

Aus dem Programm:

Einführung in das Kongress-Thema zu weltweiten Erfahrungen mit dem Dokument.

Unter Mitwirkung von:

P. Dr. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot (Sekretär des Päpstlichen Rates für den Interreligiösen Dialog, PCID),

Bischof em. Dr. Anders Wejryd (Präsident des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen, ÖR) und Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe (Direktor der Weltweiten Evangelischen Allianz, WEA)

Moderation: Michaela Pilters



Verschriftlichung des Interviews mit Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe (WEA), Erzbischof em. Dr. Wejryd (ÖRK), und Prof. Dr. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot (PCID) mit der Moderatorin Michaela Pilters

Michaela Pilters: Ja, vielen Dank. Und nach gut biblischem „Die Letzten werden die Ersten sein“, beginne ich mit dem zuletzt vorgestellten Erzbischof Anders Wejryd. Herr Erzbischof, der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen war Mitträger für diese Idee. Warum haben Sie sich zusammengefunden, ein Papier wie „Christliches Zeugnis in einer multireligiösen Welt“ zu erfinden, was waren die Motive?

Anders Wejryd: Before I try to answer that, I should say, I am not one of the fathers of the document as you are, I am only related to a father, and I should start out also by greeting you from the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit. Some of you might know that he had to have an acute surgery because of Hernia. He is back on his legs again but he wanted me to go instead of him but, so therefore now I am not a primary, I am not a “Primärquelle”, I am most secondary... Thank you, but of course from the shared interest from the Roman Catholic Church and from the WCC in interreligious dialogue and the issue of mission, conversion, dialogue... all these things coming together... there was a need to go deeper into these issues together. And as you might have noticed, the first round of talks that led up to this document was an interreligious meeting and then the second and third were intra-Christian. It was, I think, also very natural for the World Council of Churches at that time to invite the Evangelical tradition as we have seen such an interesting development between the Lausanne tradition and the World Council of Churches over the last years. I think we have seen that so many of those issues that we have thought divided us in fact unite us. And we have appeared to come closer to each other over these years and I think that gave a very special touch to it that we could be all the three traditions together.

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Michaela Pilters: Thank you. Let's give the mic(rophone) to Father Ayuso.

Wie kam es, dass diese Verlagerung zwischen dem interreligiösen Dialog zu einem inner-kirchlichen, einem inner-christlichen Dialog passierte?

Father Ayuso: Thank you, thank you. First of all I would like to present greetings of his Eminence Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue who wanted really to be here with you today but due to his busy agenda I was called to be here to represent him as secretary of the same dicastery, of the roman dicastery. But he sends his greetings and his prayers for the success of this international congress. Now let me in response to your question recall that this document that is small document, small is beautiful. In the compilation of this document is the fruit of five years, a long period of consultations, compromises and consensus and it has been the result of a long tradition - if I recall for example 1977 onwards - between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. And for the elaboration of this small document there has been a first consultation that was interreligious and then two more consultations that were intra-ecumenical consultations. So, practically the document is the result of these consultations, compromises and consensus among the communities. And the topic was not the Christian witness in a multi religious world, it was how to deal among Christians of different denominations to deal with a very difficult problem related to conversion. It was timely urgent at that time. So, for this, there was a meeting in a first consultation in Italy in Lariano (in) 2006 where there were many discussions among the different representatives to think and to share among conversion assessing the reality. It is an issue which is often the cause of misunderstanding and tension among communities in many parts of the world. So, it's a phenomenon, the phenomenon of unethical conversion, the false conversion and sheep stealing etc. This began to supplant previously how to build ecumenical and interreligious solidarity and cooperation. Subsequently bitterness and distress grew among Christians and also Christians and other religions in many countries, especially in Asia. So following this first consultation there was another one the following year 2007 just trying to focus on the ethical approach to these conversions. And here other issues were touched concerning the proselytism and evangelism. And this brought further discussions later, and this occurred in the early 2011, after a

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meeting that was celebrated in Bangkok, in Thailand, where the Christian witness issue was treated. Now, the idea of this consultation was that there was an existing reality of Christians fighting among themselves to convert, baptize Christians and others and that was posing a serious missiological and ecumenical problem. Therefore this led since the eighties also to other encounters between our Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and WCC and WEA that tried to bring different communities from the ecumenical point of view together in order to create that unity so as to witness to non-Christians the Gospel, that disunity of Christians always scandalizes the world and damages the most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every human creature.

