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## **CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN GERMANY A CRITICAL SURVEY**

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In 1988, more or less one year before the event of German reunification<sup>1</sup>, *Islamochristiana* published an essay by Heinz Klautke on Christian-Muslim relations in West Germany.<sup>2</sup> During the past 15 years much has happened in Germany with regard to the development of Muslims communities, Christian Churches and German society at large. As a consequence, Christian-Muslim Relations in Germany have also undergone significant changes. This essay sets out to state and evaluate the facts with the aim of gaining perspectives for future action.<sup>3</sup>

### **1. Development of Christianity and of Islam in Germany since reunification**

#### **1.1. Christianity**

After reunification, Germany had a population of roughly 82 million, of which 74 million are German citizens. Before describing Muslim reality in Germany, it may be useful to indicate some significant new features of Christianity and of religion, in general, in contemporary Germany.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On 9 Nov. 1989 the Berlin Wall and the borders of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) were opened, and on 3 October 1990 the GDR joined the FRG.

<sup>2</sup> Heinz KLAUTKE, „Muslim and Christian Relations in West Germany“, in *Islamochristiana* 14 (1988), pp. 255-266.

<sup>3</sup> Just during the time the present essay is being written there has been published on 23. September 2003 by the Secretariate of the German Bishops Conference the detailed Arbeitshilfe 172 under the title: *Christen und Muslime in Deutschland*.

<sup>4</sup> Here we rely on the masterly sociological analysis of the development of religion in post-second-world war Germany by Michael N. EBERTZ, *Kirche im Gegenwind* (Freiburg/Basel/Wien,,: Herder, 1997), esp. pp.,54-82.

70% of the population are Church members. The Protestants who had lost numerical majority in West Germany from the middle of the 1970's onwards, have, with reunification again slightly more members than the Catholic Church. But the most important recent development is the increase in the number of religiously non-affiliated persons, in other words: the increase in the number of people leaving the Church (Protestant or Catholic, the former in slightly higher numbers) and of those who have never been members of the Church. The religiously non-affiliated constitute almost 70% in the so-called "new federal states" (*neue Bundesländer*) and 12% in the "old federal states" (*alte Bundesländer*). Hence, reunited Germany has become from 1990 onwards not more Protestant but rather less marked by Church membership. The majority of the East-German population proves relatively resistant to the Churches, even to Christianity. This fact will ultimately have political consequences for the whole of Germany, especially as regards the clearly perceptible development towards a weakening of the symbiosis of the Churches and Jewish community, on the one hand, and the state, on the other, a symbiosis that is *sui generis* within the wider European context. Furthermore, this development will probably be enhanced by the growing impact of European legislation

At the same time, by 1995 a majority of the population of Germany (56%) – three quarters of those regularly attending Church and a little less than a quarter of those without a confessional membership – deemed it "bad", "that ever more people abandon the Church", and a strong majority – (81%) of the population, and even of those without confessional membership (55%) – considered it "good", "that the Church exists". "One can therefore", writes Michael N. Ebertz, "draw the conclusion, that whereas the political backing of the Churches is weakened and its usefulness for personal life is judged to be of relatively limited importance, yet, on the other hand, large segments of the population continue to have quite some confidence in the Churches' potential for reforming themselves and of its use for society."<sup>5</sup>

Another significant, related fact is that for the majority of its members the Church is "especially interesting with regard to the service of the weak and marginalised and also for the borderline situations of life, if, and insofar as, the Church cares for, and takes care of, these by way of its 'blessings without obligation'."<sup>6</sup> Leaving the Church normally does not lead to joining another institutionally-formed religion but rather entering the "land" of religious non-commitment. The colourful spectre of religions, esoteric practices and world views does not constitute (yet?) a real alternative to membership in one of the larger Churches. The majority retains membership in them, remaining however largely outside the scope of its norms of faith and ritual practice. Non-Christian alternatives play a rather complementary role. The one important overall change during the 1990's Ebertz formulates as a change "from Church as

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>6</sup> „...mit ihren unverbindlichen Segnungen“, *ibid.*, p. 66.

institution to Church as organisation and simultaneously from Church as organisation of religious conviction to Church as organisation providing magic-religious services.”<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2. Islam

If we follow the results of the spring survey of the *Zentralinstitut Islam-Archiv-Deutschland* (Soest) published in its *Dokumentation Nr 2003*, with May 15, 2003 as qualifying date, Germany counts 3.112.000 Muslims. Of these 34.000 live in the five new federal states. 80 % are Sunnites, 20 % Shiites, if we include in this number the Alevis who constitute up to a quarter of the ethnically Turkish population. 26.000 are members of Sufi communities and 50.000 members of the Ahmadiyya-Muslim-Jama‘at. Muslims holding a German passport count 732.000 – with a rapidly rising tendency. Among these 12.400 are ethnically German Muslims.

New data and facts about Islam in Germany<sup>8</sup>

• Total number of the Muslims in Germany	3.112.000	
• Of which consider themselves Muslim believers (as part of their identity)	365.120	(76%)
• Sunnites	2.489.600	(80%)
• Shiites	622.400	(20%)
Of whom are		
○ Alevis	416.061	
○ Iranian Imamites and turkish Shiites	202.939	
○ Ismailites	1.900	
○ Muslim Gypsies	1.500	
• Ahmadiyya	50.000	

Of whom

• Muslims with German passport	732.000
• Among whom ethnically German Muslims (converts and children form convert families)	12.400
• Out of the total number of foreign Muslims roughly 800.000 were born in Germany.	

With regard to their origin, Muslims in Germany represent almost all of the important aspects of the overall variety of the *umma*. However, the preponderance of Muslims of Turkish origin gives Islam in Germany a Turkish-Ottoman rather than an Arab colouring. The Alevis, about which more will be said later, are gaining ever more dis-

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> Taken from ZENTRALINSTITUT ISLAM-ARCHIV-DEUTSCHLAND. Dokumentation Nr. 2003. Neue Daten und Fakten über Deutschland, p. 7.

tinct organisational features, in spite of the fact that the Ankara Office for Religious Affairs (“Diyanet İşleri Bakanlığı”) has hitherto practically ignored them. Significantly, in the Federal Republic those ethnic minorities have come into prominence which in Turkey, in consequence of the ‘doctrine of national unity’, were not able to express themselves freely, especially the Kurds, whose number well exceeds that of half a million.

From the former Yugoslavia comes the second-largest group of Muslims in Germany, although, in the past few years, not a few of this group have returned to their homelands. The historical and political orientation towards Central Europe over the centuries has liberalised and even secularised Yugoslavian Islam. Twelver Shiite Islam is represented in Germany, above all, by the Muslims from Iran: traders, academics, doctors and lawyers and asylum seekers.

### 1.3. The change of generations

The fact that Muslims in Germany are now in the third or even fourth generation has led to palpable changes. Whereas the workers of the 1960’s have reached pension age, their children and grandchildren have attended German schools and universities and are active in many fields of economic, social and cultural life. The Muslims did not take long to build up their own religious infrastructure. Besides around 2300 prayer-rooms, there have been established countless Muslim institutions catering to all the different aspects of Muslim life. Beside numerous youth, student and women clubs one should mention especially organisations for religious formation which can be found in almost every mosque. There exist a number of commercial chains furnishing Muslim customers with food that complies with the ritual prescriptions of Islam. Insurances and banks offer investment facilities, which do not contravene the Islamic prohibition of interest. Travel agencies organise the prescribed pilgrimage to Mecca. Islamic undertakers transport dead Muslims for burial in the home country, although there do exist by now about 70 Muslim burial grounds in Germany.

Muslims are no longer content with confining the practice of their faith to private space, but rather invoke the protection of the Basic Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) for their practice of faith in public institutions. Questions of “pastoral care” for Muslims in such institutions as the armed forces, police, prisons and hospitals belong to this consideration as much as discussions about the wearing to the headscarf in public service, the call to prayer by loudspeaker and *halāl* butchering. Since with regard to many of these questions there do not exist solutions reached by mutual agreement, increasingly such solutions have to be reached via law suits.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For the most recent account and analysis of this whole complex of questions see Arbeitshilfe 172 published by the Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz on 23. September 2003: *Christians and Muslims in Germany*, Teil I, 3.1 and 3.2. and Teil II, passim.

#### 1.4. Muslim associations and umbrella organisations

Muslims struggle for their interests not as a shapeless mass of individuals but rather as organised communities. Such Islamic organisations have come into being from the beginning of the 1970's onwards. They consider it their primary task to work for whatever facilitates the practice of Muslim worship, especially by building rooms or centres for Muslim worship and religious life. This is all the more remarkable as, on the one hand, hitherto in the German legal system there hardly existed models for such a process and, on the other hand, Islam expressly does not understand itself as a religion with Churchlike structures. However, life as a religious minority inevitably demands special efforts towards creating a minimum of religious structures. One possibility offering itself to the Muslims was a certain legal form provided for in German civil law: registered association or club (*eingetragener Verein*). This type of association, equipped with by-laws and an elected board, constituted the precondition for being able to act with legal capacity on behalf of a community of Muslims. Such associations, which from the early 1970's came about in almost every German city with a palpable number of Muslim inhabitants, are the representatives and legal subjects of the mosques as well as the legal organizers of Koran courses and other religious activities. It may be noted, however, that this organisational form corresponds to the religious self-understanding of Islam only in a very limited way. Whereas one enters Islam automatically as it were via birth or conversion, one belongs to an Islamic association only by the acquisition of membership. Hence the number of the members of an association in no way has to be identical with the overall number of Muslims in the given town or city.

The majority of Muslims in Germany does not belong formally to a mosque association.<sup>10</sup> Such membership is, of course, in no way necessary for the fulfilment of the religious duties of a Muslim. This fact renders it rather difficult to state the exact number of members and to estimate the relative importance of a given association, whenever, for instance, there is question of granting to a given association the building permit for a mosque. Decisions of this kind tend to depend to a large extent on whether the given "representative" (*Ansprechpartner*) really can speak for the Muslims of the town in question. In any case, in addition to the officially inscribed members of a given association, also should be taken into consideration their family members as well as sympathisers of the association. Normally, in any bigger town or city one will find not only one but a whole number of Muslim associations.

The creation of these structures did not follow merely the lines of ethnic identity groups but, in addition, the lines parallel to the already existing organisations of the respective home countries. From the latter there came in the 1970's and 1980's the impulse for founding overarching (or umbrella) organisations (*Dach- oder Spitzen-*

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<sup>10</sup> Cp. the statistical data under 1.4.(j)

*verbände*) with the objective of bringing together and strengthening in this way the single associations and mosques. Thus came into existence a number of big organisations, each of them having many member associations in Germany and beyond, in other countries of the European Union. In their understanding of Islam and of society at large these organisations to various degrees continue to mirror the realities in their respective home country.

