

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL
of
CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
of the
EMERGENCY CONFERENCE
on
ANTI-SEMITISM

SEELISBERG, 1947

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SWISS REPUBLIC	<i>Frontis- piece</i>
INTRODUCTION	
COMMISSION REPORTS	
No. 1. Principal Objectives of Jewish-Christian Co- operation in combating Antisemitism	7
2. Educational Opportunity in Schools and Univer- sities	10
3. Task of the Churches <i>Address to the Churches</i>	13
4. Work in the Field of Civic and Social Service	16
5. Relations with Governments	19
RESOLUTIONS	22
LIST OF DOCUMENTS	23
CONFERENCE AND COMMISSION OFFICERS	26
MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE	28



FRATERNITÉ MONDIALE
(WORLD BROTHERHOOD)
37, QUAI WILSON, GENÈVE (Suisse)

LE PRÉSIDENT
DE LA CONFÉDÉRATION SUISSE

Berne, le 29 juillet 1947

Monsieur le Dr Pierre Visseur,
secrétaire général de la
Conférence internationale pour
combattre l'antisémitisme,
Hôtel Kulm et Sonnenberg,
Seelisberg

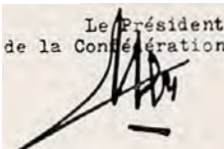
Monsieur le Secrétaire général,

Vous avez bien voulu, au nom du Conseil international des chrétiens et juifs, m'inviter à assister à la Conférence internationale extraordinaire pour combattre l'antisémitisme qui va s'ouvrir le 30 juillet à Seelisberg.

Je suis malheureusement empêché de me rendre à votre aimable invitation et vous prie de m'en excuser. Votre conférence, en liaison avec les églises, les éducateurs, l'UNESCO et la Commission des droits de l'homme des Nations Unies, tend à une meilleure compréhension dans le monde entre chrétiens et juifs, entre races et religions différentes. J'espère que ses travaux auront le succès qu'ils méritent; c'est le vœu d'un homme de bonne volonté, sincèrement désireux de voir s'établir sur la terre une harmonie durable. Je vous prie de bien vouloir transmettre aux congressistes mon salut, et leur souhaite la bienvenue sur le sol de la Suisse.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Secrétaire général, l'assurance de ma considération la plus distinguée.

Le Président
de la Confédération suisse:



Introduction

THE Conference from which the documents reproduced in these pages emerged, took place at Seelisberg in Switzerland at the beginning of August, 1947. Attended by sixty-five persons from nineteen different countries, this meeting constituted an important stage in one of the most significant developments of modern times—the growth of co-operation between Christians and Jews in the vital task of combating racial and religious intolerance, by the promotion of mutual understanding and goodwill, and the encouragement of joint action by Christians and Jews and all men of goodwill in civic and community service.

THE NEED FOR CO-OPERATION

The need for such co-operation became increasingly obvious as social and political organizations and groups, in many countries, sought to advance their objects by stirring up hatred between different sections of the communities in which they operated. The National Conference of Christians and Jews in the United States of America was founded in 1928, at a time when the Klu Klux Klan was exercising a sinister and divisive influence in American life. Some years later, a Society of Jews and Christians was formed in South Africa, as an antidote to the various racial and religious tensions in that country.

The rapid rise of Nazism in Germany with its tragic exploitation of antisemitism, the influence of which spread to all parts of the world, led to the establishment of further councils or organizations of Christians and Jews, notably in Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and Switzerland.

Perhaps the most significant feature of this now world-wide movement has been the spontaneity of its development. No attempt was made by any central organization to promote the establishment of these various national movements. Each, in its own way, represents the recognition by leading citizens in

the different countries that any form of hate movement constitutes a menace, not only to the group against which it is immediately directed, but to the community as a whole, and a violation of the fundamental ethical principles of the Judaeo-Christian tradition upon which so much of all that is best in our western civilization depends.

THE OXFORD CONFERENCE IN 1946

It was not until the summer of 1946 that a first attempt was made to bring together, in an International Conference, representatives of the already existing organizations of Christians and Jews. That Conference which assembled at Oxford in August, 1946, had, as its main purpose, the study and reaffirmation of the essential rights and obligations of man. This was summarized under the general heading of *Freedom, Justice and Responsibility*.

