



Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communion d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)

1

2 **Protestant Perspectives on Religious Plurality** 3 **in Europe**

4 Edition released by the CPCE Council for obtaining feedback from
5 the churches, summer 2016

6 *Content*

7

8	1. Introduction	3
9	2. Religions in Europe	5
10	2.1. Defining Europe?	5
11	2.2. Status and place of religion in European societies	6
12	2.3. European religious diversity	8
13	2.4. Dealing with religious diversity	9
14	3. Overview of church documents	11
15	3.1. Ecumenical guidelines	11
16	3.2. Basic documents of Protestant churches	12
17	3.2.1. Documents on Christian faith and other religions	12
18	3.2.2. Documents on dialogue and mission	15
19	3.2.3. Documents on specific subjects	16
20	3.2.4. Documents on the relationship with Islam	17
21	4. The Bible and Protestant theology in the face of religious plurality	20
22	4.1. Radical grace	21
23	4.1.1. The radical grace of God's creative activity	22
24	4.1.2. The radical grace of God's salvific activity	23
25	4.1.3. The radical grace of God's inspiring activity	24

26	4.2. Truth in Christian faith.....	24
27	4.2.1. Living in the truth of God’s radical grace	25
28	4.2.2. Truth as existential and relational category	25
29	4.2.3. Living in the truth provides space for openness	26
30	4.3. A closer look at biblical texts regarding religious plurality.....	27
31	4.3.1. Old Testament	27
32	4.3.2. New Testament.....	28
33	5. Living together in religiously plural societies	31
34	5.1. Developing a dialogical culture in living together.....	31
35	5.2. Interreligious relations and dialogues – challenges and possibilities	33
36	5.3. Cooperation in practical areas of interaction	34
37	Appendix 1: List of documents submitted by the CPCE member churches.....	37
38	Appendix 2: Participants in the study process	46
39		
40		

41

1. Introduction

42 In the last few decades, in Europe, interaction between people of different faiths has become
 43 part of everyday life. For churches, this raises the question of how to constructively shape
 44 interreligious relations and how to view such relations theologically. Due to the established
 45 presence of Muslims in many European countries, the definition of the relationship with Islam
 46 plays an especially important role. But Eastern religions also attract the attention of many
 47 people. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church has issued several
 48 documents on this array of questions¹, whereas many churches of the Reformation in Europe
 49 are still in the process of establishing their position. This is for both practical and theological
 50 reasons.

51 The *historical-practical reasons* lie in the fact that Protestant Christianity has for centuries been
 52 located mainly in countries of Central and Northern Europe, as well as the USA. There was
 53 little inclination to engage in interreligious relations. During the past decades, the situation has
 54 changed significantly. The centre of gravity of Christianity is shifting from the North to the South
 55 – to sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South-East Asia, where it finds itself involved in
 56 intensive relationships with other religions. On the other hand, Europe is becoming more and
 57 more multi-religious.

58 The *theological reasons* lie, among other things, in the focus on Christ (“*solus Christus*”) and
 59 the Bible (“*sola Scriptura*”) in the churches of the Reformation. Protestant theology emphasised
 60 the particularity of the revelation in Christ, and stressed that the work of the Holy Spirit was
 61 strictly linked to the proclamation of the Word. Lutheran theology, in particular, has repeatedly
 62 defined its relationships with Judaism and Islam – as with most other Christian traditions – by
 63 underlining the polarity of Law and Gospel, which led to labelling the latter as “legalistic
 64 religions”. Reformed theology emphasised God’s election in Christ and tended to assume that
 65 only truly believing Christians could be regarded as elected.

66 From the 1960s onwards, remarkable changes in the area of interreligious relationships
 67 occurred in Protestant churches. “Dialogue” (rather than apologetics or mission) has now
 68 become the paradigm for determining the relations to other religions. That change of paradigm
 69 has posed various practical and theological questions in answer to which individual churches,
 70 communions of churches and the World Council of Churches (WCC) have issued statements.
 71 Such statements on the theological, fundamental questions of interreligious dialogue have,
 72 however, frequently caused passionate debates within the churches. These debates disclose
 73 the need for clarification.

74 The individual churches respond to the described challenges in very different ways. Some are
 75 so overwhelmed with practical difficulties or with reforming their structures that practical and
 76 theological work on ‘external relationships’ play a comparatively less prominent role. However,
 77 the mission of the church also explicitly includes this ‘outside’. Redefining and shaping the
 78 relationship with other religious communities is a part of the church’s testimony in the world.

79 The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) has yet to determine its position as
 80 regards dialogue and theology of religions. Currently, important statements exist only

¹ Francesco Gioia (ed.), *Interreligious Dialogue: The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II, 1963-2005*, Boston, Pauline Books & Media 2006; CIBEDO e.V. (ed.), *Dokumente der katholischen Kirche zum Dialog mit dem Islam*, compiled by Timo Güzelmansur, Regensburg, Pustet 2009.

81 concerning the relation to Judaism.² Due to the special relationships between the Church and
 82 Israel, these statements cannot be transferred directly to other religious communities. There is
 83 a particular need for clarification regarding the relationship with Islam, which touches questions
 84 of a great theological scope. Specific interreligious relationships must be discussed within a
 85 comprehensive theological horizon. The CPCE has already dealt with the question of “mission”
 86 in the document *Evangelising: Protestant perspectives for the Churches in Europe*.³

87 In Florence in 2012, the General Assembly of the CPCE decided to launch a study process on
 88 the subject of “Plurality of Religions”.⁴ The following paper is the first outcome of that process.
 89 It is a draft, and intends to promote further discussion. It does not deal with specific
 90 interreligious relationship (for example to Islam), but with the question of religious plurality in
 91 general. It includes biblical and historical aspects, as well as viewpoints from systematic
 92 theology. At the end, the paper shares reflections on the churches’ possible contributions on
 93 how to live together in religiously plural societies.

94 The term “plurality” describes a situation in which more than one entity of a certain category
 95 (in this case religion) exist in the same space. “Plurality” is often used synonymously with
 96 “diversity”, referring to possible differences between the diverse entities. Nowadays, “plurality”
 97 is often used to describe the factual diversity, while the term “pluralism” implies a conceptual
 98 dimension. “Pluralism” gives a perspective on how that diversity should be dealt with, i.e. the
 99 notion “pluralism” presupposes a reflection and a normative judgment on how the different
 100 entities should relate to one another. Today, “pluralism” is used to describe acceptance of
 101 plurality and arrangements for respecting diverse entities within that plurality. In the case of
 102 religious pluralism, two important perspectives provide normative understandings: the legal
 103 perspective, and the theological perspective. From a legal perspective, the acceptance of
 104 religious plurality implies providing legitimacy to different religious entities, and guaranteeing
 105 them equal legal treatment. From a theological perspective, the discourse on religious
 106 pluralism has triggered lively debates about what acknowledging and accepting religious
 107 plurality means. There are varying degrees and varying ways of acceptance, thus different
 108 concepts of pluralism. The present paper provides “Protestant Perspectives on Religious
 109 Plurality in Europe”. It begins with describing the factual diversity, and then it articulates
 110 Protestant theological insights that give orientation in dealing with religious plurality. In so
 111 doing, it contributes to the conceptual debate on religious pluralism.

112 The paper starts with a description of “religions in Europe”, which also raises the question of
 113 the meaning of “Europe”. It then gives an overview of the documents issued by different
 114 European Protestant churches on that topic. That overview shows how burning the issue is,
 115 and how much work has already been done. The following part lays a theological foundation:
 116 it centres on the *radical grace* of the triune God as revealed in Jesus Christ. The last part
 117 reflects on the practical consequences and ways of living together in religiously plural societies.

² See in particular: Leuenberg Documents Vol. 6: *Church and Israel. A Contribution from the Reformation Churches in Europe to the Relationship between Christians and Jews*, Mandated by the Executive Committee of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship edited by Helmut Schwier, Frankfurt/M., Lembeck 2001.

³ Accepted and made its own by the General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe in Budapest in September 2006, Mandated by the Council of the CPCE, edited by Michael Bünker and Martin Friedrich.

⁴ Final Report 7th General Assembly, no. 3.2 (in: Michael Bünker/ Bernd Jaeger (eds.): *Free for the Future. Protestant Churches in Europe*, Leipzig 2013, pp. 262-263.

118

2. Religions in Europe

119 2.1. Defining Europe?

120 Speaking of Europe and religion(s) – or religion in Europe – is challenging. For a start, Europe
 121 is far from being a homogeneous set. The high diversity of the situations and of the historical
 122 journeys of each country renders it rather difficult to give a general survey. Firstly, one would
 123 need to make sure that everybody is defining what Europe is in the same way, and in any case
 124 is in agreement with what its territory is. Should the geographical limits be taken into account;
 125 should the political organising be the reference; or would one rather refer to a common culture
 126 – and if so, which one? Furthermore, is Europe even a reality, or is it a myth or a political
 127 manoeuvre? We cannot deal with these questions here, and will speak of Europe in its
 128 common understanding: that is, we do not rest on a political (the European Union), economic
 129 (EEA), or mythical (“Mother Europe”) definition, but rather on a broad geographical
 130 understanding⁵.

