



An American Baptist Response to "Dabru Emet [To Speak the Truth]: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity"

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"Dabru Emet [To Speak the Truth]:

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As members of the Committee on Christian Unity of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., we wish to express our appreciation to the members of the National Jewish Scholars Project who authored "Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity" and to the many Jewish leaders who have signed it. Along with its companion book, *Christianity in Jewish Terms*,* this statement marks a significant new step in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

The authors of Dabru Emet affirm that there has been a dramatic change among Christian churches, leading to widespread repentance for Christian mistreatment of Jews and Judaism and to acknowledgement of God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people. They believe that it is time for a Jewish reappraisal of Christianity in religious as well as social terms and a reassessment of how Jews and Christians relate to one another. They offer eight brief affirmations as their own summary proposal for a Jewish path toward this new relationship. These affirmations deal with:

- Worship of the same God
- Shared Scripture
- The land of Israel
- Moral principles of Torah
- Nazism as a non-Christian and even anti-Christian movement, for whose growth and virulence Christianity's historical anti-Judaism must bear a profound responsibility
- Irreconcilable differences between Jews and Christians over Jesus Christ, open to resolution only in God's final redemption of the world
- The effect of new relations between Christians and Jews on Jewish practice and identity
- Work together for justice and peace

We recognize the generosity and hope required for these scholars to declare that Christian faith is a valid way for gentiles to know and serve the God of Israel. To our shame, over history our Jewish neighbors have had good reason to see the primary agenda for dialogue in simple questions of Jewish survival and safety in societies dominated by Christians. With the authors of Dabru Emet, we wish to believe that a new day of broader conversation and mutual religious appreciation has

begun. But we can understand that not all members of the Jewish community may be quick to agree. We respect disagreements within the Jewish community over these issues, and acknowledge that Dabru Emet cannot speak for all Jews and does not claim to do so. We know that among the American Baptist Churches there are also corresponding differences over these questions, and over the nature of the mutual affirmation of our two traditions that is consistent with Christian identity. In this light, we particularly appreciate Dabru Emet's frank acceptance of enduring religious differences between Judaism and Christianity and its conviction that we can live fruitfully and peacefully with these differences, while each faith maintains the integrity of its own witness.

With thanks and praise to God,

We express our gratitude for the long history of collaboration between Jewish groups and American Baptists in support of the principles of religious liberty that both hold dear, and that are so crucial for the integrity and safety of religious minorities

We recognize with gratitude the contributions of leaders and scholars in other Christian churches, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, in advancing Jewish-Christian dialogue and theological reflection on Judaism. The resulting resources, ranging from official church documents to scholarly and practical works in theology, biblical interpretation, education and liturgy, are a rich ecumenical treasure. We call upon American Baptists, particularly in our religious education programs and in our seminaries, to draw upon these resources whenever appropriate

We commend the document [Dabru Emet](#) to American Baptist congregations and pastors for study and reflection

We encourage our congregations to maintain and extend relations with synagogues and temples in their communities, both for shared service and for mutual study

We reaffirm the commitments expressed in the 1983 American Baptist Resolution on Anti-Semitism, as modified by the General Board Executive Committee in 1997: "Remembering the deep foundation which Christianity has in Judaism, let us build upon that foundation so our own faith might be deepened and our understanding and appreciation of our Jewish neighbors might be enriched."

* Tikva Frymer-Kensky, David Novak, Peter Ochs, David Fox Sandmel and Michael A. Singer, eds., *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000).