

Temple Tracts: Issue 4, Volume 3

# At the Bar of History, Humanity and God

William Temple and 75 Years of the  
Council of Christians and Jews

Rob Thompson



**William Temple**  
Foundation

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## Introduction

‘The present German Government has consistently attempted to undermine and destroy those traditional religious and spiritual values of mankind in which it recognises its most dangerous enemies [...] In these circumstances we are agreed that it would be for the general benefit to form in this country a council of Christians and Jews.’<sup>1</sup> In this declaration, printed in *The Times* on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1942, the United Kingdom’s first national interfaith organisation was born. The declaration was signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Moderator of the Free Churches, and the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire.

Archbishop William Temple was at the forefront of efforts to bring the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) into being 75 years ago. He personally reviewed the founding statement before it was released on the BBC on the 30<sup>th</sup> September and printed in *The Times* on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Not only was Archbishop Temple one of the prominent voices in the genesis of interfaith relations in the UK, he also led the way in using CCJ as a public, multi-faith forum to advocate on the moral issues of the war period, most importantly in raising awareness about the persecution and destruction of European Jewry in the months and years following Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941.

Archbishop Temple’s persistent advocacy came to a head on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1943 when he stood up in the House of Lords to speak to a motion in his own name that drew attention to the persecution of the Jews of occupied Europe and called on Britain’s wartime coalition government to put into measure immediate plans to do something to help. The Archbishop’s speech concluded with these stirring words: ‘We at this moment have upon us a tremendous responsibility. We stand at the bar of history, of humanity and of God.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marcus Braybrooke, *Children of One God: A History of the Council of Christians and Jews* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1991), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, ‘German Atrocities: Aid for Refugees’ <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1943/mar/23/german-atrocities-aid-for-refugees>> [accessed 23 November 2017]

I was delighted that when Professor Simon Schama spoke to a CCJ Breakfast Seminar in October 2017, he celebrated the anniversary of CCJ's founding by highlighting Archbishop Temple's words.

Professor Schama was right to do so because although the speech did not, perhaps could not, change the course of the Final Solution (the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jewish people), it was nevertheless an important intervention from one of the greatest Christian leaders of the twentieth century on the most morally pressing issue of the twentieth century. It is important to consider in CCJ's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year because it reveals much about the nature of Christian/Jewish relations 75 years ago and, in celebrating the UK's oldest national interfaith organisation, Temple's words speak loudly and clearly down the generations of the moral obligations that a life of faith places on each of us in the contemporary situation.

In this *Temple Tract* I would like to ask: why did Archbishop Temple deliver this speech? What issues and developments led to this moment and what were the factors influencing Archbishop Temple in attaching the importance he did to the issue of the persecution of Jews in wartime Europe? Finally: what does this all mean for us today?

My aim is to look at the development of William Temple's wartime advocacy for Jewish refugees and for the Jewish communities of Europe.

I will argue that William Temple's speech owed much, firstly to his interest in faith and the public sphere (the idea of the Christian having a duty to engage and be involved in politics and in the moral decision-making of public life) and secondly to the specific context of the war in which Temple took an increasingly public and high profile position, addressing the nation through the BBC and through the newspapers.

But ultimately I believe that the founding of the Council of Christians and Jews was critical in shaping Temple's response to the situation in Europe and in facilitating the means and opportunity to conduct his advocacy. If it was not for the founding of CCJ in October 1942 then William Temple may not have had the opportunity and the encouragement to make his March 23<sup>rd</sup> speech after all.

