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How Are the Protestant Churches Responding 50+ Years After?¹

(Expanded version for Christian Scholars Group, September 2000)

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(This paper is a major change from the papers on theological and ethical issues I have previously done in relation to post-Shoah thinking. However, it is not unrelated insofar as it is an attempt to see if, and how, Protestant churches have confronted those murderous times and how doing so may have affected their profession of faith, their understanding of their relationships with Judaism and the Jewish people, and their actions.)

In the years since the Shoah most churches of the West have been responding to that event one way or another, fortunately in an increasingly thorough-going manner. As we now read the earlier documents² we find much to dismay us, but we also observe a slow but difficult awakening, as if God were enticing the churches onto untried paths. The last few decades show significant development in recognizing the more foundational issues to be dealt with, and much more readiness to engage in groundbreaking, even revolutionary, thinking such as the acknowledgment that Israel remains God's people. (We will find a mixture of consequences drawn from that acknowledgment.)

While earlier documents spoke about antisemitism a great deal, they did not face up to it as the heritage of the church's teachings and actions over centuries.³ By contrast statements of the '80s and '90s acknowledge, repent of, and repudiate the church's "teaching of contempt" with all its terrible consequences.⁴

Paul van Buren has suggested that "the pattern of revelation which shaped the Scripture and the church's beginning has once again reasserted itself" in the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel (events I have referred to as the nadir and zenith of Jewish history.). The criteria generally accepted for qualifying as a revelational event involve an initiating historical happening followed by a "profound reorientation." In both the events of this mid-century the profound reorientation is evidenced in many of the church council and synod statements. Both of these events put human responsibility at center stage. Van Buren acknowledges that such a claim as he makes must be handled carefully, but he also points out that Emil Fackenheim dares to use the language of a new revelation when speaking of "a commanding Voice from Auschwitz."⁵ To be sure, the church statements themselves do not claim to be responses to revelation, and confirmation of that suggestion may await the full response of the Christian community as the statements are tested in the life of the churches and their people. (However, I wonder if full response of that sort is necessary; may not the statements stand on their own merit even without full church support?) Certainly the new acknowledgments together with the rejection of the church's "teaching of contempt" and its assertions that the Jewish people were cast off by God would appear to be the kind of response revelation would elicit.

What happens when the churches begin to pay attention to the consequences of that rejection/contempt theology? (Remember that many churches are only beginning to ask this question, such as the Uniting Church in Australia.⁶) The Reformed Church of the Netherlands led the way in really new thinking in a lengthy study document of 1970. Ten years later two German Synods carried this forward: The Rhineland Synod of the Evangelical Church not only recognized the “historical necessity of attaining a new relationship of the church to the Jewish people” but did so on the basis of acknowledging them as the permanently elected people of God who have continuing significance for salvation history, and into whose covenant the church has been taken. It not only admitted “responsibility and guilt” for the Holocaust, but in an astounding about-face insisted that the church “may not express its witness toward the Jewish people as it does its mission to the peoples of the world.” Also in 1980 the Baden Provincial Synod spoke of obeying “the command of history . . . , in conformity with biblical teaching,” to gain a new relationship towards the Jewish people, and to realize the “inseparable link between the New and Old Testament.” Israel has not been rejected by God or by the church’s election.⁷ (I will have more to say on this in the section on “Church Mission.”)

The State of Israel:

Further, the 1980 Rhineland Synod addressed the State of Israel issue by confessing that “the continuing existence of the Jewish people, its return to the Land of Promise, and also the creation of the State of Israel, are signs of the faithfulness of God toward His people.” The Synod let this affirmation of the State’s significance stand without mentioning the Palestinians, whereas the Baden Synod did not mention the State at all. But even earlier, in 1975, the Evangelical Church in the Federal Republic of Germany insisted that with regard to “justified claims on both sides” Palestinian Arabs should not have “to bear the consequences of the conflict” alone nor “should only Israel be held responsible for the situation.” No other statement before or since has made such an observation.⁸

