

Synod of the Protestant Church in Germany: “Statement on the Jewish Question” (April 27, 1950)

Abstract

During the National Socialist dictatorship, the German Protestant Church split into a movement of “German Christians” [Deutsche Christen], which propagated a “nazified” version of Christianity, and the “Confessing Church” [Bekennende Kirche], which declared neutrality, and vowed loyalty to God, making it clear that they would not tie themselves to an earthly leader. Overall, the Protestant Church was at best neutral in the face of Nazism, and at worst complicit. The Church’s posture during the Nazi regime prompted this postwar statement on the Jewish question, in which church leaders expressed remorse for their omission and silence and dissociated themselves from antisemitism. Since then, church leaders of various denominations have continued to apologize for their silence during the war and have sworn to combat antisemitism and other discrimination going forward.

Source

For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all (Rom. 11:32)

We believe in the Lord and Savior, who as a person came from the people of Israel.

We Confess the Church which is joined together in one body of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians and whose peace is Jesus.

We believe God’s promise to be valid for his Chosen People even after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

We state that by omission and silence we became implicated before the God of mercy in the outrage which has been perpetrated against the Jews by people of our nation.

We caution all Christians not to balance what has come upon us as God’s judgment against what we have done to the Jews; for in judgment God’s mercy searches the repentant.

We ask all Christians to disassociate themselves from all antisemitism and earnestly to resist it, whenever it stirs again, and to encounter Jews and Jewish Christians in a brotherly spirit.

We ask the Christian congregations to protect Jewish graveyards within their areas if they are unprotected.

We pray to the Lord of mercy that he may bring about the Day of Fulfillment when we will be praising the triumph of Jesus Christ together with the saved Israel.

Source of original German text: Synode der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, 27. April 1950, „Wort zur Judenfrage“, in *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland 1950*. Gütersloh, 1951, p. 5f.

Source of English translation: *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People: Statements by the World Council of Churches and Its Member Churches*, with commentary by Allan Brockway, Paul van

Buren, Rolf Rendtorff, and Simon Schoon. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988, pp. 47-49; reprinted in Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past*. Bloomington. IN: Indiana University Press, 2004, p. 200.

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