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## Martin Luther and Antisemitism

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## Martin Luther and Antisemitism

Daniel Maoz (Guest Editor)

Conversion of the Jews will be the work of God alone operating from within, and not of man working – or rather playing – from without. If these offences be taken away, worse will follow. For they are thus given over by the wrath of God to reprobation, that they may become incorrigible, as Ecclesiastes says, for every one who is incorrigible is rendered worse rather than better by correction.

Luther to George Spalatin, 1514

**T**his issue of *Consensus* is based on the first annual Luther Legacy Conference held on January 20, 2020 in the Senate and Board Chambers of Wilfrid Laurier University and sponsored by Martin Luther University College. In order to transmit oral presentations to the written page, the entire transcript of the conference is included here in the Foreword section. This transcript includes audience questions that further engaged each of the four conference presenters. A final summation by Rabbi Telushkin brings the conference to conclusion. The four individual conference presentations are then included in the Conference Proceedings. Contributor bios are included at the end of this document.

**Conference Proceedings:** Beginning the conference, keynote speaker, internationally recognized Jewish author and scholar Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, engages the topic of how passion usurps ethical thought and behaviour throughout history. Three respondents then offer critical engagement with the keynote thesis through Indigenous, Lutheran, and Jewish lenses.

**Studies and Observations:** The next section includes three brief essays written by students enrolled in a course on antisemitism at Martin Luther University College. These short studies focus on key aspects of antisemitism, anti-Judaism, and Judeophobia that inform in a relevant manner, topics of racism, bullying, and bigotry. The essays analyse the lessons of Jewish history to better address social inequity played out in contemporary Canadian and global contexts such as Indigenous residential school injustice, the Black Lives Matter movement, LGBTQ2S+ themes, and other social issues. Some of the students added a Statement of Commitment that expresses their pledge to be a non-silent witness to injustice in society.

The three essays include “Consequences of Reinforcing Stereotypes: A Look into Representations of Minorities on Television” by Matthew Berish; “Antisemitism in Classical Music: from Wagner to Shostakovich” by Christopher Clarke; and “Contemporary Repercussions of Historical Discrimination” by Kimberly Spevack.

**Book Reviews:** Local Jewish community members offer critical assessment and analysis of what each considers an influential publication addressing antisemitism.

I wish to acknowledge the many donors whose generous contributions enabled the Luther Legacy Conference to proceed. These include Waterloo’s Rohr Chabad Centre for Jewish Life; Martin Luther University College; the National office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; the

Office of Research Services, Wilfrid Laurier (Connections Grant); members of Waterloo's Temple Shalom (Reform Judaism); members of Kitchener's Beth Jacob Congregation (Modern Orthodox Judaism); members of Guelph's Beth Isaiah Synagogue (Conservative Judaism); friends of Martin Luther University College; and many more. Letters of support and congratulations also came from B'Nai Brith Canada; the Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies Canada; Facing History and Ourselves Canada; Indigenous Services UW and WLU; WLU President's Office; Waterloo Regional Police Services Chief's Office; local Mayors of Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge; Regional Chairs (past and present); local and regional government representatives; and others too numerous to list here.

A note about transcription: I transcribed most of the documentation from the Luther Legacy Conference represented in this issue from audio recordings of the event. As transcription editor, I needed to make decisions on when to retain colloquial speech and when to change the wording to accommodate the written page. I accept responsibility where I did not make better choices.

Daniel Maoz  
Waterloo, ON

## Contributor Bios

Elder Jean **Becker** is the Senior Director, Indigenous Initiatives and Acting Vice President, Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion at the University of Waterloo.

Luisa **D'Amato** is a Columnist for the Waterloo Region Record Newspaper.

Norm **Finkelberg** is a member and lay leader at the Reform Judaism's Temple Shalom in Waterloo, Ontario.

Rev. Dr. Mark **Harris** is Principal Dean and Professor of Functional Theology (emeritus) at Martin Luther University College, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Rev. Dr. Bishop Susan **Johnson** is the National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Rev. Dr. Allen **Jorgenson** is Assistant Dean, the William D. Huras Chair in Ecclesiology and Church History, and Professor of Systematic Theology at Martin Luther University College, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Dr. Daniel **Maoz** is Jewish Scholar in Residence and Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at Martin Luther University College, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Carol **McMullen** is a Learning Disabilities Specialist and a Family / Personal Coach specializing in Attention Deficit Disorders, ASD/Asperger's, Learning Disabilities (LD), Non-verbal Learning Disabilities (NLD), and Acquired Brain Injuries (ABI).

Dr. Jacob **Sivak** is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and Distinguished Professor Emeritus in Optometry and Vision Science at the University of Waterloo.

Rabbi Joseph **Telushkin** received an Orthodox Smicha (Ordination) at Yeshiva University, New York, an internationally renowned public lecturer, and author of dozens of books and articles, including *Code of Jewish Ethics* (2 volumes); *Jewish Literacy*, *Why the Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism, the Most Accurate Predictor of Human Evil* (with Dennis Prager); and *Rebbe: The Life and Teachings of Menachem M. Schneerson, the Most Influential Rabbi in Modern History*.