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Politics and Religion

Fundamentalism and political extremism

Michael Trainor
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I begin this paper by reflecting on some of the more popular political leaders in many countries around the world. Their names surface constantly before us in news briefings, international events and meetings.

Common factors link these political leaders; they are male (one commentator has even called them 'Alpha males'[1]), powerful and wealthy. While each is different given their diverse political environments, their style of leadership—and this, of course, is my idiosyncratic analysis— each dismisses dissent, removes opposition, and invents 'truths'—their interpretation of reality—believed to be self-evident. (One of them has even coined the phrase 'fake news' in disputing interpretations of reality that do not cohere with his agenda.) They easily identify conspiracy, seek to control media and other means of social communication that contradicts their predominant political agenda.

The climate that results is two-fold.

One is of rapturous applause by their followers and political allies. The political climate that results leads to a culture that deifies the leaders who are against liberal-progressive views and can do no wrong. A simple, monochromatic interpretation of the world dominates. The single most important defining value that shapes political success and popularity is nationalism and national loyalty.[2] Economic success, protected by militarism, legitimises a national identity and becomes the litmus test of global importance. An exaggerated nationalistic ideology when promoted by the kind of political leadership described above further emboldens those who hold fundamentalist and extremist views. Those who have such a mindset reject pluralism and affirm a political system that encourages egoistical pursuits antithetical to the common good.[3]

Another climate or spirit emerges at the same time, and one about which I am deeply concerned. It is one of suspicion, fear, antagonism and indifference to others. These 'others' include asylum seekers, and, depending on the political context, religious adherents of 'other' faith traditions, and the poor—though in the first blush of the appeal which such leaders have to a popular nationalism or populism, these political leaders would have wooed the poorer members of their constituencies who eventually become their victims.

In this paper I seek to explore fundamentalism and political extremism and their implications for inter-religious, Jewish-Christian conversations. I want to do two things. First, I offer my definition of political extremism and fundamentalism and explicate their epistemological and economic foundations. I suggest that these social expressions are a response to western neo-liberalism. I shall also suggest in the second half of my reflections that fundamentalism is not a phenomenon of a particular group. It is a human phenomenon. All of us are fundamentalists 'of sorts'. Second, I want to propose some responses to political extremism and fundamentalism that might be helpful in the light of our inter-faith encounters that draw on our respective theological traditions. These centre on humility, openness and generosity.

1. Political extremism and fundamentalism

I understand 'political extremism' as the exaggerated expression of an ideology considered by its adherents as unquestionable and for some who take a quasi-theological position on secular matters, of semi-divine status.

> Extremism…aims at 'monism' and 'monocracy' in the sense of the enforcement of a bundled claim to power which – if at all possible – eliminates any competition, does not tolerate variety and opposition, seeks to render it harmless at the very least, stops political change, obstructs and suppresses the autonomous commitment of groups and individuals, at least when this stands in the way of the ambitions of the rulers.

This ideology has social consequences. Extremist views, as we know only too well, can lead to violence and death as the ideologue seeks to impose their point of view upon others they consider heretical, corrupting or immoral. In the many examples of the violent, death-dealing acts that we are so aware of and for some of us, painfully experienced by those close to us, we distinguish between acts perpetrated by committed ideological advocates and those who are criminals enacting social protest and seeking to inflict

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pain under the banner of an ideology, often religious. For a person who holds extremist views, that can lead to nefarious and fatal actions, the ability to entertain difference and engage in dialogue is limited, if not absent. For such a person, their epistemological belief system rests upon a simple, Manichaean, black and white, right or wrong interpretation of reality. Partial truth claims do not exist. There is only one, non-negotiable truth, which the adherent possesses. Simplicity trumps complexity, 'common sense' trumps intellect, untrammelled zeal trumps reason and wisdom. I will argue that Fundamentalism, a particular interpretation of reality and truth claims, especially religious truth, buttresses the ideologue's epistemological frame of reference.

Fundamentalism emerged from a nineteenth century North American evangelical Protestant context which affirmed the literal interpretation of the Bible as the foundation of Christian faith and the unchangeable word of God.[5] It emerged in reaction to liberal-critical approaches to biblical interpretation which recognised the historical-cultural conditioning of biblical texts. Those who hold this fundamentalist perspective are, usually, christocentric (in the sense that without Jesus there is only hell[6]), against feminism, gay relationships, are economically conservative and politically obsessed with order, discipline and security.[7]

A Christian context is the origin of this classical notion of fundamentalism. However, the term 'fundamentalism' has been applied beyond Christians to adherents of other religious and institutional systems. In its usual application, fundamentalism identifies those who hold absolutist views that represent or define for them irrefutable truth. It is not difficult to see how such an epistemological position leads to violent acts committed under the banner of religion or nation. The South American Catholic theologian, Leonardo Boff suggests,

'One who sees himself or herself as the holder of an absolute truth cannot tolerate another kind of truth, and this is destined to intolerance. And intolerance causes contempt for the other, and contempt engenders aggression, and aggression brings wars to combat and exterminate those who have erred. Religious conflicts emerge everywhere, with an incalculable number of victims.'[8]

We know in more recent decades of how non-critical, extremist attitudes when melded with religious doctrines take on a style of violence that is considered divinely endorsed. We are in, not for the first time in history, an *epistemological* and *social* crisis. We desire cultural meaning and social stability at a time when many of the world's leaders seem to back away from sane, measured political engagement and social encounter. We desire social and political systems that will protect, enhance human dignity and bring justice, especially to those who are impoverished or victims of tragedy.[9] One Catholic theologian, Anthony Carroll, identifies the impoverishment that people feel at times of vulnerability and the inadequacy of solutions proposed to deal with these situations,

'The secular horizon of modern societies is often poorly equipped to deal with the tragic aspects of human life such as illness, suffering, and death. Short of resources of existential meaning, purely secular programs in advanced modernity often turn to chemical [or economic] solutions to extinguish the pain and existential angst that face us at such time. These solutions, whilst having an important contribution to make, do not provide adequate support in these moments of human life.'

Carroll recognises that generally we struggle to respond adequately and comprehensively to people's pain, struggles and fears. We know the inadequacy of pharmaceutical solutions to people's suffering and deep need. We also know that no amount of available funding and welfare, though helpful, addresses the real cause of human impoverishment and social isolation. The human malaise is deeper than it seems on the surface. Within this setting of impoverished and destabilised societies, it is easy to see how religion can be promoted as the panacea. Further, people in these situations can also feel a sense of social exclusion and meaninglessness brought on by unanticipated change from modernity that they identify with globalisation and nwesternisation. In this situation religion, interpreted and promoted from a basic or fundamentalist perspective, offers identity, protection and security. It can provide people with an interpretative key for understanding their situation and responding to it. This in turn can lead to opposition, even extreme and violent opposition, that allows them to reassert their identity and address their experience of social exclusion.