Michaela Pilters: Ja, vielen Dank. Was hat denn die Weltweite Evangelische Allianz getrieben, sich in diesen Prozess mit einzuschalten, Mr. Tunnicliffe?

Geoff Tunnicliffe: Well, that is with great joy that I am here today, I am so thankful for the organizers of this historic event and I count it a real privilege to be with you. The World Evangelical Alliance has been part of this process since the first meeting really for three reasons: the first reason is that sometimes criticism is made of Evangelicals including our Pentecostal Constituency in terms of our methods of evangelism and witness. The World Evangelical Alliance wants to listen to such criticism accepting and changing where our practices fall short of the role of Christ...but also correcting unmerited criticism ensuring that we both listen and are listened to. Secondly, since his beginning in 1846 the WEA has been committed to religious liberty and issues of justice. Participating in the discussions and the formulation of this document about ethics of mission was an opportunity for us to collaborate at a very important level with Christians from so many different traditions seeking together to discern the ways in which Christ calls us to participate and witness in this world. And thirdly, Evangelicals have something to offer to the wider conversations. Particularly in terms of our reference with the authority of scripture, our commitment to evangelism and mission, our commitment to the centrality of the cross and the resurrection. We also have much to learn from our ecumenical partners. Active involvement in the Christian witness process

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had helped us build and strengthen wider conversations and relationships. So we have been delighted in to be able to participate in this very important document and conversations.

Michaela Pilters: Vielen Dank. Das waren jetzt so die Motive, warum man sich beteiligt hat. In der nächsten Runde würde mich natürlich interessieren, was hat sich, aus Ihrer Sicht, in der Zeit nach der Veröffentlichung des Dokumentes in Ihrer Kirche verändert, which process can you tell? What happened since the document has been published in the...

Anders Wejryd: Yes, I think we often underestimate the necessary time for documents like these to really mean something. I mean some of us, we decide upon these documents and then we say: now they are out for reception. And then, a year later we say: now we have to move on. And no one has heard about the document yet. We need time, and I think when we have such a wide spectrum of participants it is extremely important to give time. And as this document was launched in 2011, it's 2014 now, for god a thousand years etc... I think we have to be a little bit patient and I must say that a gathering like this it wasn't, probably wouldn't be possible to do that before. You need some time to see if this short document really is challenging or not. And then, the world has to go around and I am very impressed by the group that is here, the perspectives that seemed to be represented among you. For the World Council of Churches there has been a number of meetings organized, Canada, Guatemala... And of course, together with the Assembly at Busan in South Korea this last November, this document had a prominent place in the interreligious space. And... I think the experiences are... that this document brings up issues that get us to talk. After a while, why do you do like that? What is that? The tension between the more individualistic traditions, especially in the Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions, the revival movements and the more collective traditions of the Orthodox Church and many of the other churches, that tension, I mean it is something we run into, also when it comes to ecumenical work at home, don't we? And I think this document has been most important also for that. In discerning who we are and who you are and why. So, therefore I think we should spend time and I am very grateful when I see the themes of the work-

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shops tomorrow which actually show how many issues are brought up by this document.

Michaela Pilters: Thank you. Mr. Tunnicliffe: What has happened the last three years in the Worldwide Evangelical Alliance?

Geoff Tunnicliffe: Well, many in our Evangelical and our regional alliances around the world have actively engaged in the follow-up process to the Christian witness document, in India, Brazil, Norway and Canada and other places. If you want a full list, you can speak to Dr. Thomas Schirmacher for a detailed list. And some of the workshops we will be also including in this congress will also discuss that. But beside these countries and other regions, it has been our privilege to encourage our various global partners such as World Vision International, to take this document as a norm for their work all around the world. Secondly the document has provided tools for building ecumenical relationships. It has helped to facilitate our regional and international members to further develop their ecumenical participation. There have been also opportunities for internal conversations within the WEA about our motivations and our methodologies in Evangelism and our witness. And it is exciting to see Churches and mission organizations adapt the text and use it in their discussions by the way they serve their neighbours and witness to those around them. But believing that pictures are better than a thousand words, I want to show you two pictures, so it makes it two thousand words...The first picture is this: this picture was taken in Honduras. In two days there was a hundred inches of rain that fell. And when the waters receded from the massive flooding that took place it changed the landscape. And you see in the forefront of the pictures a bridge that still exists built by very proud Japanese engineers who did a great job. But you note that the river no longer flows under the bridge. And I want to suggest you that the river has changed its course when it comes to ecumenical relationships. There's a new river that has been formed. And the reality is: we need new bridges. And in the second picture there's another bridge. This bridge is from Londonderry in Northern Ireland. It was opened last year. It's called the "Friendship Bridge". It divided the Catholics and the Protestants, that river did for many years. And in the years of troubles and conflict there were

