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SOME COMMENTS ON HERVORMDE KERK STATEMENT

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General observation on Section II: I believe it would be best to substitute the term Hebrew Scriptures for Old Testament.

Paragraph #6: "thanks to Christ." This phrase to have echoes of the older Christian belief that the Hebrew Scriptures only revealed their true meaning in the light of the New Testament. Even if this were not the intent of the authors of the statement, the phrase is open to misinterpretation and therefore should be omitted from the text. The sentence, it seems to me, reads quite well without this phrase.

Paragraphs #20-23: I am not satisfied with the overall presentation of Jesus' relationship to the Jewish people. The impression given is that in Jesus man can understand everything that he needs to know for salvation. I do not accept this point of view. I believe very deeply that something new and unique took place in the Christ Event. Man came to understand his relationship to God in a new way. But there are aspects of the God-Man relationship which are essential and which are not per se included in the Christ Event. The Christ Event does not really, as far as I am concerned, say all that much significant about the Messianic Age (in contrast to the Messiah). The early Christians thought it did; but they were wrong. By their mistake the early Christians sacrificed a real understanding of the Messianic Age concept which Judaism preserved. Christians have to relearn it today. I believe in trying to evaluate the relationship of Jesus to the Jewish people it is essential to introduce this distinction between the Messiah and the Messianic Age.

Paragraph #27: I do not accept the position expressed in the first sentence that Jesus Christ has a fundamentally different function for the nations and for Israel. I feel that Jesus' meaning is the same for all men, Jew or Gentile. But I say this in light of what I have said above. I do not believe that the Christ Event exhausts all religious meaning or incorporates all the essential elements of a full religious understanding within it. It does incorporate some unique insights which to my way of thinking are as necessary for Jews as for Christians to explore. Now granted, Christians and Jews will come at this exploration in different ways in the light of their different heritages, but I still am not pleased with the wording of this sentence.

Paragraph #49: This paragraph seems to place by implication the greatest share of the guilt for the plight of the refugees on the Jews. I could accept

this paragraph if a similar exhortation were addressed to Christian Arabs. What about the moral demands to help their brothers that should fall upon the Christians of Lebanon and Egypt and Jordan? If the intent of the paragraph is to say that, over and above political blame, Jews should be moved by their moral principles to help suffering people, then the same thing ought to be demanded of the Christians in the area.

Paragraph #50: I would dispute the statement at the bottom of the page that Arabs are treated as second class citizens in Israel. The statement needs a great deal of clarification. I do not deny there is some de facto discrimination. And there is a sense in which Arabs will always be second class citizens in a state which is culturally Jewish. But there are many ways in which the minority rights of the Arabs are safeguarded in Israel to a far greater extent than are the rights of the minority in the United States. It must also be remembered that Israeli Arabs have stayed in the Jewish state of their own free will. They have the option of returning to an Arab state if they wish.

✓ || Paragraphs #52-53: I am not happy with speaking about election with reference to the modern state of Israel. The idea of election is okay if it means that the Jewish people have something unique to contribute to the religious understanding of man. But so do Christians and other groups. I would prefer personally to drop all talk about election in contemporary theology, although it is proper to speak of it in connection with the Hebrew Scriptures (hence I would not object to its use in the opening part of this statement). I believe all peoples are elected, though in different ways. This is part of the Christian message. And if one accepts the election of all people, it seems useless to me to speak at length of the concept. What we should try to determine is the unique features of each religious tradition. Christianity's understanding of Judaism must be seen in light of its understanding of other world religions. I fear that we who specialize in Christian-Jewish relations often fail to take this fact into account. I also feel that stressing the uniqueness of Israel places an unrealistic burden on the state of Israel.

WB || Paragraphs #54-55: I am quite dissatisfied with this epilogue. It seems a simple restatement of the traditional Christian position of Romans 9-11 that, after all is said and done about the continuing validity of Judaism, Jews cannot attain their full salvation without accepting Christ. This might be acceptable if the Christ Event were understood in the limited context I have emphasized in comments on earlier paragraphs. I do believe that there are religious understandings in the Christ Event which would make Judaism richer if it could come to grasp them. But I believe that there are religious understandings in Judaism which would make Christianity richer if it could come to grasp them. The underlying presupposition in this paragraph seems to be the traditional one that Christianity really contains all necessary religious insights that man needs to perfect his relationship with God. I deny this thesis. The messianic time will not come until such incorporation is accomplished on both sides (and between Christianity-Judaism and the other world religions). While the paragraph does admit failure on the part of Christians, it implies that it is failure from a fully known ideal. Jewish failure, on the other hand, seems to be attributed to a partially unknown ideal due to the failure to as yet understand the Christ Event.

Lastly, there should be something in the statement about the Holocaust and how it affects Christian-Jewish relations.