## 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1943

Firstly, before exploring these three factors influencing Temple's advocacy, it is important to look at the speech itself.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February 1943 William Temple wrote to Francis Lascelles. Lascelles was Clerk of Public Bills in the House of Lords, one of those responsible for administering legislation through Parliament. Temple expressed his wish to table a motion in the House identical to one being concurrently tabled in the House of Commons, a motion which had the signatures of over two hundred Members of Parliament in support. Temple's motion read as follows:

That, in view of the massacres and starvation of Jews and others in enemy and enemy-occupied countries, this House desires to assure His Majesty's Government of its fullest support for immediate measures, on the largest and most generous scale compatible with the requirements of military operations and security, for providing help and temporary asylum to persons in danger of massacre who are able to leave enemy and enemy-occupied countries.<sup>3</sup>

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, then, Archbishop William Temple made the short journey across the River Thames from Lambeth Palace to the Palace of Westminster. If he crossed Lambeth Bridge, which is the most direct route to the Peers' entrance on the west side of the Palace of Westminster, no doubt he would have looked down the river and seen barrage balloons bobbing above the city. Perhaps there would have been gaping holes along the riverbank, the result of Luftwaffe bombing raids, where once warehouses and wharfs were visible. The route would have been marked by sandbags, military posts, but also of course by the normal hustle and bustle of city life, unchecked by wartime.

On the nights of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May 1941 Parliament had been hit by German bombs. The damage to the House of Commons was so great that from June 1941 the Commons met in the chamber of the House of Lords whilst the Lords met in the Robing Room. So it was here that, dressed in the black and white robes and pectoral cross of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple stood up in the Robing Room.

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<sup>3</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 54. 242

My Lords, I beg leave to move the Resolution standing in my name on the Order Paper. We are confronted, as all your Lordships know, with an evil the magnitude and horror of which it is impossible to describe in words. There has, I suppose, never been so great a manifestation of the power of sheer cruelty and of the determination to wreak upon a helpless people what is not vengeance, for there is no offence, but the satisfaction of a mere delight in power such as is to be witnessed on the continent of Europe at the present time.<sup>4</sup>

The Archbishop then went on to list just some of the evidence that had been brought to his attention of the destruction of Jewish communities, especially in Eastern Europe. Reading some of the reports that came to Temple's desk, it is striking not simply that the Allied nations knew of the Nazis' and their collaborators' injustices but that the West knew detail after detail of the systematic destruction of Jewish life in Europe: place names, numbers, transportation details, even sometimes the names of those individuals who were missing.

One such piece of evidence, preserved in Temple's papers in the Lambeth Palace Archives, is not quoted in Temple's House of Lords speech. But the fact that the letter was kept at all, when surely hundreds of people must have been writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury during wartime, is indicative of how this letter impacted on Temple himself when he read it.

The letter was written by a Czech Jewish refugee in London, Dr Bartholomew Tomaschoff and in it Dr Tomaschoff implored the world to take action at the knowledge of the Holocaust, asking that:

Radios all over the free world shall give details of the bestialities daily. Finally: that The Prime Minister Churchill, President Roosevelt, Field Marshall Smuts, Premier Stalin, General Chiang Kai-shek, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and heads of all religions in England shall broadcast immediately to the whole of the world dwelling on the details of the cruelties and challenging Hitler personally as the greatest murderer in history.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, 'German Atrocities: Aid for Refugees' <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1943/mar/23/german-atrocities-aid-for-refugees>> [accessed 23 November 2017]

<sup>5</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 54. 192.



It is hard not to think that in speaking in the House of Lords, Archbishop Temple was following Dr Tomaschoff's plea that he break silence publicly and urgently on this most vital of issues.

After listing the evidence, Temple went on. 'Is there anything in fact that can be done?'

Firstly, the promise given by the government in February of 1943 that they would grant 4,000 Jewish children and 500 accompanying adults from Bulgaria visas to Palestine, as well as 500 children from Hungary and Romania, that this promise would be upheld.

Secondly, that the visa system to the United Kingdom should be revisited so that at the very least any refugee who is able to make it to Britain should be able to stay here, especially, Temple argued, those with family members serving in HM Armed Forces. Temple cited one case that had come across his desk of a Jewish couple who had made it to Spain but, despite having four sons serving in the British army, had been denied entry to Britain. Temple argued that the consuls in Spain, Portugal, and Turkey should be granted batches of visas so that any Jewish refugees able to get there could be admitted to the relative safety of England.

