tentatively that the Presbyterian Church did not remain virtually silent in the face of the holocaust, that the Presbyterian Church press did attempt to inform its readership -- small though it may have been -- of the events occurring in Europe and the persecution of the Jews. In this regard we can state that the Presbyterian Church has been at least partially exonerated from the charge of "the silence of the Church".

Notes

1. Troper, Harold & Abella, Irving, None is Too Many, Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982.
2. For example, Zahn, Gordon C., German Catholics and Hitler's Wars, N.Y: Sheed & Ward, 1962; Friedlander, Saul, Pius XII and the Third Reich: A Documentation, N.Y: Knopf, 1966; Cochrane, Arthur C., The Church's Confession Under Hitler, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.
3. Ross, Robert W., So It Was True!, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980.
4. At the time of writing this paper the archival research of all Canadian Churches has not yet been completed nor some pertinent interviews yet conducted. Consequently, we would be ill-advised to attempt a comparative analysis of the Canadian Churches as a whole. In terms of the Presbyterian Church alone so much material has been uncovered that a comprehensive discussion of the related issues are precluded by the size of this paper.
5. Ross, So It Was True!, p.3.
6. During an interview with the former Moderator of the United Church, The Reverend Ernest Howes admitted that it was not until 1945 at the end of the war that he himself finally believed the atrocity stories. He -- and so many others, Jews and non-Jews -- felt that he was not going to fall for the same ploy used during the second world war.
7. Ross, So It Was True!, p.199.
8. Presbyterian Record, January 1933, p.5.
9. Presbyterian Record, January 1934, p.28.
10. Kerr, C.H., "The Light of the World", Presbyterian Record, December 1936, p.368.
11. Presbyterian Record, January 1938, p.12.
12. MacCallum, Rev. W.B., "A Great Confession", Presbyterian Record, February 1939, p.56.
13. Kerr, C.H., "The Light of the World", p.368.
14. Sutherland, Rev. Lewis, "The Empty Tomb", Presbyterian Record, March 1937, p.68.
15. "Rax Me That Bible", Presbyterian Record, March 1937, p.87.
16. Presbyterian Record, September 1937, p.277.
17. Conning, Rev. John Stuart, "The Presbyterian Church and the Jews",

- Presbyterian Record, March 1935, p.87.
18. Presbyterian Record, May 1938, p.138; Acts and Proceedings, June 1934, p.25; Acts and Proceedings, June 1937, p.32; Presbyterian Record, February 1939, p.46.
 19. Presbyterian Record, January 1933, pp.22-23; February 1939, p.46; November 1934, p.336.
 20. Acts and Proceedings, June 1933, pp.28,30; June 1939, pp.24-25; Presbyterian Record, September 1938, p.274.
 21. McArthur, Carolyn, "Scott Institute Mission to the Jews" report, March 16, 1938.
 22. Report of Presbytery of Chatham, re: "Developing a Deeper Spirit of Friendship Between Judaism and Christianity", no.16, Acts and Proceedings, June 1936.
 23. Stanley, Dr., "A survey of the World Situation", Presbyterian Record, February 1935, p.39.
 24. "Germany and the Jews", Presbyterian Record, May 1936, p.132.
 25. Kerr, C.H., "The Light of the World", p.367.
 26. Zeidman, Rev. Morris, "The Jews", Presbyterian Record, February 1938, p.39.
 27. _____, Presbyterian Record, September 1938, pp. 273-274.
 28. "The Jews of Roumania", Presbyterian Record, June 1938, p.169.
 29. Presbyterian Record, November 1938, pp.339-340.
 30. "Germany and the Jews", Presbyterian Record, January 1939, pp.4-5.
 31. Rochester, W.M., "Without a Country", Presbyterian Record, March 1939, p.67.
 32. MacMillan, Rev. D.H., "The Sovereignty of God", Presbyterian Record, July 1939, pp.217-219.
 33. Zeidman, Morris, "The Jews", February 1935, p.39.
 34. Rochester, W.M., "Germany and the Jews", Presbyterian Record, January 1939, pp.4-5.
 35. Rochester, W.M., "Without a Country", pp.67-68.
 36. Pitts, Rev. John, "Is Hitler Anti-Christ?" Presbyterian Record, September 1940, pp.264-266.