2. Western neo-liberalism

A contributing factor to the perceived global rise in religious fundamentalism and violent extremism (terrorism) is the neo-liberal western obsession with ownership and consumption.[11] The preoccupation with wealth and property reduces the world into haves and have-nots, pits cultures against one another and produces an environment of unrest and social disease. For peoples victimised by a global wealth imbalance and conscious of a penchant for greed, sometimes expressed by leaders as they seek to address a 'trade imbalance', violence, formed within religious contexts, become the means perceived by some to redress this social and economic imbalance. Terrorism thus becomes a form of defence of the weak against the powerful and economic elite. We have seen the results of this more recently, not only in the increased acts of terrorism in places and cities we once thought 'safe', but by the forced displacement of people from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans. These have sought asylum in Europe. According to the 2014 report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, almost 60 million people had been displaced. We are now aware of the most significant displacement of human beings on this planet since World War II.[12] We know well the response to this crisis, when, in one day, 43,000 people, half of them children, sought refuge in Europe and tent cities sprang up at borders. One social commentator even interprets the UK decision to leave the European Union (EU) as a response to this refugee crisis and the social anger that came from this.

> 'Anger stirred up a winning turnout in the depressed, down-at-heel cities of England…Anger at immigration, globalisation, social liberalism and even feminism, polling shows, translated into a vote to reject the EU. As if victory were a licence to spread hatred, anger has since lashed Britain's streets with an outburst of racist abuse.'

If this observation is even partly correct, then the UK response to leave the EU emerged from a Western xenophobic reaction to neo-liberal 'values' that were perceived as being undermined by these people from 'other' countries. The reaction emerged out of poorer sectors of the UK population.

3. A christian-jewish response

Anger, symbolised in the Brexit vote, is one tangible reaction to social change accompanied by a rise in political fundamentalism leading to expressions of extremism evidenced in the spread of hatred and racial abuse in the UK. This scenario is not unfamiliar to us and I have sought to describe it more generally, though I recognise that my analysis needs further rigour and expansion.

How might we, as religious interlocutors involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue, draw on our respective traditions to respond to or create an environment that could change the need for the kinds of issues that leads people to hold fundamentalist opinions and act out their extremist views? I would like to suggest that we have a richness within, though not exclusive to, our Jewish and Christian traditions to cultivate three virtues I consider 'fundamental' (if I might use this term); humility, openness that seeks dialogue for peace and generosity.

a. Humility

All of us are fundamentalists. This recognition, if we acknowledge it, leads us to a spirit of humility. At the heart of our belief in a living God lives a spirit of fundamentalism as we embrace what we believe are the core or fundamental elements of our faith traditions. These define our lives and religious practice. These beliefs are 'radical'. They reflect what is at the *root* (Lat. *radix*) of our lives, and offer existential meaning in a world that we experience as difficult, awkward, conflicted and confused. Leonardo Boff writes,

> 'The term fundamentalism has become a word used to accuse the other. 'Fundamentalist' is always the other. When one refers to oneself, be it referring to one's religious, political or economic views, one always prefers to use the term 'radical'. By using the term radical, we mean that we seek the roots of the problem in order to understand it, and after understanding the roots of the problem, we seek to undermine them, which is a very positive thing to do.' [14]

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Living with a generous spirit creates an environment that addresses one of the serious causes of global fundamentalism and religious extremism.

I think Boff offers us a helpful insight. In the us-them dichotomous, accusatory manner in which we speak of the 'fundamentalist' we need the humility to see that at our core we are also fundamentalists. We prefer, though, to see ourselves as radical in our desire to distinguish ourselves from the 'other'. But this humble recognition opens a space in us that allows for a communion of being and compassion with those who think and act in a manner with which we do not agree. Cultivating the virtue of humility may not lead to social change or alter the view of those who hold fundamentalist attitudes. It probably will not stop the occurrence of violent acts. It will offer us, though, with a resource that links us to a God who invites us to understand rather than condemn, to recognise that we are capable of 'terrorist dementia', violence against others and environmental devastation.

b. Openness and dialogue for peace

This recognition of what I hold as sacred (my 'radical' stance) and what another seeks to defend (as a 'fundamentalist') contains within it the seed for critical analysis of the various expressions of fundamentalism and its link to extremism. Boff's analysis above, that understanding the roots of what is important and problematic can lead to 'undermining' (Boff's expression) the causes. By 'undermining' I think Boff means to 'address' the issues. It alerts us to the value of retaining a spirit of humble openness to the situations we encounter, deep reflection on their causes and the issues related to them, and seek ways of dialogue, if possible, with those who disturb us. This means engaging in unpopular, even controversial conversations with interlocutors with those whose views or opinions I disagree. Such an approach moves us from postures of power and aggression toward laying the foundation for non-aggressive peace-making and peace building. To return to Boff again,

> 'Along with our aggressive constitution we also have a capacity for affection, for compassion, solidarity, and love. It is now urgent for us to draw out these forces from inside us so that we can direct history towards a more benevolent path. Any kind of delay in doing this is foolish…We have at our disposal resources to re-work violence through the social development of contention of violence and the use of rationality.'

Gleaning the wisdom of our respective theological traditions is an imperative at a time that is for many a period of social unrest and spiritual chaos. Those of us involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue are, in some respects, in a privileged position. We have the wisdom of our traditions that can bring forward values and virtues that can enhance the social contexts in which we live. As we engage with political and civic bodies, we can offer an alternative voice that raises up compassion for the poor and the importance of social inclusion of those who are disenfranchised by virtue of their social status, religious background or cultural origins.

c. Generosity

We know that the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) is not an agency for political change, but an umbrella body for those who live and act in the local, regional level. However theological convictions and religious actions are not apolitical realities. We believe they influence the world in which we live. In this viewpoint one of the important religious truths common to our religious traditions concerns the place of wealth and the role of our possessions. A counter-balance and moderating disposition in a Western world obsessed with possessions and ownership, which I have suggested is one of the causes for fundamentalism and extremism, can come from mining the theological traditions about wealth. From a Christian point of view shaped by the gospels, Jesus calls his followers to dispossess themselves of their possessions. This freedom from material possessiveness and spirit of generosity allows his followers to focus on the neediest and respond in ways that unites them with those who experience social ostracism. A similar wisdom emerges from the Tanakh's[16] prophetic tradition. This biblical conviction of the centrality of generosity offers a counterbalancing voice in a world preoccupied by wealth accumulation and inspired by the tactics of greed. Living with a generous spirit creates an environment that addresses one of the serious causes of global fundamentalism and religious extremism.

Conclusion

In this brief paper, I have sought to offer an insight into fundamentalism and political extremism. I have suggested that the popular world political leaders foster a social environment of exclusion, simplicity, and nationalism that dismisses any form of opposition and closes off any signs of critique, especially from traditional media and social communication sources. The political environment that results offers a potential seed-bed for fundamentalism, critical of integrative reflection and appreciative of simple

binary analysis. I have suggested that there is a link between fundamentalism and political extremism, especially in those situations where such analysis goes uncontested. This link is bolstered in social contexts of upheaval, poverty and political chaos. The kinds of leaders that I have been thinking of are perhaps not religious fundamentalists themselves, but draw on fundamentalist expressions of nationalist ideologies to bolster their political and economic agenda. Finally, I have suggested that that wisdom of our inter-religious, Jewish-Christian traditions, enhanced through respectful dialogue and mutual support, can assist towards creating a social environment and political atmosphere that is humble, open to dialogue for peace, and critical of a political economic agenda obsessed with material gain, greed and wealth.

