2. Negotiating religious dialogue: A response to the recent increase of anti-Semitism in Australia

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In January 1991 during the first Gulf War, Gerry Levy, Sydney-based president of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, received an urgent call that the North Shore Temple had been attacked by arson and was on fire. He rushed over to find the synagogue's rabbi standing outside with the Torah scrolls in his arms and one building completely gutted. As a young boy, Levy had been in Germany during *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi pogrom of November 1938, when the synagogue of his home town, Magdeburg, was burnt down and his community violently attacked. In 1991, he felt he was reliving these events and found the experience extremely traumatic.¹

This chapter will explore the rise of anti-Semitic attacks on the Australian Jewish community, making reference to parallel developments within the Islamic community, a parallel that can be seen in an article published in the *Maitland Mercury* shortly after September 11. This article highlights attacks on the Muslim community in Australia, with its headline 'racial abuse starts to affect Muslim minority' but visually represents the attacks on the Jewish community with the graffiti, 'Victoy [sic] to Islam; Death to the Jews', painted on at least three entrances to the Primus Telecom Building on the corner of King and Collins Streets, Melbourne in September 2001.²

I will argue that the problem facing Australia, and indeed the world, is not the question of Samuel Huntington's model of a 'clash of civilisations'³ but rather of a 'clash within civilisations' between fundamentalists and conciliators. In order to deal with this increasing problem, what is needed is more understanding, education to combat xenophobic, racist attitudes, and a coalition of the moderates across the religions. More dialogue to create better understanding across the major faiths in Australia is important both at the roof level of leadership, and at the grassroots in schools and individual communities. I believe that those who oppose such dialogue create blasphemy and sacrilege in our society and that the religious zealots are, indeed, the ones who create the most serious problems. In saying this, I would like to support Veronica Brady who has argued that a 'blasphemous society is one which refuses to recognise the other' (see chapter 4) which is something which often happens with religious zealots.

With the 1990–1991 Gulf War came a spate of attacks against Jewish institutions across Australia. Over a three-month period in Sydney, arsonists attacked five synagogues, a quarter of the community's synagogues. After the fire at the North Shore Temple on 28 January, there were fires at three Sydney synagogues in February and March, possibly linked. The first occurred on 26 February at the Sephardi Synagogue in Woollahra, when petrol was poured into a rear window and set alight. One week later there was a fire at the Bankstown Memorial Synagogue. The last, on 29 March, was at Kogarah's Illawarra Synagogue; petrol was spread across the synagogue and set alight. A security guard foiled another arson attempt in mid-April at the North Shore Synagogue.⁴ A year later, in May 1992, arsonists attacked the Newtown Synagogue, one of the oldest in the city, built in 1918. Fortunately it has been restored, as has the Illawarra Synagogue, but the Bankstown Synagogue was not so lucky. The community was too small and did not have the funds to rebuild it, and decided to close the synagogue.

Synagogues and other Jewish buildings in Melbourne, Canberra and Newcastle were also attacked. The first arson attack occurred on the Jewish kindergarten in Doncaster, Melbourne, while a bomb threat was made against the Palais Theatre, Melbourne, just at the end of a Jewish solidarity rally being held there. Other anti-Jewish manifestations included desecration of Jewish graves; hate letters prophesying the coming of the 'Fourth Reich' in which Jews would be incarcerated in concentration camps like the 'Auschwitz holiday camp'. Bottles and eggs were hurled from passing cars at individuals walking in Melbourne streets. Such events continued after the Gulf War, although at a reduced level, with one of the worst episodes being the desecration of Jewish graves in an Adelaide cemetery in 1995.

With the failure of the 'Oslo Accords' and the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada between Israel and the Palestinians in September 2000, attacks against the Jewish community increased with problems developing one year later, reaching its peak after the historic and horrific attack on the twin towers in New York on 11 September 2001. In September 2000, the synagogue in Rosco Street in Bondi was attacked by arson while anti-Israel graffiti was daubed on the Illawarra Synagogue in Sydney's South. The Canberra Jewish centre was fire-bombed four times between September 2001 and September 2002. Individual Jews, particularly men wearing skullcaps, were physically attacked, while community leaders received death threats. Violence and Jew-hatred manifested themselves in the pro-Palestinian rallies of 2000 and 2001, with the burning of Israeli and US flags. Such outbursts created fear and anxiety amongst Australian Jewry and the wider community. Most recently, the court cases in Perth against Jack Roche, a Muslim convert, and Jack van Tongeren, a far right national extremist, highlighted the danger faced by Jewish institutions and individual Jews in Australia.⁵