Information about the size and range of the various Islamic associations and organisations in Germany constitutes a condition for fruitful encounter, since most of the active Muslim partners in dialogue are representatives or members one of these associations.<sup>11</sup>

The following are the most significant organisations in Germany:

(a) The *Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e.V. (DITIB)* counts 780 associations and around 118.000 members. It is the biggest Islamic organisation in Germany. Founded in 1984, with its seat in Cologne, it is the foreign branch of the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Turkey (*Diyanet*). The DITIB is charged by the Turkish government with the religious care for the Turkish worker migrants in Germany. For this purpose it puts at the disposal of its member associations fully-trained Turkish imams for a number of years (normally each imam serves in Germany for a period of about four years). For some years now the central office of DITIB at Cologne employs a theologian trained in Turkey who represents the organisation in interreligious dialogue.

(b) The *Islamische Gemeinschaft e.V. (IGMG)* with official seat in Bonn represents the European branch of the Islamist movements inspired by the politician Necmettin Erbakan (b. 1926)<sup>12</sup>. The objective of Erbakan's political movement consists in the introduction in Turkey of an Islamist order of state and society. The *Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş (IGMG)*, the ideological spearhead of the movement, has – under various names – been active in Germany from 1976 onwards. In addition to its local associations there belong to the IGMG independent associations as well as amalgamations of associations on regional levels – the so-called *Islamische Föderationen*. According to details provided by Milli Görüş itself in 1996 they counted about 162.000 members Europe-wide and 475 local associations in Germany. Lemmen remarks: “the experiences with Milli Görüş as to Christian-Muslim dialogue unfortunately rarely have been good. Repeatedly their representatives have instrumentalised religious functions for political objectives.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> There exists a growing literature on this subject; LEMMEN (see relevant entries in bibliography) merits special mention. Here and in other parts of our essay we are much indebted to his writings and to conversations with him. For an introduction to the basic information and questions regarding Christian-Muslim encounter see Th. LEMMEN/A. MIEHL, *Miteinander leben. Christen und Muslime im Gespräch* (Gütersloh, 2001), passim. In these paragraphs we have closely followed this work.

<sup>12</sup> For N. Erbakan see art. Erbakan, Necmettin, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, vol. 1: 438-439.

<sup>13</sup> Lemmen/Miehl, op. cit., p. 45. Cf. Also: Faruk Şen, *Islam in Deutschland*, pp. 53-56.

(c) The *Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren e.V. (VIKZ)* with its headquarters in Cologne is the branch of the Süleymanci movement of Turkey which has Naqshbandi origins. It originated as a movement for the organising of Koran classes and was founded by the scholar of Islamic Law Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan (1888-1959).<sup>14</sup> In reaction to the policy of radical secularisation on the part of the Turkish government he began to organise secret Koran courses, in order to guarantee the religious education of Muslim youth. Tunahan as well as his followers have to be seen in the context of Islamic mysticism. To the Süleymancis their founder represents the last link in a long chain of mystical masters, which goes back uninterruptedly to the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, himself. They are convinced that his spiritual energies continue to guide and strengthen his community after his death. The Süleymanci movement was the first religious grouping which in the early 1970's began with the religious care for the worker migrants in Europe. The central administration of the VIKZ in Cologne is responsible for 300 branch centres in Germany and for 125 further establishments in other countries. According to information provided by the organisation it has altogether 20.000 members. After having been active and even creative in the field of initiating Christian-Muslim dialogue from the Muslim side, two and a half years ago the organisation suddenly withdrew from all dialogue activities. Instead it concentrates now on the integral religious formation of its youth in boarding schools and in seminaries (*medreses*) for the training of imams.

(d) In similar ways the *Nurculuk-Bewegung* must be seen as a Naqshbandi movement of reform and restoration of an Islam badly under pressure from the secularisation policy of the Turkish state. It was founded by the Islamic scholar Said Nursi (about 1873-1963).<sup>15</sup> His popular epithet *Bediüzzaman* – “the creative mind of our times” – hints at his extraordinary religious knowledge and insight. His special concern was the critical analysis of modernity in the light of the Koran. He thought less of an *aggiornamento* of Islam than of the interpretation of modernity by the criterion of the Koran, which in his belief alone constitutes the key for a proper critical assessment of the world. His followers, the *Nurcular* – “bearers of light” – know themselves propelled by the concern of propagating the teachings of Said Nursi all over the world by means of translating and propagating his writings. For this purpose they do not run mosques but rather teaching institutions and cultural centres. In Germany they are represented especially by the *Islamische Gemeinschaft Jama'at un-Nur* and the so-called *Fethullah-Gülen-Gruppe*.<sup>16</sup> Both are intensively engaged in dialogue with Christians.

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<sup>14</sup> For this movement and its founder see the monograph by G. JONKER, *Eine Wellenlänge zu Gott*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2202. Also: Faruk Şen, op. cit., pp. 56-58.

<sup>15</sup> See: Faruk Şen, op. cit., pp. 58-60.

<sup>16</sup> More information about the formation centres of the followers of Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi in Faruk Şen, *Islam in Deutschland*, pp. 79-81.

(e) The *Föderation der Türkisch-Demokratischen Idealistenvereine in Europa e.V. (ADÜTDF)* – better known under its short name: *Türkische Föderation* – pursue a clearly political objective.<sup>17</sup> They have their headquarters in Frankfurt (a. M.). It is the foreign branch of the Turkish *Partei der Nationalistischen Bewegung (MHP)*. This party originally had a purely nationalistic outlook. In the 1970's however it began integrating into its ideology the religious identity. The meaning of this so-called *Türkisch-Islamische Synthese* is aptly expressed by the phrase: *türkischer Leib und islamische Seele* (i.e. *Turkish body and Islamic soul*). It is said that to the *Türkische Föderation* belong altogether 200 associations and 10.000 members. It has not shown any interest in interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

(f) The *Union der Türkisch-Islamischen Kulturvereine in Europa e.V. (ATIB)*, also, has its headquarters in Cologne.<sup>18</sup> It came into being in 1987 as result of a split from the *Türkische Föderation*. As to its ideology, the religious component has prevailed over the nationalistic one. According to information provided by *ATIB* it counts 125 associations and 25.000 members. Representatives of *ATIB* repeatedly have taken part in interreligious activities in Germany.

(g) The Twelver Shiite Muslims (mainly of Iranian origin) run the important *Islamische Zentrum Hamburg e.V. (IZH)*, with branches in other German cities. It is linked to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Shiites hailing from Turkey have formed their own association with links to the Hamburg Centre.

(h) For the Muslims of Arab origin the two *Islamische Zentren* in Aachen (*IZA*) and Munich (*IZM*) with their various branches in other parts of Germany constitute important points of contact. Both centres have their roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, with special links to Egypt and Syria, where the Brotherhood has a long history of political opposition, Islamist social and educational reform activity.

It would lead us too far afield to enumerate the many associations of Bosnian and Albanian Muslims of more recent origin.

The ethnically German Muslims as yet play only a relatively modest role within the scope of organised Islam in Germany. The two *Deutschen Muslim-Ligen* in Hamburg and in Bonn try to convey to their Muslim brothers the insight that the development of an Islamic identity in Germany goes hand in hand with a detachment from the affairs and policies of the respective home countries.<sup>19</sup>

(i) In addition to the religious organisations made up of members of one given nationality there have come into being in Germany during the past few years unions of

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. op. cit., pp. 60-62.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. op. cit., pp. 62f.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. op. cit., p. 79.

associations and organisations on regional and national levels.<sup>20</sup> The motive for this has to do with the insight that certain demands can become reality only when pushed by a broadly constructed federation of all Muslims. On the level of the federal states (Länder) one should mention here the *Islamische Religionsgemeinschaft Hessen e.V. (IRH)* and the *SCHURA – Rat der islamischen Gemeinschaften in Hamburg e.V.* On the national level, there came about in 1986 the *Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* and in 1994 the *Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland e.V.*. Because of the dominance of the IGMG and its sub-organisations the *Islamrat* can be considered as almost a manifestation of *Milli Görüş*. In contrast, the *Zentralrat* originally could claim to be a genuine representation of a large segment of the organised Muslims in Germany. However, this claim has become somewhat hollow after the withdrawal of the *VIKZ* from it.

(j) The national umbrella organisation of the Muslim Student Association in Germany (MSV) was founded in 1964, with its headquarters in Marburg. It brings together 25 local groups that work however on ideologically independent lines. The MSV is member of the ZMD.<sup>21</sup>

(j) The Zentralinstitut Islam-Archiv-Deutschland provides the following statistical data concerning the most important organisations:

**List of members of Islamic Organisations (as for 2003)<sup>22</sup>**

DITIB	118.000
Islamrat	136.000
Verband Islamischer Kulturzentren	20.000
Nurculuk Vereinigungen	12.000
Zentralrat der Muslime	12.000
Islamische Religionsgemeinschaft Hessen	11.000
<i>Gesamtzahl</i>	<i>309.000</i>

Concerning the scope of organised Islam in Germany Th. Lemmen/A. Miehl comment:

“With all the complexity of organised Islam one must not forget, that many Muslims are not members of any of the Islamic associations, organisations and unions or entertain with them only a very loose connection. However, since the “silent majority” up to now has not yet produced any bodies representing their views and interests, the asso-

<sup>20</sup> Cf. op. cit., pp. 68ff.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. op. cit., pp. 81f.

<sup>22</sup> ZENTRALINSTITUT ISLAM-ARCHIV-DEUTSCHLAND, Dokumentation Nr. 2003, p. 5.

ciations and organisations are indispensable partners with regard to questions of Islamic life as well as to interreligious dialogue. And yet, it has to be seriously taken into account, that many of the Muslims that have grown up in Germany in the meantime have developed a definite Islamic identity and maintain a critical distance vis-à-vis the persistent fixation of the Islamic organisations upon their respective home countries. These Muslims oppose the fact that the interests of the respective home countries continue to shape the policies of the Islamic organisations in Germany, a practice that, in their view, ultimately damages the interests of the Muslims in Germany. Christian-Muslim dialogue should not disregard these critical voices.”<sup>23</sup>

### 1.5. The Alevi – a significant segment of the Muslim in Turkey and in Germany

The Alevi are a group of considerable importance in the context of immigration from Turkey to Germany.<sup>24</sup> They constitute at least a fifth of the population of Turkey and also of the ethnically Turkish population in Germany. The religious beliefs and practices of the Alevi are different from those of the Sunni Muslims to such an extent that these often rarely consider Alevi as not belonging to the fold of Islam.

