

DRAFT FOR W.C.C. GUIDELINES ON CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS

1. MISSION, COVENANT AND FINALITY OF CHRIST

(1) We rejoice in the new awareness of our oneness with the people of God, the Jews. As Catholics and Protestants we express thankfulness for the new consciousness of our relationship with the Jews, but the power of the Spirit and of historical truth have forced us to realize that our New Testament contains some anti-semitic implications (cf. John 8, stating that "the Jews" have the devil as their father). We sadly observe that these ecumenical

developments separate us from errors harden the position of those Christians who retain anti-Jewish perspectives, and perhaps harden them in those very attitudes we must find as contrary to the spirit of our Lord to whom we give thanks and the nature of God about which we testify.

(2) Certain theologians today are urging that Christianity re-examine its claim that the Jewish longing for the Messianic age

was totally fulfilled in the death-Resurrection of Christ. Such a reappraisal would have profound implications for the future of the Christian-Jewish dialogue (since the notion of the Messianic age is considerably more central to Jewish self-understanding than is the concept of a personal Messiah). Christian theology, on the other hand, must maintain the uniqueness of the Christ event, but should do so without detracting from the continuity of Jewish faith and the Jewish covenant.

(3) In studying the implications of the Incarnation, the Christian churches must begin to recognize that their covenant as traditionally interpreted does not completely express the meaning of

stress over individualism

salvation in all its dimensions. (Too often, the Christian churches have cultivated a Christology that is individualistic, other-worldly and predisposed to "cheap grace.") Judaism, however, has preserved the concept of salvation as ultimately communal but as the product of human righteousness as if God had been lost from sight. ^{Put this first?} The hope for renewal of Christology would emphasize the diversity of the two religions, each containing different but complementary aspects of humanity's religious dimensions.

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- (4) The Christian world cannot turn its back on the question of the absoluteness or finality of the death-Resurrection event since it has profound significance from the standpoint of human brotherliness, especially in relation to our Jewish elder brothers. How could an absolutist, unchanging avowal of the Incarnation ever be saved from inhumaness^{ness}, in the presence of the Jews? How could humanity and brotherliness ever be fostered apart from Christian questioning of that absolutist avowal?

(5)

(Israel is God's ^{dearer} agent of salvation.) It was for this purpose that Abraham was chosen to be leader of a great nation, agent for the salvation of all the nations listed in Genesis 10. Israel ^{is relationship} outlined her relationship to God ^{is expressed} in terms of a covenant. Of particular importance is the fact that the Yahweh-Israel covenant must be understood as a relationship between two parties of unequal status, the infinite God and the finite Israel. Israel promised to obey the covenant, carrying out its terms with fidelity.

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It came to Israel as the word of God himself. When the Exiles

develop idea of God's abidingness - otherwise we would all be lost!

alluded to the covenant relationship in terms of a broken marriage (Isa. 50:1) a prophet justifiably exclaimed that "the word of our God will stand forever." (Isa. 40:8) It is inconceivable that God could ever break the covenant with the people of Israel even though Israel did break it.

- (6) The choice of Israel as recipient of the covenant relationship was a mystery as Israel had no special qualifications for its role. The only reason for the choice was the love of God. (Deut. 7:8) Israel brought to the covenant all the characteristics of humanity. When humanity sinned, Israel was sinful. Yet she was no less faithful or more sinful than other peoples. As agent of salvation she played a role in salvation history as representative of mankind. The covenant of God with Israel is everlasting in nature and cannot be replaced by a second covenant. Therefore to lay blame on the Jews for crucifying Christ is to read anti-semitism into the Bible for they were acting as representatives of sinful mankind in dire need of salvation. Christianity minus the Jews would be incomplete: they are partners of God in the covenant. The differences between Christians and Jews ^{were originally} are a "family affair," something quite different from the divisions between Christians and Muslims.
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2. ECCLESIOLOGY