The 1970 Netherlands document focused a good bit of attention on the issue of the State of Israel. It saw land as part of the election of the Jewish people by God, and rejoiced in the “reunion of people and land” in the post- World War II years, “a sign . . . that it is God’s will to be on earth together with man” as well as a sign of “God’s lasting election” of this people. (The Dutch church did not disallow the possibility of the Jews’ later loss of the land.) While speaking from a theological perspective the Netherlands Church insisted that “faith has consequences in the political realm.” Again in 1981 Dutch Protestants warned against criticisms of the State of Israel that either negated the right of its existence or forgot the tie between the Jewish people and the land. They also observed that the history of Christian antisemitism and the annihilation of six million Jews in the mid-twentieth century combined with “excessive expectations” of the Jewish state give Jews a reason for suspicion of Christian intent.⁹

In 1982 the Texas Conference of Churches, in a move similar to that of the Netherlands Reformed Church, insisted that “the Spirit of God moves among us” in the nitty-gritty events of worldly and political events. And even earlier, in 1977, the Union of Evangelical Churches in

Switzerland said that it is the "duty of the Christian Churches and all Christians . . . to stand by Israel in her growing isolation."¹⁰ In 1993 the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) theology committee produced a statement recognizing "an intrinsic relationship between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel, which is linked to God's covenant with them, a reality which is often not well understood by Christians." The statement went on to refer to some of the biblical commandments regarding the use of land which the ICCJ saw as "paradigms" that others might apply toward land and people elsewhere (e.g., the sabbatical year which is based on divine ownership of land, release of slaves, and cancellation of debts, as well as recognizing the rights and dignity of "others" living in one's land).¹¹

Generally European churches have been more supportive of Israel than those of North America or the World Council of Churches. Most documents of the American churches as well as of the World Council have tended to focus on the purely political dimension of the Jewish return to the Land and the consequences for the Palestinian Arabs, sometimes in an unbalanced way. For example, the World Council of Churches' 1983 "Statement on the Middle East" was definitely more one-sided on the Palestinian Arab and Lebanese side and negative toward Israel, referring to the "repressive action of the occupying power in East Jerusalem and other occupied territories" without any mention of the Arabs' refusal to accept a negotiated peace settlement in the aftermath of the '67 Six Day War or their continuing hostile actions against Israel. And in 1994 a resolution passed by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. insisted that Israeli settlements in Gaza, West Bank, and East Jerusalem were illegal and obstacles to peace.¹²

The United Church of Christ statement of 1987 deliberately omitted any reference to the State or Land of Israel knowing what a "hot coal" that would be to handle at the national meeting. Nevertheless the issue came up in the three public hearings on the '87 document after its passage. And when the Theological Panel issued its "Message to the Churches" in 1990 it dealt with that subject fairly extensively (in sections 1 and 5) though without being able to represent any consensus in the church on it. The "Message" did state appreciation for the "compelling moral argument for the creation of modern Israel . . . for a victimized people." But it also recognized the "entailing . . . dispossession of Palestinians from their homes and the denial of human rights." It reported that successive General Synods of the Church have asserted both peoples' right to self-determination as well as "security and justice."¹³

The British Working Group of the WCC's Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People issued its "Guidelines/Recommendations on Jewish-Christian Relations" in 1977. It contained three positive statements about the State including the following: "the most remarkable of all such [Jewish] resurgence is the emergence of the State of Israel which . . . has made it possible for Judaism to regain its wholeness."¹⁴

Speaking more theologically, the Presbyterian Church in its study document of 1987 recognized the central place of "the covenant promise of land" in Jewish life over the centuries, and it affirmed "the continuity of God's promise of land." But it hedged that statement with the

caveat that possession is dependent on the people's adhering to God's expectations. It then went on to insist that it is "inadequate" to see the promise of land "solely in terms of a specific geographical entity on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean"; instead they held that "'land' is a biblical metaphor for sustainable life, prosperity, peace and security" and that since the "State of Israel is a geopolitical entity" it is "not to be validated theologically."¹⁵ Hence this church implicitly denies any revelational status to the Jewish state.