One of the Commissions into which the Conference resolved itself dealt with the general problem of Group Tensions which, as the opening paragraph of its report declared,

“are aggravated in the post-war world by the general feeling of insecurity and by fear of attack from totalitarianism in its various forms. Each of the religious communities represented at the Conference—Jewish, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant—has suffered persecution or restriction of rights in varying degrees in different parts of the world. Hate is an evil which affects mankind as a whole. Each group in the Conference must withstand unswervingly attacks on other groups.”

The second part of the report of this Commission went on to point out that

“of all the various group tensions, that known as antisemitism concerns the whole world and calls for special treatment. Recent history shows that an attack on Jewry is an attack on the fundamental principles of Judaism and Christianity on which our ordered human society depends. Accordingly it is advisable to deal with antisemitism as a special case requiring special treatment, though suggestions for dealing with antisemitism may be applicable to other types of group tensions.”

THE PURPOSE OF AN EMERGENCY CONFERENCE

It was natural enough, therefore, that the Commission should go on, as it did, to recommend first, that an emergency Conference be convened at as early a date as possible to deal in particular with the problem of antisemitism and secondly, that plans be formulated for the setting up of an International Council of Christians and Jews. Both recommendations received the unanimous endorsement of the full Conference and it was in fulfilment of the first that the Conference on antisemitism assembled at Seelisberg on 30th July, 1947.

The purpose of this Emergency Conference—or “workshop” as our American colleagues taught us to call it—was defined as follows:

- (a) to study the present extent of the evil of antisemitism and the contributory factors to its persistence and growth in post-war Europe;
- (b) to formulate plans for immediate and long-range activity through educational, political, religious and social institutions both of a national and international character, for removing the causes, and remedying the effects of antisemitism.

The membership of the Conference was built up on a personal and non-representative basis. Every effort was made to secure the attendance of people who, by reason of their personal knowledge and experience, were in a position to make important contributions to the work of the Conference, irrespective of their national, religious or political affiliation. It was clearly understood from the outset, therefore, that the views expressed or suggestions made by members were to be interpreted purely as their own personal judgment, and not as in any sense committing their country of origin, their religious denominations or any organization with which they happened to be associated.

The list of names printed at the end of this report covers only those who attended the Conference. It does not include those of the considerably larger number who were originally approached and who, for one reason or another, were unable to accept the invitation to take part. Even so, it will be seen both from the notes as to the countries of origin and religious

affiliation, as well as from the distinction of many of the individual names, just how important and authoritative a group it was which met at Seelisberg.

Before the Conference assembled on 30th July, documentary surveys of the condition of Jews in the various countries of Europe had been prepared. These were supplemented during the opening sessions by the reading of a number of carefully prepared papers. For reasons of economy, apart from all else, it has proved impracticable to print all these documents in this report. A list is appended of those which are available in duplicated form, and which may be had on application to the office of the International Council.*

THE WORK OF THE COMMISSIONS

From the evening of the second day the Conference broke up into a number of commissions to discuss the following subjects: The principle objective of Jewish-Christian co-operation in relation to the combating of antisemitism; the educational task in schools and colleges; the task of the churches; the contribution of civic and community organizations; and problems at the level of relations with governments. It is the reports of these commissions which constitute the major part of the material published in this report.

Little is needed by way of explanatory comment on the commission reports except perhaps in relation to the longer of the two documents produced by Commission 3. Those who are even remotely familiar with the past history of relations between the Church and the Synagogue, and with the prejudices, fears and suspicions on both sides which still mar the relations between Jews and Christians, will readily appreciate the difficulty and delicacy of the task entrusted to this particular group.

After a first meeting of the full commission, the Christian members met together in private to consider a first draft of a document for submission to a further meeting of the group as a whole. This draft was then subjected to the closest scrutiny by the Protestant and the Roman Catholic members in separate meetings. Another joint meeting of the Christian

* International Council of Christians and Jews,
37, Quai Wilson, GENEVA, Switzerland.

members took place before the draft was submitted to the full commission which, when it had carefully considered the importance of the whole subject, agreed to recommend to a plenary session of the Conference that the full report be adopted, but not released for publication until it had been considered by a number of Christian leaders and that, in the meantime, a shorter statement of the commission's main concern be approved for immediate release.

The Conference readily agreed to this procedure; the shorter document was approved for immediate publication; the longer one was referred to various ecclesiastical authorities, some of whom have since indicated points which, in their judgment, called for further consideration. Those points have been duly noted, and will be the subject of further study, but in the meantime, since no objection was made to its publication, the text of the document is included in this report.