To date, no arrests have been made for any of the arson attacks and there is much debate as to whether the cause of these attacks in Australia and elsewhere has been due to radicalised Islamic fundamentalist ideologies and movements, or the resurgence of extreme right-wing movements, such as Hansonism (the right wing, racist movement known as One Nation led by Pauline Hanson), which are both anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish. Arrests in Western Australia in 2004 seem to indicate the attacks come from both groups—Jack Roche, radical Islam, and van Tongeren, far right. Roche was planning to attack Jewish leaders as well as the Israeli embassy. Van Tongeren was arrested for desecrating the Perth Hebrew Congregation's Synagogue in Mount Lawley with swastikas.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), through the work of Jeremy Jones, its current president, has monitored the level of anti-Semitism. Since October 1989, annual reports have been compiled documenting incidences, as well as activities of groups and individuals responsible for purveying anti-Semitism in Australia, such as Dr Fredrick Toben of the Adelaide Institute and Olga Scully in Tasmania.⁶ These incidents include abusive emails, graffiti such as 'Bomb the Jews', mail and telephone threats, verbal harassment and abuse, including the bullying of Jewish children at school by some Muslim children, and actual physical violence against individuals and institutions. The majority of such attacks are anonymous so it is difficult to determine who is responsible.⁷ In his introduction for the 2002–03 survey, Jones notes that there were 'over 500 reports of anti-Jewish violence, vandalism, harassment and intimidation'. He presents a graph, showing that since 11 September 2001, the number of incidents has almost doubled,⁸ with 63 per cent of such attacks occurring in New South Wales in 2002–03.⁹

Since 1995, telephone intimidation and hate letters have decreased. However, the phenomenon of hate email has been growing rapidly. In 2003, hate email increased by 20 per cent from the previous year. Indeed, online media, including hate emails and websites, is the area of greatest concern today. As Jones points out, 'individuals with time on their hands are able to reach a variety of audiences quickly and inexpensively'.¹⁰ The medium used by anti-Semites may be new, but their messages are not. They continue to propagate the traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes ranging from 'the international Jewish conspiracy', 'the 'Jewish/Nazi' analogy', via Holocaust denial to 'Mystical Jewish Power' (promoting the myth that Australian Jews influence public policy through their wealth and business connections), and that Jews are 'Un-Christian' and Judaism is 'Anti-Christianity'.¹¹

The Australian League of Rights continues to be the longest-running, most influential, as well as best organised and most substantially financed, racist organisation in Australia.¹² Founded in Victoria by Eric Butler, in 1945, it became a national movement in 1960. From the beginning, Butler has been

opposed to Israel, attacked the veracity of the Holocaust, and portrayed Jews as dangerous and evil creatures. Through the Heritage Bookshop in Melbourne, he has sold anti-Semitic literature, including the Tsarist forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which fosters world conspiracy libel against world Jewry. Today, the League is directed by Betty Luks in Adelaide and it continues to publish its weekly newsletter, *On Target*, as well as *New Times* and *Social Creditor*, both of which started in the 1930s. The League has established links with other far right organisations such as the Australian National Action, the Australian National Socialist Movement, National Alliance and members of Pauline Hanson's One Nation, as well as supporting anti-immigration groups and working with Holocaust deniers such as Melbourne lawyer, John Bennett. The Citizens' Electoral Councils, centred in Melbourne, draw on material produced by Lyndon la Rouche, an American anti-Semite and Holocaust denier.¹³ There are also a number of small, radical, 'identity' churches which claim to be Christian, but emphasise the idea of white supremacy, and portray Jews as evil. All these groups have increased their use of the internet in recent years to spread their message of hate.¹⁴

The substantial increase of anti-Jewish verbal and physical attacks in Australia, especially since September 2001, reflects a worldwide phenomenon.¹⁵ Commenting in *The Age*, journalist Peter Fray wrote:

Incredible as it may seem, barely 60 years after the Holocaust, antisemitism has returned to haunt Western Europe's 1.13 million Jews. Since September 11, there has been an average of 18 attacks a day on Jewish people or their property.¹⁶