Other churches have tried to balance their acknowledgment of the meaning of the land and nationhood to the Jewish people, its right to secure borders, and acceptance of the State's legitimacy with recognition of the Palestinian people's right to and need for nationhood. The Disciples of Christ statement does not mention Palestinian statehood but speaks of the Bible's insistence that God's gift of land to Israel is made "in trust" that Israel will live there responsibly with regard both to the land itself and to the poor and the stranger, connecting this to relations between Israel and "the Palestinian people." (The Disciples point out that while this is a theological statement it should be taken in the context of the U.N. General Assembly's "moral concern for justice and peace.")¹⁶

Church mission:

With regard to mission and conversion (which I touched on briefly earlier) most churches have not followed the Rhineland Synod in rejecting "mission" to the Jewish people (as it continued to do in two documents of 1996 & '97¹⁷); in fact, this remains probably the biggest hurdle. The mission of the church to all peoples, including Jews, and in some cases especially to Jews, is seen as so central to the church's being called into existence that it is not easily rethought even in light of the new and fairly widely accepted recognition that God's covenant with the Jewish people has not been rescinded (a view that is the absolute opposite of the centuries' long Christian position). Thus we find various churches affirming the Jewish peoples' continuing covenant with God while insisting that the Church has been called to bear witness to Jesus Christ among all people. As the Episcopal Church did in '88 when it said "The Church must bear witness by word and deed among all people to Jesus Christ," though it insisted that "coercive proselytism" should not be used. In 1991 The Presiding Bishop's Committee on Jewish-Christian Relations expressed concern about the "Decade of Evangelism," and went on to express gratitude for Anglican's tradition ("in its more enlightened moments") of respect for "God's truth as it exists outside of the Church." In that same year the world-wide Anglican communion at Canterbury, England acknowledged two opposite views within the church on this subject, and while not opting for one, it also rejected "aggressive" proselytizing. At the same time it issued a resolution on "Inter-Faith Dialogue: Jewish/ Christian/Muslim" in which many of the admissions made by the Episcopal Church in the U. S. regarding mistreatment and misrepresentation of Jews were echoed. (The Canterbury document also recognized that Islam claims to supersede both Christianity and Judaism.)

The Presbyterian Church study (which initially came out of the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1982, was reworked and then issued by the united church in '87) has positive statements regarding God's "irrevocable" election of both peoples; sees the reign of God being

attested by both the Jewish people's continuing existence and the church's proclamation of the gospel; and affirms the church as engrafted into Israel's covenant. Yet when it comes to the conflict between the Scripture's commission "to witness to the whole world about the good news of Christ's atoning work for both Jew and Gentile" and its representation of Jews as "already in a [permanent] covenant relationship with God," Presbyterians choose to adhere to what they see as their commission to bear witness. In a somewhat similar manner United Methodists affirm: "We are clearly called to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every age and place. At the same time we believe that God . . . continues today, to work through Judaism and the Jewish people." It then adds two modifiers: 1) we realize that "evangelization of persons of other faiths, and of Jews in particular" often involves sensitive and difficult issues, and 2) we "can never presume to know the full extent of God's activity outside the Christian Church."¹⁸ In each of these instances we find that even forthright affirmations of the enduring covenant of God with Israel and recognition of the evils that followed from the Church's long denial of that have not usually led to a clear-cut rejection of the view that Jews need to accept Christ.

Dr. Robert Willis argued in 1975 that, if after the death camps Christians "still cling to the pretension that their story undergirds a responsibility for the conversion of Jews, then it is questionable whether we can learn anything from the events of history."¹⁹