*Alevi*, “follower of Ali”, is the term the Alevi employ for designating themselves. They see themselves as belonging to the groups that in the conflict between Ali and Mu’awiya took sides with the “Party of Ali”, the Shiites. The Alevi must not be confounded with the Alawis or Alawites (Nusayriens) of Syria. The Alevi cultic formula “Allah-Muhammad-Ali” underlines the fact, that Alevi consider Muhammad and Ali as part of the truth. They venerate the 12 Imams and therefore count them as a special group within the Shia. With the exception of the “first pillar” of Islam, the pronouncing of the *shahāda*, the Alevi disregard and even reject the religious-cultic duties and the remainder of Islamic Law as it has been developed on the basis of Koran and Sunna. Thus, for example, they strictly follow monogamy and do not know of any prohibition of pork and alcohol nor do they have legal prescriptions concerning women’s dress, the reason for all this being that they do not accept the text of the Koran as it exists today and is used by Sunnites and Shiites as having divine sanction.

Alevi congregate in *Cem* houses (*cem evi*) and not in mosques. They also do not pray in the direction of Mecca. Centre of their worship is the *cem*, a liturgical service in remembrance of forty holy men in the early times of Islam. Alevi are strictly mo-

<sup>23</sup> LEMMEN/MIEHL, *Miteinander leben*, p. 49.

<sup>24</sup> On the Alevi in general see, e.g., Karin Vorhoff, *Zwischen Glaube, Nation und neuer Gemeinschaft: Alevitische Identität in der Türkei der Gegenwart*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1995; David Shankland, *Islam and Society in Turkey*. Huntington: The Eothen Press, 1999, pp. 132-168 (=Ch.6: “The emergence of the Alevi”).

nogamous. Men and women on an equal basis participate in the cult. Women occupy a clearly stronger social position in the Alevi community than in Sunnite and Shiite Islam. Whereas many Muslims doubt, or even clearly deny that the Alevis are Muslims, but the Alevis consider themselves to be so.

In consequence of pressure for assimilation and of inner-Turkish migration traditional religious and cultural structures in Turkey have been largely destroyed and hence could not simply be transported to Germany. Until the beginning of the 1990's the Alevis had remained largely unnoticed in Germany. The first impulse for the building-up of proper structures in Germany started in Hamburg, where in 1989 the first modern type Alevi association was founded. At the moment there exist in Germany 96 associations. They are members of the *Föderation der Alevitengemeinden in Europa e.V. (AABF)*. The *AABF* sees itself as a Faith community as defined by the German Constitution and "as a secular association, which is sharply opposed to the mixing of religion and politics, which however on the cultural level demands more self-determination for the Alevis in Turkey and in Germany."<sup>25</sup> The *AABF* takes an active interest in interreligious dialogue and, especially, in dialogue with Christians. Recently it initiated the "*Multireligiöse Studiengruppe*" (*MUREST*). It consists of representatives of *DITIB*, the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church and of the *AABF*, and systematically takes up the basic themes of religion in everyday life by way of an open and mutually critical dialogue with the aim of eventual publication.

## **2. Some aspects of Muslim religious practice in Germany**

### **2.1. The development of a distinct milieu**

From the middle of the 1970's it has been the policy of the German state of allowing the family members of Muslims living in Germany close members of Muslim families living in Germany, including their prospective wives, to immigrate in Germany in order to be united together. In addition, a certain material wellbeing of the immigrants has led in the conurbations of Germany to the formation of a Turkish residential population with Turkish shops, coffee houses, clubs, prayer-rooms and mosque centres. Muslim groups of other nationalities have built their centres. In this way a network of Turkish and Islamic-Mediterranean life-style, culture and religion has come about.

This development has improved the life situation of the Muslim families. It has not, however, changed the basic fact that the Muslim minority finds itself in a social environment which is indifferent, frequently even hostile towards a life according to Muslim standards and customs. The opportunity for ritual prayer at the working place and

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<sup>25</sup> Körberstiftung (Hg.), *Religion – ein deutsch-türkisches Tabu?*. Hamburg, 1997, P. 112, quoted in *Christen und Muslime in Deutschland* (Arbeitshilfe 172), ed. Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Bonn, 2003.

in public, the construction of mosques with or without minaret and many other similar aspects of traditional Muslim life no longer can be taken as a matter of course as it had been in the Muslim home country. It rather has – often with difficulties – to be retained and practised deliberately, or even to be fought for in tough debates and possibly extended law suits. The world of industry and its organisation of Labour with its strictly regulated modes of production and secular society with its pressures toward consumption and leisure simultaneously constitute both: enticement and menace.

Many react to this situation by stressing their Islamic identification and by rigidly keeping to the traditional regulations of Islamic culture. Such religiously and culturally “strict” Muslim families who in countless ways deliberately distance themselves from their environment, appear strange to the German population and are judged easily as unwilling to “integrate”. These families themselves however consider the falling back on traditional modes of behaviour as a protection as well as a kind of declaration.

At the same time, the rejection by Muslims of the social environment, from a feeling of fear and threat, is being viewed critically by an increasing number of other Muslims and is in fact often rejected by them as a cliché. Young Muslims of the second, third or even fourth generation participate actively in German social and political life without thereby giving up their Islamic moorings. At the same time one will find them ever more frequently on the boards of Muslim organisations. Hence for Islam in Germany the general ascription “foreign” is becoming ever less correct; large segments of the Muslim population, and hence of Islam, have become, or are in the process of becoming acclimatized and feel at home in Germany.

The Islamic centres have developed into important places of community and orientation. Recent Muslim statistics speak today of 2.380 centres for prayer and assembly, some of them are modified industrial buildings or warehouses. The overwhelming majority of these is owned by Islamic associations or organisations. In these prayer rooms/community centres a Koran course for children, youth and adults, normally will be organised on a regular basis. In the meantime in many places have been constructed so-called purpose-built mosques, that is, mosques which are clearly recognisable as such from the outside. Hitherto in the Federal Republic 141 “classical” mosques have been opened (in the year 2001/2002 alone 77). Furthermore at the moment 154 purpose-built mosques are in planning or under construction. In addition there exist 120 school mosques (arab., *madrassa*, türk. *medrese*) of the Nurculus (*Islamische Zentren Jama‘at un-Nur und Verband Islamischer Jugendzentren*), 150 educational institutions of the Fethullacis (i.e., the followers of Fethullah Gülen) and a rapidly growing number of boarding schools (*Internate*) run by the Süleymancis (*VIKZ*).

Ritual prayer (with the special emphasis on Friday prayer und sermon) and Koran courses are the prime duty and function of the mosque. However, in addition the mosque constitutes, especially in the minority situation of Europe, a point of contact for human and cultural, but also for ideological and political propagation and even indoctrination. In most prayer rooms and mosques Christians are welcome visitors. Hosting visits of Christians to the mosque offers to imams and active members of the mosque community a welcome opportunity to explain Islamic faith and practise and thus to fulfil the central Islamic duty of *da'wa* (invitation, mission).

However, many Muslims in Germany practise the pillars of Islam only sporadically, or Islam has even ceased to be for them a practised religion. Nevertheless, "obviously under the impact of the mutual state of feeling [between Muslims and non-Muslims world-wide in the wake of 11. Sept. 2001]<sup>26</sup> in the year 2002/2003 regular mosque attendance has increased considerably. Thus about 185.000 faithful participated in daily prayers, compared with 67.000 in the year 2001/2002. This corresponds to an increase of 176 %. The same development can be observed with regard to Friday prayers. Whereas in the year 2001/2002 285.000 attended, in 2002/2003 their number had risen to 464.000, an increase of 62%. Surprising is also the increase in the attendance of Bayram prayers<sup>27</sup>: 880.000 as compared to 560.000 in the previous year, an increase of 57.1%.

## 2.2. Youth and religious education

Muslim children who grow up in Germany are exposed to influences alien to the cultural traditions of their immigrant parents. The schools with their open education and the far-advanced moral indifference of society cause them deep concern. They are not opposed to a good education and formation, but they would also like to hand on to their children Islamic faith convictions and an Islamic life style. For this reason many of them in the afternoon and/or on week-ends send their children to Koran courses and some put them even in the boarding schools run by the VIKZ. In these institutions the children learn important parts of the Koran in Arabic and are made familiar with the basic rules of Islamic life.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> M. Salim Abdullah in *Islam-Nachrichten* (Zentralinstitut Islam-Archiv Deutschland, Soest), 4. Juli 2003.

<sup>27</sup> i.e. prayers on the two major Islamic feasts: the Feast of Sacrifice and the Feast of Fast Breaking.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. in this context the detailed "*Islam-Knigge*": *Ratschläge zum Umgang mit Muslimen in Deutschland*, written by the prominent convert to, and scholar of, Islam Ahmad von Denffer in: *AL-ISLAM – Zeitschrift von Muslimen in Deutschland Nr. 4/1966*. The essay is inspired by the famous work of Adolf Freiherr von Knigge (1752-96) and offers detailed counsels, not as Knigge did, "as to the art of dealing with men" but rather as to "the arts of dealing with Muslims", "for everyone who has to do with them." The text gives an excellent insight into the concept this German convert to Islam has of an ideal and integral Muslim lifestyle in Germany (and everywhere) that forms part and parcel of the essence of Islam and must be inculcated wherever Muslims live. It answers the question as to what

These children not only have to cope with a rather heavy daily schedule, since almost immediately after leaving state school they attend the Koran course in the mosque but they frequently suffer from conflict and tension, since in some mosques a certain rigidity and passive learning by rote as well as – depending on the imam – an emphasis on the contrast of Islamic living to the godless environment prevail. This environment often is painted in wholly negative colours. So it would seem all the more important, that the considerable efforts made in Germany today towards reaching viable solutions for teaching Islam as an ordinary subject in state schools (i.e. according to the criteria of the German school system) come to a successful conclusion. Whilst this paragraph is being written, in a number of places pioneering projects are under way. Just now, in autumn 2003, the Land Niedersachsen, for instance, has started a well-thought out and planned programme of such teaching of Islam in eight of its schools.