131 It is also difficult to try do give a general picture of religious belonging in Europe. Of course, a
 132 number of surveys provide information concerning the religious affiliation of the European
 133 population⁶. For instance, the *European Values Survey* led in 2008 in 47 countries⁷, reveals
 134 that more than 3/4 of the population in Europe identify with a religion even though this may
 135 well represent very different commitments and practices in each country; *Pew Research*
 136 *Center* claims that there are in Europe some 18% of non-believers (in 2015). According to the
 137 *European Values Survey*, globally speaking, a good third of the religious Europeans (36.7%)
 138 are Roman Catholics, a smaller third (30%) Orthodox, Muslim (15%) and Protestant (14.5%)
 139 believers are found nearly in the same numbers, while Jews, Hindus and Buddhists represent
 140 each less than 1% of the population. However, this information provides a rough picture, and
 141 such a depiction of religion in Europe can only be a starting point. In fact, depending on the
 142 countries taken into account, one can find very different results. Besides, figures given for
 143 Europe as a whole are an average which results from putting together realities so different that
 144 it becomes practically meaningless. From a religious point of view, the unity of contemporary
 145 Europe is non-existent, since it covers countries with very different contemporary settings and
 146 historical backgrounds.

147 The Protestant Reformation began in Europe. In a nearly entirely Catholic part of the world
 148 (the non-Catholics being mostly members of the Jewish minority), there were some precursory
 149 movements with Peter Waldes, John Wycliff, Jan Hus. However, the writings of Martin Luther
 150 in Germany mark the start of the Reformation, which quickly spread in France and Switzerland,
 151 then to the rest of Europe. The history of the propagation of the Protestant ideas and the
 152 gradual establishing of Protestantism in different trends and institutions is a long, complex, and
 153 often contentious one. As a result, Protestantism finds itself these days in very different

⁵ That means here the member countries of the CPCE, which is a geographical definition.

⁶ Sources of information on religious belonging in Europe are mostly results of the major European studies: *European Values Studies*, *European Social Survey*, *International Social Survey Programme*, *Eurobarometer*. *Pew Research Forum* also provides data. For further information on sources concerning religion in Europe, see the Eurel website (more precisely <http://www.eurel.info/spip.php?rubrique573>).

⁷ Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Montenegro, Netherlands, Northern Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Republic of Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine.

154 situations, depending on the country. Nowadays, in Europe, one can find some countries which
 155 have remained mainly Catholic (Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Poland), others which had become
 156 predominantly Protestant (Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway), and those which have
 157 established, smoothly or painfully, the coexistence of both traditions (Germany, The
 158 Netherlands, Switzerland). The Eastern part of Europe was mostly under the influence of
 159 Orthodoxy and Greece, Romania, Russia or Bulgaria are predominantly Orthodox, although
 160 from different origins. In South Eastern Europe, because of the historical spread of the Ottoman
 161 Empire, some regions have a long-standing Muslim tradition (such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina),
 162 or are predominantly Muslim (Albania). In many places, there is a long history of presence of
 163 Muslim groups (such as the Tatars in several countries); however, Islam is a minority in most
 164 European countries.

165 The main religious group differs thus according to each European country. The importance
 166 given to religion also varies, with some countries being very secular while others remain deeply
 167 religious. Many European countries are currently experiencing troubled times as a direct result
 168 of undergoing years of Communist regime, which others never went through. This regime
 169 tended to control religion, and even tried to destroy the religious institutions (e. g. Albania after
 170 1961). The sudden freedom of religion that followed the fall of the regime led to an important
 171 rise in religious practice in several countries (Ukraine, Bulgaria, Hungary). This surge may also
 172 be caused by the economic crisis and the difficulty of making a living which could be leading
 173 young people to turn back to religion (as in Albania). Finally, we should also mention that the
 174 migration trends are currently bringing to Europe people from Africa, Asia, America and the
 175 Middle East, causing the European countries to become a place of encounter between people
 176 who express and experience their individual religion in very different ways. This evolution of
 177 Europe does not facilitate comparative studies of its recent history: since Europe has not
 178 throughout the years always meant the same group of countries, general conclusions are
 179 difficult to draw. The global picture can be affected by including, or not, either a more religious
 180 country (Ireland for instance) or a more secular one (such as Sweden); suffice it to say that
 181 among the recent entrants to the European Union, one can find the most religious country of
 182 Europe (Poland) and the least religious (Estonia).

183

184 2.2. Status and place of religion in European societies

185 Regardless of the variations from one country to another, nevertheless – although they can be
 186 considerable – all the countries of Europe share a common reference point and a similar
 187 situation. The common reference point is the legal affirmation of the freedom of religion or
 188 belief of individuals⁸, which is accepted throughout Europe even if not fully respected
 189 everywhere. The similarity between the countries of Europe is that their religious setting is
 190 changing, and often changing very quickly.⁹ Similarity, however, stops there: the change does
 191 not affect all the countries in the same way, or at the same speed. It is not expressed similarly,
 192 and does not always have identical causes or consequences. General tendencies affecting

⁸ See article 9 of the *European Convention of Human Rights*: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and, in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.” (http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf).

⁹ Mattei Dogan, “Religious Beliefs in Europe: Factors of Accelerated Decline”, Ralph L. Piedmont, David O. Moberg, *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion Volume 14*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, p. 161-180.

193 several countries can, nevertheless, be described. Firstly, a change in the religion-politics
 194 relation is noticeable. Of course, this affects mainly the part of Europe previously under the
 195 Communist regime: in many of these countries, the presence of religion is now accepted, and
 196 the religious groups have recovered. In other places, the relationship of the state to religion
 197 has changed tremendously because of a recent major political upheaval. Elsewhere, the
 198 relationship of the state to religion has developed at a slower pace. Several nations have
 199 experienced an important change concerning the place that religion used to hold in the political
 200 landscape. In Sweden, the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden used to be the state church, but has
 201 not been any more since 2000; in Italy, the Catholic Church no longer has a specific social
 202 status. Another change is the fact that in many European countries, believers now do not
 203 represent the main part of the population.¹⁰

204 Although the numbers may display meaningful differences, all the European countries exhibit
 205 a significant drop in religious belonging as well as in practice. For a long time, scholars have
 206 explained that drop by the loss of the belief in the existence of God. Our civilization was
 207 becoming more technological, and this modernity would necessarily come with a growing
 208 rationality, they said. This modern thought was considered incompatible with beliefs
 209 understood as proceeding from a less advanced way of thinking. However, the multiplication
 210 of new religions in the 1970s (the “New Age”) led observers to admit that it was more an
 211 evolution of beliefs than a drop (some even claim an increase in religious beliefs among youth).
 212 Generally speaking, however, one must admit that the major change concerns the intertwined
 213 dynamics of the relation between institutions and individuals. To belong, or to remain, in a
 214 religious group, less and less depends on the social birth group of the individuals. On the
 215 contrary, people are in search of meaning, move from one group to another, cobble together
 216 their own ideas, and change. All this is best expressed as a development in the relation to
 217 institutions. The caving-in of religious practice most probably demonstrates a reorganisation
 218 of traditional affiliations more than the disappearance of beliefs. Most individuals no longer rely
 219 mainly on church institutions to provide the frames for the way they think religion and
 220 spirituality, but they tend to set the borders up for themselves. Recent European surveys
 221 reveal, for instance, that a majority of Europeans believe more easily in a vague supernatural
 222 power or force than in a personal God.¹¹ The decline in prestige of important religious traditions
 223 also discloses new forms of reference to religions: spirituality becomes an individual matter.
 224 People feel free in their relation to religion, and thus create new structures of faith, such as
 225 those claiming to be “Buddhist Jews”.¹² All in all, it is a risky task to try and provide a general
 226 explanation for this development. The changes in the religious landscape can be described
 227 quite easily; they are more difficult to explain. The religious change in Europe may be
 228 expressing secularisation, or pluralisation, or the return of religion, or the transformation of
 229 religion, or even a combination of these ideas. All these trends in interpretation can be
 230 challenged, however. Since we actually belong to this historical moment, nobody can really be

¹⁰ For further information, see reports by *Religionsmonitor*, (<http://www.religionsmonitor.de/english.html>) or *Pew Forum* (<http://www.pewforum.org/>).

¹¹ Detlef Pollack, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel (ed.), *The Social Significance of Religion in the Enlarged Europe. Secularization, Individualization and Pluralization*. London, Ashgate, 2012.

¹² This example of combination of religious beliefs is given as an illustration; see Lionel Obadia, *Shalom Buddha*, Berg International, 2015.

231 in a position to provide proper theories, and the explanations given remain narratives. They
 232 can inspire our thought but they can only fall short when we come to a specific country.¹³

233 Whatever the interpretation, however, one idea can definitely be turned down for good: religion
 234 is not disappearing. At the same time as the relation of individuals to religious institutions
 235 moves toward a diminution of the political importance of churches in some countries, the highly
 236 religious historical base of Europe is being acknowledged or rediscovered. In all the countries,
 237 public institutions and their structure, social values, and even the cultural framework often have
 238 their roots in religion: items as diverse as hospitals, chaplaincies, human rights, or the end-of-
 239 the-week rest, originally had a religious dimension. Christian perspectives and practices have
 240 significantly influenced many cultures in Europe, and Jewish, Muslim, pre-Christian and
 241 Enlightenment traditions also had an impact on Europe throughout history. Although their
 242 religious dimension is sometimes lost, such explicit value-orientations are deemed important
 243 by people and they refuse to part with it.