The Archbishop concluded with a passionate plea against 'procrastination of any kind.' He knew that what little could be done would mean the world to someone, and that inaction was to be judged, just as persecution would also be judged one day.

And then the preacher in Temple came to the fore and he spoke extemporaneously:

We have discussed the matter on the footing that we are not responsible for this great evil, that the burden lies on others, but it is always true that the obligations of decent men are decided for them by contingencies which they did not themselves create and very largely by the action of wicked men. The priest and the Levite in the parable were not in the least responsible for the traveller's wounds as he lay there by the roadside and no doubt they had many other

pressing things to attend to, but they stand as the picture of those who are condemned for neglecting the opportunity of showing mercy.<sup>6</sup>

And then, Temple looked down on his notes where, whether earlier that day or whether sat in the Robing Room as he waited for the debate to begin, he had scribbled his concluding words: 'We at this moment have upon us a tremendous responsibility. We stand at the bar of history, of humanity and of God. I beg leave to move.'

After several other speeches to the motion, the House voted its agreement to Temple's motion and Temple left the chamber.

On the same day that the Archbishop made his speech, the war rumbled on. In its heaviest raid to date, British Bomber Command targeted Dortmund in Germany. In an election in occupied Denmark, the government party won 143 seats, leaving the Danish Nazi Party trailing behind with a mere five seats. The troop transport ship SS Windsor Castle was sunk by the Luftwaffe off the coast of Algeria. General Bernard Montgomery ordered the British 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division to reinforce New Zealand troops near Zarat in Tunisia. And Heinrich Himmler's statistician reported to the Head of the SS that thus far over 600,000 Russian Jews had been, quote, "resettled."<sup>7</sup>

The importance of the issues which Temple's speech raised in the public mind cannot be overstated.

But what were the influencing factors behind this speech? What was going on in Temple's mind and what made him the most active public Christian leader on the national stage in trying to advocate to bring an end to the suffering?

## Christianity and the Public Sphere

Firstly, William Temple's advocacy in raising awareness of what would become known as the Holocaust owed much to Temple's own belief in the Christian's duty to act in the public

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<sup>6</sup> The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, 'German Atrocities: Aid for Refugees' <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1943/mar/23/german-atrocities-aid-for-refugees>> [accessed 23 November 2017]

<sup>7</sup> '1943 Timeline' <<https://ww2db.com/event/timeline/1943/>> [accessed 27 November 2017]

sphere. The persecution and destruction of European Jewry was a moral outrage, raising awareness of it was a moral imperative, and it was here that William Temple saw the role of the Christian: a moral imperative to learn about the truth, to engage with reality, and to act to make a difference.

Temple's most famous book remains *Christianity and Social Order*. Temple completed the manuscript in November 1941 and it was published in 1942, interestingly the same year that Temple became Archbishop of Canterbury and the same year that CCJ was founded.

One of the primary focuses of *Christianity and Social Order* was to emphasise the importance of the application of principle. In other words, people of faith must find ways to put their beliefs into practice, to shape the world around them according to their faith in human relationships and their ideal of human perfectibility.

*Christianity and Social Order* would have an important influence on the debate over wartime reconstruction and ultimately the creation of the Welfare State. But I think the general principles were principles which Temple applied in all spheres of public life. He saw his role as Archbishop of Canterbury not just as the spiritual head of the Christian community in Britain, but as a voice of conscience in a deeply challenging and swiftly changing world.

Temple wrote in *Christianity and Social Order* that 'the aim of a Christian social order is the fullest possible development of individual personality in the widest and deepest possible fellowship.'<sup>8</sup>

This is something that can be applied to the question of the Jewish situation in Europe. The Archbishop saw the issue as one of the deepest concern for individual liberty and for the fellowship of the community. The persecution of the Jews of Europe was robbing individual Jews of their personality, their liberty, and their lives, and in the process destroying the fellowship of the peoples of Europe.