That kind of thinking led the United Church of Christ in 1987 – one of the most explicit statements -- to forthrightly affirm that "Judaism has not been superseded by Christianity; that Christianity is not to be understood as the successor religion to Judaism; God's covenant with the Jewish people has not been abrogated." Further rejection of the previous supersessionist pretension is asserted in three very recent documents. In 1995 the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Hamburg, Germany issued a "Renunciation of 'Mission to the Jews'" in which it warned that "only if the churches clearly refuse to missionize Jews is their fight against anti-Judaism within the church and against every form of antisemitism in society really plausible." It claimed that all efforts (in Germany) to get a "governing church body or synod" to adopt a firm stance against missionizing Jews had failed. In 1998 the Evangelical Church A.B. & H.B. of Austria most explicitly insisted that "missionary activity among Jews is theologically unjustifiable and must be rejected as a church program" precisely because God's covenant with Israel stands "to the end of time."²⁰ The 1997 United Church of Canada's position is initially a bit more confusing as it affirms that it is called to "bear faithful witness to all people . . . to God's reconciling mission in Jesus Christ" but the sentence continues by saying "[thus opening] the door in a new way to those previously outside" *Israel's irrevocable covenant* with God. To avoid any misunderstanding on this point the document adds Appendix C to its full study which states that the United Church "does not support" efforts to evangelize Jews since it recognizes that "conversion from Judaism to Christianity is not needful for salvation."²¹

The Lutherans' struggle with this central issue can be followed by examining documents from 1964 through '82 and on into the '90s. At Løgumkloster, Denmark in '64 the Lutheran World Federation took a traditional *replacement* position, although its '69 final draft of one section was a bit more ambiguous and perhaps leaned toward the new theology of *recognition*.

The '73 document (Neuendettelsau) affirmed a low-key theology of *recognition* while the '75 Oslo statement reverted to *replacement* theology, and the '82 Bossey report mixed the two views. In North America Lutheran statements of the '70s espoused traditional *replacement* theological views on the relationship of Christianity to Judaism and its people but in a restrained manner (except for the Missouri Synod branch). In the mid-'90s North American Lutheran churches focused on repudiating Luther's diatribes against Jews, on proclaiming antisemitism to be "an affront to the Gospel," and on sponsoring interfaith dialogues. The Evangelical Lutheran "Guidelines" of '98 acknowledged strong Jewish reactions to conversion efforts, and recognized that the Jewish people are "a diverse, living community of faith" with whom an encounter is "profoundly enriching" for Christians. *Recognition* seems to be implied though Lutherans have not yet made such outright statements as the previous three I've mentioned.²²

By contrast we find the Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland again in 1996 and '97 insisting on its 1980 view on this point. In '96 its "Ecumenism and World Mission" Committee instructed its representatives to bring the Rhineland position on the relationship between the church and Israel, Christians and Jews into the discussion with several Assembly and Council groups so as to emphasize: that "Christian mission could never replace God's covenant-history with Israel"; that regarding salvation history there is "only one distinction" between people – that between "the people of God and the [people of] the Gentile world"; that there are no "chosen people" besides Israel; that the church "cannot do missionary work on its own, but always within a partnership of testimony with Israel." It pointed out that church mission "repeatedly followed national claims and prepared for or followed colonialist practice." The Rhinelanders further observed that "Christian mission can learn from Israel how as a minority to live in exile, without any ambition for power, and still to become a blessing for many. . . ."²³

The one exception to all of the above positions is found in the Southern Baptist Convention's 1996 outright avowal to continue to pray for salvation of the Jewish people and to direct its "energies and resources toward proclamation of the gospel" to them. On June 16, shortly after the Southern Baptists issued their resolution, three church communities in New York – the Roman Catholic archbishopric, the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Episcopal Church – objected to this singling out of Jews for evangelization. Their joint statement (after citing one source for each church) opted for dialogue instead. They saw "no conflict between a dialogue based on mutual respect for the sacredness of the other and the Christian mission to preach the Gospel." And then added: "An aggressive direct effort to convert the Jewish people would break the bond of trust built up for over thirty years and recreate enmity between our 'elder brothers and sisters' and ourselves. . . ."²⁴

A much more effective and affirming statement had been made by the Alliance of Baptists in the previous year (March 1995). Recognizing that the Holocaust was the "culmination of centuries of Christian teaching and church-sanctioned action directed against the Jews" the Alliance accepted Baptist responsibility for transmitting "a theology which has taken the anti-Jewish polemic of the Christian Scriptures out of its first century context and has

made it normative for Christian-Jewish relations; a theology which has usurped for the Church the biblical promises and prerogatives given by God to the Jews; a theology which [views] Jews as modern versions of their first century co-religionists; . . . a theology which has valued conversion over dialogue, invective over understanding, and prejudice over knowledge [and] does not acknowledge the vibrancy, vitality, and efficacy of the Jewish faith." They offered this confession "with humility and with hope for reconciliation between Christians and Jews." At the same time they went on to affirm that Christian Scriptures teach that God has not rejected the "community of Israel, God's covenant people" and therefore they renounced "interpretations of Scripture which foster religious stereotyping and prejudice against the Jewish people and their faith."²⁵

