



Renunciation of Mission to the Jews

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A call to the churches. February 1995

Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Hamburg 1995

Renunciation of 'Mission to the Jews'

1. The productive encounters between Jews and Christians still experience one obstacle in particular: the churches have not yet expressed a clear, unambiguous, authority supported renunciation of mission to Jews.

Certainly, individual churches, groups and personalities have approached such a renunciation with various degrees of clarity. In 1980, the

synod of the Protestant Church in the Rhineland recognized the "Faithfulness of God who stands by the election of God's people Israel": "We believe that Jews and Christians, each in their own calling, are witnesses to God before the world and each other." Other national churches expressed themselves similarly. This position, however, does not yet expressly eliminate mission to Jews. The dialogue group "Jews and Christians" of the "Central Committee of German Catholics" declared in 1979 that "Jews and Christians are fundamentally denied the right to try to move the other to unfaithfulness towards the call of God issued to them respectively". This comment, nevertheless, has no place in the official teaching of the church. In 1992, the Protestant "Central Association for Witness and Service among Jews and Christians" formulated a clear refusal to missionize

Jews. Nevertheless, their Northelbe membership association does not support this nor other decisions. No governing church church body or synod has yet adopted a stance against mission to Jews..

This hesitation and ambiguity expressed in church statements is an extraordinary burden to the Christian-Jewish partnership. The meeting of Jews and Christians can only continue to be trusting and fruitful if every intention – however concealed – to missionize Jews is completely rejected.

2. The churches are making great effort in opposing antisemitism which has again and again received impetus over the past years. Nevertheless, their effort is open to suspicion if some groups and representatives in the churches refuse, openly or in a veiled manner, a renunciation of mission to Jews. Jews experience

[Christian] mission to Jews as a brusque threat to their existence. That is only too understandable after the experiences of the last centuries and especially the Shoah. Only if the churches clearly refuse to missionize Jews, is their fight against anti-Judaismus within the church and against every form of antisemitism in society really plausible .

3. Mission to Jews did not only become historically obsolete, it is also in conflict with biblical findings. The mission command Mt 28:19 f. says that the disciples are sent out to bring the teaching of Jesus, that is his interpretation of the Torah, to the gentile nations in the world, that is not to the Jews who already have and guard the Torah. This has to be underlined; only in this way one can give justice to the insight that Jesus was a Jewish teacher of the Torah.

4. The demand for the church's decision against mission to the Jews that leaves nobody in doubt arises out of theological, historical as well as political reasons: mission to the Jews, that is the methodic, organized and intentional effort of Christians to dissuade Jews from the Jewish religion, should not be acceptable.

5. The Executive Board of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Hamburg [Germany] asks all Christian churches in Hamburg, their responsible leaders and committees, to stand unequivocally with the Jews who live in our midst and with the Jewish communities by declaring publicly that a "Mission to Israel" is inconsistent with Christian faith.

The Executive Board at the same time encourages the churches to introduce an intense opinion-forming process to bring about a consensus to abstain from mission to the Jews.