This violence has developed over three main stages, only two of which directly related to Israel. The first stage began with the al-Aqsa Intifada of September 2000. The second stage followed the attack on the twin towers in New York on September 11. The third stage started with the suicide bomber who in March 2002 exploded his bomb on the Passover Seder night at the Park Hotel, Netanya. This attack on the first night of Passover resulted in the Israeli incursion into the West Bank and Gaza and the controversy surrounding Israel's attack on Jenin.¹⁷ It is understandable that both the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada and the operation in Jenin inflamed Muslim feelings against Israel and that these feelings of hatred were extended to Jews in general. However, the link with September 11 is much less obvious and involved a number of elements, including the false claim that the operation was actually planned by the Mossad, the misconception that the increase of anti-Muslim feelings and the decision to go to war against Iraq post-September 11 were a result of the Jewish lobby in the United States, and the belief that the attack on the twin towers was planned because of Jewish connections to high finance.

Following the Park Hotel bombing, at the end of April 2002, attacks took place against Jews and Jewish institutions across Europe, and also in North America and Australasia in what was described as a list 'too long to summarise adequately'.¹⁸ These attacks, including harassment and violence against individuals¹⁹ and vandalism against Jewish institutions, occurred in Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Germany, the Ukraine, Greece and Canada.²⁰ With this wave of anti-Jewish attacks, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in Vienna requested Professor Werner Bergmann and Dr Juliane Wetzel of the Centre of Research on Anti-Semitism in Berlin to undertake a review and analysis of these events. They produced a 105-page synthesis report entitled 'Manifestations of anti-Semitism in the European Union' in February 2003.²¹ This report has created significant controversy relating to the definition of anti-Semitism, the issue of anti-Zionism and the role played by the small minority of radical Muslim youth.²² The report has been placed on the website of the Centre of Research on Anti-Semitism but it has not been published because of the controversy surrounding its findings.

As a result of the violence beginning with the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, Israel's actions were compared with those of Hitler and Nazi Germany. A classic example is Portuguese Nobel Prize winning author, Jose Saramago, who drew parallels between Israel's bombing of Ramalla in 2002 with the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz/Birkenau.²³ Yet, in my view, no comparison can be made with Nazi genocide, which aimed to kill the entire Jewish people. The attacks on Ramalla were Israel's response to the horrific crimes perpetrated by the suicide bombers against innocent civilians and their ramifications in Israel. During the present al-Aqsa Intifada, 3000 Palestinians have been killed but close to 1000 Israelis have also died in suicide bombings and Palestinian attacks.

In 1971, Walter Laqueur published an article entitled 'The Jewish Question Today: Between Old Zionism and New Anti-Semitism', in which he argues that 'the Jewish Question has always been a sensitive barometer' in terms of tolerance and humanity.²⁴ Laqueur points to the pessimistic conclusions of the German Jewish writer, Jacob Wassermann who in 1921 stated,

Vain to seek obscurity. They say: The coward. He is creeping into hiding, driven by his evil conscience. Vain to go among them and offer them one's hand. They say: Why does he take such liberties with his Jewish obtrusiveness? Vain to keep faith with them as a comrade in arms or a fellow citizen. They say: He is Proteus, he can assume any shape or form. Vain to help them strip off the chains of slaves. They say: No doubt, he found it profitable. Vain to counteract the poison. They brew new venom.²⁵

More than eighty years after Wassermann wrote this pessimistic comment, half a century after Auschwitz and a generation after Laqueur wrote his article, the issue of anti-Jewish feelings and the reasons for the increase in violent attacks on Jews across the Diaspora, as well as in Israel, has moved again into the centre of public and academic debate. Anti-Semitism has proved to be 'Proteus', not only assuming 'any shape or form' but with key concepts such as world conspiracy theories and Holocaust denial being promoted by groups from across the political spectrum determined to attack Israel, the Jewish state, and Jews in general.