Reference list

[1] Journalist Shekhar Gupta in a June 2017 address at a conference in India (https://www.ibtimes.co.in/alpha-males-modi-putin-trump-erdogan-xi-jinping-dominate-our-world-shekhar-gupta-7317000

[2] Anthony D. Smith defines nationalism as '[a]n ideological movement for attaining or maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential "nation"', in *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 9.

[3] On this and an exploration of the nature and various forms of extremism, see Uwe Backes, 'Meaning and Forms of Political Extremism in Past and Present,' Central European Political Studies Review 9: 4 (2007): 242-62, esp. p. 247.

[4] Backes, 'Meaning and Forms,' 249.

[5] Although, as pointed out to me by a colleague of Indian descent, 'Such fundamentalism goes back much further, probably about 5,000 BC in Hinduism and the evolution of the caste system as a way of the religious elite to control the common person'.

[6] The recent response by a popular Australian rugby player to a question about God's attitude to gays demonstrated the Jesus-Hell dichotomy that operates with some religious fundamentalists. Israel Folau was asked, 'What was gods [sic] plan for gay people?' His response was 'HELL…unless they repent of their sins and turn to God' (https://www.rt.com/sport/423183-israel-folau-gays-go-to-hell/).

[7] Leonardo Boff, *Fundamentalism, Terrorism and the Future of Humanity* (London: SPCK, 2006), 6.

[8] Boff, *Fundamentalism*, 15.

[9] I want to add a comment here offered by my colleague, Dr Ron Hoenig: 'There is also, of course, a secular economic issue here – that wages are more or less frozen at a time when capital is rampant. As well as that, people who belong to dominant cultures – even if they are not part of the elites – are seeing their "cultural aristocracy" threatened. So white working class men are, in many parts of the world being challenged by women, by people of colour, by ethnic, religious, sexual "minorities" for the unquestioned cultural power they possessed – even if they belonged to the more oppressed working classes. The battle for cultural hegemony is being won by cosmopolitan knowledge elites and whether or not the elites themselves are diverse, there is no doubt that there is more of a battle going on between the former culturally secure and the forces of cultural, secular, ethnic, etc. diversity.'

[10] Anthony Carroll, 'A Catholic Program for Advanced Modernity,' in Staf Hellemans and Josef Wissink (eds), *Towards a New Catholic Church in Advanced Modernity: Transformations, Visions, Tensions* (Reihe: Tilburg Theological Studies/Tilburger Theologische Studien, 2012), 64, as quoted by Richard S. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 2015), 142.

[11] It needs to be said that, unfortunately, such obsession is not an exclusive western phenomenon.

[12] For a further analysis of the neo-liberal penchant for property and possessions and its critique from a Christian-biblical-theological perspective, see Paul Babie and Michael Trainor, *Neo-liberalism and the Biblical Voice: Owning and Consuming* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018).

[13] 'The politics of anger', *The Economist*, 2 July 2016 <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21701478-triumph-brexit-campaign-warning-liberal-international-order-politics?cid1=cust/ednew/n/bl/n/20160630n/owned/n/n/nwl/n/n/n/>.

[14] Boff, *Fundamentalism*, x.

[15] Boff, *Fundamentalism*, 63.

[16] Tanakh/Tanach: Canonical collection of Jewish texts

Michael Trainor is a senior lecturer at the Australian Catholic University. His area of study is the New Testament with focus on the gospels and their relevance for our contemporary world and inter-religious dialogue. Michael is co-chair of the South Australian Council of Christians and Jews, Chair of the Australian Council of Christians and Jews and Executive Board member of the International Council of Christians and Jews. His latest work is a co-authored monograph (with Prof. Paul Babie), *Owning and Consuming: Neo-Liberalism and the Biblical Voice*. He is also a contributor to the forthcoming volume, *Enabling Dialogue about the Land: A Resource Book for Jews and Christians*. In 2007 Michael received an Order of Australia for services to theology, archaeology and inter-faith relations.

Render unto Caesar

Baptists and their relationship with the state

Marita Munro

From their very beginnings over 400 years ago, Baptists have affirmed the separation of Church and State. This belief was the natural outworking of their strong conviction about freedom of conscience. While Baptists hold many beliefs in common with other Christian and Protestant groups (being strongly influenced by the 16th century Protestant Reformation), their views about liberty and separation of church and state have tended to set them apart from other churches.
A brief historical sketch may shed some light on the matter.

Baptists had much in common with the 16th century Anabaptists (Radical Reformers) who challenged Protestant and Catholic practices, established communities of faith based on believers' baptism, (mostly) rejected the use of weapons and advocated separation of church and state. Thousands of Anabaptists were forced into exile or martyred by Protestants and Catholics alike for their convictions.[1]

Baptists emerged during the early 17th century when leaders of Church and State strongly believed that political stability depended upon religious uniformity. In other words, citizens should believe what they were told to believe and worship according to a set pattern, imposed by the State. The Monarch (from the time of King Henry VIII) was viewed as the Head of the Church. The authorities also argued that the Church (religion) needed the support of the State. King James I's introduction of the Law of Conformity, early in the 17th century made life very difficult for those who dissented from the Established church. Known as radical Puritans, they wanted to 'purify' the church of Roman Catholic practices, free citizens from State-imposed clerical laws, form their own covenanted congregations and appoint their own pastors. From among these Separatist groups the first Baptists emerged. Forced to leave England to seek religious freedom in Holland, they began to worship, baptise and organise their church as they believed God was directing them through Scripture. Their leaders included a former Anglican priest, John Smyth and an influential lawyer and layman, Thomas Helwys, who founded the first Baptist Church on English soil at Spitalfields, London in 1612. Smyth, Helwys and other Baptist leaders went on to write about liberty of conscience and religious freedom for all (not just for themselves)[2].

Here are just two examples,

> *'The magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel men to this or that form of religion or doctrine, but to leave Christian religion free, to every man's conscience…for Christ only is the King, and lawgiver of the church and conscience'*
> (John Smyth, 1612)

Thomas Helwys went even further in his letter addressed to King James 1,

> *'Let them be heretics (included Catholics), Turks (ie Muslims), Jews or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them' (1612).'*

These views put the Baptists in a minority in a society with an established church and a monarchy who believed strongly in the Divine Right of kings and the bishops. Baptists placed limits on the State's jurisdiction. While it could rightfully expect obedience from its subjects, the State could not compel individuals to believe against their conscience. Helwys earned a long prison sentence in London's Newgate Prison for his convictions.

