Towards Renovation of the Relationship of Christians and Jews

30.01.1980 | Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland, Germany

The Synod of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (Germany) adopted this statement as a result of several years of reflection and consultation. January 1980

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of Christians and Jews

Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee (Rom. 11:18b).

1. According to its "Message to the Congregations concerning the Dialogue between Christians and Jews"(12 January 1978)the Synod of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland accepts the historical necessity of attaining a new relationship of the church to the Jewish people.

2. The church is brought to this by four factors:

   1) The recognition of Christian co-responsibility and guilt for the Holocaust--the defamation, persecution and murder of the Jews in the Third Reich.

   2) The new biblical insights concerning the continuing significance of the Jewish people within the history of God (e.g. Rom. 9-11), which have been attained in connection with the struggle of the Confessing Church.

   3) The insight that the continuing existence of the Jewish people, its return to the Land of

Promise, and also the foundation of the state of Israel, are signs of the faithfulness of God towards his people (cf. the study "Christians and Jews" III, 2+3).

4) The readiness of Jews, in spite of the Holocaust, to (engage in) encounter, common study and cooperation.

3.

The Synod welcomes the study "Christians and Jews" of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the supplementary and more precise "Theses on the Renewal of the Relationship of Christians and Jews" of the Committee "Christians and Jews" of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland.

The Synod receives both thankfully and recommends to all congregations that the study and the theses be made the starting point of an intensive work on Judaism and the foundation of a new consciousness of the relationship of the church to the Jewish people.

4.

In consequence the Synod declares:

1) We confess with dismay the co-responsibility and guilt of German Christendom for the Holocaust (cf. Thesis I).

2) We confess thankfully the "Scriptures" (Luke 24:32+45; 1 Cor. 15:3f.), our Old Testament, to be the common foundation for the faith and work of Jews and Christians (cf. Thesis II).

3) We confess Jesus Christ the Jew, who as the Messiah of Israel is the Saviour of the world and binds the peoples of the world to the people of God (cf. Thesis III).

4) We believe the permanent election of the Jewish people as the people of God and realize that through Jesus Christ the church is taken into the covenant of God with his people (cf. Thesis IV).

5) We believe with the Jews that the unity of righteousness and love characterizes God"s work of salvation in history. We believe with the Jews that righteousness and love are the commands of God for our whole life. As Christians we see both rooted and grounded in the work of God with Israel and in the work of God through Jesus Christ (cf. Thesis V).

6) We believe that in their respective calling Jews and Christians are witnesses of God before the world and before each other. Therefore we are convinced that the church may not express its witness towards the Jewish people as it does its mission to the peoples of the world (cf. Thesis VI).

7) Therefore we declare: Throughout centuries the word "new" has been used in biblical exegesis against the Jewish people: the new covenant was understood in contrast to the old covenant, the new people of God as replacement of the old people of God. This disrespect to the permanent election of the Jewish people and its condemnation to non-existence marked Christian theology, the preaching and work of the church again and again right to the present day. Thereby we have made ourselves guilty also of the physical elimination of the Jewish people.

Therefore, we want to perceive the unbreakable connection of the New Testament with the

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Old Testament in a new way, and learn to understand the relationship of the "old" and "new" from the standpoint of the promise: in the framework of the given promise, the fulfilled promise and the confirmed promise. "New" means therefore no replacement of the "old". Hence we deny that the people Israel has been rejected by God or that it has been superseded by the church.

8) As we repent and convert we begin to discover the common confession and witness of Christians and Jews:

We both confess and witness God as the creator of heaven and earth, and know that we live our everyday life in the world blessed by the same God by means of the blessing of Aaron.

We both confess and witness the common hope in a new heaven and a new earth and the spiritual power of this messianic hope for the witness and work of Christians and Jews for justice and peace in the world.

5.

The Synod recommends to all district synods to appoint someone representative of the Synod responsible for Christian-Jewish dialogue The Synod commissions the leading board of the church to constitute anew a committee "Christians and Jews" and to invite Jews to work within this committee. It is to advise the church leadership in all questions concerning the relationship of the church and Jewry and to assist the congregations and church districts towards a deeper understanding of the new standpoint in the relationship of Jews and Christians.

The Synod commissions the leading body of the church to consider in what form the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland can undertake a special responsibility for the Christian settlement Nes Ammim in Israel, as other churches (e.g. in the Netherlands and in the German Federal Republic).

The Synod commissions the leading body of the church to see to it that in the church instruction, in the continuing education, and in the advanced education of the church the matter of "Christians and Jews" shall be appropriately paid attention to.

The Synod considers it desirable that a regular teaching post (lecture ship) with the thematic "Theology, Philosophy and History of Judaism" shall be established in the Wuppertal Theological Seminary and the University of Wuppertal, and requests the church leadership to negotiate with these institutions to this end.

Extract from: Zur Erneuerung des Verhältnisses von Christen und Juden. Handreichung der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland, Düsseldorf, 1980. English translation: F. Littell, revised by R. Rendtorff

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