



Christianity's Decline and the Rise of Antisemitism in Canada

A Call for Unified Revival

Rabbi Jarrod Grover
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This essay expresses Rabbi Grover's own views and not those of any organization or group. It was first delivered on June 24, 2025 as an address at the launch of the Simeon Initiative, a multi-year Cardus program that brings Jewish and Christian leaders together to learn from one another and to stand against antisemitism. It has been edited slightly to appear here in written form.

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cardus.ca

X@cardusca

Head Office: 1 Balfour Drive, Hamilton, ON L9C 7A5

info@cardus.ca

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About the Author



JARROD GROVER is the rabbi of Beth Tikvah Synagogue in Toronto. A bilingual native of Montreal, he received his bachelor's degree in economics from Princeton University and his master's degree and rabbinical ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Rabbi Grover is a leading religious voice within the Canadian Jewish community. He serves as vice president of the interdenominational Toronto Board of Rabbis, as treasurer of the Ontario Region of the Rabbinical Assembly, and as a member of the Jewish Community Consultative Committee of the Toronto Police Service. In 2014, Rabbi Grover was invited by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to join him on his official delegation to Israel.

About Cardus Spirited Citizenship

The Spirited Citizenship program at Cardus studies religion in Canada and the ways in which religious Canadians work together and with others to strengthen our shared social fabric. As a related focus, the program studies the charitable sector and its changing dynamics as a critical part of Canadian society.

Jews and Christians come from different traditions, yet we are bound by shared values, rooted in the eternal words of Scripture and our faith in the God of Israel. This conference is being convened to muster our collective voices to confront a growing darkness in Canada: the alarming rise of antisemitism. I believe that this rise is significantly—though not simplistically—fueled by the decline of Christianity in this country and the broader erosion of religious life. This is more than a demographic shift; it is a spiritual crisis that imperils the moral foundations of our society.

We are meeting in a time of profound moral uncertainty in a world that is in dire need of moral clarity. Meanwhile, the religious institutions that help to ground that moral clarity are in decline. Churches are closing, and our synagogues are growing quieter too, their voices drowned out in a culture increasingly unmoored from the sacred. A spiritual fog has settled over our land, and, with it, antisemitism—a hatred as old as the Jewish people—is gaining ground.

This is not only a Jewish concern; it is a crisis for anyone who cherishes the principles of justice, compassion, and reverence that once animated public life in Canada. I ask you to listen today not as members of different faiths but as heirs to a shared mission: to restore faith, truth, and unity to our fractured nation.

The stakes are high. Antisemitism is not merely one prejudice among others; it is a signal, a warning, of deeper civilizational decay. The weakening of Christianity in public life, I believe, has diminished one of the most powerful moral guardrails that has restrained antisemitism in Canadian society.

The prophet Amos warned, “Behold, the days are coming . . . when I will send a famine in the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). That famine is here. Canada is in the grip of a spiritual drought. The Judeo-Christian values that once upheld justice, compassion, and humility before God are now being displaced by a culture that elevates self-expression over shared responsibility, and subjective feelings over timeless truths.

We teach our youth to prioritize rights without duties, to embrace tolerance without the discipline of truth, to esteem empathy but not moral clarity. These shifts are not benign. They create a vacuum in which hatred festers. The resurgence of antisemitism is not just a political problem—it is a spiritual symptom of a society adrift. The decline of Christianity contributes to this condition by dissolving the moral and institutional frameworks that once provided Jewish communities with protection, understanding, and deep interfaith friendship.

This was not always the case. Following the horrors of the Holocaust, much of the Christian world—particularly among Catholics after Vatican II, and across many Protestant denominations—undertook serious theological reflection. They rejected the anti-Jewish tropes that had stained Christian teaching for centuries and began to embrace a new theology of solidarity with the Jewish people.

In sermons, classrooms, and sanctuaries, Christian leaders reshaped their communities’ attitudes. Evangelicals stood visibly with Israel. Catholic bishops explicitly denounced antisemitism. Mainline Protestant ministers championed Jewish-Christian dialogue. These actions were not merely symbolic; they created a moral infrastructure within society.

In 1980, during a surge in antisemitic vandalism across Canadian cities—including synagogues defaced and Jewish cemeteries desecrated—it was the Christian community that stepped forward. Clergy from all denominations condemned the violence publicly. Churches hosted interfaith vigils. Sunday schools organized events to teach about the Holocaust and the dangers of hatred. The Canadian Council of Churches issued statements affirming the Jewish people's dignity and calling antisemitism a sin against God. That year, the solidarity from our Christian neighbours wasn't abstract—it was visible, embodied, and deeply felt. It served as a bulwark against hatred, reinforcing that antisemitism was a betrayal of Canada's moral and spiritual foundations.

Today, that bulwark is eroding. In 2021, only 19 percent of Canadians reported attending religious services regularly, down from 30 percent two decades prior. Over one thousand churches have closed in the past decade. Fewer Canadians are exposed to Scripture, to theological reflection, or to the moral vocabulary that once framed antisemitism as a spiritual evil. Christian seminaries are shrinking. Fewer young Canadians are raised to see every person as created in the image of God. Fewer understand what it means to “love the stranger” (Deut 10:19) or to remember the suffering of others.

This matters. Without Christian institutions bearing moral witness and teaching historical memory, antisemitism encounters fewer restraints. The Jewish population in Canada is small—just over four hundred thousand people. We cannot stand against this rising tide alone. The decline of Christianity removes a crucial ally from the public square.