37. Edmonds, Rev. Henry M., "To the Jew", The Hebrew Evangelist, November 1941, p.7, "Mission to the Jews" File.
38. Ketchen, Rev. H. Beverly, "The Courageous Candor of Jesus", Presbyterian Record, August 1942, pp.249-250.
39. Zeidman, Rev. Morris, "Scott Institute Report", Acts and Proceedings, 1940, pp.1-4.
40. McArthur, Carolyn, "Quarterly Report on Jewish Work", December 1940, "Mission to the Jews" File.
41. Zeidman, Morris, "Evangelizing the Jews", Presbyterian Record, March 1941, pp.72-74.
42. McArthur, Carolyn, "Quarterly Report on Jewish Work", August 1941, "Mission to the Jews" File.
43. "The Yiddish New Testament", Presbyterian Record, October 1941, pp.303-304.
44. Presbyterian Record, January 1942, p.24; The Star, 1941, no page, no month, in "Mission to the Jews" File.
45. "Presbyterian Mission to the Jews", Acts and Proceedings, June 1942, p.25. This remark seems to be directed against Reverend Zeidman personally.
46. Pitts, Rev. John, "Is Hitler Anti-Christ?", pp.265-266.
47. "German Cultural Oppression in Czechoslovakia", Presbyterian Record, February 1941, p.49.
48. "Hitler's New Role", Presbyterian Record, September 1941, p.277; the quotation was taken from a London publication, "The Spiritual Issues of the War", no date, no page.
49. Rushbrooke, J.M., "Various Matters -- A Church Pronouncement", Presbyterian Record, November 1941, p.340.
50. Vansittart, Sir Robert, "Germany's Black Record", Presbyterian Record, March 1942, p.71; reprint from Magazine Digest, no date, no page.
51. Zeidman, Morris, "Behind Nazi Lines", The Hebrew Evangelist, November 1941, pp.5-7, "Mission to the Jews" File.
52. Elmslie, Rev. William T., "Europe in the Furnace", Presbyterian Record, 1941, p.357.
53. Vansittart, Sir Robert, "Germany's Black Record", p.71.
54. Zeidman, Morris, "Fresh Air Camp Evangelism", Presbyterian Record, November 1941, p.334.

55. Conning, Rev. John Stuart, "Palestine and the Jews", Presbyterian Record, September 1939, p.262.
56. Keller, Dr. Adolf, "Central Bureau for Relief of Evangelical Churches in Europe, Foreign Affairs Bulletin", Presbyterian Record, March 1940, p.85.
57. "The Need in Europe", Presbyterian Record, May 1941, p.157.
58. Keller, Dr. Adolf, "Farewell to America", Presbyterian Record, October 1942, pp.294-295.
59. Mackay, Rev. Clifton J., "A Day of Good Tidings", Presbyterian Record, 1943, p.19.
60. Skene, J.B., "Our Spiritual Need", CBR Radio Vancouver, February 1945; printed in the Presbyterian Record, April 1945, p.118.
61. "Gleanings -- Religion on Every Front", Presbyterian Record, June 1945, p.169.
62. "Chaplaincy Service", Presbyterian Record, March 1945, pp.83-84.
63. McCrea, Rev. Samuel, "A War Time Visit", Presbyterian Record, March 1943, pp.86-87.
64. Rochester, W.M., "The Shorter Catechism", Presbyterian Record, June 1943, pp.163-164.
65. "On Behalf of the Jewish Race", no.22, Acts and Proceedings, June 1943, p.147; italics added.
66. *ibid*; italics added.
67. "On the Rampart -- Open Canada to Refugees", Presbyterian Record, February 1944, p.41.
68. In treating the question of silence and its meaning Longfellow, in his poem The Three Silences of Molinos (1878), wrote:
Three silences there are: the first of speech,
The second of desire, the third of thought.