



Official Statements

German-Austrian Statement Declaration

of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
in Germany and Austria
concerning the Sixtieth Anniversary of
the End of the Second World War, May 8, 1945

Preface

In these days it is sixty years since the end of the Second World War. What happened during that time, our mothers and fathers lived to pass through and suffer. Their experiences and memories have become part of our own history. Their texts and documents are not only stored up in our archives; they have become part of our knowledge and our memory.

Conscious of the responsibility for our thoughts and deeds, today as well as for the past and the future, we feel called upon to take a stand to the past events in an open and humble manner.

I. We deeply regret . . .

. . . that this terrible war which brought unmeasurable suffering over mankind originated in our countries - and that Seventh-day Adventists also took part in it.

. . . that the character of the National Socialist dictatorship had not been realized in time and distinctly enough, and the ungodly nature of NS ideology had not clearly been identified.

. . . that in some of our publications or papers published by us there were found articles glorifying Adolf Hitler and agreeing with the ideology of anti-Semitism in a way that is unbelievable from today's point of view.

. . . that our peoples became associated with racial fanaticism destroying the lives and freedom of six million Jews and representatives of all the minorities in all of Europe within a few years - and that many Seventh-day Adventists did not share the distress and suffering of their Jewish fellow-citizens.

... that we excluded, separated and left fellow-citizens of Jewish origin to themselves so that they were delivered to imprisonment, exile and death.

II. We honestly confess ...

... that by our failure we became guilty towards the Jewish people, towards all persons persecuted and all suffering of was and also towards Adventists in other countries. For this we humbly ask God and the survivors concerned to forgive us.

... that in those days of distress we as Seventh-day Adventists did not act more courageously and consequently, in spite of our knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and the Prophetic Word, and thus failed to follow our Lord. We did not follow decidedly enough the ones among our ranks who boldly offered resistance and did not bow to the Nazi dictatorship nor cooperate with it.

... that neither the passing of time nor the great distress and need of those days could justify or repair the wrong committed; only God in His Grace is able to grant remission of failure and sin.

III. We want to take firm stand ...

... that never any war against other nations will originate from Germany or Austria, and that no one will be limited or discriminated against because of race, religion, nationality or gender.

... that the past events will not be left forgotten but remain in our sight even today as a continuing memorial.

... that the obedience we owe to the state authorities does not allow giving up Biblical convictions and values.

... that we will be able to “discern the spirits” and to confess our faith and live consequently, even if

we will come into the “hour of temptation.”

Final Remark

With this declaration we do not want to express contempt over those who lived and believed in those times. We have no right to condemn our fathers and mothers, God alone is the judge. Nor are we entitled to free others from their guilt, God alone makes us free.

In our days however, we want to take a decided stand for right and justice - towards all peoples. We earnestly pray to God that we will succeed. By His Grace He alone is able to give us the intention and the power to fulfill that task.

In the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany,

Klaus van Treeck, Chairman
Gunther Machel, 2nd Chairman

In the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Austria,

Herbert Brugger, President

The translation of the text from German into English has been made by the president's office of the Euro-Africa Division in Berne, Switzerland

General Conference Statement

Motivated by a sincere concern for the ... Jewish people we have, during the last two years (2001-2002), studied and analyzed some aspects of the complex topic of the proper relation between

Jews and Christians. The anti-Semitism that has characterized the history of Christianity and that resulted in the replacement of the Sabbath by Sunday, the law by grace, and that contributed in a direct way to the holocaust has challenged us as Adventists to examine the Jewish roots of our faith. We affirm that,

1. In contradistinction to most Christian communities the SDA Church brings together in its theology and mission the law and the gospel and becomes the proper place for the reconciliation of Jews and Christians. . . .

2. The mission entrusted by Jesus to the apostles consisted in the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham—"In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3). . . .

3. Although the socio-political theocratic system came to an end, God did not reject the Jews (Rom 11:1; *Acts of the Apostles* 375). This is evidenced by several biblical and historical facts:

. . . Jesus selected as his disciples a group of Jews who recognized him as the promised Messiah;

. . . God has seen the suffering the Jews have experienced throughout their history and has comforted their hearts in their affliction and beheld with pity their terrible situation (*Acts of the Apostles* 380);

. . . God had used the Jews throughout Christian history in the preservation of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and as witnesses to the perpetuity of God's unaltered law;

. . . God has called the SDA church to work in a very special way for the Jewish people as we approach the end of the cosmic conflict. He has promised that "as His servants labor in faith for

those who have long been neglected and despised, His salvation will be revealed" (*Acts of the Apostles* 381).

4. The dispensational interpretation of the role of Israel in prophecy is a distortion of the biblical message and demeaning to the identity of the Jewish people.

5. The church's concern for the . . . Jews requires that further study be made on the biblical theology of Israel in an effort to eliminate barriers.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' Official Statement on the Jewish-Adventist Connection, appearing in *Reflections: BRI Newsletter* no. 3 (July 2003): 2.

Consensus Statement

From the Adventist-Jewish Friendship Conference in Jerusalem

As participants in 'Comfort, Comfort My People', an Adventist-Jewish Friendship Conference, meeting in Jerusalem, Israel, 6-12 February, 2006, we give our assent to the following consensus statement.

★ We affirm the words of the prophet Isaiah, taken as the title of this conference, intending them to express our positive attitude towards the Jewish people, acknowledging the need for healing in our relationship, and affirming our conviction that they occupy a unique place in God's purposes.

- ♦ We as Seventh-day Adventists have much for which to repent in how we have related to Jews. Anti-Judaism and even anti-Semitism, rather than true brotherhood and acknowledgment of commonly held spiritual truths, have too often characterized our relationships. For this we ask forgiveness from those Jews affected by our actions.

- ♦ We have been reminded at this conference of the richness of our Jewish heritage in areas as diverse as lifestyle, Sabbath, worship and common hope, to name but a few. We have much more to learn from Judaism about how to deepen our faith and become better Seventh-day Adventists.

- ♦ We affirm our common heritage with Judaism, acknowledge our indebtedness to it, and aspire to relate to Jews in love and openness.

- ♦ We affirm that among Christians, Seventh-day Adventists have a unique relationship to the Jewish people. We share common truths, such as the significance of the Hebrew Scriptures for our spiritual nurture, and of biblical law for our ethical instruction. In particular we note the significance of the Sabbath for both groups. Further, our unique relationship is grounded in the conviction that the Jews occupy an unparalleled place in the divine-human relationship, a point affirmed by the New Testament in its referring to them as 'His people' (e.g. Romans 11:1-2).

- ♦ We wish to encourage the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church to explore the exegetical and theological foundations for the relationship between Christianity in general and Adventism in particular on the one hand, and Judaism on the other. This should be done in depth, as a matter of urgency, and in a spirit of unity. In particular, to address the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27; to study com-

prehensively Ellen White's statements concerning the place and role of Israel in God's salvation-history; and to investigate the potential impact of the Holocaust on Adventist biblical hermeneutics. Further, to investigate with an attitude of openness, how such study might influence future formulations of the Adventist relationship to Judaism.

- ♦ We acknowledge that our aims can not be achieved through theological discussion alone. Therefore, we wish to encourage initiatives that will enhance dialogue, friendship and mutual respect for each other's traditions.

- ♦ We contemplate the future hoping for a willingness to learn from each other, anticipating a celebration of our common heritage which will lead to our mutual spiritual enrichment, while honouring the God whom we both serve.