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many things that went on. But today there stands a new bridge, a bridge of friendship where people flow backwards and forwards in conversations and in relationship. I want to suggest you today that we are living in a day where we are building a new bridge and let us build one bridge at a time in different countries. And I believe what you are doing in these days here in Germany is recognizing that the old bridges no longer work and that we need new bridges and that you together are going to build a new bridge here in your context in Germany.

Michaela Pilters: Thank you. That's a very nice symbol and picture ... Father Ayuso, the Roman Catholic Church in the last three years there has happened a big event. We have changed... and we have a new Pontifex. The little small paper about mission and religious respect is a very small event. But has something changed after... in this respect?

Father Ayuso: Yeah, ...I think that... well... When the document was presented officially, Cardinal Tauran said that we are gathering here in this historic moment of Christian witness. And I think that was true and I think that - I don't remember who was at this time the representative of the WEA - but he also called that very day a historic moment. And I think that we are reviving this historic moment today here in Berlin with your presence, with this perhaps the largest ecumenical gathering today, that has one small document as calling each one of us to come here together. And in that sense it is something very very important because today in the world in which we are living demands global responses and therefore there is this responsibility of all of us to continue this work. It was five years now, there has been also for the catholic church the continuity from the Pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI to the one of Pope Francis who in continuity with the ministry of Pope Benedict XVI is continuing, witnessing about since the very beginning the importance of ecumenism and the importance of interreligious dialogue for our future. And therefore it is very important for us that this document may be studied and I am also looking forward for tomorrow morning's seminars and workshops to see what comes about from our reflections and sharing together. It is very important that we take care of it. It is very important for us and this is one of our achievements, we have published the document "Christian Witness"

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and translated it to different languages. I think that we should pay more attention for this so that it may reach worldwide to every small community. Why? Because I think that the recommendations - very simple - that contains this document are very simple but contain universal principles that are the key for probably solving many of our daily problems in today's world. We have disseminated the document in many ways through our diplomatic representatives, through the presidents of the different Bishop conferences. We also have published some articles on reflections on the importance of the document. We have had further discussions about the importance of the relevance of the document today, about the need of Christians responding together to the contemporary global reality or about the need of a conversion in order to be authentic witnesses. So, we see in the Catholic Church that there has been a well reception by Christians worldwide. We also had an implementation, an intrachurch preliminary meeting in December 2012 in Bossey, Switzerland, and also we had another meeting in Rome last year in December with members of PCID, WCC, WEA in order to work together to disseminate the recommendations to the grassroot levels. I think that this is a document that has to reach the grassroot. So here, each one of us, we have all this responsibility for bringing to the people the contents of this document. We have also, for example, noticed a global interest, but particularly the Catholic Bishops Conference of Pakistan has translated it into Urdu language and also has sought to implement it in collaboration with the other Christians in Pakistan, and as far as I know the Catholic Bishops Conference of Australia has discussed ways and means to implement the document. And then here in Germany with this meaningful and important meeting. The important thing is that the document reaches all communities because as we know at a regional and local level still exist tensions and prejudices with regard to mission and evangelism and we have to come together in order to witness together to members of other religious traditions the spirit and the life of the gospel.

Michaela Pilters: Please stay, just for the next question. Which theological subjects are most important for you in the document?