Liturgical reform:

If any long-term change is to be accomplished, major reformulations of liturgy, hymns, and services of the church will be essential since so many continue "the traditional Christian view of Jews and Judaism," as the WCC British Working Group observed in 1977. The Disciples of Christ warn about the "language of invective, condemnation, and rejection" used against Jews in the New Testament and in most church traditions, especially the "deicide" accusation (killing of God) which it insists is a "theological and historical error." The Disciples go on to point out that history "has witnessed the same crucifying actions by Christians toward Jews." United Methodists insist the church has an "obligation to ensure that the preparation, selection, and use of liturgical and educational resources" do not "perpetuate misleading interpretations and misunderstanding of Judaism." The Episcopal Bishop's Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations expresses concern about lectionary readings with antisemitic overtones, and both Evangelical Lutherans and the British Columbia Conference of the United Church of Canada advise that care must be used and explanation given when New Testament texts reflect the early conflicts between synagogue and the early church or when Jesus' death is dealt with.²⁶

But such advice and warnings are only prescriptive. By contrast, the United Church of Canada document of '97 devotes eleven pages of substantive instruction to "anti-Judaic moments" in the four Gospels and Paul's letters, and another six pages to guidelines for the use of Scripture in general. In addition, the document provides for a six session study, or alternatively one of three sessions. The study affirms that the story of Christ "recapitulates the Hebraic stories . . . newly revealing the content that God always saw in them. 'Fulfillment' then is revealed again and made available more widely to gentiles." The document further elaborates on how the time of separation of the two communities led to writings that made no attempt "to be fair to opponents" and that later these passages seemed "to validate Christians in their animosity toward Jews."²⁷

I suggest that in addition to these types of efforts the churches periodically combine with the Scripture selections a reading of one of the more helpful and forward-thinking of the church statements (including from denominations not their own) perhaps calling them "Letters to the Churches." Thus the church will demonstrate that it is a living organism that is continuing to

grow in understanding, just as it does with many of the recently-adopted confessions of faith.

None of these efforts address the problem of the language of many hymns, and yet congregations sing them week after week without being aware of how their fundamental thinking is being affected. Many of the most loved hymns create the biggest problems. While many churches have changed wordings to take account of the need for language inclusive of women, none have done so (to my knowledge) related to the rethinking of Christian theology regarding Judaism. Yet that need not be an unsurmountable problem.

German Protestant churches led the way liturgically in observing the new relationship between Christians and Jews each year.²⁸ In 1988 the Episcopal Church "Guidelines" recommended that this be done annually in its churches, either at the time of Yom HaShoah/Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust or in the fall on the Feast of St. James of Jerusalem.

American Lutherans have discussed the appropriate wording of prayers in civic settings, and have recognized the value of Christian attendance at Bat and Bar Mitzvahs, Seders, and Yom HaShoah observances.

With regard to the training of clergy Episcopalians and Evangelical Lutherans have urged their theological schools to promote greater understanding and appreciation of the common heritage of Jews and Christians. The Episcopal General Seminary and Protestantism's Union Theological Seminary have established dialogue relationships with the seminaries of both Conservative and Reform Judaism, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Roman Catholic Church (in Yonkers). This, combined with considerable attention to Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations in a number of GTS's courses, has had a very formative effect on the ministry of their students. A number of them, from '65 to the present, with whom I have been in touch speak very positively when they tell of the impact this has had on their ministry – the way they preach and teach Scripture as well as relationships they have developed with neighboring Jewish congregations, rabbis, or individuals (as well as with Muslims, Buddhists, etc. in some cases). Three of the four Disciples of Christ schools also take the issue seriously.²⁹ But the foregoing appear to be exceptional (though, to be sure, most seminaries have at least one faculty member attuned to the new thinking). By contrast, Beverly Asbury's 1992 survey of some 15 major theological schools (Protestant and Roman Catholic) in the United States found that few of those in training for the ministry know anything about contemporary Judaism, the church statements we've been discussing, or the scholarship that undercuts triumphalism and supersessionism. Indeed, just a few years ago most candidates for the position of Protestant chaplain at Vanderbilt University seemed "never to have questioned" such assumptions. Moreover, seminary curricula generally remain preeminently traditional with regard to the Christian-Jewish issue.³⁰