244

245 2.3. European religious diversity

246 In recent history Christian churches have supported the idea of Europe: Catholics and
 247 Protestants have long been working at building a European network. The *Conference of*
 248 *European Churches* (CEC), bringing together Protestants, Anglicans and Orthodox, was
 249 created in 1959; the *Council of European Bishops' Conferences* (CCEE) was founded in 1971.

250 This Christian reference is, however, challenged, with Christianity nowadays far from being the
 251 only reference as regards religion. This is another common feature of European history: the
 252 plurality of cultures and religions. Cultural differences, because of the process of globalisation,
 253 can be found within European societies. Moreover, mobility (due to tourism and migration), as
 254 well as the quick and easy dissemination of information, brings individuals to encounter and
 255 learn about many cultural universes different from their own background. Europeans have thus
 256 discovered new religious cultures.

257 This diversity has frequently been made visible by the presence of migrants from Muslim
 258 majority countries. Most Christians nowadays know about Muslims, but also about many other
 259 religious groups: Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs. Recently, the end of the Communist regime
 260 has brought into Europe several countries in which there is a significant Muslim presence
 261 (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria). Altogether
 262 the presence of Islam is increasingly noticeable in many European countries, above all
 263 because Muslims have grown in the number since the second half of the twentieth century.
 264 This numerical importance, and the change in mentalities, brings the religious minorities to
 265 seek a greater visibility. Europe claims a strong commitment to freedom of religion and belief,
 266 and contemporary societies affirm the "right to difference": the two elements put together lead
 267 most minority groups to the demand of better public recognition. Although several religious
 268 groups, such as some smaller Protestant churches, have also raised their voice, Islam is the
 269 most well-known of these emerging groups. In many European countries, the Muslim presence
 270 is a central issue of public debates, and this religion has strongly taken part in challenging the
 271 habits concerning the visibility of religion in the more or less secularized European societies.

¹³ Detlef Pollack, *Säkularisierung - ein moderner Mythos?* (Studien zum religiösen Wandel in Deutschland). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck 2003; Mark Lilla, "Europe and the legend of secularization", *New York Times*, 31 March 2006.

272 This can be due to the fact that Muslims represent one of the largest religious minority groups
 273 (due both to migration dynamics and to a high level of intergenerational transmission).
 274 However, one must also bear in mind that the debate raised both by Muslims and about Islam
 275 from the non-Muslim majority sometimes has roots in ethnic tensions, and current political
 276 events. For instance, recent arguments on circumcision, religious slaughter, or the wearing of
 277 religious symbols, have mostly focused on Muslims although they also concern Jews or Sikhs.

278 This may be in relation to the fact that, notwithstanding certain exceptions, Christianity is in
 279 Europe generally confronted with a change in its importance, and a changed perception of the
 280 role of churches in public life. Other religious groups are in the meanwhile gaining importance.
 281 These dynamics that Europe is experiencing have varied and sometimes opposing
 282 consequences.¹⁴ All religious groups now belong to a universe in which travel is easy and
 283 quick, and the dissemination of information is nearly immediate. That changes the link between
 284 religion and country of birth. Sikhs of Britain, Baptists of France, or Alevi of Germany, live
 285 connected to other members of their faith group, in their native country or elsewhere in the
 286 world. Religious belonging is worldwide, and religious conflicts affecting a country echo all over
 287 the world (especially when they provoked the displacement of populations who bring along
 288 traumatized patterns of interreligious relations). Global interconnection is strong; distance does
 289 not necessarily mean breaking ties, and goods and news can circulate easily. Even so, these
 290 ties do slacken. Moves modify religious customs: rites, practices, and languages change in a
 291 new national context, like other social and cultural dimensions. The change of context also
 292 often means a change in the collective pressure, and the link to religion is also modified. It can
 293 be intensified (religion becomes really a “chosen” affiliation) or weakened (it is one of the many
 294 things left behind). In any case, immigrants have decisions to make: relationship to religious
 295 belonging and practice needs to be determined. Should one try to adapt to the way the religion
 296 is practised in the receiving country, or keep the ways of the country of birth? This dynamic is
 297 shared by all: the coexistence of a number of religious groups may open their minds because
 298 convictions are put into perspective when the practice of several religions in the same country
 299 seems possible. At the same time, they may just as well bring people to believe in exclusive
 300 religious truths.

301

302 2.4. Dealing with religious diversity

303 The coexistence of different social groups is a contemporary reality, which does not mean it is
 304 easily dealt with everywhere. In many countries formerly under Communist regime, the newly
 305 recovered religious freedom does not run totally smooth: for lack of a common ideological
 306 enemy, the different ethnic and religious communities tend to rise against each other; religious
 307 institutions sometimes compete to recover former privileges. These countries also exhibit a
 308 reaffirmation of the religious identity (Poland, Bulgaria for instance), which can go together with
 309 a hardening of “ethnic” boundaries and a reinforcement of stereotypes (such as those against
 310 Roma in Bulgaria), and an increasing of internal fractures. There, and in many countries of
 311 Europe, religious belonging and national belonging are understood as necessarily linked.
 312 Religious diversity becomes then increasingly hard to admit, and emigration is a difficult
 313 experience. The place of the religion in the country of origin or the receiving country is also a
 314 determining element. If it is a majority or a minority, if it is known or unknown, respected or

¹⁴ See chapter 5 of this report.

315 despised, all this plays a role. But human migration compels all the religious denominations to
 316 reassess their own understanding of themselves: nowadays, no denomination holds the
 317 majority. In nearly all the countries of Europe, everybody is forced to learn this though to some
 318 it may come as a surprise. This will bring Muslims from the Middle East to discover, upon
 319 arriving in Europe, non-Arabic-speaking Muslims; it will bring European Muslims or Christians
 320 to discover African Muslims or Christians; Iranian Muslims to discover that Shia Islam is, on a
 321 world scale, a minority; Romanians to discover Greek or Russian Orthodoxy – and the list
 322 could be longer still. All religious groups are now, one way or another, experiencing a situation
 323 of encounter with other faiths, if only in diaspora. This situation can have different
 324 consequences: discovering other faiths can lead some to a greater open-mindedness; to
 325 others, it may be a trigger to rally around their identity and move to a fundamentalist religious
 326 behaviour. It can happen that newcomers integrate into relatively established groups, and that
 327 their habits and convictions cause some friction. Religious diversity is more and more
 328 frequently encountered inside the denominations themselves. Or else, groups create new
 329 institutions in their host country; sometimes, the leading institution from their homeland, who
 330 consider themselves responsible for orthodox thinking do not recognize them, whereas the
 331 migrants in turn claim that they have the authentic belief, based on what they reconstruct from
 332 the memories of their past. In fact, most usually, all possibilities are open: from the
 333 development of fresh and diverse “spirituality” on the outskirts of the principal denominations,
 334 to the reinforcement of demanding religious practices, which can easily be seen as
 335 fundamentalist or extreme. Of course, this behaviour mostly concerns limited parts of the
 336 different religions. However, since they are sometimes very active groups, they may create
 337 some disturbance, all the more so because they question the relation to the political power
 338 (government) and institutions, in the name of their religion. In some countries, these groups
 339 become the most visible aspect of religion in the society, at the expense of other groups. They
 340 then unfortunately contribute to giving religion a bad social image. Most people, however, do
 341 not go to such a radical level of commitment, and the increased religious diversity is for most
 342 an occasion for interreligious contacts, frequently via interreligious marriage and religious
 343 education, leading to an increase in the cooperation between religious groups.¹⁵

344 Altogether, the changing landscape of religion in Europe is leading to challenges for the
 345 Protestant churches, which need to give account of their values and convictions to very diverse
 346 interlocutors. Protestant churches want sufficient attention to be paid to human rights, and they
 347 want their values of respect to individuals to be taken into account and implemented in the
 348 political sphere. They acknowledge the necessity of developing the dialogue with Muslims; this
 349 question, however, cannot be dealt with as such in this report and would necessitate another
 350 process dedicated to it. Finally, in face of the criticisms and questions that all churches
 351 encounter nowadays, the Protestants churches need to speak with one voice. Of course, while
 352 each one of them wants to avoid being assimilated to an expression that they would not find
 353 totally acceptable, religious solidarity with the other Protestant churches remains a very
 354 important dimension. The discourse of the churches on religious diversity concerns non-
 355 members. Therefore, it has consequences for the image of the churches. At the same time,
 356 the topic of religious diversity is a necessary internal matter for thought.

¹⁵ See chapter 5 of this report.