SETTING UP AN INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

Of the relevance and importance of this and the other commission reports, the reader must be left to judge for himself. Their value must clearly depend on the extent to which they can be made effective in application. No one was more conscious of this than the members of the Conference themselves. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that their last corporate act should be to adopt unanimously a resolution, emphasizing the urgent need for the utmost despatch in giving effect to the recommendation of the Oxford Conference, with regard to the setting up of an International Council of Christians and Jews. The text of this resolution is printed below on page 22. It is a matter of very real satisfaction to be able to report that Dr. Everett R. Clinchy, the President of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in the United States, was able to revisit Europe in the autumn of 1947, and that considerable progress has already been made in the building of the International Council.

WHAT HAPPENED AT SEELISBERG

A final word must be added about the meetings at Seelisberg. Very few of those who took part in the discussions had ever previously met each other. Some had known in full

measure the sufferings and privations of Fascist domination and antisemitic persecution. Language, always a problem at any international conference, was even more of a problem at Seelisberg because of the strong prejudice felt by some members—a prejudice born of great hardships—against the use of German in any of the discussions. There were many anxieties, and not a few problems of personal relations, to be resolved before the Conference could hope to proceed with maximum efficiency.

In a word, the group was, as most groups are, a microcosm of the world from which, for a few days, it had come apart. But it was an interesting and moving experience to see the way in which, as the Conference proceeded, the common concern for the combating of a particularly dangerous form of hatred and intolerance, and the sense of a common task in seeking to promote, through educational means, a new spirit of understanding and co-operation between all men of goodwill who look for the establishment of a true and lasting peace, had the effect of binding the members together into a living fellowship of friends and colleagues.

There is a sense in which that fellowship was broken when the Conference disbanded. There is another and more abiding sense in which it still remains. It make take a very considerable time to carry into effect many of the recommendations set out in the reports printed in the following pages. But the value and the success of the Conference are not to be assessed in those terms only. That it met at all is a fact of far-reaching significance. That its members learned to know and to respect each other as they did, is an achievement of which the value cannot be overestimated.

THE PRINCIPLE OBJECTIVES OF
JEWISH-CHRISTIAN CO-OPERATION
IN RELATION TO THE COMBATING
OF ANTISEMITISM

1. Antisemitism is a world-wide problem which we believe can be solved only by the co-operation of all men without distinction of race and creed. For the purpose of co-operation as equal partners in dealing with this problem, Christians and Jews have joined in this International Emergency Conference to combat antisemitism. Their co-operation in this matter has been based upon the complete independence and integrity of the religious faiths and practices of each religious group. The common aim has been to combat antisemitism as a sin against God and against humanity and as a danger to modern civilization—a danger to non-Jew and Jew alike, to the Christian and to the follower of the Jewish faith.

2. The decision to hold this Emergency Conference was taken at the International Conference of Christians and Jews held at Oxford in August, 1946. Its membership has been built up of specially invited persons from the following countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Rumania, Switzerland and the United States. Although the invitations were issued on a purely informal and personal basis, care was taken to ensure that the interests of all sections of the various Christian communities and of the Jewish community should be unofficially represented.

3. Whilst the Conference recognizes that the problem of antisemitism is but one of the many problems of mutual relationships between members of different faiths, creeds and races which at present trouble mankind, it recognizes also that antisemitism has become especially dangerous because of its

exploitation as a political weapon. Its deep-seated causes and its widespread ramifications demand that those attempting to deal with this problem should be careful to avoid falling into the illusion that it can be solved by the application of some simple panacea.

4. In full realization of the gravity of the problem which brought the members together at Seelisberg, the Conference divided itself into a number of working commissions to explore various aspects of the problem, and their decisions were approved unanimously by the entire Conference of Roman Catholics, Protestants and Jews.

5. For Christians, the problem of antisemitism involves the legacy of many centuries of anti-Jewish prejudice which has been and is being exploited, and has already led to an unparalleled disaster to all of mankind, particularly for European Jewry. Frank discussions between Catholic, Protestant and Jewish members of the Conference have resulted in the production of a document, which may well serve as a norm, dealing with the elimination of emphases in Christian religious teaching which tend unwittingly to encourage or perpetuate antisemitic attitudes in Christians. This statement will be submitted to the authorities of the various Churches for consideration, and marks, moreover, a great step forward in dealing with antisemitism.

