



Jewish-Christian Relations: Encounters Past and Present

HPRS7027

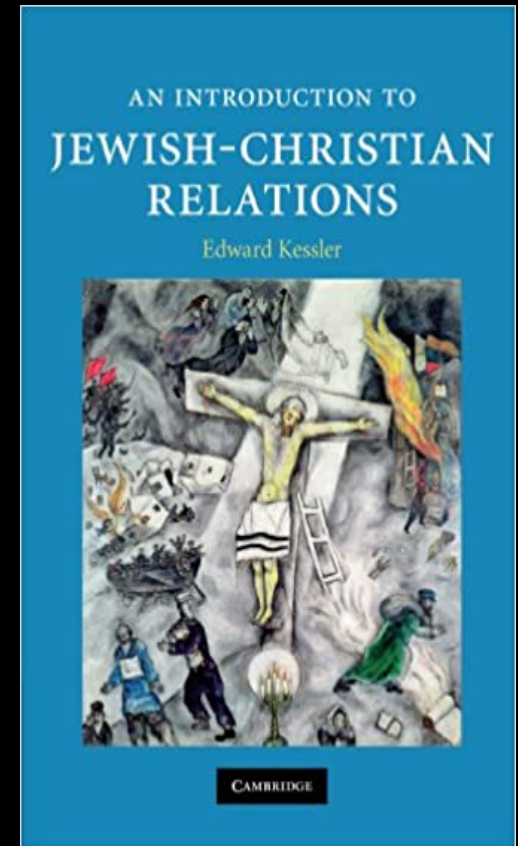
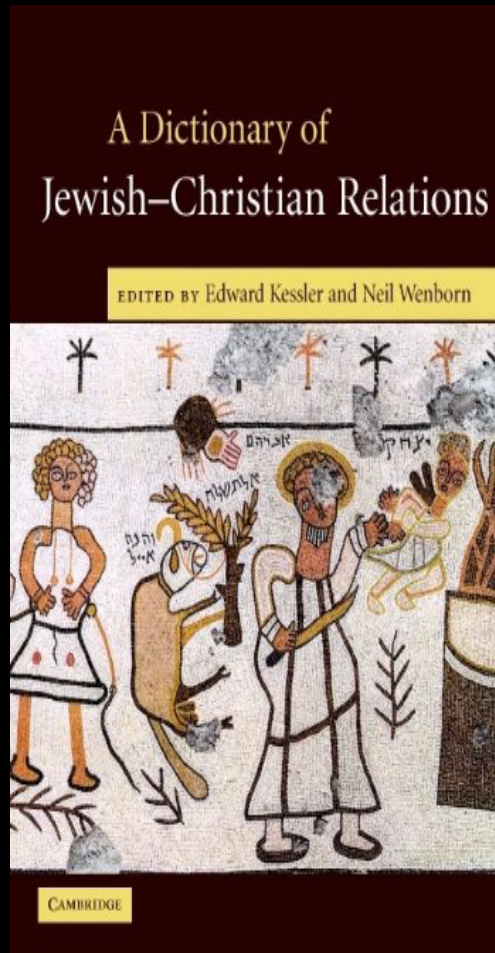
Aims

- To examine the roots and development of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.
- To analyse *the nature of the relationship* between Jews and Christians over the centuries.
- To discuss the sources in their historical, socio-political, cultural and religious contexts.

Aims

- To discuss a wide range of historical events, and the ways in which 'conflict' and 'dialogue' are expressed in religious and literary texts, as well as archival material and cultural artefacts.
- To evaluate a range of hermeneutical issues arising from the sources and the relevance of those issues for contemporary Jewish-Christian relations and interfaith dialogue more widely.

Key Textbooks



Definition of Terms

Anti-Judaism: opposition to the Jewish religion

Anti-Semitism: hatred of the Jews in a racial sense.

The Importance of the Twentieth Century

The Holocaust / Shoah

Holocaust: stems from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *olah* (burnt-offering) – to appease a wrathful God?

Shoah: the Hebrew word for disaster (destruction and doubt).