Historian Robert Wistrich, world authority on the history of anti-Semitism,²⁶ points to Muslim anti-Semitism as a decisive factor in the rise of anti-Semitism in the world today. In a booklet entitled *Muslim Anti-Semitism: A Clear and Present Danger*, he argues that the 'vast output of anti-Semitic literature in the Arab and Muslim world' has 'become increasingly apparent as the anti-Semitic virus has taken root in the body politic of Islam to an unprecedented degree'.²⁷ Other scholars have supported his theme of Muslim anti-Judaism, arguing that recent Islamic writings have drawn on anti-Jewish trends in traditional Islam. These include statements about Jews in the Qur'an, which 'see the Jews as a people who do evil'.²⁸ The Pact of Omar, thought to have been drawn up in the ninth century, created the concept of the *dhimmi* status, extending protection at first to Christians and afterwards to Jews, based on the payment of special taxes and acceptance of subjugation and inferiority.²⁹ However, whilst Jews did suffer periods of forced conversions and massacres under Islam, on the whole they enjoyed a more peaceful coexistence in Muslim societies than they did under Christianity.

Since the creation of the State of Israel the situation has changed. Over 600,000 Jews have fled Arab lands since 1948. Today only a tiny minority are left, mainly in Morocco and Iran. The Arab world has fostered Jew-hatred by publishing the *Protocols* and a plethora of anti-Semitic literature. In 2002, the *Protocols* formed the basis of a thirty-part television series produced in Egypt.³⁰ The Arab media has published anti-Jewish cartoons, with negative images of Jews, and has continued to promote the blood libel accusation that Jews have to use gentile blood for religious festivals such as Pesach and Purim. Leaders of radical Muslim movements such as Hamas and Hizbollah disseminate the idea that Jews wish 'to take vengeance on the whole world for their history of persecution and humiliation'.³¹

Since September 11, Muslim radicals have intensified their attacks on Jews. Some have claimed that the attack on the twin towers in New York was planned by Israel's secret service, the *Mossad*, and that Jewish and Israeli employees were warned about the attack in advance.³² Another key element of present day radical Islam is the denial of the events of the Holocaust, with the belief that

Jews created the 'hoax of the Holocaust' in order to justify the creation of the state of Israel. One of the most disturbing aspects of recent Muslims attacks on Israel is the equation of Zionism with Nazism and the ongoing accusation that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people.³³ The Jews, who were once the victims, have now become the perpetrators, and they maintain that the war of 1948 or Naqba (disaster), is equated with the *Shoah* (Holocaust). Again, in my view, such comparisons cannot be made. Even some modern Arab scholars have pointed out that in 1948 the Palestinians lost their homes and property; during the Shoah six million European Jews lost their lives.³⁴

A number of scholars, both Jewish and Christian, have argued that the 'new anti-Semitism' is directed against the 'Jewish State', whilst the 'old anti-Semitism' was directed against individual Jews.³⁵ In a well argued article, Brian Klug opposes this view and claims that,

The underlying hostility towards it [the Jewish state] in the region is not hostility towards the state *as* Jewish but *as* European interloper or *as* American client or *as* non-Arab and non-Muslim—and, in addition, *as* oppressor. Whatever names we may legitimately give these attitudes, "antisemitism" is not one of them.³⁶

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has led to legitimate criticisms of Israel's policies but the problem is that these criticisms have been taken over by Jew-hatred with images of the traditional anti-Jewish stereotype of the satanic nature of the Jew out to destroy the world. The consequence is that criticism of Israel now nourishes the general hatred of Jews, particularly in the Muslim, Arab world. Klug himself notes that: 'this is not to say that anti-Semitism cannot and does not enter into anti-Zionism in the Arab and Muslim world. Clearly it does. Moreover, the longer Israel is at loggerheads with the rest of the region, the more likely it is that anti-Semitism will take on a life of its own.'³⁷

It could be argued that the connection between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism is not a new phenomenon. During the 1960s, the Soviet government constantly attacked Israel, using traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes in the media.³⁸ In 1971, four years after the 1967 Israeli conquest of the West Bank and Gaza, Laqueur wrote:

The establishment of the Israeli state was the greatest turning point in the 2000 years of Jewish history; it had a profound effect on Jewish life all over the world. But while esteem for Jewish determination and prowess has increased, the position of the Jews has not become more secure. In a world where might counts more than right, Jews are still at the mercy of superior forces. Zionism has not changed this...The state created by Zionism thus faces an uphill struggle to be accepted as a fact that can no longer be undone. As long as this struggle continues, the

existence and independence of the state of Israel is no more assured than that of other small countries situated in an area where an expansive super-power has staked its claim.³⁹

It is more than thirty years since Laqueur wrote about Zionism and the 'new anti-Semitism', and there have been many important developments, including peace agreements with two of Israel's neighbours, Egypt and Jordan. However, Israel still feels besieged—the al-Aqsa Intifada, which began in 2000 with the constant threat of suicide bombings within Israel and physical violence against individuals and Jewish institutions across the Jewish world, including Australia on the edge of the Diaspora, has added to the Jewish sense of embattlement.