These early Baptists appealed for toleration towards the Jews and for their return to England from which they have been expelled centuries earlier.[3]

Throughout the 17th century the pendulum swung backwards and forwards between the easing of restrictions for Dissenters under Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth and repression with the restoration of the English monarchy under Charles II which saw the 'Great Ejection' of clergy who did not conform to the Established Church's 1662 Act of Uniformity. [4] A limited degree of religious liberty was finally granted to Dissenters with the sealing of the 1689

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Edict of Toleration. This followed a bloodless revolution that saw the overthrow of Charles II's successor, James II and the ascent to the English throne of Protestant rulers, William and Mary of Orange (Holland). Repression of Roman Catholics however, would continue for a very long time to come.

The spiritual convictions underpinning Baptist views were based on their study of Scripture, particularly the New Testament:

1. Almighty God is Lord of the Conscience. Each person stands in a unique and sacred relationship with God. Every individual will one day need to give account of himself/herself before God the Judge.

2. The State (Civil authorities) has a legitimate sphere of authority – but it has no role in the church or the spiritual sphere.

3. Jesus Christ alone is the Lord of the Church.

4. Faith is a free gift from God. It cannot be forced. Faith involves a free autonomous act of obedience to Jesus as Lord.[5]

These convictions led to diversity rather than uniformity among Baptists; they also led to divisions. It was not simply a case of anything goes however, because Baptists appealed to Scripture as illuminated by the Holy Spirit for their ultimate authority.

Baptists have expressed their spiritual convictions in different ways throughout history. For example:

1. A rejection of infant baptism and an affirmation of believers' baptism as a symbol of conversion, identification with Christ in his death and resurrection and entry into the Body of Christ, the Church.

2. A denial of state-enforced religion.

3. Freedom to interpret Scripture for themselves without dependence upon external authorities.

4. Freedom to meet together for worship, to order their church life as they see fit and appoint their own pastors, teachers, deacons and elders (ie autonomy of the local church).

5. Freedom to preach, teach, learn, engage in mission and evangelism while respecting the freedom of others to believe or not to believe.

Over time, further expressions would come to the fore, shaped by different political and religious contexts and the relative numerical strength of Baptists in various parts of the world.

Today, Baptists are the world's largest Protestant denomination and the third largest Christian Church (after Roman Catholics and the Orthodox). It was estimated that in 2005 there were 48 million Baptist members and more than 150 million worshippers in Baptist churches.[6] The United States has the greatest number and variety of Baptists[7] largely because of Baptist convictions about freedom and independence.[8] Outside of North America, significant Baptist communities exist in Russia, Romania, Korea, Myanmar (Burma), Brazil , India and Nigeria.

Baptist life in North American began in the 1630s.

Those Separatists who left England for the American colonies, to escape religious bigotry and a corrupt establishment were shocked to discover the same spirit of intolerance in 'New England', this time at the hands of a Puritan (Congregationalist) establishment. Roger Williams and later John Clarke, English pastors were particular targets for their wrath.[9]

Williams, America's first Baptist, originally an Anglican minister, had left England in 1631 in protest at corruption in his church. In Massachusetts, he challenged the authority of civil authorities in spiritual matters and especially Puritans' illegal occupation of Indigenous land. Following a trial and banishment, he formed the first Baptist church on American soil at Providence, Rhode Island. Williams argued for complete religious liberty for all, a soul freedom, safeguarded by the separation of church and state and condemned the shedding of blood in religious wars, arguing that Scripture opposed religious persecution on the grounds of conscience.

In 1663 John Clarke, a Cambridge lawyer, Baptist minister, doctor and political theorist, secured Rhode Island's Charter, enshrining religious liberty. Founder of the 2nd Baptist Church on American soil, he appealed to the English Parliament in the hope of leveraging religious freedom in New England. He wanted the Puritans delivered from their false zeal for God which led to what he called 'soul murdering'. Both Williams and Clarke contributed to an ethos of growing religious toleration in the American colonies.

Baptists (and Methodists) flourished in the 18th century evangelical revival in North America With religious fervour went opposition to restraint upon religious expression. Baptist contemporaries, Isaac Backus and John Leland led a campaign for the separation of church and state. They envisaged the state as a secular institution which had no right to intervene in the affairs of the churches. Children of the optimistic Age of Enlightenment (Modernity) that laid new stress on individual freedom and responsibility, their context was one of heady revolution (American Wars of Independence). Backus objected to state taxes imposed for the construction of Congregational Church meeting houses and helped to tear down the Anglican establishment in Virginia. Leland was said to have influenced the framers of the American Constitution, writing, 'Government has no more to do with the religious opinions of men than with the principles of mathematics'. The 1st Amendment of the Constitution of the US disallowed state government from tampering with religion and religious institutions, and disallowed any religion from dominating the government.

19th century Baptists in England struggled to overcome the impact of state policies that did not encourage religious liberty. Conscious of their exclusion from the privileges enjoyed by members of the established church, many Baptists becoming involved in anti-slavery campaigns even though they themselves suffered religious grievances. Some turned their attention to the question of the union of church and state, believing that an established church was undesirable. The British anti-state church association was launched and re-named the Liberation Society in 1853, to express their concerns about state interference in religion, commerce and trade as well as state aid in education that privileged the Church of England.

While Baptists are not a creedal people, they have written Confessions/Statements of Faith to express their convictions and consensus of opinion at a particular time and place.[10] Every one includes a statement about religious liberty and the role of the State.[11] Some were written from the perspective of Baptists who enjoy the fruits of democratic societies without an Established Church (as in Australia and the USA). Others were penned by Baptists experiencing the harsh realities of religious, ecclesiastical and/or political tyranny.

The Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC), The Baptist Faith and Message (1925, 1963, 2000) states that God is Lord of the Conscience, spells out the State's role in protecting the church, and ensuring full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. The State cannot privilege one denomination over another nor is the Church to use the State for its own work (Articles 6, 17). America's Co-operative Baptist Fellowship's Guiding Principles underline the freedom and responsibility of all Christians to relate directly to God without imposition of creed or control by clergy or government, and the separation of church and state, concluding, 'We believe in freedom of religion, freedom for religion and freedom from religion'. European

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Baptists' 1992 Statement of Identity's article on separation of church and state is based on the sole lordship of Jesus Christ and concern for religious liberty. Like the SBC Article, the State is not to involve itself in church matters or privilege one group of believers or non-believers over another. Baptists are encouraged to be responsible citizens, actively participating where appropriate in political processes, exercising a prophetic voice when the State acts against God's intentions or supporting the State when it acts in line with God's purposes (Articles 11, 22).[12]

The Baptist Union of Victoria's Principles and Ideals of the Baptist Faith identifies Christ's Lordship of the Church as the sole authority in all matters of faith and conduct in the life of the Church and the individual and guarantor of liberty of thought and conscience for believer and Church, freed from any ecclesiastical or external authority.