6. In dealing with antisemitism, it is necessary to consider at least two practical issues: (a) the guarantee of equality of Jews with all other people living in any state in regard to all political, legal and economic rights, including their freedom to develop their own religious and cultural life; and (b) the right of Jews, particularly European Jews, to find homes elsewhere, including Palestine. These guarantees of equal rights are to be achieved by means of such appropriate measures as:

- (a) the immediate implementation, or enactment and implementation, of laws restoring, or making compensation for, property taken from Jews;
- (b) the economic and social rehabilitation of Jews;

- (c) immediate measures to counteract antisemitism in occupied territories and meeting the position arising from the existence and situation of Jewish displaced persons in Europe;
- (d) making group libel and incitement to religious and racial hatred, an offence in national and international law.

7. Other means of combating antisemitism both on a short-term and a long-term basis were also considered. Long-term projects which call for careful planning are concerned with the question of education in the widest sense of the term. Detailed suggestions with regard to the setting up and operation of Councils of Christians and Jews in all countries were also formulated. Great importance was also attached by members of the Conference to the cultivation of relations with U.N.O. and its dependent organizations, and particularly with U.N.E.S.C.O., so as to secure their co-operation and assistance in the fight to eliminate antisemitism.

8. In view of the world-wide nature of the task, it is mandatory that the suggestion of the Oxford Conference of August 1946, to establish an International Council of Christians and Jews, should be implemented without any delay, and that the Continuation Committee then appointed should now take energetic action to organize, and establish in as many countries as possible, Councils of Christians and Jews linked with the International Council. The Conference also urged that the Continuation Committee, pending the full constitution of the international body, should proceed without delay to implement the programme outlined at Oxford in 1946 and now at Seclisberg in 1947.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

Our recognition of post-war disillusionment on the part of peoples everywhere, and especially on the part of those who believed that victory would secure personal liberty, economic opportunity and a democratic way of life, compels us to face the growing problem of group tensions, and in particular the increasingly serious menace of antisemitism, not only to the Jewish community, but also to the fundamental principles of the democratic way of life. Education is one of the most powerful forces available to assist man in the solution of his problems. Education, both intensive and extensive, must be immediately employed, with all the skill and intelligent resourcefulness possible, to combat antisemitism as well as the divisiveness which separates man from man and group from group.

We believe that in education and in the re-education of all peoples and groups, and especially through the further development of specific programmes and techniques for children and youth, lies one of the vital avenues for recovery and progress. This new approach emphasizes human values, and individual rights, with their corresponding duties and responsibilities for citizenship.

We hold that the acquisition of knowledge is not an end in itself, but that it must be accompanied by the development of attitudes favourable to the welfare of all men. Schools and universities should be definite places in which the children, youth and adults learn to respect and love their fellow men. Such a programme of education, it is hoped, will be encouraged or established throughout Europe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Set up working committees in each country, composed of the representatives of such organizations as may exist locally, for improving group relations and specifically for promoting

appropriate education of teachers. Such groups in one form or another already exist in Scandinavia, Austria and Switzerland. Similar groups should be set up in as many countries as possible. Particular attention should be given to the vital task of securing the co-operation of the governments and local authorities, in countries where education is directly under the control of the State.

2. Form unions of students in all countries to study the problems of group relations, and to make plans for action. Use such organizations as already exist, and form co-ordinating councils among them. The Executive Committee of the International Council should invite existing organizations to co-operate with its programme.

3. Steps should be taken to improve teacher training for better human relations. The following avenues are suggested:

- (a) Suggest to local governmental and clerical authorities, the inclusion in their training programmes of psychological orientation of teachers to the problems of group relations.
- (b) Invite U.N.E.S.C.O. to send teams of workers to hold sessions on these problems with educational groups in various countries.
- (c) Urge the authorities in charge of teacher and student exchange projects, to select exchange-teachers who could be given experience in areas where this kind of work is being carried on.
- (d) Promote exchange of literature in this field useful to teachers.

4. Promote revision of existing teaching materials to eliminate matters prejudicial to minority groups, and encourage the development of new materials as needed. Also encourage the exchange of materials between countries and groups before they are printed, as is now the case in the Scandinavian countries.

5. Establish a centre for clearance and exchange of materials and experiences. Encourage the distribution of professional books among European countries, and in particular urge the removal of those import quotas which at present make such distribution virtually impossible. Approach U.N.E.S.C.O. to distribute materials on group relations.