The number of Muslim youth constantly grows who have adapted themselves entirely to the thought and behaviour of their German peers. This frequently leads to considerable, at times violent, conflict with the parents, especially in case of the girls. Already more than a decade ago Werner Wanzura wrote on this point:

“The majority of younger Muslims of foreign origin tend to take “Islam” as a symbol of backwardness and as a hindrance for the development of their personality. At first sight such persons give the impression that they have successfully “jumped into modern Europe”. At first sight they give the impression that the question of their identity has been solved to the satisfaction of all. Only a closer look and intensive contacts unveil the inner vacuum, caused by the lack of roots in any worldview...The inner void also is not replaced, not even by way of ersatz with solid non-religious – possibly philosophical – maxims, which persons who deliberately have turned away from religion at least subjectively perceive. Instead, as far as this group of young Muslims is concerned, their entire planning of life rests on superficial, mostly materialistically oriented, objectives. Something similar, by the way, can be observed among a growing portion of the originally Christian majority population.”<sup>29</sup>

However, for some time now, especially since 11. Sept. 2001, there is a trend observable, also among young Muslims, towards relatively stronger participation in liturgical and other Muslim activities, religious and communal.

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integration means for Muslims of von Denffers conviction and what it will ultimately demand of everyone who want to live in peace with them...

<sup>29</sup> W. Wanzura, E. Schlesinger, „Deutschland unter dem Halbmond?“ Moslems in unsere Gesellschaft, in: *Pastoralblatt für die Diözese Aachen u.a.*, August 1991, pp. 247f.

### 3. Dialogue in shared citizenship for civil society

#### 3.1. Integration and the Basic Law of Germany

The aim of any strategy for peaceful coexistence and active collaboration of Muslims and non-Muslims is integration of the Muslims in the German society. Integration is something quite different from “assimilation” which would amount ultimately to a total adaptation or even to growing absorption of the Muslims by the social conditions in Germany. Integration as understood in the normal political discourse in Germany aims at an ethnically differentiated, religiously and culturally plural society in accordance with the Basic Law of the country. The present Federal President (*Bundespräsident*) of Germany, Johannes Rau, in his famous “Berlin Speech” dated May 12, 2000 has spelled out clearly the prevalent understanding of integration:

“Integration: this does not mean uprooting and faceless assimilation. Integration is the alternative to the concept and reality of an unrelated parallel coexistence of cultures perceived to be simply irreconcilable. Integration is the again-and-again-to-be-renewed commitment of all citizens to shared values. Who wants to live lastingly in Germany does not need to deny her or his origins. However, such a person has to be ready to co-shape an open society according to the model of the German Basic Law. This is our offer to all. We can and we will remain an open society only, if there do not develop lasting islands which lie outside the basic social consensus...”

The basis of peaceful living together (*convivenza*) of all in Germany is the issue of human rights and the Basic Law of the country. In this respect religious freedom and equality of opportunities constitute key questions. One of the basic human rights laid down in the “General Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948” is that of religious freedom. The demand for equality of opportunities follows from the principle of equality laid down in the Declaration (cf. art. 1; 7; 18). The Basic law of the German Federal Republic explicitly guarantees religious freedom and equality of opportunities (cf. art. 1; 3: 4). The living together of Muslims and Christians can succeed only, if and in so far as the high standards of human rights and the principles of the Constitution are regularly and effectively applied in legal decisions. Many times, however, a wide gap exists between the norms of the law and lived reality. Thus, in wide sections of society the consciousness often seems to be absent that a yes to religious freedom necessarily implies a yes to the free, and possibly dynamic, development of all religions in society, including, of course, the religion of Islam. What is being done to further the formation of that consciousness in the German population?

The existing legal position in Germany is not in need of any modification. This holds true also with regard to the legal recognition of Islamic communities as corporations of public Law (*Körperschaften des öffentlichen Rechts*). Only in a very few cases modifications have to be discussed, as for instance as to the possibility of instituting

Islamic teaching of Religion in schools (*Religionsunterricht an staatlichen Schulen*) according to art. 7, paragraph 3 of the Federal Constitution and as to the question of double citizenship.

Regarding religious freedom it must not be forgotten that it is not a right that applies to a religion as such but an "*Individualrecht*" that applies to each person staying in the Federal Republic (and thus is not conditioned in any way by the law of citizenship). Hence every Muslim person in Germany, whether citizen or not, has the right to belong to her faith and practise it, to educate her children in that faith and also to propagate her religious conviction. The limits of religious freedom are defined by the freedom that accrues to other persons in equal measure. The different religious groups have to practise tolerance, because freedom of religion and equality of opportunities must not only be demanded, they also have to be granted in full measure.

### **3.2. Some concrete problems**

A few of the most important points relevant in this context may be mentioned here. Muslims living in Germany, the majority of whom were born there, naturally have the wish to construct mosques in classical or modern style, with a proper cupola and a minaret. They would like to build in each town where a substantial number of Muslims live, mosques in neighbourhoods of Muslim concentration and, eventually, a large Friday mosque in a central place of town. Such projects which imply that the Muslims and, with them, Islam emerge as it were out of the back yards and industrial parks into visibility, initially meet almost everywhere with resistance in substantial sectors of the population. Points at issue are, first of all, the height of the minaret and the call of the muezzin over the loudspeaker. In the city of Pforzheim, for instance, after a long public dispute, the planned 36 meters of the minaret had to be reduced to 26 meters.

Legally speaking the construction of mosques in Germany does not pose any problem. Mosques are buildings dedicated to worship. The Muslim communities and organisations have the right to be treated with the same degree of fairness as any other building sponsor. The height of the minaret must not depend on the height of the highest church steeple of a given place. It has to be determined by the civil authorities objectively and without respect of person. It makes sense to have the mosque built where the majority of Muslims live. Muslims naturally aspire eventually to construct a representative mosque, a Friday mosque that can accommodate all the Muslim praying population of a given town, worthily proclaiming and representing Islam in the public eye.

In the effort to solve controversial points and to minimize possible tensions and fears in the non-Muslim population, mixed "round tables" or ad hoc committees, compris-

ing persons representing the civil authorities and the Churches, have proved to be helpful. Such committees in some places have developed into properly registered “*Christliche-Islamische Gesellschaften*”.<sup>30</sup>

Another important question in the life of Muslim communities in Germany is the burial of the dead. At first, it was usual to transfer the dead to their country of origin. Until recently almost all the Turks living in Germany – but not only they – have been following this practise. Not mentioning the fact that such a procedure is costly, with the time of Muslim families dwelling in Germany becoming ever longer, the desire has grown to bury their dead in Germany according to the Muslim rites and burial prescriptions. Legally, there do not exist in Germany any problems in setting up Muslim burial grounds. Also, the prescription of German law to bury the dead in coffins does not seem to meet with a real problem in Islamic Law. Cities and communes discussing these questions have profited much by getting into contact with cities and communes where, after successful negotiations of the parties involved, such facilities already exist. In the meantime in more and more places all the facilities for Muslim burial and special Muslim burial grounds have been provided.

As to the dietary prescriptions of Islamic Law and especially the question of ritual slaughter, Peter Heine writes:

“Hardly any aspect of daily life in German context is as well-known as the quranic prohibition of eating pork and drinking alcohol. In addition there exist other dietary taboos which Muslims have to observe. An especially deeply rooted concern is the eating of meat which has not been slaughtered according to the prescriptions of Islamic Law. According to these a Muslim has to take care to eat only such meat as has been totally freed from blood. The problems to which this leads are obvious.”<sup>31</sup>

Formal legal opinions on the part of the Fatwa-Council of Al-Azhar University as well as on the part of the Office of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Bakanlığı*) in Ankara have clarified that an animal killed after stunning by electric shock has to be considered as ritually pure (i.e. *halāl*). In this way the problem had seemed to be basically solved. However, differing from previous decisions (including the one by the Supreme Administrative Court (*Bundesverwaltungsgericht*) the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) in 2002 ruled that upon request Muslims have to be granted special permission to slaughter without previous stunning. Significant with regard to this decision was, that the concept of *Religionsgemeinschaft* no longer was applied to Islam as a whole – for which, as we have just seen, a compelling prohibition of this kind cannot be claimed. Rather, the decision referred to the more narrow-

<sup>30</sup> For more on this see below under 4.4.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Heine, *Halbmond über deutschen Dächern*. München, 1997, pp. 276f.

ly related group of the claimant, which is of the conviction that this mode of slaughtering is strictly enjoined by Islamic law. The present-day legal position is largely defined by the fact that in June 2002 the protection of animals has been anchored in the Basic Law of Germany as constitutional objective. A conclusive clarification as to the legal consequences of the ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court in the light of the new qualification of the protection of animals as an objective of the State is still pending. In some Muslim-majority countries at least, animals are being stunned as part of industrial mass-slaughtering, just as it is being done in Germany, without leading to major public criticism and/or court proceedings. A comparison suggests the conclusion, that the insistence on omitting the stunning during ritual slaughter in the situation of minority for a section of the Muslim population has become increasingly a symbol of their religious identity to be maintained and buttressed by all possible means vis-à-vis a non-Muslim environment. One is led to a similar conclusion when observing demands on the part of specific Muslim groups in the areas, for instance, of the (loudspeaker-enhanced) call to prayer, Islam-specific dress etc.

### 3.3. Islam as a public corporation like the Churches?

Muslims on the one hand try to comply with the German legal order but on the other hand they do not wish to be drawn into a process of “*Verkirchlichung*” (“churchification” as it were) of their religion. Islam is not “Church” in the Christian meaning of the word. It does not know of a *magisterium* of the Catholic or even of the Protestant kind, which would have the authority to make binding decisions in matters of faith and morals. Organised Muslims deal with the state in the legal form of “*Verein*” (association). Up to now no Islamic organisation has yet been recognised as a “*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*” – analogous to the Christian Churches, although applications to this effect have been presented to the authorities on the part of the *Islamrat* as well as of the *VIKZ*.

The status of *Körperschaft* does indeed offer a number of advantages for religious or ideological communities (the raising of taxes from their declared members through the agencies of the state, organisational and disciplinary powers etc.). However, it is not a necessary condition for a community being entitled to teach its religion according to art. 7 (3) of the Basic Law. For this the private law status is sufficient. In the meantime various models for this Islamic teaching of religion at state-schools have begun to be implemented and it looks as if it will establish itself over the whole of the German territory – following different models in the different Länder. With the beginning of the school year 2003/2004, for instance, in the Land Niedersachsen eight schools have begun to teach Islamic religion according to Art 7 (3) of the German Basic Law.

In legal proceedings towards the recognition of religious communities in Germany as public corporations normally the following requirements have to be met: 1) The group must comprise a sufficiently big number of persons. In the case of Muslims in Germany this requirement certainly has to be considered fulfilled. 2) It has to be ascertained, that the religious group in question is likely to exist in Germany for an extended period of time. In this respect, too, one can take note that Islam has established itself permanently in Germany. 3) The religious group has to be represented vis-à-vis the state by a body or a person, through which arrangements can be made with the state authorities that a binding upon the whole group. On this organisational requirement hitherto all efforts on the part of the Muslims have foundered.

