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CHRISTIAN-JEWISH CONSULTATION
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At the request of the Jewish-Christian Consultation in Lugano (October 1970) a group of Jewish and Christian scholars met in Geneva in April 1972 to discuss the theme "The Quest for World Community - Jewish and Christian Perspectives". At the end of the meeting the following Joint Proposals were formulated:

I.

The present world situation is characterized by increasing interdependence. Mass communication from continent to continent bring close to us the concerns of millions of people of whose existence we were hardly aware before. Mass travel helps us to become acquainted first hand with ways of life and thinking which in the past were hardly known to us. Economic, technological and political developments draw the people of this world more closely to one another. This development raises acutely the question whether mankind will be able to create a world community which allows for life in justice and peace.

① The realization of such a new order is not optional. It is decisive for the future of the human race. "One world ... or none" is more than a slogan. However, the concept of interdependence of mankind is ambivalent. It may hold out the promise of new community but we also know from bitter experience that human institutions are not always unmixed blessings, no matter how noble the intentions of their founders, and may even lead to new conflicts of unprecedented dimensions. Groups can overreach themselves and destroy others. Nations can and do make war, and one world may be dictatorial or soulless.

② When speaking of world community we do not think of an imposed uniformity throughout the world - ideological, cultural, political and religious. We feel that world community needs to be understood as community of communities. The identity of each group must not be extinguished, but each must find its place in the wider community of communities. Only such a concept provides the hope for the development of a human future in which individuals and groups will have their rights respected and their dignity inviolate.

The way to realization of world community is barred by many obstacles. We mention only a few factors which need realistically be taken into account:

1. The abdication of social responsibility by individuals.
2. The loss of a sense of history and continuity by contemporary man.
3. The traumatic diminution of the sense of human dignity - man's meaning and worth - in this technological era, with the resultant breakdown in interpersonal and intercommunal relationships.

4. The division of the world by racism, competing power blocs and antagonistic classes of the advantaged and the disadvantaged, such that the latter are permanently frozen in their deprivation with the only recourse being revolution and social upheaval.

It is imperative that our two faith communities apply themselves in common to devising the ways and means of remedying these problems. The Jewish and Christian communities both are aware of this challenge. They have in the past not been sufficiently sensitive and open to those outside their own circles. Yet we feel that our world views are such that our communities have to respond sympathetically and creatively at this moment of history if they are to be true to their respective heritage.

These traditions are specific for each faith community. Judaism reverences the Hebrew Bible, but it is by no means restricted to it. In its long history, it drew upon the Bible and creatively applied its teachings to each generation and its problems within a developing tradition. The matrix of Christianity is the Christ event, which is witnessed in the New Testament and cannot be understood without the Old Testament. In the course of time, each tradition has learned to reinterpret itself and reformulate its world view in critical response to new phenomena, conditions and challenges. Starting from different points of origin, the two heritages have yielded certain understandings and insights that are of the most crucial significance for human history. These concepts, not adequately realized heretofore, include the dignity of man and his freedom, which issue from his creation in the divine image, and his responsibility for his fellow-man under God. It is our conviction that such ideals which our communities share are deserving of renewed commitment and implementation by the two of us as part of the human family for the betterment of all mankind. It is up to us to create an atmosphere in our communities conducive to the implementation of these principles in concert with other faith communities.

II.

The two study groups agreed that the following are some of the subjects requiring further investigation by the constituent groups and the plenary conference. The first, third and fourth subjects have not been considered in depth because of lack of time. The second has been discussed but the groups have not been able to reach agreement on a common statement.

1. We have used the terms "world community" and "community of communities" in this paper. These terms must be properly defined and conceptually analyzed before they are used in a final statement.

2. The dialectic relation of universality and particularity is differently conceived by the two groups. These differences must be spelled out and clarified.

3. How can we understand and work together with communities of other religions and ideologies in their quest for a world community based on their own resources?

4. How can we contribute to the actualizing of the biblical teaching of social justice in cooperation with communities of other religions and ideologies, and in addition to, or in conjunction with, governmental and international agencies?

Implementing the recommendation in the above mentioned proposals that further deliberations be held to clarify outstanding questions of major significance, the two groups reconvened in Geneva in December 1972 and presented papers on several of the questions assigned to them. The following represents the major points that were made in the papers and the ensuing discussion:

3 1. In speaking of world community we do not mean mere interdependence of men and nations. We intend rather an order that enables communities to live together creatively in justice and peace and for our mutual enrichment. It is not a perfect community but a viable way of sharing the possibilities and responsibilities of human existence. Thus, we do not speak of world community as an ultimate goal but as a proximate goal. Both Jews and Christians - as well as other religious and ideological communities - have ultimate goals for the future which are not necessarily identical. There is the messianic age and the Kingdom of God. God will bring about the reign of love and justice. These hopes will inspire our lives and actions and our modes of responsibilities with regard to our more proximate goals.

4 2. World community as a viable order for today's world should be conceived as a community of communities. World community is not only the sum of individual human beings; it is composed of communities of diverse kind and of a variety of societal structures, some natural, some historically and culturally determined, some freely contracted (e.g. ethnic, linguistic, religious, political). Individuality can be expressed through membership in various communities. World community must recognize the value of such communities as they provide human life with identity and meaning and work towards overcoming the threats of loneliness, anonymity and uniformity.

3. States, too, should regard themselves as the protectors of equal rights of all their component communities. This understanding of the state as it has emerged in modern times is to be welcomed and affirmed. If

the state is regarded as absolute in the name of an ultimate value it becomes a danger to rather than an instrument of world community.

4. We found helpful the distinction between particularity and particularism. Particularity does not exclude the legitimate concern of a community for its rights as long as it does not ignore the rights of others. By particularism we mean the self-interest of a community which is exclusive in that it ignores the rights of other communities and disregards the interest of world community. Particularism because it does not contribute to solidarity with the larger community is detrimental to world community. World communities should be aware of the dynamics of historical developments and the emergence of legitimate demands which may effect their own rights. The distinction between particularity and particularism can not be drawn in a final static way. Each community must be open and responsible for the rights of other communities and the whole of mankind.

5. Both Jews and Christians are bound to emphasize the value of particularity in world community. We think that this emphasis needs to be understood as a contribution to world community because insistence on particularity emphasizes the insistence on the respect for the rights of other particularities. Mutual respect is the basis of world community. This emphasizes the access to power of the as yet powerless and a readiness to change mentalities and structures which are impeding the access to power and the fulfilment of identity.

6. Religions have often been a hindrance rather than a contribution to the building of world community. Today's situation calls into question in a special way the exclusiveness which may have characterized the traditions in the past. Any form of triumphalism must be rejected. The contributions Jews and Christians are able to make to world community must be seen in the wider context of the contributions other religions and ideologies are striving to make. The dialogue between Jews and Christians is as yet still too restricted to the Western world. Therefore, they must be particularly sensitive to the wider context and make the effort to contribute to the mutual understanding between people of all persuasions.

7. Obviously many areas require further research and discussion. Some of the areas mentioned are:

- a. The understanding of election and its bearing on the life of the community
- b. The role of the state and its relation to its component communities
- c. The role of power in the mutual relation of communities, in particular the understanding of power in both traditions
- d. The actualizing of the teaching in both traditions for social action.
- e. The sharing of spirituality
- f. Further clarification of the term community and the mutual relation of "communities of diverse kinds".