



Groundbreaking Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity

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December 7, 2015. For the first time since the Second Vatican Council changed Christian teachings toward Judaism and the Jewish people 50 years ago, a group of Orthodox rabbis have issued a public statement advocating partnership with Christians and appreciating the religious value of Christianity.

Published on the website of the Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation (CJCUC) in Israel, "To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians" is signed by over 25 prominent Orthodox rabbis in Israel, United States and Europe and calls for cooperation between Jews and Christians to address the moral and religious challenges of our times. The proclamation's authors are inviting fellow Orthodox rabbis to join in signing the statement.

"The real importance of this Orthodox statement is that it calls for fraternal partnership between Jewish and Christian religious leaders, while also acknowledging the positive theological status of the Christian faith. Jews and Christians must be in the forefront of teaching basic moral values to the world," said Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, one of the statement's initiators, and founder of CJCUC, member of the Israeli Rabbinate and the Chief Rabbi of Efrat. While not a direct response to the Church's 1965 "Nostra Aetate," "To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven" was clearly influenced by Christianity's new affirmation of the eternity of the Jewish covenant and the respect that Christian leaders have demonstrated toward Judaism and Jews in contemporary dialogues and religious encounters.

"Jewish thinkers have previously crafted statements like Dabru Emet in 2000 on Jewish-Christian relations and theology, but few Orthodox rabbis could go along with those theological and practical claims in light of their understanding of Jewish tradition. This proclamation's breakthrough is that influential Orthodox rabbis across all centers of Jewish life have finally acknowledged that Christianity and Judaism are no longer engaged in a theological duel to the death and that Christianity and Judaism have much in common spiritually and practically. Given our toxic history, this is unprecedented in Orthodoxy." said Rabbi Dr. Eugene Korn, Academic Director of CJCUC.

The statement cites traditional opinions by past rabbinic authorities to justify partnership with Christians and religious appreciation of Christianity. "We understand that there is room in traditional Judaism to see Christianity as part of God's covenantal plan for humanity, as a development out of Judaism that was willed by God," said Rabbi Irving Greenberg, perhaps the most active Orthodox theologian in Jewish-Christian dialogue and covenantal theology. Another of the statement's initiators, Jerusalem's Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee, added, "We need to work together to meet our common challenges: the assault of radical secularism, religious extremism and moral relativism on the heritage and dignity of humankind."

The complete text of "To Do the Will of our Father in Heaven" can be found here at JCR.

Source: Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding & Cooperation ([CJCUC](#))