It is a well-known fact that Islam does not have “official” structures that would be comparable to those of the major Churches. In principle the Muslims acknowledge themselves that a body or organisation speaking with authority in the name of the given Muslim community would be alien to Islam’s understanding of itself. Hence one may wonder how far it will be possible for Muslim communities to develop representative structures analogous to those of the Christian Churches and the Jewish communities in Germany, and , furthermore, whether such structures can be reconciled with Islam at all? The Muslims living in Germany must ask themselves, whether such a “constitutional shape” is acceptable to them or whether it contradicts Islam, since Islam on its own premises has not developed anything like it. This also concerns the relationship of Church and state. Classical Islamic jurisprudence does not know a separation of worldly and spiritual power. Rather, the private, social and political areas of life are determined by the Scharia.

### **3.4. The necessary contribution of the Muslims**

The Muslim side, too, similar to the majority, made up of Christians and many others, has to make its contribution towards the success of peaceful living together in religious diversity. Of fundamental importance is the unqualified acceptance of the Basic Law as the free democratic constitutional structure of the Federal Republic of Germany, which defines itself as a secular state under the rule of law. This acceptance should find expression in the statutes and rules of all Islamic associations and organisations. It has to be perceived by all as coming from inner conviction. It should not pose any problem, because the Muslims enjoy in Germany more rights and liberties as they would in their home countries. Not a few Muslims have chosen to live in Germany precisely, because their basic human rights have been and often still are menaced in the countries of origin.

There remains the question: to what extent do Muslims accept unequivocally the principles and values of the German constitution. To mention just one example: The *Islamic Charta*, published by the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, Inc. (ZMD),

on February 20, 2002, states in art. 11: “Muslims accept the basic legal order guaranteed by the Constitution”. However, subsequent clarifications sought from the authors of the Charta made it clear, that this acceptance only refers to Muslims in a minority situation as it obtains, for instance, in present-day Germany and Europe. In other words: the Charta does not advocate a pluralistic, democratic order based on equal citizenship and the full respect of individual human rights, including religious freedom, for Muslim majority societies.<sup>32</sup>

Belief in the principles of the Basic Law of Germany implies a rejection of all strategies of official and unofficial circles in Turkey aiming at instrumentalising the Muslim population of Turkish origin in Germany for the objectives of Turkish nationalism and of pan-Turkish policies in the sense of the so-called “Turkish-Islamic synthesis”. Such a policy amounts to deliberately preventing true integration in Germany, in other words, to establishing permanent Turkish parallel societies in Germany and in Europe at large. As long as there can be made out valid reasons for considering Islam as a religion that at least in part is directed against the Basic Law, efforts to oppose and minimise the image of Islam as being intrinsically incompatible with pluralistic, democratic living will have little effect.

However, the deconstruction of negative images is not a one-sided affair. On the part of the majority (and within it of the Christians) the determination would seem to be indispensable to correct false images and to translate effectively into reality the spirit of the statements of the great Churches that ask for a positive shaping of Christian-Muslim relations. In order to reach these objectives there is need for the pastoral promotion of a theologically-underpinned basic religious attitude of Christians and Muslims, an attitude capable of considering individual and corporate dynamism of other religious groups as a positive challenge and as a chance for dialogue and collaboration beyond the confines of single confessions and religions.

#### **4. Dialogue between Christians and Muslims as believers.**

After discussing the modes and conditions of dialogue of Muslims and Christians in shared citizenship we shall focus finally on such aspects of Christian-Muslim dialogue, where the two parties act explicitly as communities of faith and faithful practice. Obviously, we shall meet at every step an overlapping of the two aspects: Christians and Muslims participating in shared responsibility in the dialogue for more solidarity and more freedom within democratic states of law, and Christians and Muslims as

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<sup>32</sup> In his lecture of December 12, 2001 Dr. Nadeem Elyas, the chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, in his lecture „Muslime ohne islamischen Staat?“ had made this point clear beyond any doubt. See J. Beckermann, and H. Engel (Hg.), *Das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche*. Frankfurt, 2001. S. 117-138, esp. 132ff.

religious seekers engaging in dialogue on the way to ever greater understanding and realization of the divine truth entrusted to them.

#### 4.1. Christian „guidelines“ for dialogue with Muslims in Germany

On September 23, 2003, during their recent autumn plenary, the German Bishops published a 277-page document (*Arbeitshilfe 172*) entitled *Christen und Muslime in Deutschland*.<sup>33</sup> The publication takes into account the spectacular development of the presence of Muslims in Germany from the 1960's onwards, that is, from one of being guests to one of being co-citizens on a permanent basis. Among Christians as well as Muslims, the bishops observe, the conviction is growing, "that Christians and Muslims, in the interest of peaceful *convivenza* and as a precondition of fruitful encounter, have to reach agreement among themselves as well as with their religiously indifferent co-citizens about the kind of legal frame which the value-bound but at the same time religiously neutral, state provides."<sup>34</sup> The president of the German Bishops Conference, Karl Cardinal Lehmann made it clear during the press conference accompanying the presentation of the *Arbeitshilfe* to the public (on 23. Sept. 2003): the document was designed to contribute to the building up of a constructive relationship of the Catholic Church and Islam. He characterised its content by four key words: information, orientation, dialogue and international cooperation. The president of the *Kommission Weltkirche* of the German Bishops Conference, Bishop Franz Kamphaus added on the same occasion: "The service, the document renders to the reader, is to assemble in one place and to render transparent the essential theological, political and juridical aspects which are of importance for a constructive analysis and for arriving at decisions."<sup>35</sup>

The first part of the document informs Catholics about the historical, theological and political diversity of Islam in Germany as well as about the essential elements of Muslim faith and practice in general. Also, the chief elements of the Christian faith are spelled out in response to the teaching of Islam, and the differences and common elements are highlighted. The second part of the book lists in alphabetical order a number of entries dealing with fields of pastoral action that are of special importance for the work of the Catholic Church in the encounter with Muslims in state and society. Such headwords are, for example: old people's home; circumcision; burial; interreligious marriage; wearing of the headscarf of teachers in state schools; hospital; construction of mosques; the call to prayer; religious teaching of Muslims at state schools, ritual slaughter.

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<sup>33</sup> Already in 1982 they had published a 70-page essay *Muslime in Deutschland (Arbeitshilfe 26)*, followed in 1993 by the more dialogically and pastorally-oriented 98-pages document *Christen und Muslime in Deutschland. Eine pastorale Handreichung (Arbeitshilfe 106)*.

<sup>34</sup> *Christen und Muslime in Deutschland*, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> The two *Pressemitteilungen* by Lehmann and Kamphaus, see <http://www.dbk.de/Arbeitshilfe> (172).

The bishops underline that Muslims as well as anybody else in Germany enjoy the constitutionally attested right of free exercise of religion, as long as their acting in the name of religious freedom does not go counter to the common good and the rights of others. Under this condition Muslims enjoy also the right to propagate their faith. The bishops furthermore state, that if Muslims, in the effort to exercise their right to religious freedom, try to push through via legal action claims based in Islamic law, “they contribute to the integration of Islam in a legal order hitherto alien to Islam”<sup>36</sup>

At the same time the bishops make it clear, that the general Islamic teaching on the position of woman, the traditional teaching on *jihād* as “war in the way of God” (*fi sabīl Allāh*) and the practise of human rights in Islamic countries do not accord with Christian conceptions and with the regulations of a state under the rule of law. They also voice their concern about the restrictions laid upon the exercise of freedom of the Christians living in Islamic countries. Simultaneously they state: the idea of holding the Muslims living in Germany to account for what their coreligionists in other countries owe to the Christians there, would not be compatible with the understanding of religious freedom in Germany nor be in harmony with the demands of the basic Christian commandment of love of neighbour.<sup>37</sup> However, the bishops continue, Christians should openly state their worry concerning the religious freedom of Christians in Islamic countries and “wherever possible” do so “by naming concrete abuses and not simply by making sweeping accusations.” They should try to create awareness among their Muslim partners in dialogue of the fact, “that Christians here in Germany will be able to defend the legitimate claims of their Muslim co-citizens effectively to the degree that are taken into account the legitimate interests of the Christians in Islamic countries.”<sup>38</sup>

In the year 2000 the Church Office of the Evangelical Church of Germany had published its own instruction *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen in Deutschland. Gestaltung der christlichen Begegnung mit Muslimen* (Living together with Muslims in Germany: shaping the Christian encounter with Muslims).<sup>39</sup> In four parts it offers a short account of the development of Islam in Germany, theological orientation and principles of the encounter with Islam, the juridical framework for Islam in Germany and the discussion of individual areas of Christian-Muslim living and working together. The text tries from an evangelical perspective to promote openness towards Muslims with the aim of understanding them and of respecting their religion. It wants to help remove clichés and distorted images (*Feindbilder*) that emanate from ignorance as well as fear. It also states, however – already in 2000 – that there do exist in the world at large, but also in Germany, Islamic currents that necessitate vigilance and, possibly, ask for protest.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., n. 316

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, n. 528.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Gütersloh, 2000.

“In many countries we observe an instrumentalization of religion in the course of ethnic, political and social conflicts. This appears in the radicalization of some Islamistic groups who today with their political extremism and terrorist actions determine many persons’ image of Islam. It would be indeed naïve and disastrous to close ones eyes to the phenomena of religious and political fanaticism. The image of Islam, however, becomes distorted and false, where one does not keep in mind that Islam cannot and must not be identified with such phenomena. We must differentiate and not indulge in sweeping statements. An underlying tone of mistrust and insinuation leads nowhere.”<sup>40</sup>

The document does not make a secret of the existence, within the evangelical Churches of Germany, of different opinions about the relationship of the Christian and Islamic faith and about the proper Christian attitude towards Muslims. Precisely in this situation “it wishes to invite the Christians to an inner-Christian conversation about their relationship to Islam, in mutual listening to the arguments of the other side. The text [of the present *Handreichung*] can invite them to such a conversation since it has originated in one.”<sup>41</sup>

#### 4.2. Muslim statements

Statements on interreligious dialogue by leading Muslim individuals in Germany published in Muslim periodicals and addressing mainly fellow-Muslims merit special mention here, because they would seem to emanate more directly from faith convictions and be less politically oriented than those by Muslim organisations.<sup>42</sup> The two prominent German writers on Islam, Murad Wilfried Hofmann and Ahmad von Denffer, on the basis of their neo-Hanbalite position, are not outright against dialogical contacts with Christians. However, their concept of interreligious dialogue is significantly reductive. Von Denffer, for instance, assigns to dialogue exclusively the function “to explain our position, and to find out, whether – and eventually how – others are able and willing to share our effort.”<sup>43</sup> Dialogue “allows us”, he further explains,

“...to present to Christians that which we aim for in life, and how we want to go about it. After we have thus explained our position, we

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> A milestone, as far as this latter category of statements is concerned, constitutes the publication of the Islamic Charta for Germany by the ZMD on 20. February 2002. The text of the Charta is published in various languages on <http://www.islam.de>. For text and discussion in English see Christian Troll, “Germany’s Islamic Charter, with a commentary by Christian Troll s.j.”, in *Encounter* (Roma), Dec. 2002. N° 290.