So he had to speak out.

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<sup>8</sup> William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1987), p. 97.

## The Wartime Context

Yet, whilst undoubtedly Temple's general theory of a Christian's duty in the public was influential in shaping both how Temple looked at the world and also how he saw his role as a Christian leader, it does not tell the whole story of Temple's journey towards his speech in the House of Lords.

The context of the war and Temple's particular wartime role was a particular encouragement in his growing advocacy for the Jews of Europe.

William Temple was installed as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1942. But before this he was a well-known and admired Christian leader on the public stage, having been Archbishop of York since 1929. It was understandable then, that a well-known Christian figure should be invited to speak publicly on the eve of war in August 1939.

In the BBC's Sunday evening service of August 27<sup>th</sup> 1939, William Temple gave the address. His text was 1 Peter 2: 17 'Fear God. Honour the King.' And early in his address, Temple said this: 'It is a time of crisis, and the very word "crisis" is the Greek word for judgement. It is the word used by St. John in recording the Lord's saying "Now is the judgement of this world" – Now is the crisis of this world.'<sup>9</sup>

By linking the war as crisis to a notion of the war as judgement—both God's judgement and a just people's judgement for another's wrongdoing—William Temple was arguing, even before war had broken out, that the crisis that the world was undergoing already was a time for judgement, a time for the revelation of truth when truth was being distorted by evil. It was a time for a fellowship between right-thinking people in opposition to fascist militaristic conquest, and it was a time for justice pursued by active people of faith in dispelling prejudice and persecution.

Almost four years before his speech in the House of Lords, Temple was arguing that this was not a war simply of defence and the restoration of peace, but a war to re-evaluate our very conception of how people should live alongside each other in Europe. 'This time of crisis is a

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<sup>9</sup> William Temple, *Thoughts in War-Time* (London: Macmillan, 1940), p. 3.

call to the nation', he said, 'to repent of their self-centred policies and dedicate themselves to the common task of promoting the common welfare of all the children of God.'<sup>10</sup>

The Archbishop became a frequent broadcaster on the BBC and letter writer in the newspapers during the war. He used public media to address the people of the United Kingdom in this time of crisis. For example, Dr Tomaschoff's letter to Temple which I cited earlier, was in response to a letter written by Temple on the subject of Nazi crimes in Europe to *The Times* newspaper, in December 1942, in which he wrote to express 'burning indignation at this atrocity, to which the records of barbarous ages scarcely supply a parallel.'<sup>11</sup>

The war was a time of crisis—of judgement—and of responsibility. And Temple saw no greater responsibility than the responsibility he had to speak out publicly, stiffening Christian resolve and charity yes, but also in being a voice to inspire hope and justice. Temple was clearly moved by the war into a position of advocacy on behalf of the Church.

But we still have not explained why William Temple was led to believe in the importance of the issue of the persecution of European Jewry when Britain and the Empire had so many issues facing them during wartime. If fellowship was a vital end to William Temple, what was it that made him realise that Christian/Jewish relations and an end to the persecution of Jews was essential in establishing this fellowship?

## The Council of Christians and Jews

So we come to the founding of CCJ and I believe that it was CCJ that was crucial in enabling and encouraging William Temple to come to the House of Lords and make his speech on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1943.