Vatican II Council (1962-65)

‘Christianity, so long an instigator of violence against Jews, rediscovered a respect and admiration for Judaism, and the once close relationship, which had become a distant memory, has been to a large extent restored’ (Edward Kessler)

Developments within Christianity in a Post-Shoah Context

- Greater appreciation of the importance of Judaism for understanding Christian faith and history.
- Christians acknowledge their part in the development of *Adversus Iudaeos* (anti-Jewish literature).
- Acknowledge the value and significance of Jewish interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures ('Old Testament' > Hebrew Bible / Tanakh).
- Understanding of important developments within Judaism over the centuries.

Developments within Christianity



- Appreciation of the importance of Judaism for Christianity.
- Rediscovery of 'Jesus the Jew'.

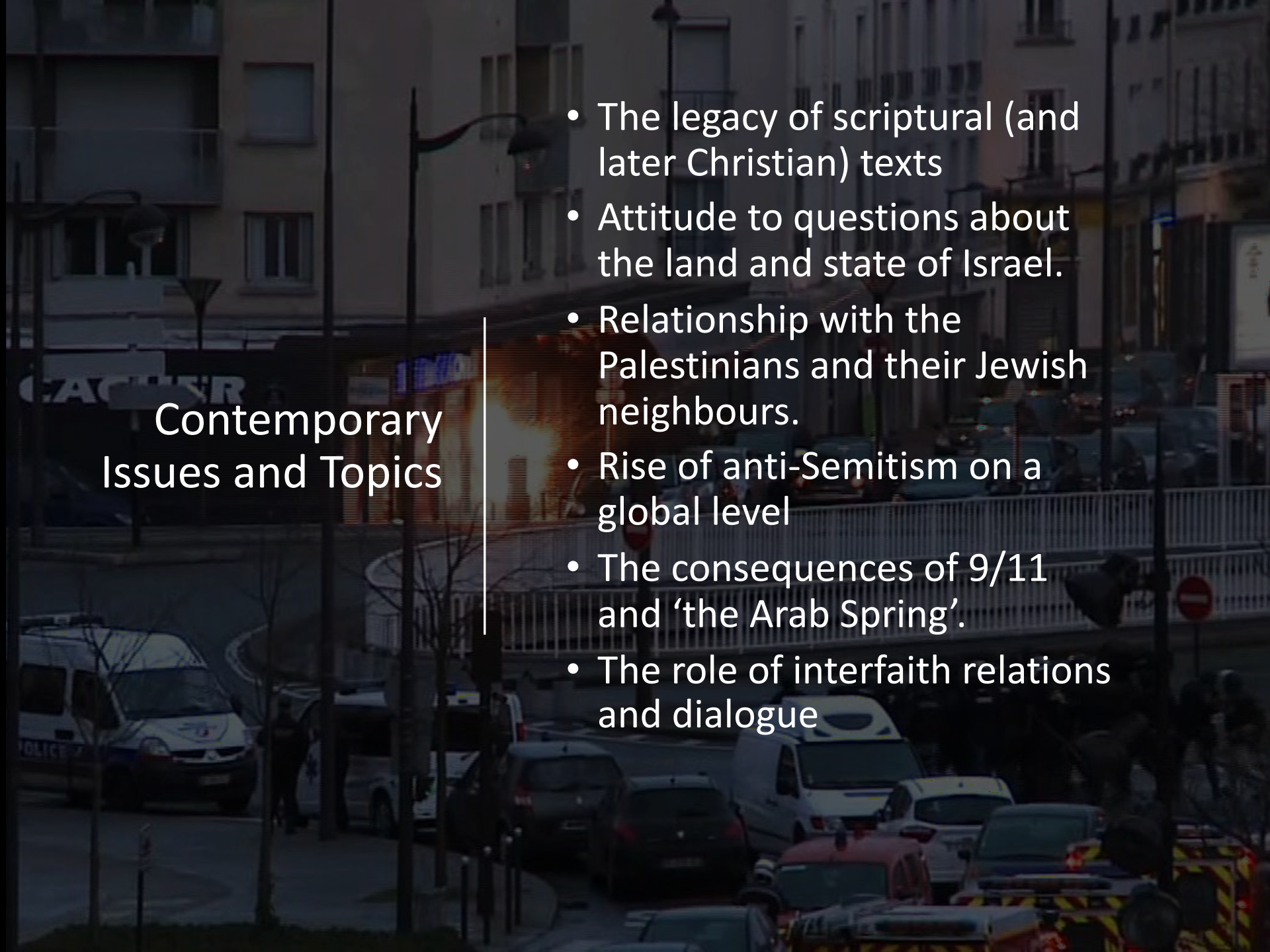


Establish dialogue with Christian groups in order to wipe out anti-Semitism.