357

3. Overview of church documents¹⁶

358 3.1. Ecumenical guidelines

359 Whereas the Roman Catholic Church, back in 1965, promulgated the declaration on the
 360 relation with non-Christian religions “*Nostra Aetate*”, the Protestant churches needed more
 361 time to produce basic documents on the principles of their relation with other religions. The
 362 WCC published its first *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* in
 363 1979 (adopted by the Assembly in 1983). The guidelines judge interreligious dialogue a
 364 fundamental part of Christian service within the community, and a fulfilment of the
 365 commandment to love one’s neighbour (*WCC, Guidelines*, no. 18). They invite Christians to
 366 let themselves be questioned by other religions (no. 22), and encourage them to engage in
 367 dialogue though they underline the risk of syncretism (no. 24-28). Thus, the guidelines advise
 368 on how to conduct dialogues, but do not say much about the underlying theological principles
 369 of the Christian churches. The *Baar Statement*, published by a consultation in 1990, went a
 370 step further in stating that “plurality of religious traditions” is “both the result of the manifold
 371 ways in which God has related to peoples and nations as well as a manifestation of the richness
 372 and diversity of humankind” (*WCC, Theological Perspectives on Plurality*, no. II). Referring to
 373 John 10:16, it argues that God’s salvation in Christ extends beyond the boundaries of the
 374 Christian community (no. III). It refers to Gal 5:22-23 in affirming “that God the Holy Spirit has
 375 been at work in the life and traditions of peoples of living faiths” (no. IV).

376 The 2004 revision of the 1979 *Guidelines* takes a more cautious approach when it
 377 acknowledges that religious plurality may give rise to communal tensions (*WCC, Ecumenical*
 378 *considerations*, no. 6), and argues for being “aware of the ambiguities of religious expressions”
 379 (no. 11) and adhering to the faith in the Triune God (no. 12). The first approach to a “Theology
 380 of religions” can be found in a paper from 2006 (*WCC, Religious plurality*, presented at the
 381 Assembly in Porto Alegre) that takes the concept of “hospitality of a gracious God” as a starting
 382 point and concludes that the “plurality of religious traditions [is] both the result of the manifold
 383 ways in which God has related to peoples and nations as well as a manifestation of the richness
 384 and diversity of human response to God’s gracious gifts” (no. 42, taking up the Baar statement).

385 It seems that the concept of *missio Dei* (God’s action direct to the whole humankind, with the
 386 church as an instrument within this action) provided the horizon for understanding the
 387 existence of other religions, and thus formss the background for the WCC documents. Such a
 388 broad understanding of mission has specifically been rejected by the Lausanne Movement,
 389 which identifies mission and evangelism. It stated in its *Manila Manifesto* 1992: “We affirm that
 390 other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and that human spirituality, if
 391 unredeemed by Christ, leads not to God but to judgment, for Christ is the only way” (no. 7).
 392 The focus on evangelism, which is most important for the Evangelical movement, has for some
 393 time been less important for the European Protestant mainline churches, but since the 1990s,
 394 consciousness of the necessity of evangelism has also grown among them¹⁷, and thus a few
 395 documents explicitly consider the relation between interreligious dialogue and
 396 mission/evangelism.

¹⁶ A complete list of the documents (most of them submitted to the CPCE office by the member churches) can be found in the Appendix.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. the CPCE document *Evangelizing. Protestant Perspectives for the Churches in Europe* (2006).

397 This connection is also the focus of the widest agreement on this subject achieved within
 398 Christianity up to now. In 2011 the WCC and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) agreed,
 399 together with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, on “Recommendations for
 400 Conduct” in the Christian relation to people of other faiths (in the document *Christian Witness*
 401 *in a multireligious world*). The document does not intend to definitively clarify the relations
 402 between interreligious dialogue and mission. However, it urges the commission to evangelize
 403 and calls for rejecting all forms of violence, for respecting “full personal freedom”, and for
 404 appreciating “what is true and good” in other beliefs (no. 6, 7 and 10).

405 Documents issued by Protestant churches or church bodies in the last decades stand within
 406 this range of positions. It should be observed that the majority of documents did not come into
 407 being before the 21st century, i.e. they were composed after the attacks of 9/11 which changed
 408 the view of Islam in the West, and put the contribution of religions for a peaceful cohabitation
 409 high on the agenda. Together with the increased visibility of Islam in many European countries,
 410 this may also explain why many Protestant churches in Europe published documents on the
 411 relationship to Islam rather than to other religions in general. Although the focus of this study
 412 is meant to be religious plurality in general, and not the relationship to certain religions, these
 413 documents should at least be considered regarding their view of religious plurality. In a first
 414 survey, however, we will only present documents concerned with interreligious dialogue at
 415 large.

416

417 3.2. Basic documents of Protestant churches

418 3.2.1. Documents on Christian faith and other religions

419 As already observed, Protestant churches, especially in Europe, needed longer than the
 420 Roman Catholic Church to produce basic documents on the relation to other religions. The
 421 explanation is analyzed in one of the first documents of this kind, the study *Religionen,*
 422 *Religiosität und christlicher Glaube* (1991) by the Protestant churches in Germany (written by
 423 a joint committee of the Lutheran churches and the Reformed and United churches). The
 424 document reflects on the heritage of Barthian theology with its dichotomy between Christian
 425 faith and “religion”, and states that only the “return of religion” in the late 20th century paved
 426 the way for a self-perception of Christianity as taking its place within the religions. Thus, the
 427 concept of “Konvivenz”¹⁸ is used in the document, supporting the plea for positive theological
 428 encounters with other religions. The religions can even be seen as products of the creative
 429 power of God, by which God acts through human beings (p. 127). The Christian reluctance to
 430 accept sacralization is also underlined.

431 The study of the EKD *Christlicher Glaube und nichtchristliche Religionen* (2003, written by the
 432 Advisory Commission for Theology (*Kammer für Theologie*) and approved by the Council),
 433 remarkably, does not mention the study of 1991. It notes an opposition between Christianity,
 434 based on the “experience of God’s salvific love (“*Zuwendung*”) towards humankind in the
 435 history of Jesus Christ” (p. 8), and the other religions, based on human experiences (cf. p. 5).
 436 The unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the necessary distinction between law and
 437 Gospel, serve as arguments for a warning against participation in the religious practice of other

¹⁸ The German term „Konvivenz“, introduced by Theo Sundermeier, includes a mindset of respect and openness, together with the awareness that the other will always remain “other”.

438 religions, and against interreligious prayer (pp. 19-20). The document expresses that the
439 secular state and the idea of human rights should be accepted by all religious communities.

440 In 2015 the Council of the EKD published a new statement (a “basic text”) on the relation of
441 Christian faith to religious diversity: *Christlicher Glaube und religiöse Vielfalt in evangelischer*
442 *Perspektive*. Affirming religious diversity, the study especially emphasizes the legal order in
443 Germany, which secures both the freedom of individual persons and of religious groups. The
444 German model of constitutional law on religion, which is based on freedom and participation
445 and which Protestant theology and the EKD have been strongly supporting in the last decades,
446 is recommended as a model in the European and international context as well. In respect of
447 the various encounters of Christians with adherents of other religions within German society,
448 the EKD argues for cooperation and dialogue, which should be conducted without giving up
449 one’s own Christian convictions, including responsibility for mission and evangelization.
450 Distancing itself from problematic modes of mission and evangelization, it nevertheless
451 highlights evangelization as an interest in other people and their lives, thus being compatible
452 with a positive estimation of other religions. In the thorough discussion of issues of a theology
453 of religion (“*Religionstheologie*”) the study refrains from favouring one model of relating
454 Christianity to other religions. However, it rejects approaches which presuppose that all
455 religions are referring to the same transcendent reality.

456 Besides the EKD some of its member churches (“*Landeskirchen*”) have published basic
457 documents of their own which aim at different target groups and have different foci. The
458 documents from the churches in Hesse-Nassau and Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper
459 Lusatia, in particular, do not show much interest in measuring other religions against Christian
460 convictions, and thus pointing out the differences, but prefer to seek aspects that promote an
461 open encounter. The two strongly connected documents from the Evangelical Church of Berlin-
462 Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia (*Diskussionsbeitrag* and *Grundlagen*, 2012/13) refer to
463 the unlimited love of God, to which Christians shall witness in the world, and to the Holy Spirit,
464 in which God is active in manifold ways in the world so that Christians can perceive his activity
465 in other religions as well. There is a strong plea for an open dialogue, which even includes
466 participation in the religious practice and spirituality of the other religions. Likewise, the
467 document of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (*Life in Diversity*, 2003) states “that
468 Christian faith today must learn how to express its knowledge and its experiences of faith in
469 the presence of other convictions”, and this in an attitude of “fundamental respect for different
470 ways of believing” (no. 4.1). It should not weaken the commission to give witness which has
471 been highlighted before (with the concept of *missio Dei*), but witness shall be given in an
472 attitude of respect, without devaluating the religious convictions of others (no. 4.2). In the
473 concluding chapter, this text tries to identify resources for a more positive discernment of other
474 religions. It refers to the biblical insight that God’s Spirit blows where it chooses (no. 5.1), to
475 the necessity of an inviting attitude for fulfilling the Great Commandment, and to the concept
476 of truth as a process.

477 A similar approach characterizes the document of the Federation of Swiss Protestant
478 Churches *Wahrheit in Offenheit* (2007). After taking account of several other official positions,
479 characterized by distinctions and demarcations, it suggests “getting involved in the debate with
480 other religions and carving out the specifically Christian by the way of a dialogical dispute with
481 their certainties of truth” (no. 1.5). A detailed consideration of the nature of truth in relation to
482 faith (ch.2.1) backs this position. Even the Bible verses that are often quoted in favour of an

483 exclusivist position, correctly understood, do not justify an absolutist understanding. The faith
 484 in the Triune God, in God as the creator of the whole creation, in Jesus Christ as the
 485 representation of God's salvific presence in history, and in God's Spirit drifting at will and
 486 permeating the whole creation (2.4), give support to the acknowledgement that "God also
 487 represented Godself outside of the Gospel, in creative energy, salvific action and in the power
 488 of God's Spirit, in order to fulfil the divine universal will for salvation" (2.4.3, p. 47 in German
 489 text).