It is important to recognise that in the same period there has also been a substantial increase in attacks on Muslims in Australia and elsewhere. The Muslim migration to Australia is a fairly recent phenomenon. In 1947 there were almost no Muslims in Australia, compared with 32,000 Jews who comprised 0.4 per cent of the population. While the Jewish population has increased to 84,000 in the 2001 census, Jews still only constitute 0.4 per cent of the population. In comparison, the Muslim population increased from 22,000 in 1971, or 0.2 per cent of the Australian population, to 201,000 in 1996, or 1.1 per cent of the population, and further increasing to 282,000 in 2001, or 1.5 per cent of the population.⁴⁰ Against the background of these demographic developments, the Muslim Arabs have become a large and visible target of growing xenophobic sentiments endemic in Australian society, which has a history of attacking visible minorities who are 'the last people off the boat'.

The rise of anti-Muslim feeling as part of the general Australian racist xenophobia has been fed by a number of specific events. Already during the Gulf War there were significant attacks on Australian Muslims, with women wearing the *hijab* being the major targets of abuse.⁴¹ In 2001, three events came together to produce strong anti-Muslim feeling in Australia. These were the issue of gang rape in Sydney, the arrival of illegal boat people highlighted by the incident of the *Tampa* when the Australian government refused to allow the 440 refugees who had been on board the capsized boat to land on Australian shores and the events of September 11.

In the weeks after September 11, members of the Arabic community suffered abuse, with hijab-wearing women and children again being a key target of abuse. Women endured verbal abuse, were spat at and some had their veils pulled off.⁴² Arabic newspapers and institutions received bomb and death threats and mosques were desecrated and attacked by arsonists. The worst attacks occurred in Queensland, where two Brisbane mosques, in Holland Park,⁴³ and Kuraby⁴⁴ were damaged by fire, and arsonists were apprehended while trying to set fire to another mosque on the Gold Coast. In Perth, the Nooral Islam Mosque had human faeces thrown into its grounds. Schools and pupils were also targets,

with a bus carrying Muslim schoolchildren in Brisbane being hit with rocks, bottles and other missiles⁴⁵ and the Islamic College of South Australia in Adelaide being vandalised and forced to close after bomb threats.⁴⁶ Arabic Churches were targeted with racist graffiti.⁴⁷ The viciousness of the anti-Muslim feeling was expressed on talk-back radio and in hate mail such as: 'you are all Muslim fanatic terrorist criminals' and 'you are all marked for death. All Muslims must suffer for this and other terrorist acts'.⁴⁸

The Jewish community responded to the anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli attacks by organising rallies across the world. In Sydney, a major protest rally held in April 2001 attracted between 5–10,000 members of Sydney Jewry. Australian Jewry has been identified by the police as 'number one terrorist target' and has been on high security alert. Young volunteers provide much of this increased security but despite this voluntary approach, professional trainers and some professional security guards are also employed, placing a great financial strain on the community. The Muslim community has also had to increase its security measures and both communities have faced skyrocketing insurance costs, which are difficult to keep up with.

Let me add a personal note. Over the last few years I have developed a new definition of being a Jewish woman—it means having your handbag searched before entering a synagogue, something I would never have imagined as a young girl growing up in Australia. I also wonder what the impact is on our idealistic Jewish young people, our best and brightest, who devote so much of their spare time to guarding Jewish institutions, synagogues and schools. This experience of anti-Semitism has led not only to a sense of threat, but also an awareness of the obligation to combat this rise of xenophobic and racist attacks. As an historian, I realise that Jews on their own are not in a position to defend themselves. They need the support of others.