This isn't merely a story of institutional decline. It is a story of collective amnesia. As faith recedes, so too does knowledge of the Holocaust, of Jewish suffering and resilience, and of the historical role that Christianity played both in our persecution and—more recently—in our defense. A 2023 survey found that 20 percent of Canadian youth under age twenty-five now question the scale of the Holocaust. A generation ago, this statistic would have shocked the public conscience. Today, it barely registers.

To be clear: we are a secular society, and our shared institutions should remain nonsectarian. But to echo the words of US President Ronald Reagan—words that I believe apply equally here—Canada was built on a universal claim to human dignity. There is no true liberal democracy without the shared conviction that every human being possesses inherent worth and moral responsibility. The most insidious aspect of our modern relativism is that it undermines this very conviction. Where there is no transcendent moral standard, there is no anchor for human dignity. Instead, we are left with power politics—where every debate is a contest between “oppressors” and “the oppressed,” and where tradition is often dismissed as inherently bigoted. This is not progress. It is peril.

Within such a framework, Jews are increasingly misrepresented as symbols of power, privilege, or colonialism. On university campuses in 2024, protests equated Zionism with racism, denying the Jewish people's ancient and scriptural ties to the land of Israel. These slogans erase our suffering, distort our story, and rationalize antisemitism in the language of social justice.

These ideologies are not confined to the far left. On the far right, white nationalist and so-called “Christian nationalist” movements—often detached from authentic Christian theology—revive conspiracy theories of Jewish power and manipulation. In 2023, Canada saw a disturbing

increase in cemetery desecrations and synagogue vandalism driven by these ideologies, echoing centuries-old lies about Jewish “global control.” This hatred thrives when the biblical principle that all people are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) is forgotten.

The Torah teaches, “Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations” (Deut 32:7). Rashi’s commentary on this verse explains that it represents a divine call to remember the past and learn from it, by asking parents and elders for stories and teachings. This is not just a suggestion but a commandment to transmit knowledge and history from one generation to the next.

Yet today’s educational and media ecosystems, stripped of both historical and theological depth, struggle to convey history and memory. Misinformation spreads quickly. Blood libels once confined to medieval Europe now mutate online into claims of Jewish globalism or political subversion. B’nai Brith Canada reported a 70 percent rise in antisemitic incidents in 2024 alone, much of it fueled by digital propaganda. Without religious institutions teaching discernment and history, these lies go unchallenged.

Canada’s increasing religious and cultural diversity—driven in large part by immigration—brings new strengths but also challenges. Some newcomers arrive from societies where antisemitism is state-sponsored or embedded in media and education. Without strong Canadian institutions—churches, interfaith partnerships, and civic spaces rooted in shared moral principles—those imported prejudices will and do persist.

Let me be clear: this is not about blaming immigrants. Antisemitism is an old, global disease. But when the Christian institutions that once anchored public morality diminish, it becomes harder to counter new forms of hatred. Radical Islamist ideologies, often hostile to Jews and the West, are finding significant expression in liberal democracies. These ideologies are distinct from Islam itself and must be named and opposed. We must distinguish political Islamism from the faith of millions of peaceful Muslims, many of whom share our moral concerns and are eager for partnership.

To return to my central point: secularism does not inherently breed antisemitism. Many secular Canadians are powerful voices for justice. But secularism alone cannot transmit historical memory or ethical clarity across generations. Organized religion, at its best, offers both—the narrative and the nurture needed to resist hatred. This is not to say that ethics come only from faith. Secular humanism has its own dignity and beauty. But religion brings institutional strength.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks taught that liberal democracy cannot survive without the moral capital provided by faith. In Judaism, the Seven Noahide Laws form a moral code that we believe binds all humanity. These include laws governing our relationship both with God and with one another. Together, they create a framework for just societies. Remove their foundation, and the structure weakens.

My friends, we cannot be silent as antisemitism rises in the shadows of spiritual decay. The decline of Christianity contributes to this rise by eroding the memory, alliances, and moral clarity that once held hatred at bay.

But we are not powerless.

To Christian clergy: hear me when I say that your voices are indispensable. Preach the truths of Scripture. Revive interfaith partnerships. Teach your congregations about their Jewish roots. Be confident in the gospel. Don't cave in to progressivism or wokeism. Condemn antisemitism with courage and clarity.

To Jewish leaders: let us deepen our bonds with Christian allies. Let us share our story not only as tragedy but also as testimony to resilience and divine promise. Yes, many Christians want to convert us—I consider that a compliment, not a threat. I know who I am and what I believe, and you do too. Let's get over that, and partner in education, advocacy, and public witness.

And I want to say to all those of faith gathered here: we must be united in our demand for fairness and equality in education. Ontario's publicly funded Catholic schools, serving 1.5 million students, receive full state support, while Jewish and other Christian schools receive none. This is not fairness. It is systemic religious inequality. If one faith's schools are funded, then all should be. Full stop.

Those religious schools are essential to raise a generation that understands history, cherishes freedom, and reveres the divine image in every person. Let us build schools, programs, and communities that teach the Holocaust, celebrate Jewish contributions, and combat antisemitism with truth and memory.

Canada is in a spiritual crisis. The decline of Christianity is not the sole cause of rising antisemitism—but it is a critical factor. It has left us morally disoriented, historically forgetful, and increasingly vulnerable.

Yet the light of faith still burns. It is the light of justice, of memory, of shared covenant. Let us rekindle that light. Let us honour history, strengthen interfaith bonds, and resist the rising tide of hate. Let us stand together—Jews, Christians, and all people of good will—to build a Canada where faith restores what hatred seeks to destroy. May that light shine upon us, through us, and beyond us, until this nation is again ablaze with the glory of God.