490 An openness towards other religions also characterizes the main contribution in the book *Sann
 491 mot sig själv – öppen till andra* (True to oneself – open towards others), which serves as the
 492 most important reference texts in the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden. The author Kajsa
 493 Ahlstrand argues that encounter with other religions has to be both true to one's own faith and
 494 open to new (even spiritual) experiences. Special focus is given to questions of how to conduct
 495 dialogues (e.g. with sensitivity towards power relations and to the distinction between liturgical
 496 and theological language) and to what Christians can learn from encounters with specific
 497 religions. Although the necessity of a theology of religions is underlined, there is no detailed
 498 sketch of such a theology.

499 The guiding documents of the (Lutheran) Church of Norway reveal a similar interest in the
 500 question of how to conduct dialogues. *Guidance for religion encounter* (adopted by the General
 501 Synod 2006) describes the attitude in which Christians are expected to start dialogues with
 502 "openness, the will to see and listen, honesty, frankness and the absence of force and abuse
 503 of power". After a number of recommendations substantiating these attitudes, some "concrete
 504 challenges in religion encounter" are also briefly addressed. The *Guiding principles for
 505 interreligious relations* (2008), an internal paper, giving account of the aims and basic
 506 assumptions of the Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, has a similar focus.
 507 Both documents start from the faith in the triune God as the basis for dialogue, without
 508 interpreting it in a one-sided exclusivist or pluralist way (*Guiding Principles*, 1.1: "We know of
 509 no other way to salvation than Jesus Christ, but nor can we place restrictions on God's saving
 510 acts"¹⁹). Additional material is provided in the books *When Believers Meet. A Study Guide on
 511 Interreligious Dialogue* (2007) and *Kirke nå (Church Now)*. The first book looks into three
 512 issues of practical interest: mixed marriage, prayer and religious symbols. The last chapter ("A
 513 matter of relationships") puts relationality as the key category at the centre. This is also the
 514 focus of the second book's chapter on the Lutheran Church in relation to other religions written
 515 by Oddbjørn Leirvik. The book from 2016 *Dialogteologi på norsk (Dialogue theology in
 516 Norwegian)* with several contributors from academia and the Church of Norway is an example
 517 of recent theological reflections on inter-religious encounters from a Norwegian context, aiming
 518 to provide protestant theological resources for the calling of the Church in a pluralist society.

519 Smaller churches often are not in capacity to produce documents centred on interreligious
 520 dialogue, but present their position in documents of a more general character. The document
 521 *The Czechoslovak Hussite Church in Relation to Ecumenism* from 2014, for example, contains
 522 a chapter on interfaith dialogue. It motivates this dialogue by the challenges of nowadays
 523 pluralistic societies, and regards other religions as responses to God's love, which speaks to
 524 all people through the Holy Spirit. They are "expression of human encounters with God, and
 525 of real efforts to find and to praise God properly, although this effort has not resulted in the

¹⁹ This is a quotation from the consensus of the 1989 World Mission Conference of San Antonio.

526 recognition and acceptance of Jesus Christ” (no. III.5.1). Therefore, a dialogue is promoted
 527 “whose aims are mutual understanding and enrichment, overcoming prejudices, and peaceful
 528 co-existence” (no. III.9.3).

529 In the same way, the Waldensian and Methodist Churches in Italy dealt with ecumenism and
 530 interreligious dialogue together in the document *L’Ecumenismo e il dialogo interreligioso* of
 531 1998, approved by their Synod. Highlighting the necessity of overcoming a history of violent
 532 relationship with other religions, it calls for interreligious dialogue, which should be theocentric
 533 rather than Christocentric. On the other hand, the theory of Greater Christ provides the
 534 possibility to perceive interreligious dialogue as sharing different manifestations of the *logos*
 535 (no. 67).

536 The Christian Reformed Church in the Slovak Republic sent a short text in German
 537 (*Stellungnahme*) which was apparently formulated in response to the request from the CPCE
 538 office to send official documents. The text supports dialogue between different religions in
 539 order to come to shared positions regarding challenges in the social sphere, but strongly
 540 opposes a dialogue that would lead to a loss of identity for the participating church (regarding
 541 their convictions and dogmas) or to the merging of religions.

542 Some churches do not provide documents on their position towards other religions, but express
 543 this position in general documents about the principle of the church. As an example, the United
 544 Protestant Church of France, in its advertising pamphlet *Choisir la confiance* (2013), presents
 545 itself as an open church holding ecumenical and interreligious dialogues (p. 6) and motivates
 546 this with the statement that “churches need the other churches in order to deepen their
 547 convictions and to implement them in front of the challenges of our time” (p. 9, French text).

548

549 3.2.2. Documents on dialogue and mission

550 A few documents seem less interested in interreligious dialogue as such or in the theology of
 551 religions than in the relationship between mission and dialogue. The first of these documents
 552 is *Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses: Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships*. At the
 553 time of its first adoption by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1980, it
 554 was one of the first documents on this topic published by a (now) CPCE church. The document
 555 in its present revised form was adopted in 2008. As the title indicates, neighbourly love and
 556 witnessing are the two key terms in this document; both have to come together in dialogue,
 557 which “offers to both partners the opportunity of enriching their own faith through the wisdom
 558 of the other”. A Christological focus guides the document, and the basic tone is a call to
 559 respectful and honest encounter.

560 In a similar way, the document *Mission and evangelism in a multifaith society*, adopted by the
 561 Church of Scotland in 1993, promotes dialogue as a fulfilment of the commandment to love
 562 and as a commission for each congregation. The appendix contains useful interpretations of
 563 Bible passages relevant to the topic (pp. 573-577).

564 The most detailed document on the subject, drawn up by the theological commission of the
 565 Evangelical Church of Westphalia in 2004, has the title *Mission – Missionsverständnis – Dialog*
 566 *mit anderen Religionen*. Starting with a general description of the religious situation of
 567 Protestant churches in Germany and a survey on mission from the perspective of the New
 568 Testament, it states that mission and evangelism are essential for a Protestant church.

569 Dialogue with other religions is also necessary, however, and mission (in respect to people of
570 other faith) can only have the form of dialogue. The final chapter shows that this is in line with
571 the concept of “*missio Dei*”.

572

573 3.2.3. Documents on specific subjects

574 Some churches provide documents on specific subjects that either have a practical focus or
575 deal with the relationship of state and society towards religious communities. Quite practical is
576 e.g. the short text *Der Fremde in unserer Mitte*, published by the European Methodist Council
577 in 1999 and recommending the Methodist congregations to develop a culture of hospitality,
578 also towards persons of different faith.

579 One of the documents concerned with the question of the role of religions in the public sphere
580 and their relation towards state and civil society was *Carta di Milano* (2013), sent by the
581 Waldensian Church. It was produced by different religious communities in Milan as a
582 preparatory text to a forum of interreligious relations and encloses a few suggestions on the
583 practice of dialogue and encounter, without making this a subject of its own.

584 A special problem concerning the relationship between Christianity and other religions in the
585 public sphere is religious education in public schools. In Germany, where the right to
586 confessional religious education is guaranteed by the constitution, several Protestant churches
587 reflect on this subject. In the North Elbian Lutheran Church the committee on interreligious
588 dialogue in 2009 published a discussion paper *Interreligiöses Lernen in Schulen in Schleswig-*
589 *Holstein*. It highlights the importance of interreligious learning in a multi-religious society and
590 recommends cooperation with other churches and religious communities, both for developing
591 the Protestant religious education and for supporting those religions which cannot at present
592 offer religious education in state schools. The importance of interreligious competence in
593 further education of pastors is highlighted, as well.

594 The booklet *Religionsfreiheit* (2012) of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland makes clear
595 that the question of religious freedom also concerns the relationship towards other religions. It
596 recommends that Christian parishes should support the building of mosques as a
597 consequence of their approval of religious freedom, that needs to be actively and constructively
598 shaped. Besides, it advocates a general dialogical attitude, originating from the belief that all
599 human beings are made in the image of God, and from the commandment of neighbourly love.

600 Most of the practical questions addressed in the booklet originate from the presence of Muslims
601 in European countries, and therefore the Conference of Churches on the Rhine (a regional
602 group of CPCE churches) in 2009 published the statement *Freedom of religion as a human*
603 *right in Christianity and Islam*. The declaration states that – against the background of
604 increasing cultural and religious diversity in Europe – freedom of religion is of central
605 importance as a basis for the churches. This also includes a guarantee from the state of the
606 right to change one’s religion or ideological convictions. Therefore, the understanding of
607 human rights and their foundation should be a major topic in the dialogue between Christianity
608 and Islam.