<sup>43</sup> Ahmad von Denffer, *Some Reflections on Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, Leicester, 1988, p. 32

shall ask the Christians: 'As Muslims, we strive for the establishment of God's will on this earth...

- Do you, as Christians, share our objective?
- Do you, as Christians, find yourself in agreement with some of the basic values we cherish and wish to promote?
- How will you, as Christians, assist us in our task of establishing the will of God on this earth?"<sup>44</sup>

Obviously, the questions of von Denffer do not aim at understanding the Christian position or at a possible deepening of Muslim perceptions in its light but rather to make sure that Christians understand the Muslim position correctly and know themselves to be invited to accept them in order to assist Muslims in their "task".

Murad Hofmann, in contrast to von Denffer, includes in his concept of dialogue efforts to improve relations between Christians and Muslims as well as to explore possible collaboration. Nevertheless he states: "Since Christian-Muslim dialogue [as perceived by Christians] can only be a continuation of missionary efforts with other means, it would be more fruitful and honest to use this dialogue exclusively for the dismantling of the traditional enemy image of Islam on the part of Christians as well as for furthering practical, humanitarian collaboration."<sup>45</sup> In any case, Hofmann underlines, Muslims in Germany, given the fact of their minority status, must guard against the great danger arising from dialogical openness: ending up with a syncretistic Islam, "more or less like the muddled beliefs of the Bektashi dervishes."<sup>46</sup>

The Twelver Shiite theologian Mehdi Razvi of the Islamic Centre in Hamburg writes in quite a different vein. He sees in dialogue first of all "a means for making possible the peaceful living together of men and women and to develop approaches for a more just world."<sup>47</sup>

"The adherents of religious traditions are all asked today to render a credible witness for their faith so that they can be models for others. Hence interreligious dialogue today acquires an ever greater importance. We should take serious the quranic exhortation and discuss with one another employing serene and objective arguments. In conversations on matters of faith it does not matter who is right; that decision we should leave to God, which, however, is not to say that we should cease to vie with one another in doing good...Furthermore, there always remains the well-known possibility of parting from one another in "peace" (*salām*), in case our conversations fail

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Murad Wilfried Hofmann, „Zum Christlich-Islamischen Dialog“ in: *Al-Islam* 4(1986), 19.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. The reference to Bektashi dervishes carries special significance in Germany, where the Alevites, who venerate Hadji Bektash Veli as their spiritual father, form at least a quarter of the Turkish-origin Muslim population.

<sup>47</sup> Mehdi Razvi, „Einheit der Religionen. Wie sollen wir miteinander Dialog führen?“ in: *Al-Fadschr/Die Morgendämmerung* 5 (1988) Heft 34, 3.

to realise its original objective. We should remain all the time conscious of the fact that God's pleasure belongs to the steadfast and righteous."<sup>48</sup>

Since 1997 on the initiative of the ZMD there has been organised on national level on October 3 each year the "Day of the Open Mosque". In the meantime, practically all major Muslim associations join in the efforts to organise this day. The widely-distributed official folder explains:

"Deliberately, October 3, the Day of German Unity, has been chosen as framework for the Day the Open Mosque. By this the **solidarity** of the three million Muslims **with this society is to be expressed. Why a Day of the Open Mosque?** A Day of the Open Mosque is organised for information, self-portrayal, and **for getting to know each other**. Opening up to one another and dialogue should take place. Ever more people today wish to get **to know for themselves** Islam and the people living as Muslims and to form their own idea of them. The past years have shown us that a lack of knowledge has led to many prejudices, which tend to render difficult a fruitful living and working together in society. One further reason for this is the lack of opportunities for Muslims to pass on knowledge and answer questions. Linguistic barriers and lacking readiness on both sides compound the problem. [On this Day of the Open Mosque] the Muslims shall everywhere answer questions and be ready for conversations. More important than the flawless mastery of the language would seem to be the sincere wish to deal with one another in the best of ways... Muslims in Germany consider themselves Germans and Europeans and wish to participate in the social process in Germany and in Europe".<sup>49</sup> (emphasized as in the original text)

The Islamic community "Milli Görüs" (IGMG) on the occasion of this year's Day of the Open Mosque (Friday, 3. 10. 2003) on its home page published a Friday sermon on the topic of: *Our relations with non-Muslims and the "Day of the Open Mosque"*. The sermon specifies "a number of important basic rules for the living together of people of different faith allegiance". These are: the need to find elements of common ground which can serve as basis for living together; the need for men and women to deal with one another in the best manner and respectfully (Sura 16,125); the need to support one another socially and to strive for justice for all men and women; the need to act by the principle of tolerance and human rights for all humans and to strive for the principle of tolerance and understanding for one another. The sermon ends with the enunciation of "three basic principles": 1. Who does not open his heart to others, cannot win hearts for himself; 2. Who does not allow himself to be known as he is, will be described by others in ways he is not; 3. "Yes" to integration, "No" to assimilation.

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<sup>48</sup> Mehdi Razvi, *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> See <http://islam.de/Tag> der offenen Moschee.

### 4.3. Structures for dialogue

Over the last two decades or so a whole network of structures for the promotion of dialogue has come about in Germany. It is mainly, but far from exclusively, Christian. On the Catholic side CIBEDO (**C**hristlich-**I**samische **B**Egegnungsstätte und **D**okumentationsstelle, founded in 1978, since 1981 in Frankfurt) offers the services of a library and documentation about Islam in general, the presence of Muslims in Germany and Christian-Muslim encounter. It has been active in the training and formation of “multipliers” in the fields of educational and pastoral care and functioned as a centre of contact between representatives of the Churches and of the Mosque associations and organisations.<sup>50</sup>

German dioceses with a relatively high Muslim population (altogether 17 out of a total of 27) have appointed an Islamreferent(in) (female or male Islam consultant) with the task to work for better information about Muslims in Germany, the various aspects of Islam as well as for the preparation of the Catholic Christians (parishes, educational and other institutions) for encounter and dialogue with Muslims. Only very few of these consultants work full-time for interreligious relations: Most of them are charged additionally with other related tasks such as promoting inner-Christian ecumenism, Christian-Jewish relations, knowledge about and relations with sects and new religions or the like.

Catholic and Protestant academies regularly and increasingly organize lectures, seminars, encounters and summer schools relating to Islam and Christian-Muslim relations. Some of them for this purpose have appointed a person specially qualified for understanding and promoting Christian-Muslim relations as member of the team. The same holds true for some of the major Catholic apostolic and charitable “works” such as *Caritas*, *Missio*, *Misereor*, *Katholische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Migration*. Furthermore, the German Bishops Conference within *Kommission X: Weltkirche und Migration* has instituted a sub-commission for Interreligious Dialogue to which belong two academic scholars of Islam and a specialist in the field of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations in Germany. Within the *Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken* a group of Christians and Muslims, active and knowledgeable in Christian-Muslim relations, meets at regular intervals to discuss and find solutions to issues of common interest to Muslims and Christians in contemporary German society.

In the Evangelical Church of Germany (*EKD*) there exist comparable structures. In the central offices of the *EKD* a consultant heads the department: “Islam and World Religions”. He convenes the Conference of the Islam consultants of the 24 *Landeskirchen* that make up the *EKD*, again persons who usually combine one or more other tasks with that of Islam consultant. He convenes annually the “Conference for

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<sup>50</sup> The periodical: *CIBEDO. Beiträge für das Gespräch zwischen Christen und Muslimen* (published every second month) unfortunately ceased publication by the very end of the year 1999.

Issues pertaining to Relations with Islam” (*KIF*). It gathers the specialists from the *Landeskirchen*, from the specialised Church agencies, federations and other organisations. This conference reflects on questions of *convivenza* with Muslims and organizes training-courses for its members. A consultant works from the central offices for the whole of the evangelical Church of Germany. The *Landeskirchen* within whose territory happen to live a very many Muslims (e.g., Westphalia, Rhineland and part of Hanover) have appointed for each *Kirchenkreis* (corresponding to the catholic deanery) a special consultant for Islam. The renowned *Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen* in Berlin (Evangelical Central Institute for Religious and Ideological Questions)<sup>51</sup> has a special section dealing with issues pertaining to inter-religious dialogue, not least Christian-Muslim dialogue. The Orthodox Church in Germany, too, has a specially appointed Islam consultant.

The *Islamisch-Christliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft (ICA)* was founded in 1976. It comprises representatives of various Islamic organisations active in Germany as well as persons from the Roman-Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical Churches of Germany. The Working Group concentrates on solving together practical problems which arise in the living together of Christians and Muslims.

On the Muslim side, the *VIKZ* in 1998 had taken the bold initiative of founding the Islamic Academy Hahnenburg near Cologne (*ISLAH*) as a supra-regional educational and cultural institution with a substantial programme in the line of interreligious dialogue. However, in 2000 the central authorities of the Süleymanî-Brotherhood in Istanbul (the *VIKZ* is the German branch of this brotherhood), quite suddenly and without public explanation, terminated all activities of the academy going beyond internal religious education and formation, including interreligious dialogue.

For some years now *DITIB* in Cologne employs a consultant for relations with the Churches.<sup>52</sup> The *Institut für Information über Islam und Dialog e.V. (INID)* in Hamm founded is just one of various other initiatives on the Muslim side to project Islam and to invite non-Muslims to inform themselves about Muslims and Islam. Only time will tell, how far the interest of these “dialogue” institutes and activities actually promotes dialogue in the proper und full meaning of the term, i.e., as a sustained effort truly to learn about and from one another in the spirit of openness and to explore common ground for shared thinking and acting.

#### **4.4. The Christlich-Islamische Gesellschaften**

Last, but not least, should be mentioned here one of the most creative developments during the past twenty years or so, in the field of Christian-Muslim relations in Ger-

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<sup>51</sup> For its homepage address see the end of the bibliography.