6. Invite U.N.E.S.C.O. to call the attention of educational agencies with which it works, to the need for immediate attention to the problem of antisemitism, and also to press for the rescinding of the prohibition on the sending of books into Occupied Countries.

The following principles should be observed in the development and direction of educational programmes:

7. All educational programmes should stress the need for beginning with small children. The work up to the present tends to be limited to the secondary schools and universities.

8. The work in schools should be accompanied by work with parents, so that the home can share and extend this education. In accordance with the same principle, every effort should be made to enlist the full co-operation of the general youth organizations.

9. It should be stressed that it is not enough to give intellectual information. Specific emphasis should be put on emotional training, and development for attitudes. To this end, the democratizing of school life is an essential medium.

10. This programme of education is also needed in countries which have no immediate conflict in schools. Positive programmes of orientation in democratic citizenship are needed everywhere and for everybody.

11. Educational programmes should include all minority and majority groups, as well as Jews and Christians. In all cases emphasis should include not only democratic rights and privileges, but also the corresponding duties and responsibilities.

12. It is understood that any proposed programme should be adapted to the needs of the particular country. Therefore an analysis of the pressing needs of specific groups in each country will be helpful.

Commission 3

THE TASK OF THE CHURCHES

Moved by the sufferings of the Jewish people, the Third Commission, in the course of a frank and cordial collaboration between Jewish and Christian members, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, were faced with the tragic fact that certain theologically inexact conceptions and certain misleading presentations of the Gospel of Love, while essentially opposed to the spirit of Christianity, contribute to the rise of antisemitism.

Having recognized this, the Christian members put forward certain proposals with regard to the content and form of Christian teaching, which should serve not only to combat antisemitism, but also to promote good relations between Jews and Christians.

These deal, among other points, with the need to emphasize the close bonds which exist between Judaism and Christianity, to present the Passion story in such a way as not to arouse animosity against the Jew, and to eliminate from Christian teaching and preaching the idea that the Jewish people are under a curse.

On their side, the Jewish members of the Commission declare that they will seek to avoid in Jewish teaching anything which would prejudice good relations between Christians and Jews. Jews and Christians alike pledge themselves to promote mutual respect for what is sacred to each religion.

THE TASK OF THE CHURCHES

Address to the Churches

We have recently witnessed an outburst of antisemitism which has led to the persecution and extermination of millions of Jews living in a Christian environment. In spite of the catastrophe which has overtaken both the persecuted and the persecutors, and which has revealed the extent of the Jewish problem in all its alarming gravity and urgency, antisemitism has lost none of its force, but threatens to extend to other regions, to poison the minds of Christians and to involve humanity more and more in a grave guilt with disastrous consequences.

The Christian Churches have indeed always affirmed the anti-Christian character of antisemitism, but it is shocking to discover that two thousand years of preaching of the Gospel of Love have not sufficed to prevent the manifestation among Christians, in various forms, of hatred and distrust towards the Jews.

This would have been impossible if all Christians had been true to the teaching of Jesus Christ on the mercy of God and love of one's neighbour. But this faithfulness should also involve clear-sighted willingness to avoid any presentation and conception of the Christian message which would support antisemitism under whatever form. We must recognize, unfortunately, that this vigilant willingness has often been lacking.

We therefore address ourselves to the Churches to draw their attention to this alarming situation. We have the firm hope that they will be concerned to show to their members how to prevent any animosity towards the Jews which might arise from false, inadequate, or mistaken presentations or conceptions of the teaching and preaching of the Christian doctrine, and how on the other hand to promote brotherly love towards the sorely-trying people of the old covenant.

Nothing would seem more calculated to contribute to this happy result than the emphasizing of the following points:

1. Remember that One God speaks to us all through the Old and the New Testaments.



THE FULL CONFERENCE



THE CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE

Left to right: Father Calliste Lopinot, O.F.M.; Mr. Neville Laski, K.C.; Dr. Pierre Visseur; Dr. Everett R. Clinchy; Rev. R. C. Macanna; Dr. Willard E. Goslin; Rev. W. W. Simpson; Mr. A. G. Brotman



Abbé Journet

Rev. Father de Menasce



Left to right: Father Calliste Lopinot, O.F.M.; Mr. A. G. Brotman; Mr. Neville Laski, K.C.; Dr. Everett R. Clinchy

Booklet continues in Part Two.