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Title: **“Antisemitic Positions in Christian Holy Scriptures: the Idea of Israel’s Election and its Challenge for New Testament Authors and for their Readership”**

Panel: Bible, Christianity and Anti-Semitism

The concept of Israel as God’s chosen people is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Bible. According to the texts of the Hebrew Bible, however, this concept does not deny other people their own way to God (it is not claimed that they are “rejected”).

In New Testament literature, usually, religious election is exclusively connected with the belief in Jesus as messiah. This connection, however, implies a massive degradation of the “non believing Israel”. For example, Israel is denied the essential religious rights of salvation or forgiveness of sins in Acts 13:26-41. Even Paul who explicitly acknowledges in Romans 11 the irrevocability of Israel’s election uses in some texts an aggressive rhetoric: Expecting only in the messianic future (after “the full number of Gentiles has come in,” Rom 11:25) salvation for “all Israel,” Paul describes the contemporary “non believing” Israelites as “enemies of God” (Rom 11:28), “killing Jesus and the prophets, displeasing God and opposing everyone” (1 Thess 2:15).

The clearly anti-Semitic character of the concept of election shows how deeply anti-Semitism is rooted in the foundational Christian scriptures. For the Churches, this is a most difficult inheritance that should be fully acknowledged and reflected within a constant discourse about how to (re)define Christian identity.

Such a discourse should include for example: A declaration of international and national church organizations, to fight anti-Semitism, to reject supersessionism, to acknowledge the Jewish religion as equal, to emphasize the many common authoritative texts and beliefs Jews and Christians share (some churches already have passed such a declaration); the obligatory implementation of the theme “Christian identity without anti-Semitic elements” in Christian religious studies at schools and at universities.