Dr. 'Coos' Schoneveld of The Netherlands has argued forcefully for reading the New Testament with newly-opened eyes. He advises that it is time we see Jewish survival over so many dire centuries in the light of a new understanding that in the Resurrection God affirmed the Torah which Jesus upheld, the people of Israel of which Jesus was one, and Jewish existence as

such. Schoneveld sees Jesus as having been vindicated as a Jew (not as a Christian) who underwent martyrdom, as so many Jews have done, for the justification of God's name (*kiddush ha-Shem*).³¹

I have just a few more remarks about two additional documents: A '94 brief statement issued jointly by Hungarian Roman Catholic Bishops and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary called the Holocaust "an unpardonable sin" and "the greatest shame of our 20th century." It stated that "all those who . . . failed to raise their voices against the mass humiliation, deportation, and murder of their Jewish neighbors" are responsible along with the perpetrators, and it asks for forgiveness. It upholds those who "rescued lives at the cost of their own, or endangering it, and . . . protested with universal and general effect against the diabolical plots." It further stresses the need to develop "true humaneness" so that such crimes "will never happen again." However none of the theological issues are touched on.³²

In 1998 the Lutheran Church of Bavaria issued a Declaration which stresses that a "fresh start" in relations between Christians and Jews "has to begin with an understanding of the complicity of Christians in the persecution and destruction of children, women and men of Jewish origin (the *Shoah*/ Holocaust). The *Shoah* represents a deep challenge to Christian teaching and practice" extending over centuries. "The Lutheran Church of Bavaria has a share in this guilt – as Lutheran and as German." It goes on to insist that "anti-Judaism [is] in opposition to the deepest essence of the Christian faith"; therefore the church's responsibility is "to fix [its] understanding of itself in such a way that [the self-understanding] of the Jewish people is not thereby set aside." It follows that "Christians have . . . to think through anew how they are to understand their witness that Jesus Christ is the savior of all [persons] in respect to the Jews ."³³

One other Protestant project is presently being carried on among the many Reformation churches of Europe (the Leuenberg Church Fellowship) and is not yet finalized. Since the churches see themselves as "the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ" and hence the "people of God," they recognize that the question of how close they are to, or differ from, the people of Israel who also see themselves as the "people of God" calls for further clarification.³⁴

Conclusion:

All of these developments are very important. The big question is: What impact are they having? Have the churches acted as if a new revelation has been given to them? The Berlin-Brandenburg Synod admitted in 1984 that despite its endeavors, "there has, as usual, been little progress beyond the initial stages. The burden of centuries of ecclesiastical and political antisemitism is still upon us."³⁵ While this is still largely true, some of the signs I've noted may give us more hope. However even these accomplishments are almost entirely within the main-line churches of the West. Among the biblical/fundamentalist churches we find two camps: those who hold that conversion of Jews is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Christ; and those who, while hoping for Jews' ultimate acceptance of Jesus, leave the matter up to God and insist that their "mission" is to stand fast with Jews. All in all, Charles Obrecht has observed that the "troubling story of the Jewish-Christian encounter is perhaps the most vexing and enduring

reclaiming of the truth and power of God in every generation." An openness to new understandings that may seem radical at first is part of the "unending task of interpretation" as God works to accomplish redemption.³⁶

Notes

1. The original paper was presented at "Remembering for the Future 2000" in Oxford, July 2000. It will be published in that version in Spring 2001 by Palgrave Publishers Ltd. in the U.K. and is copyrighted.