1939 saw the coming together of three of the largest Baptist Conventions in North America (American, Southern Baptist and National) to make pronouncements called the American Baptist Bill of Rights which provided a watch-dog surveillance on matters of church-state relations. It emerged in an international context that saw the rise of fascist governments and dictatorships in Europe. The body later known as the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (1946) fostered research and public education into matters of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. But with the fundamentalist takeover of the SBC in 1979, has come a noticeable shift in its attitudes towards the State. Fundamentalist Baptists (such as Rev Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority), began to enter the realms of politics and public policy during the 1970s. Falwell's policy was to recapture America for God and he headed a coalition of Baptists, Roman Catholics, Jews and others.[13] Ronald Reagan's appearance on the platform at the annual SBC delegates' gathering at the beginning of the 1980s was tantamount to a public endorsement of his presidential campaign. In 1991 the SBC withdrew funding from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, an action reflecting a shift in the historical understanding of religious freedom among Baptists. William Brackney observed that many modern Baptists were more concerned with the creation of 'a Christian America' than with the preservation of certain religious freedoms. Many made the case for Christian (Baptist) involvement in government while rejecting the role of government in the church (especially in the area of education). Some neglected state accreditation requirements or refused admission to non-white students whilst retaining tax exemption status.

In 2004 the SBC's piece-de-resistance was its decision to withdraw from the international community of Baptists represented by the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), established in 1905,[14] citing doctrinal and structural differences. Southern Baptists had been an integral part of the BWA since its foundation. Having identified freedom of conscience as a fundamental Baptist conviction, the BWA surveyed the political realm for evidence of violation of religious liberty and worked to support Baptists in parts of the world expressing oppression or active discrimination.[15]

A key BWA objective, defined in 1947 and revised in 1975 states,

> '[To] Act to further uphold for all people the claims of fundamental human rights and to further and maintain full religious liberty everywhere, both for our constituent churches and all other religious faiths'.

Confronted by a host of human rights abuses at the beginning of the 21st century, then General Secretary of the BWA, Denton Lotz declared, 'The Baptist idea of religious freedom enshrined in the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights is under threat as never before'.

In comparison to other parts of the world, the Australian Baptist community is quite small, yet growing,[16] influenced by various and often divergent developments among Baptists in Britain and North America.[17] Australian Baptists are organised along state lines and the majority belong to State Baptist Unions, such as the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV).

Australia has no established church.[18] Governor Bourke's Church Acts (1836–7) gave the main denominations equity before the law, with both buildings and clergy salaries subsidised by the State.[19] They were designed to promote the role of the Christian Churches in a young European settlement beset with a host of social problems and to avoid the problem besetting Great Britain of an Established Church. Christian denominations could receive state funding (in proportion to their numerical size). For Baptists and Congregationalists, this posed a theological dilemma. Didn't accepting State aid contravene a fundamental spiritual conviction about the separation of church and state?

Baptists exercised their freedom in this matter; some accepted aid; others did not. While many Baptists supported the Reverend J. Dunmore Lang's strenuous campaign to abolish this aid during the 1840s, they accepted aid for building between 1837 and 1842,[20] including land for their church building in Collins Street, Melbourne.[21] But the issue of state aid remained contentious among Baptists.

As private donations increased, state aid was gradually phased out, from churches by 1870 and from church schools in 1872, completing the separation of church and state.[22] However this situation would be reversed from the 1940s with the reintroduction of a rates exemption for church property.

The creators of the Australian Constitution were resistant to the idea of government legislating for the establishment and regulation of religion (faith). The Constitution's Preamble contains a reference to 'Almighty God' and in the Constitution itself, religious freedom is guaranteed and discrimination on the grounds of religion is rejected.[23] The Constitution underpins a pluralistic society in which Australian people are free to espouse any number of religious views or none at all.

In his analysis of the secularisation of western public institutions during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hugh McLeod observed the tendency of governments to extend their powers into areas formerly controlled by churches such as education and welfare. This was primarily in response to demands for equity between religious communities and/or because the state had better resources. This extension of power can also be seen in the way governments deliberately assigned churches a significant role in education, welfare and immigration to foster social harmony, civic virtue and national morale.[24] McLeod's analysis is borne out in the Victorian Baptist experience.

During the 1950s Baptists recognised how much they benefited from state aid; rates exemptions on church buildings, land grants for free or token amounts, long leases for low rentals, building grants for kindergarten halls and operational subsidies for day kindergartens.[25] The BUV's 1954 Report recognised that the church and the state were living and expanding, related entities with specific duties.[26] It acknowledged that historically Baptists had applied their principles variously, according to prevailing conditions. They had co-operated with the state for the good of society, without adverse consequences in several areas.[27]

Victorian Baptists argued that increased co-operation between church and state was in the interests of a more democratic society. The church could positively contribute to society's moral and spiritual values in light of the secular educational system's failure to do so. While taxing citizens for the support of various partisan religious views involved ethical dilemmas, it could be justified on the basis of Baptist belief in 'soul liberty'; 'the right to worship God or not – according to the dictates of (a person's) conscience, and to propagate that faith'.[28] Fairness demanded that: 'we must grant that right to others'.[29] Baptists formulated a response that affirmed several key convictions earlier outlined. They were counselled to reject complete separation from the state and to be open to state initiatives. State aid that did not compromise the church's freedom was equally open to other groups and used for functions for which the state could not afford to provide, was seen as acceptable. At the

> The church could positively contribute to society's moral and spiritual values in light of the secular educational system's failure so to do.

1960 Assembly, Baptists agreed to approve the affiliation of Whitley College, the Baptist College of Victoria with the University of Melbourne and to accept grants from the Australian Universities Commission.[30] By 1961 almost half their pre-school centres were receiving government subsidies.[31] The relationship between the church and the state was further complicated by the return of state aid during the 1960s under the Menzies Federal Government. Capital grants for science laboratories and libraries were followed by per capita grants for running costs for denominational schools. Victoria was the only Australian state in which Baptists operated their own schools. While in other states Baptists affirmed the doctrine of the separation of church and state, and expressed concern about Catholics receiving the bulk of state aid, in Victoria the denomination was more divided.[33] The re-packaging of state aid as a response to a 'national need' enabled some churches to overcome their previous opposition, although considerable doubts remained.[34] Opponents to state aid eventually capitulated and the nature of the relationship between the schools and the church was changed as a result.[35] Valuing as they did the role of education in forming society's citizens and leaders, Victorian Baptists were prepared to accept significant government funding, recognising that if they wanted their schools to retain a competitive edge, they had little choice. For some Baptists, this decision represented the 'thin end of the wedge'.

The provision of welfare also involved Baptists in increasingly close co-operation with government, but again this co-operation brought major challenges. The complexities of providing care for disadvantaged groups caused some Baptists to reassess their traditional approaches and explore new pathways. Individuals and congregations coming from a social justice perspective identified unmet needs and developed services to fill the gap. But welfare services based on a committed volunteer base, were not necessarily equipped to respond professionally to a range of community needs. Baptists were challenged by the demands posed by compliance with the state in standards of care and professionalisation of their workforce including wages policies. Without state aid it would have been impossible for Baptists to provide the bulk of their welfare services, yet the acceptance of such funding could create tensions. Initially such services saw possibilities for expansion when governments recognised as priority areas the needs that they were serving. However, the lure of government funding altered the shape of the services and, while state funding represented considerable savings for successive governments, increasing government regulation also brought additional costs and involved compromise for Baptists.