The establishment of Council of Christians and Jews was publicly announced in *The Times* on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1942. At the heart of CCJ's founding, said Archbishop Temple and the other founding Presidents, was the imperative to address the scourge of antisemitism:

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<sup>10</sup> Temple, *Thoughts in War-Time*, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 16. 138

The present German Government has consistently attempted to undermine and destroy those traditional religious and spiritual values of mankind in which it recognises its most dangerous enemies. The course of the war has seen a steady intensification of these attempts, and German conquests have enormously extended the area in which these policies can be ruthlessly applied. In the forefront of these efforts to create division within every community the Nazis have always placed antisemitism, which is repugnant to the moral principles common to Christianity and Judaism alike. We cannot afford to ignore the effects of the steady propagation of this evil throughout the world. It is not only a menace to the unity of every community in which it takes its root, but it is the very negation of those values on which alone we believe that a new and better world can be established.<sup>12</sup>

So CCJ committed itself from the beginning to addressing rising antisemitism, not just because they perceived it a barrier to good community relations, but even more importantly because of the destruction it was wreaking in occupied Europe and its obstruction of the pursuit of the better world which all free peoples dreamed of in the post-war period.

In the first few weeks of CCJ's existence as a formal, public body, Temple was kept well up to date with proceedings by its first secretary, Methodist minister Revd W. W. Simpson. But he also, of course, carried on with his work in his own right.

Throughout 1942, Temple had been inundated with letters from Christian and Jewish leaders, highlighting what was going on in Europe as the German army pushed ever onwards into the Soviet Union, and as the Einsatzgruppen destroyed Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and in Russia.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 1942 William Temple led a delegation of campaigners, organised by the Parliamentary Committee on Refugees and the well-known Independent MP Eleanor Rathbone. The meeting was with the Home Secretary Herbert Morrison to discuss the growing awareness of atrocities in Europe and the growing public demand that the British Government do something to address the increasingly desperate situation.

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<sup>12</sup> Braybrooke, *Children of One God*, p. 18.

But the meeting did not go well. The Archbishop spoke first, imploring the Home Secretary to facilitate visas for European Jews to Mandate Palestine. Temple pointed out that there were 15-20,000 visas as he understood still valid for Palestine under the terms of the Government White Paper of 1939. Eleanor Rathbone added that 'further evidence was pouring in daily, most of it almost too painful to speak about, emphasising the growing urgency of the need for help, immediate help.'<sup>13</sup>

Mr Morrison was, as he stressed, sympathetic but in short there was nothing that he was prepared to do. He argued that relative to its small size Britain had done more for European refugees than any other nation, that there was a lack of space for any more large numbers of refugees, and that there was 'a difficulty of absorption.'<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately at this point William Temple had to leave for another engagement and it was then that the meeting really soured further. 'Where was it to end?' asked Herbert Morrison, 'If I gave in and allowed 2,000 children in now, you would be back, badgering me again as the position got worse – oh yes, Miss Rathbone,' he continued, 'whatever you say I know you would – and it simply couldn't be done.' When Eleanor Rathbone attempted to protest, Morrison again was belligerent in his attitude towards her: 'my decision is unalterable, and I am not here to bandy rhetoric with you Miss Rathbone.'<sup>15</sup>

Following the meeting one of the participants, the Suffragist and Liberal Party candidate Margery Corbett-Ashby, reported back to William Temple and said that 'in forty years I haven't seen a worse handled deputation by any responsibly minister. It was quite clear that the Government did not consider the Christian conscience worth worrying about.' Evidently, the Parliamentary Committee on Refugees could not persuade Herbert Morrison so it fell to other means for William Temple to continue his advocacy.

So it was that when Eleanor Rathbone wrote to Temple again on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, calling for debate in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords, and quoting the terrible statistics that it was believed that 2,000,000 European Jews had already been killed and that 5,000,000 were still 'in danger of extermination', including in her letter a cable from Chaim Weizman which said he had received confirmation that Hitler had ordered the

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<sup>13</sup>London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple. 54. 129

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 129

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 130

extermination of all Jews in Nazi occupied countries, Temple responded as follows: 'I have received an urgent call from the offices of the Council of Christians and Jews to try with them to take some common action which would at least express people's horror at what is happening and might have some practical influence.'<sup>16</sup>