2. In the immediate aftermath of World War II churches for the most part remained imbued with centuries-old theological convictions even while they acknowledged the horrors of the recent years of Nazism and what they entailed for Jews. The Protestant Evangelical Church of Germany in October 1945 spoke of the guilt it shared with the nation for the "unending suffering" imposed on "many peoples and countries," yet it never mentioned the particular suffering imposed on the Jews of Europe (Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The German Phoenix* [Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1960], Appendix C, p. 89). And when the World Council of Churches' executive, prior to its first Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, requested some input, the Protestant Federation of France responded. Its paper saw the sufferings of the Jewish people as God's judgment (though not His "vengeance") for their unfaithfulness in rejecting Jesus, and considered this suffering to be an "appeal to conversion" and for Jews to "turn from their unfaithfulness in refusing to recognize [Jesus] as the Messiah foretold by the prophets." The French statement candidly stated that the aim of general conversion "cannot be anything less than the spiritual destruction of Israel" (*The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* [Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988] p. 128). The World Council's own final document insisted that the churches must proclaim to the Jewish people that "The Messiah for Whom you wait has come" (*ibid.*, pp. 6-7).

For documents from 1965 to 1975 see *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations*, Helga Croner compiler (London: Stimulus Books, 1977); for documents 1975 to 1983 plus a 1947 interfaith document, see *More Stepping Stones to Jewish-Christian Relations*, Helga Croner compiler (New York: Stimulus Books/Paulist Press, 1985). Also see *Stepping -Stones to Further Jewish-Lutheran Relations*, Harold H. Ditmanson, ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), and *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People: Statements by the World Council of Churches and its member churches*, Allan Brockway, Paul van Buren, Rolf Rendtorff, Simon Schoon, commentators (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988). Sources for additional documents that are not included in these volumes will be noted as mentioned. A new volume in the *Stepping Stones* series is presently in preparation; it will include many of the earlier statements from the first two volumes plus the many that have been issued since then.

3. See the World Council of Churches 1948 statement.

Simon Schoon, commentators (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988). Sources for additional documents that are not included in these volumes will be noted as mentioned. A new volume in the *Stepping Stones* series is presently in preparation; it will include many of the earlier statements from the first two volumes plus the many that have been issued since then.

3. See the World Council of Churches 1948 statement.

4. See Lutheran World Federation, '84; Presbyterian Church (USA), '88; Anglican Church at Lambeth, '88; World Council of Churches and the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People, '88 & '92; Disciples of Christ, '88/'93; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, '94; Alliance of Baptists, '95; Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, '95; United Methodist Church, '96; United Church of Canada 1997/2000; Austrian Evangelical Church, '98.

5. Van Buren, *Discerning the Way* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 176-79; Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History* (New York University Press, 1970).

6. Statement of the Uniting Church in Australia, July 1997 specifically asks "What are the implications for us, as a church, when we enter into a new relationship with Jewish people?"

7. *More Stepping Stones to the Jewish-Christian Relations*, p. 161; *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations*, p. 145. Some may object that the Rhineland Synod statement is not a clearcut renunciation of mission hopes and efforts, though that is not my reading, nor my understanding of the Synod's intentions on the basis of conversations with some of the participants.

8. *Ibid.*; for the Evangelical Church statement see *Christian Jewish Relations* 17, 3 (1984): 33-34.

9. Synod of the Reformed Church, Holland, 1970 (*Stepping Stones . . .*, pp. 103, 92; Declaration of the Council of Churches in The Netherlands, 1981, *More Stepping Stones . . .*, p. 214.

10. For both the Texas Conference of Churches and the Union of Evangelical Churches in Switzerland statements see *More Stepping Stones . . .*, pp. 186, 203.

11. "Jews and Christians In Search of a Common Religious Basis for Contributing Towards a Better World," *Current Dialogue*, 28 (June 1995): 13.

12. The Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1983, *The Theology of the Churches*, 43-46; and the Episcopal News Service, Sept. 7, 1994. The Episcopalian Presiding Bishop's Committee on Jewish-Christian Relations acknowledged the criticism of Israel in its 1991 report.

Palestinian issue was not discussed, but in 1997 the church's General Assembly adopted an informative, thorough-going, and unbiased study entitled "Resolution on the Middle East.