- (7) The Church, composed almost entirely of Gentiles, worships the God of Abraham, Isaac and ^{Jacob} Israel. (He whom the first Christians) ^{became} called the "Messiah of Israel" ~~has turned out to be the "Christ of~~ *delete*
- and a's bore the reprimand of malice, self-justification resulting from the younger family member having to justify his break from the senior party,*

the Gentiles. Yet the Jewish people survives to this day, not as "a fossil record" (Toynbee), but as a continuing ^{and vital} people, the prolongation in time of their ancestors of the Diaspora, the Jews of the Second Temple period and the ancient Hebrews. They are a people who still recite the Shema, study the Scriptures of their ancestors and offer prayers to God. They have survived the Holocaust and their story is far from finished. Today they dwell once more in the land promised to their forefathers. That a Jewish state exists, after the Holocaust, is a sign of God's love for them. Christians are called to work for conditions of peace that will help Israel to realize its special calling.

- (8) We ^{the} Gentiles worship Israel's God. Jewish Christians are so rare that the Church for all practical purposes has become a Gentile enterprise. This fact is so familiar to us that we fail to realize how strange it is that we Gentiles worship the God of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. We Gentiles use Jewish words to discuss our deepest concerns, speaking of sin and redemption, creation and covenant, grace and mercy. We use the Book of the Jews and hear the voice of Him whom they also hear. In that Book we find the Jews (historical Israel) are a major part of the subject-matter dealing with a real people in real history because the God of these Scriptures is the God of this real world. To recognize this fact leads us to a fresh understanding of the mission of the Church as a further dimension of Israel's mission to and for the world.

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(9) The Jew whom the early Christians believed to be Israel's Messiah has turned out to be the Christ of the Gentiles but the Messianic age the Christians hoped for has not appeared. What Jesus has accomplished is to draw us Gentiles into Israel's longing for the promised redemption of the world, thereby showing himself to be both Lord and Christ of the Church and the Gentile world until the fullness of redemption when God shall be all in all.[?]

(10) Krister Stendahl's judgment that "something went wrong in the beginning" points to a period in which an intra-family disagreement about Israel's mission and purpose was misunderstood by an increasingly Gentile Church. Instead of seeing the Church as a new branch of Israel, the Gentile Church concluded it was destined to replace Israel. This has weakened ^{the prophetic} Israel's message through a spiritualization of God's promises and has resulted in a defamation of the Jewish people. ~~A reassessment is long overdue.~~

(11) The very raison d'être of the Church is at issue in our attitude towards the Jews for, in the words of the Vatican Guidelines of 1975, "it is when pondering her own mystery that the Church encounters the mystery of Israel." At stake in our recognition of God's fidelity to his people is our witness to the very character of God himself. If God pledged himself to the Jewish people, if St. Paul was correct in insisting that the gifts and call of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29) then this people is God's people. If God is not faithful to this chosen people,

then there is no way to affirm his faithfulness to us.
why should the

(regardless of their fidelity to him,) then there is reason to doubt his faithfulness to us, considering our ~~Gentile~~ infidelity to the covenant he made with us.

- (12) *reaction may be pulling this out of this*
We ~~should~~ ^{must} not talk about a Christian mission to the Jews. How can we dare discuss it when we recall 1700 years of Christian teaching of contempt for the Jews?

- (13) *can bearing witness to our faith*
We do have however a duty of bearing Christian witness, an endeavor shared by only a few Christians in 1700 years. We can act as disciples ^{surrogates?} of Jesus, ^{his own people} respecting the Jewish people, welcoming their presence, helping them in sickness and health, sharing their joys and sorrows. ^{we should publicly assert that} God has not abrogated his covenant with them. ^{Accordingly we will} and we ^{however, we will not demand or expect more of this people than we do of ours} ~~revere~~ the tradition and religious experiences that are their heritage ^{as a result of the covenant}. It is well to ^{own faith community, or of others} experience a humanitarian concern for the Jews but in bearing witness we can look at the Jews from a higher altitude in the divinely revealed religion we share with them.