Did Baptists compromise their theological identity with the acceptance of government money and the associated rise in levels of bureaucracy and management? An unqualified 'yes' or 'no' to these questions is simply not possible. If Baptists were to engage meaningfully with a changing society and not be relegated to a place of irrelevance, they were compelled to accept government funding whilst recognising the challenges this represented.

By the beginning of the 3rd millennium however, this interaction had been greatly extended. It was now accepted wisdom that Baptists could not maintain their involvement in welfare and education without significant state aid.

Like all other religious bodies, Australian Baptists are required to comply with the laws of the land in an increasing number of areas: property management, government funding, taxation, marriage registration, insurance cover, privacy and duty of care. Evidence of sexual misconduct among clergy and denominational leaders surfacing during the late 1980s tested the effectiveness of Baptist structures, leadership and beliefs at a time when the state began demanding greater accountability from the churches. Procedures and protocols now abound – a necessary and welcome shift! The Baptist Union of Victoria's Code of Conduct with which all its accredited/ ordained Pastoral Leaders must comply includes clear statements about Baptists' moral and legal responsibilities and duties.[36]

Baptist relationships with the state are complex.

The most recent changes to the Federal government's marriage legislation to allow for the legal union of same-sex couples has caused a furore among Australia Baptists with the majority opposed to the changes. Many Australian Baptist pastors are marriage celebrants which is not the case in several other countries where clergy are not permitted to conduct weddings. Some Australian Baptists have argued for the separation of the legal and spiritual roles on the basis of their convictions about the separation of church and state. Concerned that the proposed Marriage Act changes might compel Baptist celebrants to go against their conscience and conduct same-sex marriage, Victorian Baptists voted in 2017 to disallow their pastors from conducting such marriages. In protest, some Baptist pastors have relinquished their rights to perform marriages.

Conclusion

Baptists have interpreted the separation of church and state variously depending upon their socio-political context. In Australia, social change, institutional evolution and secularisation involved connections with the State, but such co-operation inevitably involved tension between basic guiding principles and pragmatic decision making.

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Marita Munro, Professor of Baptist Studies, Whitley College, the University of Divinity. Marita studied theology and was ordained with the Victorian Baptist Union (BUV). She has served in inner Melbourne Baptist churches and Christian communities, including the House of the Gentle Bunyip. After completing post-graduate studies in Anabaptist history and Human Rights at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, she joined the faculty of Whitley College to teach New Testament Greek and Church History. Her PhD research with the University of Melbourne was on the history of Victorian Baptists. Marita is a member of Collins Street Baptist. Participation in work parties to the Middle East and rural India have expanded her faith horizons.

Ending the victim-blaming

The Australian Jewish community and its response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Associate Professor Philip Mendes

The responsibility for addressing and changing such backward views lies with the community leadership as much as the Rabbinate or the discrete religious groups or sub-groups concerned.

To date, Australian Jews have struggled to come to terms with revelations of institutional child sexual abuse (CSA) within their community.

In October 2008, the Australian Jewish News, referring to a widely reported case of sexual abuse by Rabbi David Kramer at Yeshivah College in the early 1990s, confidently assured readers that such an event was unlikely to be repeated now or in the future. The AJN argued that Yeshivah had learnt the lessons from this case, and had since that time implemented Working with Children checks and mandatory reporting training to ensure children were safe (Anonymous 2008).

In April 2013, the then President of the Jewish Community Council (JCCV) of Victoria informed the Victorian Government Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations that there was no 'incidence of child abuse' in any affiliated organisations. She later qualified that this statement did not include Jewish organisations not affiliated with the JCCV which presumably was a reference to Yeshivah College and Adass Israel (Bassat 2013: 2).

It is questionable whether the JCCV and the peak national Jewish body, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), have consistently provided the pro-active leadership necessary to inform and educate Jewish community opinion on the importance of this issue (Pinskier 2017). On the one hand, there is no doubt that all mainstream Jewish organisations firmly support mandatory reporting of child abuse and professional child safety processes and procedures, oppose any denial or cover-ups of child abuse, and fully support CSA survivors and their families (Bassat 2012; Executive Council of Australian Jewry 2017a; 2017b; Neil 2017; Searle 2011). But on the other hand, there has been a reluctance by communal leaders to acknowledge that some Jewish ultra-orthodox groups (or sections of) still hold a contrary opinion based on the biblical concept of Mesirah or not informing on fellow Jews which is discussed below, and that like it or not these groups or individuals are part of the community. The responsibility for addressing and changing such backward views lies with the community leadership as much as the Rabbinate or the discrete religious groups or sub-groups concerned.

To be sure, there is still much to be learnt about manifestations of CSA within the local and global Jewish communities. There are currently no empirical studies of the prevalence of CSA within Australian Jewry, the responses of Jewish community organisations, or the experiences of CSA survivors and their families. Nevertheless, it appears that the statistical incidence may be far higher than many in the community assume.

In October 2012, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Victorian Police, Graham Ashton, informed the Victorian Government Inquiry discussed above that the police had identified 69 offences (i.e. criminal convictions for sexual abuse of minors) in the Jewish community involving 18 distinct victims from January 1956 to June 2012. This seems to be a relatively high rate of prevalence compared to an estimated 135 offences in the Salvation Army and 150

offences in the Anglican Church despite their congregations involving much larger membership numbers (Ashton 2012:6). Later, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RC) reported that 25 Jewish survivors of CSA had detailed their experiences in private sessions. 15 of these 25 cases referred to the two schools known as Yeshivah Melbourne and Yeshiva Bondi. The other cases were not revealed publicly, but can be assumed to involve mainstream Jewish organisations. The prominent CSA survivor and victims advocate, Manny Waks, has alleged that there were 'dozens of victims' of CSA at the Yeshivah Melbourne alone including at least 53 young men who were molested by Rabbi David Kramer in 1990-91 (Waks 2016: 302; see also p.151). Additionally, it has been alleged that there were at least 15 girls sexually abused by Malka Leifer, the principal at the Adass Israel School in Elsternwick from 2000-2008 (Stewart 2017).

The remainder of this paper will draw on the case studies of Jewish CSA from the Royal Commission reports to examine the key challenges that the Jewish community faces. But it is important to note that these revelations were not unexpected given what we know about institutionalised CSA within Jewish communities (and particularly ultra-orthodox communities) internationally, and typical communal responses. There are about five layers of religious-cultural context and behaviour that emanate from the existing yet still limited literature.

Firstly, ultra-orthodox communities seem to be particularly vulnerable to CSA because of multiple factors including the absence of sex education as a protective mechanism, associated sexual repression despite the absence of celibacy requirements for Rabbis, the regular use of the male mikveh (ritual bath-house), and also gender inequity within communal leadership and decision-making bodies, which shield predators from exposure (Kolker 2006; Melchior and Waks 2015; Meyer 2015; Pelcovitz and Mandel 2011).