The commonality of this experience of fear of attack and the need for increased security has led to one positive and important initiative—the creation two years ago of the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews, supported by their roof bodies—the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Australian Federation of Islamic Council and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

Inter-faith dialogue began in Australia during World War II with the creation of the New South Wales Council of Christians and Jews and, although this initiative petered out after the war, it was later rejuvenated. Over the last five years there have been a number of important initiatives including the New South Wales-based Women's Interfaith Network, the government-sponsored Australian Partnership of Ethnic and Religious Organisations, and the 'Living in Harmony' projects, which are also funded by the federal government to create greater understanding of the cultural diversity in Australia.

The creation of the National Dialogue at the federal level takes these initiatives onto a new level of discussion. This new organisation aims to build bridges and create a better understanding of key issues during this period of increased ethnic and religious tension in Australia. In a recent paper, one member of this dialogue, Peta Pellach, outlines the three main areas of discussion as follows:

Matters of national importance where a religious perspective is pertinent; matters of theological interest that are of significance to all the partners in the dialogue; religious ideas and practices that are unique to one of the participants in the dialogue and require explanation in order to create understanding.⁴⁹

Relating to national issues, the problems of globalism, dealing with tragedy and foreign policy decisions, especially in relation to the War on Terrorism and Iraq, are the main areas for discussion. In relation to theological issues, the concept of 'Covenant', the meaning of a 'just war', Messiah, peace, medical ethics and educating the next generation of believers are the key areas of concern. Possibly the most challenging of the three discussion areas relates to exploring religious concepts which are unique to one faith group such as Evangelism, the Exodus, the Trinity, Jihad, and the Jewish concepts of Israel and the love of Zion, meaning Jerusalem, which is the basis of modern Zionism.

Developing a wider dialogue between religious groups is an important element in the present crisis facing not just Australia but the whole world. In an editorial published in the American Jewish periodical, *Shofar*, Zev Garber has summarised well-known scholar of Islam, Bernard Lewis' suggestions of ways to overcome the problems as: 'self criticism, interpersonal dialogue, and the need to study and observe the totality of a group's behaviour and not only doctrinal, popular, and journalistic teachings'.⁵⁰ To achieve this, Garber has stressed:

Learning the complexity of the historical, religious, cultural, psychological, and political factors of the Palestinian national movement is imperative for Jews. Similarly, Arabs and Muslims must come to realize that Jewish self-pride as expressed in peoplehood, religion, and the statehood of Israel are answers to Jewish identity, survival and anti-Semitism. Both communities must learn that blatant immoral acts by individuals or states can never be condoned.⁵¹

Creating a more balanced perspective in both communities is a necessary precursor for any real peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and also in the broader, world scene. However, this needs to take place at a number of different levels. The National Dialogue relates to the religious roof bodies, and as such mainly touches the elite, the top leadership. Efforts to penetrate at the grass roots are also needed, and this can be best achieved through school programs and curricula. The innovative program of 'Goodness and Kindness' run by

Kuranda Seyit and Rabbi Zelman Kastel represents an important innovation in this regard, but such activities need to be extended.

The theory of the 'clash of civilizations' developed by Huntington sought to divide the world into a clash between the Judeo-Christian heritage of the West and Islam.⁵² However, Osama bin Laden and other Muslim terrorist leaders do not represent the majority of Muslims, just as the extremist Jewish leader, Rabbi Kahane, did not represent the Jewish people and, indeed, was not permitted to take his seat in the Israeli Knesset because of his extremist views. The divide between the fundamentalists and the conciliators represents what has been called 'a clash within civilizations'. In 2003, in a speech to the Subcommittee on Near East and South Asian Affairs of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Knesset member Rabbi Michael Melchior stressed this point. He advocated the need to empower the moderates to be joined in 'a cross-cultural coalition to counter the extremists in each camp'. He stated:

An imam and a rabbi may disagree over many things. One's God and His Messengers may not be like the other's. But if both agree that neither of their gods and prophets wants us to kill each other, then a partnership can begin...