- (14) *it is a devious device to say that*
A ~~remark common among Christians~~ is that we should not monopolize the treasures of the Christian faith but ~~that~~ we should share them with the Jews. ^{such a justifying of} This is a devious approach to evangelization of the Jews ~~which~~ altogether neglects the fact that "Salvation is from the Jews." (We do not return to a donor the gifts he has given us.) "The Jewish people is conscious of having received through its particular vocation a universal mission with regard to the nations. The Church for its part estimates that its own mission can only be inscribed in this same universal project"

of salvation." (French Bishops' Statement, 1973). Jews and Christians fulfill their callings along different paths but these paths are constantly crossing each other. ~~Their mission is to the world, not to each other.~~ *However, as Xus we acknowledge that we have stained our mission so badly that we must confess our sins even while testifying to the message of love we would bring to the world.*

- (15) In New Testament times, Christians believed that salvation could be found only in faith in Jesus. (This led to the concept of a universal mission to convert all peoples to Christianity. After the 16th century, we came to realize that the greater part of humanity had never heard of Jesus. So we redoubled our missionary efforts but now after 2000 years, only a small segment of the human race actually confesses Christ.) It is time to ask ourselves: did God ever intend our new covenant to be the only valid approach to him? Perhaps our covenantal election is not so much a privilege that guarantees salvation as a vocation to help in making all creation responsive to the will of the Creator?

- (16) Such a concept of covenant and election need not change our faith and worship radically except for this difference: ~~we would not expect all our hearers to share the Christian faith anymore than we expect all Christians to enter the ministry.~~ We should preach Christ in the way He revealed himself to us but we should realize that God has reached and will reach other peoples through other covenants: those whom he has reached through other covenants do not need our preaching. *(How decide who?)*

- (17) Against this background, we can review our relations with the Jewish people, no longer rejecting them as obdurate or

or intractable but regarding them as a people to whom God has revealed Himself in a covenant (other than ^{+ given to} ours.)

(18) Finally, we ^{as penitents} must approach our Jewish brothers and sisters ^{which has been original to us} ^{gave} as penitents asking reconciliation. We ^{confer} cannot avoid responsibility for the many injustices, ^{and} perhaps atrocities, perpetrated upon Jews with the blessing of ^{some} Christian authorities. Ever since the Edict of Milan in the fourth century, Jews have been suffering at the hands of Christians and in the name of Jesus.

(19) The mission of the Christian and of the Church of Christ is to give witness to the Good News preached by Christ. Yet we humbly acknowledge that our faith does not exhaust the content of God's revelation nor can we forbid God to create other expressions of grace. We respect Judaism as an authentic ^{service of God} religion in itself and we are painfully aware of Jesus' words about the arrogance of certain missionaries, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you travel over sea and land to win one convert, and when you have won him, you make him twice as fit for hell as yourselves." (Matt. 23:15) The test of true discipleship is to walk in the way of Jesus, and yet the Gospels remind us that many who are not formal members of the Christian Church will enter heaven before some of the ~~charter~~ members.

3. THE HOLOCAUST

(20) Only in a world where anti-semitism existed could the Holocaust have happened. Unfortunately, it was Christianity that provided a rationale for this anti-semitism in its teaching of contempt

for the Jews and in its anti-Jewish theology. Therefore as Christians we should liturgically and existentially ^{confront the reality & implications of the H.} ~~(acknowledge~~ ^{and share} ~~our share of guilt for the Holocaust)~~ ^(vicariously enter into the suffering of that cataclysmic destruction) ~~and prove our sincerity by our actions.~~ ^{Furthermore, we must}

(21) We do well to ask ourselves and our Christian brethren everywhere: in what specific ways can the Holocaust and the re-establishment of the state of Israel be received with decisive seriousness by the Christian churches and within Christian theology? The Holocaust confronts us with the terrible question as to the contribution of traditional Christian preaching and teaching to the slaughter of the people of God, in 1933-45. That event is a challenge to our traditional Christology, especially to the Christology of suffering. The renewal of Jewish sovereignty in the state of Israel poses anew the question of the utilization of political power by the people of God. That renewal must be welcomed by Christians as one means of demolishing the historic Christian fable that God condemned the Jews to wander forever over the face of the earth, deprived of a homeland.