Secondly, most such communities are reluctant to report manifestations of CSA to secular authorities, and instead prefer to keep such discussions in-house by seeking adjudication by a Rabbi or Rabbinical court known as a Beth Din. In 2011, the leading ultra-Orthodox organisation in the USA, Agudath Israel of America, issued a public recommendation to that effect (Friedman 2013; Katzenstein and Aronson Fontes 2017; Lesher 2014; Melchior and Waks 2015; Neustein and Lesher 2008; Otterman and Rivera 2012; Resnicoff 2012; Resofsky 2016). This reticence reflects a range of religious beliefs involving concepts such as Mesirah (i.e. a Hebrew word which refers to the biblical prohibition concerning informing on Jews to external non-Jewish authorities with a threat of the death penalty for

those who infringe that are labelled Mosers) which are still upheld by many ultra-orthodox groups despite numerous statements by Halachic authorities such as Rabbi Mark Dratch (Chairman of the Rabbinical Council of America's Task Force on Rabbinic Improprieties) that mandatory reporting is fully compatible with Jewish religious teachings (Anonymous 2016a; 2016b; Berkovits 2017; Brofsky 2017; Cohen 2011; Dorff 2003a; 2003b; Dratch 1992; 2009; 2011; Katzenstein and Aronson Fontes 2017; Lesher 2014; Meyer 2016; Neustein and Lesher 2008; Resnicoff 2012; Schere 2016).

Additionally, there are deep-seated cultural factors such as fear of anti-Semitism and lack of trust in the fairness of the criminal justice system despite the fact that most Jews today live in democratic countries where they do not experience prejudice from government authorities. Concern about public shame (called Shonda in Yiddish) impacting on a family's reputation and the marriage prospects of their children is another factor encouraging denial and silence (Dorff 2003a; Neustein 2009; Neustein and Lesher 2008).

Non-reporting of CSA has a number of negative consequences. It ignores the fact that CSA is a criminal offence, and that professions such as teachers, doctors, nurses and psychologists are legally required in most jurisdictions to report all reasonable suspicions of child abuse, whether sexual, physical or emotional. Additionally, most Rabbis lack the necessary knowledge to assess whether or not CSA has occurred, and many may have direct conflicts of interest given that alleged perpetrators could be friends or neighbours or even family members. Nor are they able to arrest or punish offenders whom they judge to be guilty (Blau 2017; Friedman 2013; Katzenstein and Aronson Fontes 2017; Neustein and Lesher 2008; Resnicoff 2012).

Further, non-reporting has tended to reinforce the shame experienced by CSA survivors who have felt alone and isolated, and more likely to experience long-term trauma. Non-reporting has also often resulted in numerous other children experiencing CSA either within the same organisation or community, or in other organisations or communities due to leaders failing to warn others of the potential for abuse by, for example, placing the name of the abuser on a sex offender register (Berkovitz 2017; Blau 2017b; Dratch 2011; Lesher 2009; Melchior and Waks 2015; Neustein and Lesher 2008; Zucker 2005). And notably, many alleged Jewish perpetrators of CSA including most recently former Adass Israel Principal Malka Leifer have found refuge in Israel with little or no official monitoring of their activities or continued contact with children taking place (Blau 2017a; Katzenstein and Aronson Fontes 2017; Lesher 2009; Lopin 2018; Neustein 2009; Saul 2003; Towers and Stewart 2016).

...non-reporting has tended to reinforce the shame experienced by CSA survivors who have felt alone and isolated, and more likely to experience long-term trauma.

Thirdly, community leaders have tended to prioritize protecting the unity and reputation of the community and at times actively defending the accused, rather than supporting CSA victims within the community who are often subjected to threats and public demonisation. Too often, collective interests are granted priority over the well-being of individuals. This expression of solidarity with abusers rather than victims has even included communal fundraising appeals to support the legal costs of the accused (Ben-Moshe 2015; Blau 2017a; Kolker 2006; Lesher 2014; Neustein and Lesher 2008; Rosen 2009).

Fourthly, when CSA victims and their families have reported allegations outside the community they have often been victimised and threatened by community members, and effectively excluded from the community to which they belonged. This response has caused further trauma to CSA survivors (Brofsky 2017; Katzenstein and Aronson Fontes 2017; Kolker 2006; Lesher 2014; Otterman 2012; Otterman and Rivera 2012; Resnicoff 2012; Saul 2003; Waks 2018a; 2018b).

Finally, active support to CSA victims and their families has mostly been provided by independent organisations and blogs such as Failed Messiah, The Unorthodox Jew, Frum Follies, Jewish Community Watch and Kol v'Oz – Preventing child sex abuse in the global Jewish community which are coordinated by lay groups of orthodox or ex-orthodox Jews including some CSA survivors, rather than by mainstream Jewish organisations. These advocacy groups protect victims from unwarranted public exposure in their communities by allowing them to discuss their experiences anonymously, and prevent further cover-ups and abuse by distributing information about abusers who have travelled to new communities or countries (Katzenstein and Aronson Fontes 2017; Kolker 2006; Lesher 2009).

The Royal Commission findings

In February 2015, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse held a two week public hearing to examine the responses of two Jewish institutions to allegations of CSA: The Yehivah Centre and Yeshivah College in Melbourne, and the Yeshiva Centre and Yeshiva College in Bondi, Sydney. Those findings were published in October 2016 as Case Study No.22. In March 2017, the Royal Commission conducted a further review of the two

institutions which was published as Case Study No.53. This was the first ever official investigation of Jewish institutional responses to CSA in the global community as opposed to some discrete criminal and legal investigations mostly in the United States. Due to space limitations, the analysis that follows will principally cover the Yeshiva organisations in Melbourne.

The RC reported that 15 males had been subjected to CSA by males (mostly of adult age) within the two organisations. Their average age at the time of initial abuse was 11.3 years. Most of the perpetrators were teachers, but others included Rabbis and support staff at the institution or volunteers. These events took place from about 1984 to 1992 (RC 2016; 2017b).

Four survivors presented evidence concerning their experiences of CSA at Yeshivah Melbourne and Yeshiva Bondi: Manny Waks who remains the only Jewish male CSA survivor in Australia to publicly reveal his identity; AVA; AVB; and AVR. AVB's wife, AVC, also presented evidence concerning the impact of the Yeshivah's response on survivors and their families as did AVA's mother, AVQ.

In Melbourne, two men were responsible for multiple counts of CSA: Shmuel David Cyprys, and Rabbi David Kramer, although it should be noted they were not the only adults to abuse children at the Yeshivah (Waks 2016). Cyprys appears to have been an employee and/or volunteer at Yeshivah Melbourne from approximately 1984-2011 filling various roles including caretaker, security guard, locksmith and martial arts instructor. Cyprys had been found guilty in September 1992 of an indecent assault in 1991, but was placed on a good behaviour bond, and no conviction recorded. The RC report acknowledges that 'it is unclear whether Yeshivah Melbourne were aware of the 1992 court proceedings and the plea that Cyprys entered' (RC 2016: 23), although Zephaniah Waks, the father of Manny Waks, recalls the details being widely discussed at that time in the Yeshivah community (Waks 2016).

