

# Annemarie Schimmel Forum

für Interreligiöse und Interkulturelle Verständigung e.V.

Annemarie Schimmel Forum e.V. Lochnerstr. 74 53757 St. Augustin

Der Vorstand

His Royal Highness  
Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad  
The Royal Hashemite Court  
Amman  
Kingdom of Jordan

March, 3th  
Sankt Augustin

Your Royal Highness!

In October 2007, 138 religious scholars from the Sunni and Shi'i world called upon all churches to enter into a "dialogue of action".

They proceeded from a shared faith in one single God, a conviction that would lead from conflict to competitive cooperation, thus making possible a common order of global peace.

Things are urgent, they wrote, because without peace between Christians and Muslims there could not be peace in this world.

Common challenges are constructive even during conflicts once differences no longer divide. Such challenges far from levelling religious profiles are likely to sharpen them.

In this direction the Muslim authors took an important step: They did not impute that the Christian belief in Trinity necessarily implies belief in three divinities. Rather they accepted that Trinity might refer to one single God, appearing under three different forms.

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Thus they avoided an interpretation of their own of the Christian faith, thereby ending the tradition mutually to deny each other's faith, and that with carefully chosen citations from the Bible.

The 138 authors follow a clear line of thought, aware that religious disputes until now mostly poisoned the climate necessary for cooperation in this crisis-prone world – a world that expects religions to further the common good with worthy and effective contributions.

It is indeed high time for stopping dialogues merely meant to rip open old wounds, flatter one's identity by denying the other's, and to stereo-type the world into bad culprits and good victims.

For Muslims God is above all the Benevolent and Merciful One – not a God of revenge, nationalisms, or affluence. And certainly He is not a useful divinity justifying one's personal desires.

Indeed, God does not condone cultivating national honour, nor fighting an “axis of evil”, nor the imposition of particular styles of living or any other claims of absolute superiority leading to a uniform world religion.

Correctly, the authors are not afraid that religious cooperation might produce an Esperanto or patchwork religion while admitting that the fear of religious amalgamation could blur the vision for the real problems of this world. At any rate, the world can only afford peaceful religions.

Religions capable of assuring peace?

The concept that there cannot be peace among the nations without peace between the religions aims for more than a mere absence of conflict. Target is a cooperative peace which diffuses the risk of mankind annihilating itself.

Relevant initiatives promising success demand round table discussions not between

- ❖ instructors and instructed
- ❖ grantors and grantees
- ❖ good-natured and scheming people
- ❖ demanding and conceding ones
- ❖ victors and defeated people.

Successful dialoguing requires structural preconditions like e.g. cooperative crisis management by religious charities or inter-religious academic acting as centres for active peace studies.

Fields of Action:

### ***1. Style of Dialogue***

There is no alternative to a high level religious dialogue that shuns tactical recriminations as well as threats of whatever kind. To be avoided is the typical narrowness of Christian-Islamic dialogues which are useful atmospherically at best. The religious communities, could they develop an etiquette that would assure substantial dialogues?

### ***2. Democracy***

It was a mistake to present democracy to immigrants as a finished product instead of involving them creatively in the always necessary process of improving the communal institutions. After all, there must come to be a new balance between

- ❖ power and the law
- ❖ freedom of expression and freedom of religion
- ❖ economy and ecology
- ❖ the common good and partisan interests.

In this process responsibility for the future must be shared between the majority and its minorities.

The religious communities, can they make people aware of the short-comings of their democratic systems?

### ***3. Worldwide anger***

It would be a dangerous self-delusion to believe that terror was an Islamic intervention, because this way it will be overlooked that anger is the main cause of terrorism and Islam merely its sounding board.

Wholesale accusations of the Islamic world cannot discharge the West of its co-responsibility. Rather they will increase the rage of the Muslim world.

Does it follow from their commitment to peace that the religions ought to enter into the terrorism debate?

### ***4. Religious History***

As long as the religions do not come to a joint evaluation of their histories, demagogues shall find it easy to disturb inter-religious peace by reopening old wounds barely healed.

### ***5. Education***

Conflicting educational goals and methods, leading to conflicts between public schools, parents and religious communities, will have to be paid for by our children.

The religious communities, could they not prevent, at least, mutual misunderstanding and demonization on all sides?

### ***6. Labor Market***

The religions cannot possibly compensate for short-comings of the labor market.

However, they are capable of mitigating the effects of long-term unemployment for certain individuals. Because they are strong in resolving life cycle crises by providing meaning. The religions can, for instance, be active in the following fields:

- ❖ providing job seekers with new qualifications
- ❖ organizing sponsorships for the unemployed
- ❖ setting up self-help projects
- ❖ mobilizing entrepreneurs.



Religious communities, could they perhaps set up a network of communal job scouts?

### ***7. Media***

Minorities suffer particularly under their distorted media image. A catalogue of inadmissible religious vocabulary might go a long way towards improving the linguistic media culture.

### ***8. Fugitives***

Being mostly undesired and under threat of extradition, immigrant refugees need a platform for the articulation of their problems.

The religious communities, could they come forward with model solutions for this?

### ***9. Fears and Anxieties***

Collective fears can cause mutually escalation and, as self-fulfilling prophecies, materialize what is most feared.

The religious communities, could they demonstrate how to channel fear into productive energies?

### ***10. Human Rights***

Alas, human rights are frequently wielded like a club for accusation. Worse, there exists an Occidental fundamentalism instrumentalizing human rights for political purposes.

Religious communities, could they counteract this trend by publishing biographies of human rights activists from all different cultures?

Could they come to agree on a set of human obligations, thus terminating the abusive discourse affecting the human rights ethos?

### ***11. Participation***

The participants in the World Economic Summit only represent 13 % of the world population; their composition is mono-cultural; and they keep the poor countries out, even when they – their well being and their survivability – are the very subject under discussion.

The religious communities, could they represent the views of these globalization victims?

### **12. Ecology**

For the sake of environment, 2012 is to see a new ecological global agreement to which, for the first time, also Brazil, China, India, South Africa and the United States are to adhere.

The religious communities, how could they support this attempt to save God's endangered creation?

### **13. Illegals**

Illegal immigrants easily fall prey to the criminal world since they risk deportation, once unmasked when seeking official protection.

The religious communities, could they not insist on the establishment of ombudsman offices for the sake of these illegals?

These are some of the tasks awaiting religious cooperation.

For that, the 138 Muslim scholars have given a strong impetus.

Please accept the expression of our highest esteem.

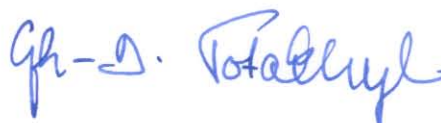
Yours very sincerely

For the Committee of the Annemarie Schimmel Forum



Dr. Klaus Lefringhausen

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