(22) Finally, we address ourselves to that other fable, God's special judgment on "faithless Israel." The Holocaust should have laid to rest forever the notion that the sufferings of the Jewish people have been a judgment of God. Rather, this atrocity helps us to see with a new clarity the dreadful sin of the early Church in identifying as divine punishment the Roman persecution of the Jews in the first two centuries. Surely the time has come for the

Church and other institutions to cease passing judgments on other faiths and peoples by holding an absolutist ^{tradition} theology that sanctions persecutions of others. If we believe in God's all-powerful love and compassion, how can we attribute to him the wounds of body and mind that have been inflicted on the Jews?

- (23) There are Christians who focus a strong light on the physical sufferings of Christ on the Cross and this does serve to remind them of the mystery of the suffering of the innocent. The Holocaust was a comparable mystery, more physically appalling than the agonies of Jesus because of the very enormity of the crime. Many of the six million victims were shot, gassed or thrown alive into the ovens, among them 1,800,000 children murdered unmercifully.

- (24) We do well to meditate anew on Jesus' passion in the light of the Holocaust and yet meditation offers no rational explanation of the irrational but methodical extermination of the six million Jews whose only offense was that they were Jews, not political

rebels or criminals or saboteurs of the Nazi war effort. The only viable answer is a firm resolve that the Holocaust must never happen again. The Church must not be found wanting the next time brute violence breaks out again in butchery of the Jews.

4. PHARISAISM

- (25) In recent decades we have discovered new facts about the tensions between "the Establishment Church" of Jerusalem and the prophetic and charismatic character of Galilean religion.

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This tension is reflected in Jesus' polemic against the Scribes, lawyers and Pharisees. One writer says that the constant testimony of earliest Gospel tradition, grounded in first-century Galilean charismatic religion, presents Jesus as "the just man, the Zaddik, Jesus the helper and healer, Jesus the teacher and leader, venerated by his intimates and less committed admirers alike as prophet, Lord and Son of God." (G. Vermes, Jesus the Jew, Collins London, 1973.)

- (26) The negative image of the Pharisees is one of the gravest distortions of Judaism still prevalent in Christianity. The correction of this distortion is absolutely necessary for honest dialogue with the Jew as well as for Christian self-renewal. For all modern forms of Judaism basically owe their existence to the Pharisaic-Rabbinic movement which produced a revolution in Second Temple Judaism. To attack Pharisaism then is in a real sense to attack modern Judaism.

- (27) Christian churches must learn the truth about Pharisaism. It was not an empty, legalistic shell without substance as it has been portrayed in Christian teaching but a dynamic, creative religious movement that formed the basic context of the teachings of Jesus and the early Church in areas such as ethics, the concept of God, liturgy, ministry and church structure. The attacks on the Pharisees in the Gospels simply reflect inter-Pharisaic disputes. Authentic renewal within the Christian churches can be brought about only by an appreciation of some basic innovations

of Pharisaism which had far-reaching influence on the teachings of Jesus and the structure of the Church.

(28) At the heart of the Pharisaic revolution was a new concept of the God-and-man relationship that was far more personal than any previous form of Judaism had contemplated. So basic was this change that the Pharisees felt it necessary to discover a new name for God. One of the principal names they applied to him was "Father," a name that symbolized the consciousness of a new intimacy between God and the individual person, an intimacy that undercut the elitist approach of the Sadduceean-Temple approach to religion and inevitably reshaped Second Temple Judaism. Seeing themselves as heirs of the prophets, the Pharisees translated prophetic ideals into the daily realities of Jewish existence.

(29) One of the most fundamental changes effected by the Pharisees was to focus on the Synagogue rather than on the Temple as the central institution in Jewish daily life. In contrast to the Temple which was the place for cult and sacrifice, the Synagogue came to meet the general needs of the people as a center for prayer and study, distribution of arms to the poor, a hospice for homeless and travelers. The word "church" basically derives from "Synagogue." In rethinking the role and structure of the Christian Church we would do well to examine the Pharisaic conception of the Synagogue.

