



A Statement by 24 Delegates to the Second Assembly of the WCC

31.08.1954 | Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches

The Assembly, held at Evanston from 15 to 31 August 1954, rejected to include a passage on the hope of Israel in its statement on 'Christ our Hope'. As a reaction to that decision a number of delegates issued a separate statement on the hope of Israel.

A Statement by 24 Delegates to the Second Assembly of the WCC

THE SECOND ASSEMBLY OF THE

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The Assembly, held at Evanston from 15 to 31 August 1954, rejected to include a passage on the hope of Israel in its statement on "Christ our Hope". As a reaction to that decision a number of delegates issued a separate statement on the hope of Israel.

In view of the decision of the Assembly on Friday to omit any reference to the hope of Israel in its Statement on the Main Theme, we feel it our duty to offer an explanation of our convictions in the hope that it will help towards closer understanding with those from whom we differed.

Our concern in this issue is wholly biblical and is not to be confused with any political attitude towards the State of Israel.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all mankind. In Him there is neither Jew nor Greek, but we also believe that God elected Israel for the carrying out of His saving purpose. Jesus Christ as Man was a Jew. The Church of Jesus Christ is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, all of whom were Jews, so that to be a member of the Christian Church is to be involved with the Jews in our one indivisible hope in Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, was accepted by Gentiles but rejected by His own people. Nevertheless God is so gracious and mighty that He even makes the crucifixion of His Son to be the salvation of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11). Whether we are scandalized or not, that means that we are grafted into the old tree of Israel (Rom. 11:24), so that the people of the New Covenant cannot be separated from the people of the Old Covenant.

The New Testament, however, speaks also of the "fullness" of Israel, when God will manifest His glory by bringing back His "eldest son" into the one fold of His grace (Rom. 11:12-36; Matt. 23:29). This belief is an indispensable element of our one united hope for Jew and Gentile in Jesus Christ. Our hope in Christ's coming victory includes our hope for Israel in Christ, in His victory over the blindness of His own people. To expect Jesus Christ means to hope for the conversion of the Jewish people, and to love Him means to love the people of God's promise.

In view of the grievous guilt of Christian people towards the Jews throughout the history of the Church, we are certain that:

the Church cannot rest until the title of Christ to the Kingdom is recognized by His own people according to the flesh. [1]

We cannot be one in Christ nor can we truly believe and witness to the promise of God if we do not recognize that it is still valid for the people of the promise made to Abraham. Therefore we invite all men to join with us in praising and magnifying that God who "concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11:32).

Signed

H. Berkhof, Holland
M. Boegner, France
A. Koechlin, Switzerland
P. Maury, France
T.F. Torrance, Scotland
H. Vogel, Germany
J. Sittler, USA
O.S. Tomkins, England
J. Smemo, Norway
E. Schlink, Germany
H.I. Yochum, USA
N.A. Winter USA

H. d'Espine, Switzerland
R.S. Loudon, Scotland
H.F. Schuh, USA
A.E. Haefner, USA
J. Hromadka, Czechoslovakia
D.G. May, Austria
J.P. Van Heest, Holland
M. Niemoller, Germany
A.H. Ewald, USA
I. Pap, Hungary
S.B. Coles, Canada
G. Stratenwerth, Germany

[1] Findings of the Pre-Evanston Conference of the American Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews, at Lake Geneva, WI, 8-11 August 1954.

{newsItem.description->f.format.html()}