<sup>52</sup> At present: Mr. Rafet Öztürk, a Germany-trained political scientist and Islamic scholar.

many. It comes from below and is based on local initiatives of Muslims and Christians living as neighbours in various cities and regions of Germany. The development of these societies reached a first culmination point, when on Jan 19, 2003 in a conference at the evangelical Academy of Bad Boll, eleven Christian-Muslim societies from different parts of Germany founded the *Koordinierungsrat der Vereinigungen des christlich-islamischen Dialogs in Deutschland (KCID)*. The objective of this coordinating council mainly is networking of the various local societies and common representation on national level. The two young presidents of the council are Murat Aslanoğlu of Stuttgart and Melanie Miehl of Berlin.

As a sample of these Christian-Muslim societies let us look for a moment at the perhaps most important one, “die **christlich-islamische gesellschaft (CIG)**”.<sup>53</sup> It was founded, 1982 as Christlich-Islamische Gesellschaft Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V. in Iserlohn on July 10 and is by now a nationwide registered association for the furthering of understanding and dialogue between Christians and Muslims, Christian Churches and Islamic communities. The CIG says about itself:

“Wh

at are the objectives of the CIG?

The CIG intends to be a place and instrument of encounter between Christians and Muslims. Encounter here means fidelity to one’s proper identity and the right to protect it. At the same time it also means being prepared better to understand and to accept the other in her/his religion, culture and mentality. What we hold in common, is to be underlined. What is different should be explained in such a way, that it is no longer perceived as separating. The CIG consciously is different from multicultural organizations which in their work tend to bracket the religious differences.

The CIG understands itself as an advocate of the Muslim minority in Germany and of the Christian minorities in Islamic countries.

We deem it our task to inform also about **activities against Christian-Muslim dialogue** [emphasis of the original]...Any natural person can become member. Collective memberships of Churches or mosque associations are excluded by our statutes.

### **What are the activities of the CIG?**

In the place of talking about one another, we put speaking with one another. Hence we foster any kind of personal contacts, from a common bus trip for attending an event of interest to mutual visits of religious services, especially on the occasion of major religious feast or celebrations.

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<sup>53</sup> Since the abbreviation **cig** no longer was available, **chrislages** has been reserved as INTERNET-Seat.

In our experience religious contacts do not lead to the mixing up of religion, to so-called syncretism, but rather to a deepening of one's own faith. However, members of CIG are convinced that Christians and Muslims adore the same God."<sup>54</sup>

A number of charitable foundations increasingly have been taking an active interest in financially helping and in encouraging projects of Christian-Muslim dialogue in its political and educational dimension and also in promoting interreligious dialogue in the more restricted meaning of the term.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.5 Theology for and of Christian-Muslim dialogue

In the context of this essay only a few of the most significant, recent theological contributions to Christian-Muslim dialogue in Germany can be mentioned.

A remarkable pioneer of Muslim theological reflection on Christian-Muslim relations has been the late Abdoljavad Falaturi (1926 -1996).<sup>56</sup> One of his lasting contributions to Christian-Muslim relations has been the successful carrying out, together with his younger colleague Udo Tworuschcka (now professor at the university of Jena), of the interdisciplinary project: "*Der Islam in den Schulbüchern der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*", the results of which have been published a total of 12 volumes.<sup>57</sup> It is to be regretted that only very recently German universities have begun to make efforts in recruiting suitable Muslim candidates to teaching positions in the field of Islamic-theological studies. At such chairs will be trained the future Muslim school teachers of religion and, hopefully, imams as well.

For more than three decades Adel Theodor Khoury of Münster University and Ludwig Hageman of Mannheim University have been making decisive contributions to the history and theology of Christian-Muslim relations. Their countless studies and text editions relating to the history of Christian-Muslim relations<sup>58</sup> as well as their publications, aimed at introducing Islam and Christian-Muslim dialogue to Christians and Muslims, have helped substantially in transforming Christian thinking on Islam

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted from [www.christlages.de/wercig.htm](http://www.christlages.de/wercig.htm)

<sup>55</sup> The best-known of these are perhaps:

1. Türkei Programm der Koerber Stiftung, see: <http://www.stiftung.koerber.de>
2. Herbert-Quandt-Stiftung, see: <http://www.h-quandt-stiftung.de>
3. Karl-Konrad-und-Ria-Groebe-Stiftung, see: <http://www.freudenbergstiftung.de>
4. Georges-Anawati-Stiftung, see: <http://www.anawati-stiftung.de>

<sup>56</sup> For information about his life, career and publications see: <http://www.islamische-academie.de>

<sup>57</sup> A leading role in this area for many years now has been playing the : Georg-Eckert-Institut. Celler Str.3. D-38114 Braunschweig. For further information see <http://www.gei.de/deutsch/projekte/islam.shtml> .

<sup>58</sup> Cf. the substantial series of studies and critical text edition: CORPUS ISLAMO-CHRISTIANUM (CSIC) (Series latina; graeca; arabica). Christlich-Islamisches Institut, D-4417 Altenberge.

and on Christian-Muslim relations in the spirit of Vatican II. Khoury's translation of the Koran, with an approving foreword of Dr. Inamullah Khan, at the time (1987) General Secretary of the Islamic world Congress, and his commentary in 12 volumes, constitutes a unique tool for any Christian or non-Christian theologian and teacher of religion working in the German language intent upon working with and from the text of the Koran in the light of selected or summarized interpretations of the most famous classical and modern Muslim Koran commentators.

The congresses and colloquia organised and published in exemplary manner (i.e., including the full wording of the discussions at the meetings) over the past two decades by Andreas Bsteh SVD, of the Theological Hochschule St. Gabriel, Mödling bei Wien, have made a lasting impact on the development of Christian *Religionstheologie* in general and especially of a Christian theology of Islam. The searching contributions to Christian theological reflection on Islam by Hans Zirker of the University of Essen combine familiarity with the foundational sources of Islam and of Christianity with stimulating comparative reflection, for instance, on the nature of Christian and Muslim revelation, on the Holy Scriptures of the two religions and on their structures authority. Zirker has made special efforts to promote "interdependent theological interpretation and learning".<sup>59</sup>

On the evangelical side, two scholars come to mind as having made outstanding contributions to developing a Christian theology of Islam. Reinhard Leuze of the University of Munich in *Christentum und Islam* tries to demonstrate that "precisely Christian theology of the modern period which takes into account the results of historical-critical research and does not know itself bound by the wording of dogmas, can realize chances of a conversation, which had to remain closed to former centuries."<sup>60</sup> Ulrich Schoen, with his prolonged experience of life among Muslims in the Maghreb as well as his years with the at the Dialogue Unit of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, for many years now has made incisive contributions to the theological reflection on Christian Muslim relations. Schoen in his writings places Christian-Muslim dialogue in the context of the wider, multilateral religious dialogue and the new insights of the natural sciences and the philosophical reflection accompanying them.<sup>61</sup>

The young catholic theologian and student of Islam, Andreas Renz, recently published his substantial doctoral study<sup>62</sup> (prepared at the Faculty of Catholic Theology and the Institute of Islamic Studies of the University of Bamberg) on the assessment by contemporary Christian theology of the Islamic understanding of revelation and

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<sup>59</sup> See his and other contributions in Hans-Martin Barth/Christoph Elsas (Hg.), *Hermeneutik in Islam und*

*Christentum. Beiträge zum interreligiösen Dialog*. Hamburg, 1997.

<sup>60</sup> Reinhard, Leuze, *Christentum und Islam*. Tübingen, 1994. Vorwort.

<sup>61</sup> For a recent summary see U. Schoen, „Christentum und Islam“, in: *Theologische Rundschau* 61 (1996), 1-47; 177-227.

<sup>62</sup> See bibliography under Renz.

the human person. At last, Christian theological reflection in German-speaking Europe seems to give Islam and Christian-Muslim relations the attention they deserve.

## 5. Final observations

Today many successful interreligious and intercultural dialogues take place in Germany on all levels of society. In these dialogues, the shared will to understand one another, to learn from one another and to live with one another in the framework of democratic pluralism transcends religious and cultural differences. Especially since September 11, 2001, hardly a day passes, on which there would not take place somewhere in the republic an important "Dialogue" between Muslims and representatives of the "majority community", non-Muslims and agnostics or unbelievers.<sup>63</sup> J. Kandel characterises the situation aptly:

"Partners in dialogue assure one another of their esteem for one another; they reject vehemently "negative mutual images" and assure one another of tolerance and acceptance. If one were to make the quantity of day conferences, seminars, panel discussions, workshops and community evenings the criterion of the quality of the dialogue, Germany assuredly would be the model country of interreligious and intercultural dialogue."<sup>64</sup>

However, a few select and succinct critical observations and questions – the present context does not allow more – would seem to be appropriate at the end of our survey.

From the formal point of view, we notice a tendency of Christian-Muslim conversations – whether in the political, the ideological or theological field – to be to a large extent a dialogue of elites, of specialists and representatives of organisations. On the Christian side there actively take part in dialogues mainly representatives or consultants on Islam working for Churches, dioceses, academies, adult formation centres as well as teachers, priests, pastors and members of Christian-Islamic societies. The political spectrum of society is represented by persons who are professionally active in political education, furthermore by single politicians, scientists and journalists, a number of NGO's with their intercultural working units, political foundations and, in an official capacity, representatives of certain state ministries. The more or less regu-

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<sup>63</sup> In Christian-Jewish dialogue (also called "trialogue") the common points of the "Abrahamic religions" are conjured up (Abraham, the "father of faith in the One God" and an "Islamic-Jewish alliance for the faith" is demanded. See e.g. Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Streit um Abraham. Was Juden, Christen und Muslime trennt and was sie eint?* München, 1994; Jürgen Miksch, *Abrahamische und Interreligiöse Teams*. Frankfurt, 2003.

<sup>64</sup> J. Kandel, „Lieber blauäugig als blind?“ *Anmerkungen zum „Dialog“ mit dem Islam*. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2003.

lar meeting of these categories of persons of the majority community in dialogues, where “Islam” is represented mainly by functionaries and activists of the mosque associations and their umbrella organisations, certainly has its value, but there would seem to be a tendency towards the type of dialogue not unknown among diplomats, where one enters the scene, explains one’s point of view, exchanges notes and departs more or less satisfied with the “success” of the event. The question is, how much true learning takes place; and even, to what extent does there exist the true desire – be it on the side of the majority community or of the Muslims – to learn about the other, to understand the other’s point of view and felt needs. In other words, how developed really is the will and capacity for criticism of self.