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Father Ayuso: I would like to remember that the document does not intend to be a theological statement of mission. The document intends to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world. Yet, theological subjects such as mission and interreligious dialogue mentioned in the document are of great importance for us in the Catholic Church. So concerning the theology of mission the document underlines for example that mission belongs to the very being of the church. So proclaiming the word of god and witness into the world is essential for every Christian. Another aspect is that proclamation is a must. Yet it needs to be carried out with full respect and love for all human beings. Another point could be that Christian mission should avoid inappropriate methods. That conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit. Another aspect from the theology of religions is the issue of freedom of religion and belief or that Christians are called to commit themselves with all people in promoting together justice, peace and working together for the common good of society. Now, concerning theology of interreligious dialogue, I think that the appropriate methods, mutual respect and trust, pave the way for dialogue. And here, if we read again the document, the document notes that Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures. Then, that interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of mutual respect and solidarity and that interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace building. So I think that the challenges for our near future could be the one of religious liberty, increasing interreligious dialogue in order to cope with tension and conflicts in the world today including violence and the loss of human lives. So, I take this occasion to express my and our solidarity with all those mainly Christians but also non-Christians who are suffering today in many parts of the world and particularly in Northern Iraq and in Syria for the cause of violence and tensions and with so many casualties and loss of lives and also the lack of religious freedom. So, I think that also we as religious leaders we have also the responsibility to recommend the political world and politicians the importance to solve those tensions that are causing a lot of damage in the world and that are wounding humanity in a very violent way.

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Michaela Pilters: Thank you. Archbishop Wejryd, what do you think are the biggest challenges?

Anders Wejryd: Well, I very much go a long way with what has been said already. I think that it is, it's a...well when you say this together – as we do – ...there is also an acknowledgment of each other. We realize that that tradition is a real tradition, that tradition is also a real tradition. We are Christians together. We stand in different traditions but we are Christians together. And I think that when we do things together and say things together we examine ourselves and each other in a way that is of ecumenical importance in the long run. The issue of religious freedom which has become more and more an issue for all Christians, which was not of course only some decades ago, is very important. And I think if you can say these things together and act according to them this can also mean something in relation to other religions. We do of course have to start with ourselves, with how we as Christians cooperate and look at each other. And what is a correct manner of converting and so on. But if we are to make a bigger difference in the world I think this is also a discussion that has to move out and come to an interreligious area. One could perhaps say that this is a document that has come out of a moderate dialogue between moderate Christians in different traditions and I think we always have to uphold this that if moderate people don't continue to talk with each other the extremists take over. And the same, I think, goes for Islam: moderate forces in Islam need moderate forces among Christians in order to have a chance of balancing extremism. So I think there is a wider spectrum that we have to keep our eyes open for. But now, it's a big enough chunk of cause to make this real. Eh.. but it is a good way to start talking and examining and respecting. And there is a lot of mutual respect in this document.

Michaela Pilters: Thank you, ... could you please hand it over... I think you won't disagree but perhaps you may give your own point of view on the big challenge.

Geoff Tunnicliffe: First of all I want to say that we actually did not share notes ahead of time. So you gonna hear some repetition and I think that is really important that you understand that. I would say as I look on the

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document, the opening paragraph text is actually brilliant. And I can say that, I didn't write it. But it alludes to the text of 1. Peter 3,15 and brings out two very important points. Witness belongs to the very being of the church. Yet we must do it with humbleness and respect. There is both, the clear priority of evangelism and witness and the urgent need to reflect on our practices and times and places where they are fallen short of what God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit demand of us. The theme that is close to my own heart is the need to highlight the suffering and persecution of Christians and other religious minorities around the world. This point isn't developed in the document, but it is an obvious outcome of its purpose and intention. Persecution has always been a deep concern of mine and recent events have only highlighted the urgent need that we as Christians speak out and stand for justice for all people. And I am gonna go off my recently prepared text which I rewrote this morning and say this: Given what is unfolding in Iraq and Syria and in other parts of the region it is imperative that we Christians stand together in response to the travesty that is being perpetrated against Christians and other minorities. I believe that for such a time is this that we develop the document on Christian witness. What can we do about this current situation? Today I am proposing for the first time publicly that we investigate and explore an idea. And that is of creating a safe haven, a city of refuge for those who are being persecuted for their beliefs in the region. I know it's complicated, there are many players that need to be involved from the United Nations to nationals, national governments, but it is going to take the moral voice of the church to speak and work together. I don't know if that's the solution. But what I do know is that what is happening now is not working. And we must do something different and so if you are from the political arena... But I would say to you as Christian leaders in Germany: this is something that you can begin to think about as I am going to begin to speak about this now globally asking us, the church around the world, our catholic and our other ecumenical partners to think about it. A few weeks ago I had a three hours private meeting with Pope Francis. And we discussed at length how we as different parts of the Christian family should work together to leave the suffering of our brothers and sisters. For such a moment as this, I believe that this document has brought us together and we must stand together on behalf of our brothers and sisters who are suffering and are losing their lives today. May God help us...