609 Another special subject concerns the question of joint celebrations and especially common
610 prayers. It was e.g. considered by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria in its aid to
611 multireligious prayer, *Multireligiöses Beten* (1992; 41999). This distinguishes between

612 interreligious prayer which is seen as problematic, and multireligious prayer which can be
 613 supported if each side maintains its integrity (e.g. if Christians continue to pray to the Triune
 614 God). The leaflet is most concerned with relations with Islam; a few other documents on
 615 common prayer explicitly limit themselves to this question and will be considered in 3.2.4.

616 The guide entitled *Ratgeber zu interreligiösen Veranstaltungen*, published in 2006 by the
 617 Central/ Southern Europe of the United Methodist Church, sounds a bit more reluctant
 618 regarding the participation in interreligious ceremonies. It states that they cannot be an end in
 619 themselves, but can only exist as a service to civil society in special occasions. Interreligious
 620 services are not possible, interreligious dialogue needs a clear mandate and has to be
 621 distinguished from joint actions on a local level.

622

623 3.2.4. Documents on the relationship with Islam

624 Regarding the churches' relationship with Islam, different types of documents have to be
 625 distinguished. On the one hand, there are publications aiming at informing members of
 626 Protestant churches about Islam. One of the first examples is the book *Was jeder vom Islam*
 627 *wissen muss*, published by the EKD and the VELKD for the first time in 1990 (based on a
 628 series of leaflets from 1981) and since then distributed in several editions (the latest being the
 629 completely revised 8th edition in 2011). After two chapters with elementary information about
 630 Muslim faith and religious life and about the history of different groups in Islam, including their
 631 relation to modernity, a third chapter deals with the relations between Christianity and Islam.
 632 The image of Abraham and Jesus in the Qur'an is considered, together with contacts in history
 633 and aspects concerning the cohabitation of Christians and Muslims. In the first editions, a
 634 fourth chapter contained a Christian appreciation of Muslim faith, discussing, among other
 635 things, whether Islam can be seen as a way towards salvation.

636 Basic information on Islam is also provided by a series of six articles *Den Islam verstehen*,
 637 published by the United Methodist Church (Central and Southern Europe) between 1998 and
 638 2000. The series deals with different aspects of Muslim faith like the Qur'an, notions of
 639 revelation and salvation, but also the understanding of the state. Some of the articles have
 640 Muslim authors, others present Islam to Christian readers (in a little more academic way than
 641 the German book), but try to give a fair account and to engage with the self-understanding of
 642 Islam. Regarding the notion of revelation, the article appreciates both the connections and the
 643 distinctions between Christian and Muslim understandings of it. The official position of the UMC
 644 can be found in the resolution *Our Muslim Neighbors* (adopted 1992 and reformulated and
 645 readopted by the general conference 2004) that encourages Christian-Muslim dialogue in
 646 order to promote peace and reconciliation. Similar perspectives can be found in the document
 647 *Wesleyan/Methodist Witness in Christian and Islamic cultures*, published in 2004 by the World
 648 Methodist Council.

649 A book similar to *Was jeder vom Islam wissen muss* is *Evangelische Christen und Muslime in*
 650 *Österreich*, published by the Protestant Church in Austria in 2011 (after an adoption by the
 651 general synod). After some basic information about the self-understanding and the history of
 652 Islam and its presence in Austria, aspects concerning the cohabitation of Christians and
 653 Muslims (like the understanding of politics and law, religious freedom, gender questions and
 654 mission) are discussed in a detailed way. The book ends with recommendations for Christian-
 655 Muslim encounters and a presentation of questions central for the Christian-Muslim dialogue

656 (with accounts of the Christian understanding). It is obvious that the book tries to correct
 657 popular Christian misunderstandings and prejudices against Islam; it also points out some
 658 basic differences. Thus it rejects the invocation of Abraham as the progenitor of the
 659 monotheistic religions, since “in Muslim view the God’s way with humankind did not begin with
 660 the election of Abraham, but with the creation of humankind” (ch. 5, p. 101, German text). It is
 661 also stated that there is a difference in the understanding of God, since “only the revelation in
 662 Jesus Christ makes it possible to encompass God in His loving and reconciling nature.”

663 Most of the other documents originate from German churches once more. The EKD
 664 complemented its book with the practical aid to encounters with Muslims *Zusammenleben mit*
 665 *Muslimen in Deutschland. Gestaltung der christlichen Begegnung mit Muslimen* (2000).
 666 Published by the EKD Council, this slimmer volume has a more official character than the book
 667 mentioned above. One of its foci is the recommending fruitful encounters with Muslims on the
 668 basis of mutual respect. The last chapter therefore contains considerations of Muslim children
 669 in Protestant nurseries, on encounter at schools, and on Christian-Muslim marriages. Basic
 670 information also seemed necessary, in order to handle “clichés and negative images” and to
 671 overcome a “sound of mistrust and allegation” (Introduction). On the other hand, it aims to deal
 672 with contradictory positions within the EKD regarding the question whether Christians and
 673 Muslims pray to the same God for instance, or whether there is an irreconcilability between
 674 Christianity and Islam. Therefore chapter II provides a theological orientation and discusses
 675 the relations with Islam in the context of relations with other religions. Discussing the different
 676 notions of God and questions of epistemology, it recommends “*Konvivenz*” and mutual witness
 677 in authenticity.

678 Six years later, the EKD published another document on the same subject: *Klarheit und gute*
 679 *Nachbarschaft. Christen und Muslime in Deutschland* (2006). Its preface refers to new
 680 developments in German society, but also to a changed image of Islam in the West after 9/11.
 681 Its focus lies therefore on the political thought of Islam, on Muslim organizations, and on the
 682 role of Islam in society. The introducing theological chapter is quite short and does not raise
 683 new aspects compared to the document of 2000; nor does the final chapter on the goals and
 684 subjects of the interreligious dialogue. Nevertheless, the document met with harsh criticism
 685 (even from representatives of EKD churches) for its strategy of demarcation.

686 *Integrity and Respect. Islam Memorandum* is the title of a statement issued by the Protestant
 687 Church in the Netherlands in 2011. It describes the relationship between Christianity and Islam
 688 as mainly antagonistic, historically as well as theologically. In a rough sketch, it contrasts
 689 Christian and Muslim teachings. On the relational level, it calls for respect for Muslims, which
 690 is spelled out in four kinds of activities: 1) love and assistance, 2) witness, 3) prayer, 4)
 691 cooperation on a social level.

692 Some EKD churches, indeed, before and after the 2006 statement, went further in
 693 constructively relating to Islam and recommending an open dialogue. Even if we take into
 694 account that the documents of the Protestant regional churches (“Landeskirchen”) again aim
 695 at the parishes and want to provide material for encounters on the local level, a more dialogical
 696 tone can be observed. One of the oldest of these documents, *Erste Schritte wagen. Eine*
 697 *Handreichung für die Begegnung von Kirchengemeinden mit ihren muslimischen Nachbarn*
 698 (first edition 2000, 3rd edition 2009), published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria,
 699 advocates a dialogue based “not on a feeling of superiority or arrogance, but full of respect for
 700 difference and religious earnestness” (p. 7, German text). The main content of the booklet is

701 thus information about Islam and about examples of encounter projects in Bavaria. The more
 702 practically oriented brochures *Erste Schritte konkret. Gelungene Beispiele aus dem Arbeitsfeld*
 703 *des christlich-islamischen Dialogs ...* and *Begegnungen von Kirchengemeinden mit Muslimen,*
 704 *islamischen Gruppierungen und Moscheevereinen* (both 2005) supplement this material. The
 705 latter also includes theological reflections, relating to the obligation of Christians to be open-
 706 minded in relation to other religions. The latest publication from this church, *Ein überzeugtes*
 707 *„Ja“*. *Praxishilfen für christlich-muslimische Trauungen* (2012), gives practical advice regarding
 708 pastoral and liturgical aspects of Christian-Muslim marriages.

709 In a similar way, the Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck in its brochure
 710 *Ermutigung und Befähigung zur Begegnung von Christen und Muslimen* (2005) tried to enable
 711 the parish councils to lead fruitful encounters with Muslim individuals and groups. Therefore, it
 712 informs about Islam (in general and in Germany) and summarizes the well-known Christian
 713 positions regarding dialogue with other religions. The focus lies on fields of contact between
 714 Christians and Muslims, including mixed marriages and multireligious prayer (which is
 715 recommended, in contrast to interreligious prayer). In 2014, it was supplemented by the
 716 brochure *Seelsorge und kirchliche Begleitung christlich-muslimischer Paare*, giving basic
 717 information about the legal questions as well as the different understandings of marriage
 718 among Muslims and Protestants, and containing prayers and other texts for wedding
 719 celebrations.

720 Encouraged by the *Charta Oecumenica* no. 11, several churches underlined their commitment
 721 to dialogue with Islam. The synod of the North Elbian Lutheran Church (in 2012 merged into
 722 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany) in 2006 adopted the declaration *In*
 723 *guter Nachbarschaft*. It requests the congregations “to make contact with the mosque
 724 communities in their neighbourhood, or if this is already the case, to intensify the existing
 725 relations” and thus “to promote the living together of people of different cultures and religions
 726 in social justice and under the protection of the valid rule of law” (pp. 90-91, German text). The
 727 synod documentation²⁰ contains the papers given at synod and at a preparatory study day that
 728 motivate the dialogical attitude.