Melchior argued that the true 'culture clash' will actually be an intra-civilisational fight to change public opinion in the two societies, a clash between the totalitarian extremists (both Muslim and Jewish) on the one side, and the rational moderates (both Muslim and Jewish) on the other. The political leaders of today must do much more than pay lip-service in support of the religious moderates. It must be a top priority for the enlightened world to empower them. We should all applaud the Nobel Peace Prize committee for taking a first step in this direction. The governments of the world must summon all the creativity and resources at their disposal to enable a coalition of moderate religious leaders to change the way their constituents perceive adherents of competing civilisations. The voice of this coalition must be heard overpoweringly in local media, in schools, synagogues and mosques. The media prefer to broadcast fiery radicals, and extremists have a built-in advantage in the competition for public exposure. Moderate religious leaders must be given whatever tools they need to redress this imbalance, and educate their peoples towards realistic moderation, rather than romantic martyrdom. Otherwise, the extremist religious elements will continue to dominate public opinion and fan the flames of violence.⁵³

While the 'flames of violence' have been much more horrific in the battle between Israel and the Palestinians, especially since the outbreak of violence with the second Intifada in September 2000, we in distant Australia have not been immune from this religious and racial hatred and violence. I would like to support Rabbi Melchior's suggestion that what is needed to counter this extremism, which breeds division and hatred, is a coalition of the conciliators.

With the creation of the National Dialogue, one step has been taken in this direction over the last two years, but it is too early to assess how significant its impact will be. If we are to ensure that 'sacred' beliefs create harmony and not division, much greater efforts need to be made to ensure that the conciliators triumph, not the extremists on both sides, who have caused so much damage to our society and I would argue are, perhaps, the real blasphemers since all members of their religious groups are tarnished by this brush of extremism and violence. Those who so focus on the importance of the sacred—such as the Jewish settlers in Hebron or organisations such as Hamas—and fail to recognise the rights of others—end up creating the ultimate blasphemy as they create hatred and destruction.

ENDNOTES

¹ Rutland, Suzanne D. and Sophie Caplan, *With One Voice: the History of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies*, Sydney, Australian Jewish Historical Society, 1998, p. 262.

² *Maitland Mercury*, 14 September 2001, p. 14.

³ Huntington, Samuel P., *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996.

⁴ Rutland, Suzanne D., 'The Jewish Experience', in Murray Goot and Rodney Tiffen (eds), *Australia's Gulf War*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992, pp. 91-92.

⁵ See Daly, Martin 'Trial cut short as Roche admits guilt', 'News', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29-30 May 2004, p. 4.

⁶ The story of the activities of Toben and Scully and the court cases against them is outside the purview of this paper. For a summary see Jones, Jeremy assisted by Landis, Josh October 2002 to September 2003 Report, ECAJ, pp. 57-63.

⁷ Jones, Landis October 2002 to September 2003 Report, p. 17.

⁸ Jones, Landis October 2002 to September 2003 Report, p. 14, reproduced in Rutland, *The Jews in Australia*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.156.

⁹ Jones, Landis October 2002 to September 2003 Report, p. 15.

¹⁰ Jones, Landis October 2002 to September 2003 Report, p. 47.

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion of these concepts, see Jones, Landis October 2002 to September 2003 Report, pp. 7-14.

¹² For a more detailed discussion of the activities of the League see Rutland and Caplan, *With One Voice: the History of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies*, pp. 282-285.

¹³ Jones, Landis October 2002 to September 2003 Report, pp. 64-66.

¹⁴ Jones, Landis October 2002 to September 2003 Report, pp. 67-69.

¹⁵ In a report written by the Washington-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Fire and Broken Glass: The Rise of Antisemitism in Europe*, New York and Washington, DC: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 2002, they stated in the foreword that: 'As this report makes clear, there is an alarming rise in anti-Semitic violence in Europe: but it is on the rise in other parts of the world as well'. As cited in Klug, Brian 'The collective Jew: Israel and the new anti-Semitism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2003, p. 118.

¹⁶ Peter Fray, *The Age*, Melbourne, 22 June 2002.

¹⁷ Gardner, Paul 'The new threat: global antisemitism', *Australian Jewish News*, 16 August 2003, p. 19.

¹⁸ Schoenfeld, Gabriel, Editorial comment, 'Israel and Anti-Semitism', *Commentary*, June 2002.

¹⁹ The worst incident occurred when skinheads stabbed David Rosensweig to death outside a kosher pizza shop in Toronto. Coren, Michael "'Blaming it on the Jews": Antisemitism is an old, never-ending story', *Sun Media* (Toronto), 20 July 2002.