Focus on Jesus' Jewishness: 'our fellow Jew', 'our older brother' (Martin Buber, 1878-1965).

Developments within Judaism

'Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book – the Bible (what Jews call "Tanakh" and Christians call the "Old Testament")' (*Dabru Emet* - Speak the Truth, 2000).



Contemporary Issues and Topics

- The legacy of scriptural (and later Christian) texts
- Attitude to questions about the land and state of Israel.
- Relationship with the Palestinians and their Jewish neighbours.
- Rise of anti-Semitism on a global level
- The consequences of 9/11 and 'the Arab Spring'.
- The role of interfaith relations and dialogue



The Early Period

- Jesus of Nazareth and his Jewish followers who believed he was the Messiah (30-33 CE).
- Effects of the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.
- The subsequent spread of Christianity throughout the Roman empire.

Developments in Early Christianity

Jews were regarded as people of the old covenant who had been replaced by the Church (*ekklêsia*).

Fierce debates about Jewish rituals such as circumcision and food laws (*kashrut*).

Debates about christology: was Jesus Christ a divine figure?

Gradual separation of Jews and Christians ('the partings of the ways').



The Church Fathers

Negative sermons about the Jews:

- Jews did not understand that the purpose of the Old Testament was to prepare the way for the coming of Christ (Jerome and John Chrysostom).
- the Jews were guilty of deicide when they crucified Jesus (Melito of Sardis).
- the Jews are the sons of Cain and they will be dispersed as punishment for their sins (Saint Augustine).

The Spread of Christianity

- Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century CE under the leadership of Constantine (285-337).
- Around 500 churches were built in places of significance during Jesus' life and ministry and became important places of pilgrimage (particularly by the 6th century CE).
- Growth of anti-Jewish literature but limited violence against the Jews.
- Lack of Jewish response to Christianity at the beginning (but see the *Toledot Yeshu*).
- Gregory the Great (540-604) insisted that the legal rights of Jews should be respected.

The Middle Ages

Christianity more united as a religion.

Jews – ‘the other group’ – expelled from Europe (including England by 1290).

The Crusades

Effects of the Black Death

The Inquisition – the burning of Jewish books, forced to attend church services and to wear the ‘Jewish badge’.



Jewish Responses

- Christianity described as a form of idolatry.
- Christians follow the Noahide laws (moral laws without being Jews).
‘Whoever denies idolatry is close to being a Jew’ (Rabbi Yohanan, Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 13a).
Christianity prepares the way for the nations to worship the God of Israel (Maimonides, 1135-1204).

The Protestant Reformation

Church split – good
news for the Jews?

Protestant emphasis
on the Word of God
(*sola scriptura*).

Martin Luther (1483-
1546): marked change
in attitude towards
the Jews (increasingly
more anti-Jewish).

John Calvin (1509-64)
and Calvinists were
more moderate
(emphasis on human
rights).

The Age of the Enlightenment

Emphasis on Jesus the Jew:
Abraham Geiger (1810-74),
Samuel Hirsch (1808-88).

Rise in anti-Jewish bias and anti-Semitic hatred.

The basis of racism: while it may be possible to reorganize society, some people – it is claimed - are beyond redemption.



The Third Reich

The Church and the Jews

Many German churches accepted Nazi policies ('race, land and blood').

Opposition from some groups, such as a meeting of churches in Switzerland in 1947: the need for a different attitude towards Judaism and its people.

World Council of Churches: the Jews must be included in the missionary work of the Church.

Vatican Council II

- Reassessment of the Church's attitude towards the Jews.
- Key role of Pope John XXIII (1881-1963), Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-72) and Jules Isaac (1877-1963).
- *Nostra Aetate* (1965: 'In our times'): condemnation of anti-Semitism, removal of anti-Judaism, acknowledgement of the value of Judaism.
- Pope John Paul II (1920-2005): called on the Church to recognize the existence of the state of Israel (1994).