After the waste of time that was the meeting with Herbert Morrison, Temple sought henceforward to communicate the message through CCJ and not through other means.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December, the same day Rathbone wrote to Temple, the CCJ Executive Committee had met and Prof Selig Brodetsky, President of the Board of Deputies and later professor at the Hebrew University, had proposed that a deputation of CCJ leaders approach the Foreign Office to ascertain the truth of the reports coming from Europe and that the heads of the churches should speak out together to inform the Christian conscience of the nation.<sup>17</sup>

By the time the Executive Committee met again, only four days later, Revd Simpson was able to report that he had had three telephone conversations with William Temple since their last meeting and reported that the Archbishop had agreed to write to the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden on their behalf.<sup>18</sup>

On 16<sup>th</sup> December a CCJ deputation met with the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Richard Law.<sup>19</sup> Present were William Temple, Bishop David Matthew representing Cardinal Hinsley of the Roman Catholic Church, the Free Church Moderator, The Revds W. W. Simpson and Henry Carter, and Lord Darnyngton.

Temple got straight to the point in relating to Mr Law that as leaders of the Christian communities of Britain and representative of CCJ they were calling on the United Nations to release a statement condemning the atrocities in Europe and warn the perpetrators that they would be brought to justice.

Mr Law was more sympathetic than Herbert Morrison. As Member of Parliament for Hull South West, perhaps he knew more than Morrison about the importance of Jewish/Christian relations. He was pleased to confirm to the delegation that Mr Eden, the

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<sup>16</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 54. 185-7; 190

<sup>17</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 16. 135

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>19</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 54. 197



Foreign Secretary, would be making a statement in the House of Commons the very next day in the name of the United Nations, expressing the outrage that the church leaders called for.

And Anthony Eden did just that. On 17<sup>th</sup> December 1942 he rose in the House of Commons to read the United Nations declaration:

The above mentioned Governments and the French National Committee condemn in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination. They declare that such events can only strengthen the resolve of all freedom loving peoples to overthrow the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny. They re-affirm their solemn resolution to ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution, and to press on with the necessary practical measures to this end.<sup>20</sup>

After Eden's intervention in the House, MPs rose from their seats and stood in silence.

Now, of course the United Nations statement was not a result of this CCJ deputation the day before, its wording had already been formulated. But I do think that the work of CCJ was important in informing the public debate which had led to this point, not least statements made by the Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz and by Archbishop Temple's letters to *The Times* and to Anthony Eden.

Indeed, in their meeting at the Foreign Office, Richard Law expressly said to the church leaders that 'the government would welcome the cooperation of the Archbishop and other church leaders in bringing these matters before the public by statements and sermons which could be given wide publicity, not only in this country, but overseas.'<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, despite this encouragement, when CCJ began to press for more concrete action on the part of the government, the government was still unwilling to listen.

On 7<sup>th</sup> January 1943, the Archbishop received a telephone message from Revd Henry Carter, another leading light of CCJ in its early days. The message stated that the Executive

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<sup>20</sup> The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 'United Nations Declaration' <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1942/dec/17/united-nations-declaration>> [accessed 23 November 2017]

<sup>21</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 54. 201

Committee had met that day and had agreed to ask the Archbishop to write to the Prime Minister himself, giving appreciation for the government's statement on behalf of the United Nations but making two requests:

Firstly, that the United Nations give assurance to neutral countries that they will undertake financial assistance and support so that any who can escape from persecution into neutral countries can do so. And secondly, that any refugees able to get to Britain, the US, Russia, or China will not be hampered by any restrictions with regards their entry into those countries.<sup>22</sup>

Temple did so, writing to Winston Churchill the very next day, stating 'we feel that some immediate action should be taken to do what is possible, however little that is.'<sup>23</sup> Temple stressed the urgency of the matter to the Prime Minister: 'our chief anxiety is the time factor: our process of consideration takes too long and the Jews are massacred daily.'<sup>24</sup>

The reply came from Anthony Eden, just over a week later, making no commitments. It must have been an incredibly frustrating letter to receive.