(30) The second innovation of the Pharisaic revolution was in the

function of the rabbi, who gradually replaced the priest as the central religious figure in Judaism. The rabbi was essentially a lay person, with no special liturgical functions, but accepted as leader of the people because of his knowledge of the Torah and his acts of healing and mercy. Jesus basically followed the rabbinic pattern in his ministry.

- (31) Another basic innovation was the development of the oral Torah. The written Torah contained lofty but abstract principles that needed to be vitalized in the concrete social situations of Palestine in the Second Temple period so the oral Torah was designed to open up the written Torah to continuous development and application. Apparently it was the root of the Christian concept of tradition as a source of revelation but Christians unfortunately have often looked on tradition as a restrictive process rather than as a dynamic means of bringing revelation alive in every age. Study of the oral Torah concept could be of help to Christians to revive an authentic feeling for tradition as a source of revelation and law as a living response to the experience of God's presence.

- (32) A fourth contribution of the Pharisaic revolution was the development of the concept of the resurrection of the human person. The Pharisees introduced into religious perception this belief that took on such central importance in Christianity.

Finally, the Pharisaic approach to ethics was not unlike Jesus' own approach, for example, in his Sermon on the Mount.

Resonances of the Pharisaic ethical stance adopted by Jesus can be found in the liberation theologies coming out of Latin American Christianity as present.

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Covenant people
section* 5. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON "FAITHLESS ISRAEL"

*is with
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understanding* The witness of Israel against Israel, especially that of the prophets and the Psalms and the Book of Wisdom, must be understood in the light of the high calling these Israelite witnesses attributed to the people of God. Objective historians would have viewed Israel as a people of high morality, sound commitment to family life, sensitivity to the needs of the stranger, concern for the poor and oppressed, dedication to high ideals of political leadership, humane treatment of prisoners of war, fidelity to international agreements.

(34) But the Old Testament records the failure of the Jewish people to live up to their calling even though much depended on fidelity to the covenant. The very peace and blessing God purposed for the nations were understood to pass to the nations through the life and example of the faithful people. Christians reading the Old Testament therefore must remember that judgments upon a faithless people were pronouncements by Israelite spokes-
i.e., were exaggerated
persons, not objective statements of the facts of the case. It was not enough for Israel to be moral. It must be a holy people, a light to the nations, a witness to the demands of a holy God upon all peoples, but borne by the elect.

(35) Especially regrettable are those developments in Christian

exegesis that ^{justify} ~~justify~~ the Incarnation on the basis of the historical accounts of the failure of Israel. Post-Exilic Israel is said to have lost its way, with a priestly hierarchy who did not appreciate the great moral claims of the prophets -- a legalistic, narrow-minded theocracy. Actually the post-Exilic literature reveals a people who esteemed the Torah, saw cult as the glory and beauty of God, and welcomed foreigners and Israelites alike to Temple worship. This many-splendored radiance of the Jewish eschatological hope and daily witness was found also in the Judaism of Jesus' day. (The Pharisees broke with the narrowness of the Temple priesthood), insisting that religion be applied to all features of life and striving to make God's Torah applicable to all features of Israel's life in the world. It is important to see the Incarnation therefore as eschatological fulfillment of the hopes of ancient Israel recast in the light of the mystery of God's love for all people. It was God determining to create within Israel a community of those who had come to know the kindness of the Lord and to bear witness to that knowledge to the ends of the earth.

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6. THE STATE OF ISRAEL

(36) It was fitting that Israel be established as a political state not only as a national home for dispersed and persecuted Jews but also as a parliamentary democracy. Its existence and security are of moment to the Christian Churches and to Christians not only as a haven after centuries of persecution and rootlessness but as recognition of the immemorial ties binding the Jewish people to their homeland. Christians ought to lend encouragement to every proposal for negotiations that holds promise to Israel of security of borders, national integrity and territorial independence as the basis for peace in the Middle East.