16. The Disciples of Christ "Statement on the Relations Between Jews and Christians" of 1988/93 is to be found in *The Church and the Jewish People: A Study Guide for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, Clark Williamson, ed. (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publications, 1994), Appendix, pp. 87-93. For other mentions of the State of Israel issue see also: Episcopal General Convention, "Guide for Christian-Jewish Relations," 1988; United Methodist Church, "Building New Bridges in Hope," 1996; United Church of Canada, "Bearing Faithful Witness," 1997/2000; The Evangelical Church A.B. & H.B. in Austria, "A Time to Turn," 1998; Evangelical Lutheran "Guidelines," 1998.

It is most surprising to find the United Church of Canada affirming the right of the State of Israel on the basis of U.N. resolution 181 (1947) which, while it envisioned Israel's "right to exist in safety and well-being," also included the creation of a Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem.

17. See later discussion on these recent Rhineland Church actions.

18. "Building New Bridges in Hope," 1996.

19. Willis, "Auschwitz and the Nurturing of Conscience," *Religion in Life* 44, 4 (1975): 438.

20. For the Austrian church document "A Time to Turn" see *SIDIC*, 17, 1 (1999): 28.

21. "Bearing Faithful Witness: United Church-Jewish Relations Today," (Etobicoke, ON: The Committee on Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relations, 1997) and its Revised Proposed Statement, 2000.

22. The terms *replacement* and *recognition* were suggested by Dr. Harold Ditmanson in his "Introduction" to *Stepping-Stones to Further Jewish-Lutheran Relationships* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990], p. 13).

23. "Israel and Christian Mission," 1996. The 1997 study document of the same church spelled out more of the details of the history of the relationship between the two peoples, its own questions about why the churches had kept silent during the Nazi era, and its conclusion that they had done so because they "had marked Judaism as hostile, at least as strange and opposing to the Christian belief." Moreover, the author commented on his observing the "sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious hostility, or at least, differentiation [toward Judaism and its people] found within the ecumenical movement" at the World Council of Churches meeting in Canberra in '91.

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25. See statement at jcrelations.com.

26. The Presiding Bishop's Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations, *The Blue Book*, 1991, p. 534. "Guidelines for Lutheran-Jewish Relations," Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1998) avers that those who had a hand in Jesus' death are "representative of humanity as such." The British Columbia Conference of the United Church of Canada urges that congregations be reminded that it was Gentile Roman authorities who killed Jesus (1996)..

27. "Bearing Faithful Witness," pp. 9-32.

28. Previously "Israel Sunday" was mission oriented.

29. John Townsend points out that Harvard Divinity School requires superior knowledge of some other world religion than the students' own, and has numbers of professors from these religions teaching the courses.

30. Beverly Asbury, 'The Revolution in Jewish-Christian Relations: Is It To Be Found in Christian Theological Seminaries? A Preliminary Study,' *Theological Education* 28, 2 (1992).

31. J. Schoneveld, "The Jewish 'No' to Jesus and the Christian 'Yes' to Jews," *Quarterly Review: A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry*, 4, 4 (1984): 60.

32. Joint Statement on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Holocaust, Hungarian [RC] Bishops and Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary, November 1994.

33. "Christians and Jews," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36, 3-4 (1999): 481, 482, 484.

34. "Church and Israel" of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship has a 43 page draft document (dated 1999) which is being circulated among participating churches (including the Church of Scotland, Czech Brethren, Ev. Kirche A..B. in Austria, Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland, Lutheran and Reformed Churches of France, Church of Denmark, Evangelical Augsburg Church in Poland, Ev. Kirch im Rheinland, Nordelbische Ev.-Luth. Kirche, Vereinigde Protestantse Kerk in Belgium, Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida, Argentina, and others). This is a very thorough-going study and statement which will merit considerable attention.

35. *SIDIC* 17, 3, (1984): 32.

34. Charles Obrecht, *Explorations* (Institute of Christian and Jewish Studies, Baltimore) 11, 1 (1997): 5.

37. Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) statement, 1988/93, op cit..