729 A fruit of the commitment to promote dialogue was the brochure *Gute Nachbarschaft leben.*
 730 *Informationen und Beispiele zur Förderung des christlich-islamischen Dialogs in der*
 731 *Nordkirche*, in 2013 published by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany. Like
 732 the documents from Hesse Electorate and Bavaria, it provides basic information about Islam
 733 and argues in favour of dialogue. The chapter on theology is quite short, and highlights the
 734 positive valuation of Jesus in the Qur’an.

735 Even before the North Elbian Lutheran Church, the synod of the Evangelical Church in Baden
 736 had released its commitment towards dialogue and cooperation in the short document
 737 *Einander mit Wertschätzung begegnen. Zum Zusammenleben von Christen und Muslimen in*
 738 *Baden* in 2005. This example was followed by a very similar text, *Miteinander leben lernen.*
 739 *Evangelische Christen und Muslime in Württemberg* by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in
 740 Württemberg (2006).

²⁰ Hans-Christoph Goßmann (ed.), *In guter Nachbarschaft*. Dokumentation der Synode der Nordelbischen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche zum Thema „Christlich-islamischer Dialog“ im Februar 2006, Reformatorischer Verlag, Hamburg 2006.

741 A few documents are not concerned with the relationship towards Islam in general, but with
 742 specific aspects of this relation. Already in 1997, the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland
 743 published a document on joint prayer: *Christen und Muslime nebeneinander vor dem einen*
 744 *Gott. Zur Frage gemeinsamen Betens*. It argues that Muslims and Christians do not pray to
 745 different Gods, since there is only one God, also for Christians, whose acting can be seen in
 746 all religions. But since the different forms and understandings of prayer cannot be unified, only
 747 joint *du'a* (individual prayer) is possible, not joint *salat* (ritual prayer).

748 After a document clarifying the relation between mission and dialogue in regard to Islam and
 749 arguing for a dialogue that goes along with witness (*Mission und Dialog in der Begegnung mit*
 750 *Muslimen*, 2002), the document *Abraham und der Glaube an den einen Gott* takes up the
 751 subject of the prayer to the one God, prompted by criticism of the document from 1997, among
 752 others by the EKD. In a detailed argumentation, it discusses the nature of Christian Trinitarian
 753 theology, highlighting the parallels between Christianity and Islam. The significance of
 754 Abraham as a bond between the two religions is also defended against criticism. The latest
 755 document of this church *Weggemeinschaft und Zeugnis im Dialog mit Muslimen* (2015)
 756 combines the theological reflections on the relation of dialogue and mission with encouraging
 757 the parishes to intensify cooperation and encounter and to realize a “*Weggemeinschaft*”
 758 (sharing part in their journeys) with Muslims.

759 Besides the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria and the Evangelical Church of Hesse
 760 Electorate-Waldeck (see above), two Swiss cantonal churches (Bern and Vaud) have also
 761 published material regarding Christian-Muslim marriages. Both documents include preliminary
 762 reflections about different aspects of these marriages, although they concentrate on liturgical
 763 material.

764 The document *Quel accueil pour les couples protestants–musulmans dans nos Églises*
 765 published by the Fédération protestante de France (including not only the French CPCE
 766 churches) is aimed at pastors and wants them to encourage church members planning a
 767 marriage with a Muslim, and also to provide useful information for preparatory conversations
 768 with the couples and liturgical material.

769 The most detailed text of this kind is the booklet *Lobet und preiset ihr Völker! Religiöse Feiern*
 770 *mit Menschen muslimischen Glaubens*, published by the Protestant Church in Hesse and
 771 Nassau in 2011. Besides marriage ceremonies, Christian-Muslim cooperation in other services
 772 is also considered. Two articles specifically reflect on the question whether Muslims and
 773 Christians pray to the same God (arguing in a similar way as the documents from the
 774 Rhineland). An addition is given in the brochure *Wenn Christen und Muslime in der Schule*
 775 *beten* (2014) about Christian-Muslim prayers and celebrations in schools.

776 All these documents provide an overview of the ongoing discussions in the European
 777 Protestant churches on the matter of religious diversity and interreligious relations. It
 778 demonstrates the importance of the topic for the churches and at the same time displays the
 779 diversity of the priorities and perspectives.

780

781 **4. The Bible and Protestant theology in the face of religious plurality**

782

783 In the face of religious plurality many churches and Christians ask how Protestant theology
 784 can contribute to a constructive understanding of religious diversity. Which arguments,
 785 approaches, and resources of Protestant theology emphasise openness to other religions and
 786 people of other faith. The following theological reflections are rooted in the Gospel, i.e. in the
 787 revelation of God's radical grace in Jesus Christ, which is expressed in the doctrine of
 788 justification by grace alone. The first part (4.1.) presents this reflection from a systematic
 789 perspective, following a Trinitarian scheme. The second part (4.2.) discusses the meaning of
 790 "truth" in the understanding of Christian faith since constructive accounts of religious diversity
 791 are sometimes accused of relativizing the truth-claims of Christian faith. The third part (4.3.)
 792 gives a biblical foundation for openness to other religions. "Radical grace" is understood as an
 793 act of God which creates freedom and confidence to move towards the religious other and
 794 interact with him or her.

795 It may be surprising to start with focusing on a doctrinal topic, then deal with a seemingly
 796 philosophical question and in the end refer to the biblical testimony. The reason for that
 797 arrangement of the argumentation is the hermeneutical insight that one always reads the Bible
 798 with a certain hermeneutical key. For the churches of the CPCE, "the unique mediation of
 799 Jesus Christ in salvation is the heart of the Scriptures and [...] the message of justification as
 800 the message of God's free grace is the measure of all the Church's preaching", and thus their
 801 common key to Scripture.²¹ Therefore the following reflections begin with spelling out the
 802 understanding of God's relation to the world in terms of God's "radical grace" and then use it
 803 as a hermeneutical key for listening to the testimony of the Holy Scripture.

804

805 4.1. Radical grace

806 God's "righteousness is like the highest mountains" and God's "justice like the great deep"
 807 (Psalm 36:6). The biblical terms "righteousness", "justice", "kindness", "mercy", "favour", which
 808 unfold the meaning of "grace", indicate that God relates in a benevolent way to God's
 809 creatures. Undeserved and unconditional grace is the core issue of Protestant faith, as of
 810 Christian faith in general. Grace does not only mean the *will* of God to be benevolent, but the
 811 *act* of God which realizes that will. It does not only indicate an attribute of God, but expresses
 812 the divine essence.

813 Biblical testimonies show that God on the one hand performs gracious acts in interaction with
 814 humans, but on the other hand is not dependent on their behaviour. God acts freely. Grace is
 815 a *creative* act, which has no precondition on the side of creation (Romans 11:6). Its only root
 816 (*radix*) is the gracious being of God. Therefore it is *radical*.

817 Grace needs to be radical in order to overcome the radical alienation of humans from God.
 818 The broken relationship between God and the creatures can only be healed by acts of
 819 unconditional divine grace. Thus grace means the power of salvation, which again and again
 820 re-establishes the relation to God, breaks open what Luther called 'the heart bent in on itself',
 821 frees from the burden of guilt and gives a new orientation in life. "It is well for the heart to be
 822 strengthened by grace" (Hebrews 13:9).

²¹ Cf. Leuenberg Agreement 12; further reflections on hermeneutics can be found in the CPCE document *Scripture – Confession – Church* (Leuenberg documents 14). Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Leipzig 2013, especially pp. 63f.

823 From the insight that God's grace is radical – rooted in God alone – follows that it is *universal*
 824 (Ps 33:5; 119:64). “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all” (Titus 2:11).
 825 God loved the entire world (John 3:16), and so wants all human beings to be saved (1 Timothy
 826 2:4) and not a single one to perish (2 Peter 3:9). Christ “is the atoning sacrifice for our sins,
 827 and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). The commitment to
 828 the universality of God's radical grace urges to not confine God's salvific presence to the
 829 borders of the Christian religion. This presence was at work before religion appeared in history,
 830 and it is at work beyond the sphere of its influence. It trespasses not only ethnic, social, and
 831 cultural confines, but also religious ones.

832 Theological reflections on the relation between Christian faith and non-Christian religions need
 833 to be founded in the core of Christian faith: the faith in God's radical grace. In the doctrine of
 834 Trinity (which cannot be fully unfolded here), it is confessed in a threefold way – as the creative,
 835 salvific and inspiring activity of God. Each of those three modes of gracious activity is important
 836 for understanding theologically the plurality of religions.

837

838 4.1.1. The radical grace of God's creative activity.

839 “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16).
 840 God is not a self-sufficient being, resting quiescently in Godself, but a relational centre of
 841 activity. God's very being leads God to call into being a reality different from God's own and
 842 accompanies it through history.

843 God's grace realized itself again in the election of God's people, and in the covenant
 844 established with them. Divine election, however, does not mean that there is no grace of God
 845 outside the chosen people. On the contrary, Israel discovered that God also bestows
 846 benevolence on other peoples. The God who led Israel out of Egypt also guided other nations
 847 (Amos 9:7). According to Isaiah 19:24-25, the Lord Almighty says, “Blessed be Egypt my
 848 people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage.” In Isaiah 45:1, the
 849 Babylonian king Cyrus, whose hand God has taken hold of to subdue nations before him, is
 850 honoured by being anointed.