- ²⁰ There were a large number of articles about these attacks published in the Australian media in 2002. See for example Evans-Pritchard, Ambrose 'Jews face resurgence of hate in Europe', *The Age* (Melbourne), 31 May 2002; and Fray, Peter 'Europe cultivates the ugly flower of prejudice', *The Age* (Melbourne), 22 June 2002.
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- ²² 'Anti-Semitism Study in the Spotlight', Centre of Research on Anti-Semitism, *Newsletter*, no. 26, December 2, 2003.
- ²³ World Jewish Congress (WJC) Institute, 18 May 2002, in ECAJ files, Sydney.
- ²⁴ Laqueur, Walter 'The Jewish Question today: Between Old Zionism and New Anti-Semitism', *Encounter*, vol. XXXVII, no. 2, August 1971, p. 52.
- ²⁵ Wassermann, Jacob *Life as a German Jew*, 1921, cited in Laqueur, 'The Jewish Question today: Between Old Zionism and New Anti-Semitism', p. 44.
- ²⁶ Wistrich, Robert S. *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*, New York, Pantheon, c. 1991.
- ²⁷ Wistrich, Robert S. *Muslim Anti-Semitism: A Clear and Present Danger*, The American Jewish Committee, 2002.
- ²⁸ Garber, Zev 'America Attacked and Zion Blamed—Old-New Antisemitism: *Fatwa* Against Israel', Editorial Viewpoint, *Shofar*, vol. 20, issue 2, p. 3.
- ²⁹ Garber, 'America Attacked and Zion Blamed—Old-New Antisemitism: *Fatwa* Against Israel', p. 3.
- ³⁰ Wistrich, p. 3.
- ³¹ Statement of Hizbollah's senior cleric, Sheikh Husyn Fadallah, as cited in Wistrich, p.12.
- ³² Wistrich, pp. 19-20.
- ³³ Wistrich, pp. 37-42.
- ³⁴ Based on information provided by Dr Irit Abramsky-Bligh, Yad Vashem Education Department, who has been teaching Holocaust courses to Israeli Arabs in recent years.
- ³⁵ Well-known lawyer, human rights activist and Canadian parliamentarian, Irwin Cotler, summed this up as Israel having become 'the collective Jew among the nations' - as cited in Klug, 'The collective Jew: Israel and the new anti-Semitism', p. 120.
- ³⁶ Klug, 'The collective Jew: Israel and the new anti-Semitism', p. 134.
- ³⁷ Klug, 'The collective Jew: Israel and the new anti-Semitism', p. 134.
- ³⁸ Wistrich has written about issues of left-wing antisemitism. In 1985, he published a book entitled *Anti-Zionism as an expression of antisemitism in recent years*, published in Jerusalem by the Shazar Library, Institute of Contemporary Jewry.
- ³⁹ Laqueur, 'The Jewish Question today: Between Old Zionism and New Anti-Semitism', p. 49.
- ⁴⁰ Figures from Cahill, Desmond 'Religion and Social Cohesion in Australia: an interim report', presented at the *Academic Colloquium, 'After September 11: Religion, Diversity and Cohesion in the Global Neighbourhood*, 13-14 September 2002, RMIT, Melbourne.
- ⁴¹ Asmar, Christine 'The Arab-Australian Experience', in Goot and Tiffen, (eds), pp. 57-81.
- ⁴² Attacks on Muslim women were an ongoing problem. See the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September 2001, *The Australian*, 15 September 2001, *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 2001, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20-21 October 2001, and the *Canberra Times*, 26 November 2001.
- ⁴³ *The Australian*, 15 September 2001.
- ⁴⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*, 24 September 2001.
- ⁴⁵ *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), 14 September 2001.
- ⁴⁶ *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 14 September 2001.
- ⁴⁷ *The Australian*, 14 September 2001.
- ⁴⁸ *Canberra Times*, 14 September 2001, p. 2.
- ⁴⁹ Pellach, Peta 'Interfaith Dialogue and the Issue of Israel', paper presented at the 16th Annual Conference of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies, Melbourne, 16-17 February 2004.
- ⁵⁰ Garber, 'America Attacked and Zion Blamed—Old-New Antisemitism: *Fatwa* Against Israel', p. 4.
- ⁵¹ Garber, p. 4.

⁵² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996.

⁵³ Speech by Knesset member, Rabbi Michael Melchior, to the Subcommittee on Near East and South Asian Affairs of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 15 October 2003.