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Michaela Pilters: Thank you very much. It's a real need and it's one of the expectations to this congress. Are there other expectations? What do you expect from the German church in this dialogue, father?

Father Ayuso: Well, I think that something very simple: to love one another, to love one another and that we may be one and that the world may see and may contemplate in the grace of our lord Jesus Christ and that his mercy and his love for every human being through us may reach the hearts of every human being living in this earth so asked to collaborate for the common good to a better humanity... And I think that this document is not only for us but for many. While we are reflecting on an inter-religious and ecumenical level these same contents and universal small principals I think that may be applicable and applied to other fields of life like in the political arena or in the financial world. And I think that if these were put into practice many things could change. Now this is not a dream, this is a reality and I think we have the responsibility for the future generation and that deserves the best we can give and prepare for them. So, it is up to us to work and to propagate this principle so that we may heal this wounded humanity we see today in the world.

Michaela Pilters: And do you have concrete expectations to this congress?

Father Ayuso: To this congress I have a lot of expectations because for us it is really very very meaningful. The World Evangelical Alliance, the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue have been for five years struggling with this document, and the idea was to reach a moment like the one we are living now here. But it is not just simply for taking a group photo but it is rather for bringing from here to our respective communities a model to present the publication, the diffusion of the document, and put it into practice at the grass root among communities, between persons of different religious traditions, among ecumenical communities in order to one day in a near future to speak on behalf of the three major institutions that the German model has been a very practical and effective one.

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Michaela Pilters: Archbishop Wejryd, what are your expectations to this congress? What do you think should happen and what can the churches in Germany do?

Anders Wejryd: You see: there is a difference between these two other gentlemen and me and that is that they have an idea what the questions are about and I missed that. Well, I think... I mean that you have a tradition as Germans of being committed but also of being very thoughtful and rational. And I think the combination of being committed, thoughtful and rational, with coming from different traditions may leave something more permanent like some good short documents. I mean you are good at long documents, we know that, but I also see that you are moving to an era of being a little bit shorter and quicker in the German tradition. And I think this combination that you have here of heart and brain is extremely important for all our traditions.

Michaela Pilters: Same question to you, what are your expectations and what should the churches in Germany do?

Geoff Tunnicliffe: Well, I would reiterate what my two brothers have said: there is high expectations on this event. It's being broadcasted around the world, it will be there forever through video and streaming. And so I agree fully with you in your reflections on the German community. But can I add: perhaps you need a little Latin or Italian passion that will drive you, not only to think academically and intellectually and thoughtfully. But can we leave here passionately about finding ways for serving the kingdom of God together. And doing that with integrity, not giving up our values and our own personal set of beliefs but seeing where we do on the area of communality and leave here as passionate ambassadors for the kingdom of God. Just a little expectation of you my sisters and brothers here in Germany.

Michaela Pilters: A little expectation, but very hard to realize...Thank you very much. Sie haben es gehört... [Applaus] Es ist nicht ganz einfach, wenn

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man Gäste hat, die sich eigentlich so einig sind. Aber trotzdem, ich glaube, dass was Sie gehört haben von unseren drei Gästen, könnte Sie inspirieren, sich jetzt mit Ihren Nachbarn zu unterhalten in einer Murmelpause, die - wie schon angekündigt - belauscht werden wird, was dann hinterher ein bisschen zusammengetragen wird. Was beschäftigt Sie, wenn Sie darüber nachdenken, was Sie jetzt gehört haben? Wo sind die Herausforderungen? Was sollte man tun, was erwarten Sie selbst von diesem Kongress? Reden Sie mit Ihren Nachbarn!