The non-Muslim side frequently is not in a position to arrive at an adequate estimate of the Muslim dialogue partner, because the image “Islam” offers of itself in Germany is confusing if not confused. The Islamic organisations and associations often lack the will to transparency. The known pattern of communication between State and Churches does not function in the case of Islam, because Islam is not and does not want to be, a Church with authoritative hierarchical and/or synodal structures.

Functionaries and officials of the big organisations and the diplomatic representatives of Islamic states over and over again are invited to panels and dialogue meetings to explain “the Islamic position”. Not infrequently they convey the impression of stage-managing these events. Political dialogues, roughly, tend to follow this pattern. Step one: the Muslim speaker or representative makes his non-Muslim audience feel that many if not most of them do not understand anything of Islam and, in case they do, are suffering from totally inadequate notions of it. Step two: the speaker assumes the role of victim. Here the well-known litany is recited of past and present scandals and weaknesses of the West, which the speakers in questions still largely identify with Christianity. The pointing to the deficiencies of integration politics and to various forms of open or hidden discrimination in our day reinforces the guilt feelings of believing and unbelieving listeners to such an extent that eventually few of them will have the courage to put any critical questions. Third step: the speaker stresses the common points of the two religions such as the dignity of man and woman and their responsibility before God, the concept of the human person as lieutenant of God (*khalīfat Allāh*), the authority of God’s commands (here the quranic commands [*ahkām*] and the biblical ten commandments will be presented as basically identical), the importance of peace, justice, social welfare, matrimony and family and an appeal for “interreligious dialogue and collaboration” follow suit. The Muslim, according to this vision, is neither really in need of Enlightenment nor of the modern critical human sciences. Human rights, democracy and pluralism are inherent in Islam which “is the solution”. The partners in dialogue hopefully are able to acknowledge the superiority of Islam and its teachings.

Certainly the vast majority of Muslims in Germany does not share this vision of things. But they are not taken serious as partners in inner-Islamic discourse by the

representatives of the Islam of the mosque organisations. The non-Muslim public normally does not become aware that besides the Islam of the established organisations there exist other possibilities of interpretation. Only roughly 20% of the Muslims in Germany are more or less firmly organised. A big number, probably 25-30%, understand themselves as rather less religious, not to speak of the Alevites that make up at least a quarter of the Turkish Muslim immigrants in Germany. These secular “*Kulturmuslime*”<sup>65</sup> and the non-organised silent religious majority are hardly interested in organised dialogues. Most of the Muslims adhere to a straightforward popular Islam. However, since they, too, wish to pray in properly built and maintained mosques, they tend to support their local leaders when there is question of constructing a dignified, functional mosque.

As far as the dialogues with representatives of Islamic associations and organisations is concerned, one soon realises that the interreligious “dialogue “ between Christians and Muslims too often is a one-way street. For a certain type of Muslim conviction, dialogue can only have the meaning of removing misunderstandings of Islam and of paving the way for making Islam better understood. Furthermore, understandably the Muslims in umbrella organisations have a vested interest in emphasising by way of a politics of cultural identity the difference with the non-Muslim other. No wonder that a certain “reading” of the Koran and the Tradition for instance as to Islamic dress for woman or the necessity of ritual slaughter are emphasised to the exclusion of other possible readings. The points of legal prescriptions derived from such a “reading” develop into symbols of Islamic identity. As long as there does not come into existence a group of Muslims which is thoroughly at home in the modern human sciences and concerned sincerely with the genuine questions of believing men and women in modern societies, a substantial theological dialogue will remain a mere hope. The institution of chairs of Islamic theology at German universities and first programmes for the training of Muslim teachers of religion and of imams give substance to hopes for a change in this respect.

On the Christian side, even the theologians and theologically educated partners in dialogue often lack the necessary familiarity with the specific features of Islam and its many different trends and movements. Only very slowly the awareness is growing of the great variety of Muslim interpretations of basic notions of the Koran as well as the crucial aspects of the Prophet’s career and Islam’s foundational history. Furthermore, most Christians lack the ability to articulate the essentials of the Christian faith in ways accessible to Muslim sensibilities. Meetings of Muslims and Christians in the context of mutual visits often show the Muslims better prepared to explain the teaching of their religion than the Christians. Christians, theologians or not, have yet to learn articulating the Christian message in ways that meet the express and implicit

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<sup>65</sup> This term signifies the category of Muslims who no longer hold and practice the Islamic faith but nevertheless identify with Islam as a – broadly interpreted – culture, a way of life.

questions of the Muslim believers and to dispel obvious misunderstandings on their part.

Finally, from the material point of view, there exist a number of themes that will need to be dealt with in further dialogical conversations and studies. The “Islamic Charta”, published by the ZMD on February 20, 2002,<sup>66</sup> claims in thesis 13 that “there is no contradiction between the divine rights of the individual, anchored in the Koran, and the core right as embodied in Western human rights declarations.” How do Muslims define the core of human rights? Which single rights belong to it and which not? Can the representatives of organised Islam with a good quranic conscience as it were, that is, without reservations, qualifications and the constant reference to limitations arising from the western origin of their formulation, accept the universalism of the “Common Declaration of Human rights”?

Furthermore, there is the question of the freedom of religion and the separation of state and religion. Can the quranic phrase “No compulsion in religion.” (Sura 2, 256) legitimately be interpreted as allowing for the unqualified right of the individual to embrace as well as to leave any given religion? In other words, has the Muslim the right to leave Islam without thereby incurring any sanction?

As to the secular state, it would seem to be insufficient that Muslims in Europe gratefully accept the secular state, its legal order and democratic pluralism, as a given fact that makes possible their free existence in Europe. Rather, one would wish for ongoing inner-Islamic discussions leading eventually to a theological and active approval of the secular state, democracy and pluralism. It should be possible for Muslims to appreciate that individual freedom of religion and the fundamental equality of religions and ideologies can be guaranteed only within an ideologically neutral state which at the same time, however, is based on a clearly defined set of basic values. The democratic state of right which protects the dignity of the human person and professes “inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of any human community” (art. 1, para 2 of the Basic Law of Germany = GG) orders its relationship to religions and ideologies by the principle of a “respectful non-identification”. Incidentally, the fact that the Christians have needed centuries to reach the consciously and theologically reflected acceptance of the secular status of right does not constitute an argument for sparing Muslims the same effort.

Concerning women, official announcements of Islamic umbrella organisations declare the wearing of the headscarf as “religious duty” and the “Islamic Charta for Germany” of the ZMD in thesis 20 demands “respect by schools and administrations for the Islamic dress code”. However, a plausible theological-juridical “proof” of this prescription that goes beyond stating the Koran’s admonition to women to dress in a

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<sup>66</sup> For the full English text of the Charta see: <http://www.islam.de>. See also: C.W. Troll, Germany’s Islamic Charter. Encounter (Rome) N° 290 (Dec. 2002).

decent and non-provocative manner does not exist. Consequently Muslim jurists and theologians differ substantially in their teaching. It would seem that conservative jurists try to make out of a culture-specific and time-bound regulation of the relationship of the genders in the 7<sup>th</sup>-century Arabia a trans-cultural and timeless religious norm. There is also the question of how the Koran's prohibition of a Muslim woman to marry an adherent of another religion or a non-believer (Sure 2: 221) can go together with the human right of free choice of the spouse as stated in art.16 of the Common Declaration of Human Rights.

Many of the problems mentioned here will find a theological solution only, when and insofar Muslim efforts towards developing an adequate hermeneutics of the text of Koran and Tradition is allowed to develop and eventually can win the adherence of large sections of the Muslim religious establishment. An unhistorical-timeless reading of the quranic text and the effort to implement the meanings of the Koran arrived at in this manner will render difficult not only Christian-Muslim dialogue but prevent the spirit and principles of the Islamic religion from co-shaping the values and basic attitudes of the believers and all persons of good will in our contemporary plural societies. If the "Islamic Charta" in thesis 15 postulates "a contemporary reading of the Islamic sources which take into account both the particular problematic of contemporary issues and the development of a properly European Muslim identity" the announcement of such a new methodology and discourse will be more than welcomed. Such a new reading hopefully would free Muslim minds and organisations in Europe to enter into a sincere dialogue with Christians and all people of good will on those basic values to be practised and applied in such fields as family, bioethics, preservation of creation, social justice...These values Muslims and Christians indeed are asked to defend and promote effectively in common, in responsibility to God, to humankind and to the whole of creation.

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### **Internetadressen**

#### *Umbrella organisations on federal level:*

Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu (AABF):

<http://www.alevi.com>

Avrupa Nizam-i Alem Federasyonu (ANF):

<http://www.anf-web.de>

Avrupa Türk Islam Birliği (ATIB):

<http://www.atib-web.de>

Diyanet İşleri Türk Islam Birliği (DITIB):

<http://www.diyenet.org>

Islamische Gemeinschaft Jama'at un-Nur:

<http://www.saidnursi.de>

Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş (IGMG):

<http://www.igmg.de>

Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland:

<http://islamrat.de>

Türk Federasyon:

<http://turkfederasyon.de>

Verband Islamischer Kulturzentren (VIKZ):

<http://www.vikz.de>

Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland:

<http://islam.de>

Deutsche Muslim-Liga Bonn

<http://www.muslimliga.de>

Institut für Information über Islam und Dialog e.V.

<http://www.inid.de>

*Umbrella organisations on the level of Länder:*

Islamische Föderation Berlin (IFB):

<http://www.islamische-foederation.de>

Schura. Rat der islamischen Gemeinschaften in Hamburg:

<http://www.schura-hamburg.de>

Islamische Religionsgemeinschaft Hessen (IRH):

<http://www.irh-info.de>

*Local umbrella organisations:*

Dachverband Mannheimer Muslime:

<http://www.mannheimer-muslime.de>

*Internet-Addresses of Institutions promoting Christian-Muslim Dialogue:*

Christlich-islamische Begegnung – Dokumentationsstelle

<http://cibedo.de>

Christlich-Islamische Gesellschaft e.V.

<http://www.chrislages.de>

Christlich-Islamische Gesellschaft, Region Stuttgart e.V.

<http://www.cig-stuttgart.de>

Christlich-Islamisches Dialogforum

<http://fl.parsomony.net/forum1257/>

Dialogforum der Christlich-Islamischen Gesellschaft, Region Stuttgart e.V.

<http://www.cig-stuttgart.de/forum/forum.asp>

EKD: Christlich-muslimischer Dialog

<http://www.ekd.de/islam>

Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen

<http://www.ezw-berlin.de>