A month later, William Temple wrote to the Clerk of the Bills in the House of Lords, Francis Lascelles, and enclosed his motion to table for debate on 23<sup>rd</sup> March.<sup>25</sup>

It is evident then that Temple's House of Lords speech was not an isolated intervention but the result of months of hard campaigning which had thus far achieved very little beyond the United Nations statement. The speech must have been, in large part, a reaction to Temple's sense that personal letters and private meetings with government ministers were not having an effect and that a public declaration by the most senior Christian leader in the nation, and indeed the empire, was what was needed.

The Council of Christians and Jews was of crucial importance here. CCJ held its first AGM, chaired by William Temple, on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1943, during which it was unanimously resolved that 'something more than condemnation of the atrocities was needed' in order 'to indicate some of the lines along which the Council hoped that the Government might take action.'<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 208

<sup>23</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, William Temple 54. 209

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 210

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 242

<sup>26</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 16. 185

This was two weeks or so after Anthony Eden's disappointing letter to Temple. Perhaps the difficulty of making any difference on this issue was on Temple's mind as CCJ passed that resolution on that first AGM, and I think we can reasonably assume that a week later as Temple wrote to Francis Lascelles, indicating his desire to speak in the House of Lords, that CCJ's resolution remained on his mind.

It was the continuity of CCJ meetings, discussions, and resolutions which kept this issue alive on the agendas of church leaders. CCJ was pioneering in placing an importance on interfaith relations in 1942, and there was no more important issue between the communities than the awareness and the necessity of addressing the fact that Jews were being rounded up and murdered in their millions by people who were in the main baptised Christians. It was CCJ's determination that this issue not be allowed to be side-lined by those in power that provided the necessary added encouragement to William Temple's decision to speak on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1943.

## Conclusion

What then, can this story say to us, 75 years later?

History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme, or so it is often said.

We do not live in 1942 anymore. The problems facing our world are different and the issues for interfaith relations, particularly Jewish/Christian relations are not in the same context as they were for Archbishop William Temple and Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz.

But I do think that the story of Temple's speech in the House of Lords has a deep relevance to us in our current situation. Temple's courage and conviction are an example to us all. He was a brave man in speaking out in 1943. We have to be brave too.

In his speech in the House of Lords, Temple recognised that the action he called for was small in comparison to the scale of the issues he discussed or the scale of the need to address them. Nevertheless, he argued, we must always do what little we can. He argued that '[i]t is recognised that the utmost we can do is small compared to the magnitude of the

horror. My plea is that we should do all we can, be it much or little in comparison with that.’<sup>27</sup>

1942 was a critical year in many respects and not least for William Temple. In 1942 Temple became Archbishop of Canterbury, published *Christianity and Social Order*, and founded CCJ. It was a momentous year and no doubt all three of these factors—the elevation of his role during wartime, the finalisation of his belief in Christian engagement in the public sphere and the success of its publication, and the cementing of his role in improving Jewish/Christian relations—all three of these factors were vital in shaping Temple’s advocacy for the Jews of Europe and ultimately in leading him to speak in the House of Lords in March 1943.

Today, our communities are divided; populist nationalism rises across the western world, including in our own country; scaremongering xenophobia becomes acceptable in the discourse of the political mainstream; and as truth is assaulted by propaganda and denial, there is a moral duty incumbent upon all of us, as people of faith, to never remain silent in the face of challenge or injustice.

It is a duty of faith to continually listen to the pain of anguished memory; to pass on the lessons of discomfiting history; to look with kindness upon the opportunity of the present in shaping a better tomorrow for the vast majority of the world; and above all else to speak out so that we may be heard. In all of this we must do whatever we can whenever and wherever we can because every little act of good will towards our friends or strangers is enough and can change the world.

In this task, there can be few better examples than that of Archbishop William Temple. The response is up to us: we too ‘stand at the bar of history, of humanity, and of God.’

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<sup>27</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, W Temple 16. 345.

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