If the Yeshivah leaders were aware of the 1992 guilty finding, then Cyprys should have been banned from ever again entering any facilities where children were present. Equally, it is questionable why other Jewish organisations that include large numbers of children in their activities – the Council of Orthodox Synagogues in Victoria and the

The Royal Commission noted that there was a strong perception in the Yeshivah community that Jewish religious law did not support the reporting of CSA to outside authorities.

Elwood Synagogue - appointed Cyprys to Board positions in the intervening period. Cyprys was later charged in 2011 with 16 counts of indecent assault and 13 counts of gross indecency alleged to have been committed against 12 boys aged 7-17 years. He was found guilty in August 2013 of multiple counts of rape and other CSA offences, and sentenced in December 2013 to eight years imprisonment with a non-parole period of five years and six months (Legge 2011a: RC 2016; Topsfield 2011).

Rabbi David Kramer was employed as a teacher at Yeshivah College from 1989-92, and summarily sent home to America by the Yeshivah leadership on a paid airline ticket following multiple complaints from parents of alleged CSA victims. He was subsequently sentenced in the USA to seven years imprisonment for CSA offences committed in March 2007. He was later extradited to Australia in November 2012, and sentenced to three years and four months prison in July 2013 for multiple offences against four students from January 1990-December 1991 with a non-parole period of 18 months (RC 2016; Waks 2016).

The facts concerning Cyprys appear to have been reported to the Yeshivah leadership either at the time or in subsequent years by CSA survivors and their families. In practice, this primarily seems to have involved reporting concerns to Rabbi Groner who was the Head Rabbi from 1959 till 2007. For example, Manny Waks reported the details of his abuse by Cyprys to Groner in 1996, and again in approximately 2000 (Waks 2012; 2016). Survivors were advised that action would be taken to protect children from further harm, but little if any action was taken, and there does not appear to have been any official documentation of the complaints, or formal process for responding to the allegations (Berkovits 2017). Cyprys was allowed to continue to have access to, and potentially sexually abuse, children. As noted above, the Yeshivah did act on Kramer by quietly sending him back to America, but no report was made to the police. They also failed to officially warn Jewish schools in other countries of the threat he posed to children, and consequently many other children were harmed as a result (Legge 2011b; RC 2016; 2017a; 2017b; Waks 2016).

The Yeshivah's passivity seems inexcusable given that mandatory reporting of child abuse was introduced in Victoria in 1993 for selected professional groups such as doctors, nurses, school teachers and principals, and operators and employees of children's services (Mendes 1996). In November 1993, the Department of Health and Community Services published a 25 page booklet titled Child Sexual Abuse: Understanding and Responding which was distributed to every school in Victoria. The booklet discussed manifestations of CSA, initial and longer-term detrimental effects, and potential barriers to disclosure and reporting. It also refuted common myths around CSA including that it is harmless to children (DHCS 1993). Yet Yeshivah College did not introduce a formal policy and practice framework for responding to CSA complaints till 2007, and the School Principal and teachers did not undertake any training on CSA until 2007 (RC 2016; 2017b).

The RC suggests that the absence of sex education within the Yeshivah school curriculum and community may have contributed to the particular vulnerability of students to perpetrators, and also the failure of the organisation leadership to understand the long-term negative impact of CSA on the well-being and mental health of victims. They also quoted a statement from Rabbi Yosef Feldman, a director of Yeshiva College and the Dean of the Yeshivah Gedolah Rabbinical College in Sydney, which revealed that he did not understand either the criminal nature of CSA, or mandatory reporting obligations in New South Wales concerning CSA (RC 2016: 2017a; 2017b).

The RC noted that there was a strong perception in the Yeshivah community that Jewish religious law did not support the reporting of CSA to outside authorities. Consequently, those CSA survivors who made complaints to police and their families seem to have been exposed to religious and social isolation and bullying, or what is called 'shunning' (2016:16; 2017a:27200; 2017b:171-72). In the case of Manny Waks, public statements made by the then Head Rabbi of Yeshivah, Rabbi Telsner in 2011, appear to have led to the victimisation of both Manny and his parents who remained active members of the Yeshivah community (Waks and Waks 2012; Waks 2016). Telsner was also perceived to have attacked another CSA survivor known as AVB who sent an email to Jewish friends and acquaintances urging them to cooperate with police investigations into David Kramer.

AVB's wife reported being exposed to widespread abuse within the Yeshivah community (RC 2017b; Waks 2016).

Towards a best practice model of responding to CSA: Engaging with the experiences and voices of victims

With hindsight, what should Yeshivah have done differently? Firstly, Yeshivah and indeed the peak Jewish leadership bodies should have educated all Jewish community members – whether secular, progressive, orthodox or ultra-orthodox - about their religious, legal and ethical obligation to report CSA to authorities, and the long-term adverse impact of CSA on victims (Featherman 1995; Neustein and Lesher 2008; Resnicoff 2012; Waks 2016; 2017).

Secondly, the Yeshivah Rabbinate should have acted as role models to the rest of their community by generously supporting the CSA survivors and their families, and funding a victims support group to assist their recovery from trauma (Berkovits 2017; RC 2017b). Whilst Yeshivah has formally apologized for 'any historical wrongs that may have occurred', the organisation should also have personally apologized to all victims (RC 2017b: 195).

It is noteworthy that two Sydney-based Chabad Rabbis – Moshe Gutnick and Mendel Kastel – who presented evidence to the Royal Commission in March 2017, condemned shunning and urged their communities to provide unconditional support to CSA survivors. Kastel described survivors as 'brave people' who need to be 'recognised for their bravery in what they've done in order to help so many others' (RC 2017a: 27227).

Patriarchal hierarchical structures based on religious knowledge and standing are not suitable for addressing contemporary social issues such as child abuse and family violence.

Finally, governance reforms are vital within Yeshivah to ensure compliance with child safety codes, accountability to scrutiny by external bodies, and effective action to prevent further cover-ups based on misrepresentations of Jewish law. Patriarchal hierarchical structures based on religious knowledge and standing are not suitable for addressing contemporary social issues such as child abuse and family violence. Child sex abuse allegations within Jewish organisations must be handled by gender balanced groups of lay leaders, parents and community

professionals including child abuse experts, not the Rabbinate (Anonymous 2016a; Lesher 2014).

It is only when Yeshivah and other Jewish organisations have both effectively acknowledged and atoned for past misdemeanours, and implemented necessary organisational change, that they can be trusted to prevent large-scale CSA occurring again in the future.

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Associate Professor Philip Mendes is the Acting Head of the Department of Social Work at Monash University. He has been researching the experiences of young people transitioning from out-of-home care, most of whom are survivors of childhood abuse and neglect, for nearly 20 years. He is the author or co-author of 12 books including *Young people transitioning from out-of-home care: International research, policy and practice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and *To empower or control the disadvantaged: A critical historical analysis of the modern Australian Welfare State* (Routledge, forthcoming, late 2018). Prior to entering academia, he was a child protection worker in Victoria from 1987-88 and again from 1992-95.