851 The elect people is rendered responsible for manifesting the radical grace of God in face of
 852 other peoples, for spreading this message, and for acting in such a way as to represent that
 853 grace. It is also called to be a 'medium', through which all nations on earth will be blessed (Gen
 854 12:3).

855 God is not a tribal God, but is the creator and sustainer of the whole cosmos. Each human
 856 being is created in God's image, regardless of their religious affiliation. In Psalm 8, God is
 857 praised for having “made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and
 858 honour”.

859 As a consequence, Christian faith has reason to expect the radical grace of God's creative
 860 activity to be at work in the realm of non-Christian religions, and even making use of their
 861 intellectual, practical, ethical, and ritual resources. Christian core beliefs teach to honour non-
 862 Christians as fellow-creatures, made in the image of God, who deserve unconditional love and
 863 respect.

864

865 4.1.2. The radical grace of God's salvific activity

866 The Son “is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being” (Hebrews
867 1:3). The fact that God represented this being in a human person, the incarnation of God’s
868 eternal word, was a further and even deeper realization of radical grace. From Jesus Christ,
869 that grace radiated to the disciples who were in his immediate presence, to those whom he
870 met when he was on the way through Galilee and to Jerusalem, and to those who later heard
871 of his message and of the gospel of his death and resurrection and were inspired by his spiritual
872 presence. Luther once called Jesus Christ the “mirror of the fatherly heart”. In him, “the true
873 light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” (John 1:9).

874 On the other hand, Jesus distinguished himself from God (Mark 10:18 and 13:32; Matthew
875 20:23), and directed the attention away from his own person to the dawning reign of God. In
876 granting communion with God to those who were socially marginalized, who did not belong to
877 ‘his’ ethnic and religious group, and who thus were despised by their fellow humans, he
878 mediated *God's* radical grace. In being totally open for God, he let God act through him without
879 resistance due to human sinfulness. According to the Gospel of John, he is not seeking his
880 “own glory; there is one who seeks it and he is the judge” (John 8:50).

881 He did not claim divine honour but “humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death
882 – even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). In exalting him, and taking him into his community,
883 God proved to be a God of life, who has abolished all bondage keeping humans away from
884 God: sin, law and death. Not only the incarnated Word, but the eternal Word of God, strives
885 for the salvation of the creatures. God's radical grace is salvific grace.

886 The Reformed tradition, in particular, has highlighted that God’s eternal Word, while living in
887 all its fullness in Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:9), reaches beyond that incarnation. In the
888 Heidelberg Catechism we read, “for since divinity is incomprehensible and everywhere
889 present, it must follow that the divinity is indeed beyond the bounds of the humanity which it
890 has assumed, and is none the less ever in that humanity as well, and remains personally united
891 to it” (question 48).

892 If the grace incarnated in Jesus is radical because it is rooted solely in God, and in being
893 universal and unconditioned by human works and beliefs, then we need to think that it extends
894 beyond the 'visible' community of Christian faith. God's radical and universal grace, as
895 represented and mediated by and through Jesus Christ, is not confined to the religion which
896 bears his name, but reaches beyond the media of the Christian religion. Christians can expect
897 that the all-embracing, benevolent spiritual presence of God represents itself salvifically
898 beyond that religion.

899 Christians can discover “shapes of grace” (Tillich) in other religions in the light of their faith in
900 Christ, by searching for what is Christ-like. Christ is the criterion for the discernment of spirits
901 – not so much by his name but more through the will of God as represented in his person, in
902 his preaching, and acting (Matthew 7:21). Making use of that criterion might lead Christians to
903 discover also the authentic love of God and of one’s neighbour, struggle for justice and
904 liberation in the name of God, caring and healing communities, and so on in non-Christian
905 religions – sometimes even more than in their own religion. God's eternal Word may speak in
906 languages 'foreign' to Christians. It can thereby intensify faith in Christ as the incarnation of
907 that eternal Word.

908

909 4.1.3. The radical grace of God's inspiring activity

910 God's creative and salvific grace, as represented in, and mediated through, Jesus Christ, "is
911 not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). In the power of God's spirit, he comes near; opens
912 hearts; creates faith, love, and hope; promotes understanding, reconciliation, and forgiveness;
913 leads into communion; renews relationships; inspires our orientation of life; widens the
914 horizons of our consciousness. God's Spirit can be, and certainly is, at work where and when
915 it wills (John 3:8). The spiritual omnipresence encompasses and pervades the whole cosmos:
916 nature and history, including the history of religions.

917 This omnipresence is concentrated in the church – understood as a spiritual movement, as a
918 dynamic field of force of God's Spirit in history which empowers, gathers, edifies and sends
919 men and women to be witnesses of God's radical grace in the world. It is, however, not
920 restricted to the church as a religious institution.

921 Christians thus can assume that God's spiritual power is at work in other religious communities.
922 Traces of its activity can be seen wherever love grows, where compassion and solidarity come
923 to the fore, where humans transcend their selfishness. God's spirit is the power of life; it creates
924 and heals life. It empowers life and drives back everything which constrains or destroys life. It
925 is also the power of *new* life which is not threatened by death. Wherever life is brought forth
926 and nurtured, redeemed from slavery and led to its fulfilment in God as the source of life, such
927 fruits can be attributed to the spirit of God.

928 Being creative, salvific, and inspiring, the three-dimensional radical grace of God is universal.
929 It reaches beyond the history of Christianity, beyond the church, and beyond the explicit
930 proclamation of the Gospel, into the entire cosmos. It affects all human beings. What is
931 required therefore is a respectful and attentive communication with adherents of other
932 religions, as well as a theological respect for the expressions or practices of these religions.
933 "Shapes of grace" could be embedded in them.

934 That is not to say that religions (including Christianity) as such, and in general, are paths to
935 salvation. Religions also mirror human sinfulness. The spirit of God often works not *in*, but
936 *against*, religious expressions and practices. Paul rightly asks for discrimination as concerns
937 the spirit, and gives us hints as to how to discover "fruits of the spirit" (Galatians 5:16-26). Many
938 religious ideas and practices – even within the Christian religion – need scrutiny. They have to
939 be seen in the light of Jesus Christ, which also sheds a *critical* light on them. Christ is the
940 criterion.

941 Assuming that there are "shapes of grace" in the non-Christian religions does not mean
942 relativizing the divine truth revealed in Jesus Christ. On the contrary, it expresses the insight
943 that this truth *is* the radical and universal nature of God's grace. For Protestant Christians the
944 appropriate response to the radical gracious God is faith. Accordingly, they do not regard it as
945 a usurpation of other religions to talk about "shades of grace" but as an expression of faith in
946 the limitless presence of God.

947

948 4.2. Truth in Christian faith

949 Christians believe in the radical grace of God, which the triune God lives out in creative, salvific,
950 and inspiring activity. In Jesus Christ, God has represented and is continuously representing
951 the radical grace which is God's very essence in a human person (cf. Hebrews 1:3). Therefore

952 Christians believe that in Jesus Christ the truth about God is revealed, not only in the sense of
 953 a prophetic information, but, indeed, in such a way that the Gospel of John can call Jesus
 954 Christ himself the truth. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father
 955 except through me" (John 14:6). This verse expresses an intimate relationship between the
 956 way, the truth, and the life. The truth of which the Bible witnesses realizes itself in life, it comes
 957 true and proves to be true and valid as it proves to be trustworthy. The Biblical understanding
 958 of truth entails an embedded normativity. It is embedded in the story of God's faithfulness to
 959 God's people, thus it is fundamentally experiential, relational and personal, without being
 960 subjective or individualistic.

961

962 4.2.1. Living in the truth of God's radical grace

963 The question of truth is addressed in the gospels when, during the trial of Jesus, Pontius Pilate
 964 asks "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Jesus has just stated that "everyone who belongs to the
 965 truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37). This brings out a close relation between truth and
 966 belonging, intellectual understanding and practical orientation. Living in the truth means living
 967 in relation to God. According to the New Testament, God's revelation in Jesus Christ
 968 communicates that God is radically gracious. This especially is made clear in manifold
 969 narratives.

970 The implications of this understanding of God is already discussed in the New Testament,
 971 culminating in the disputes of the Apostle Paul with the Apostle Peter, when the former is
 972 referring to the truth of the Gospel in order to interpret the whole story of Jesus Christ in the
 973 light of God's radical grace (cf. Galatians 2). A human being lives in the truth, when they orient
 974 their life fully in the horizon of the radically gracious God. Truth in this sense is a practical
 975 category; it is a lived-out truth, which differentiates the life of a human being between his or
 976 her old and new life. This new life is a life in the truth.

977

978 4.2.2. Truth as existential and relational category

979 Christian theology sometimes applied a theoretical framework of truth that assumed we could
 980 grasp the 'reality' of God like we can grasp the empirical reality of the spatio-temporal world
 981 around us. Yet, what faith is about is not primarily knowledge about supernatural facts that can
 982 be formulated as objective propositional statements. Faith is about trust in God mediated
 983 through Jesus Christ, which gives our lives an orientation and inspiration through God's Spirit.
 984 The truth of faith is a truth of life. This has implications about the reality we presuppose and
 985 experience in faith and trusting in God, which can, and must, be formulated in the form of
 986 propositional statements.

987 Of course, the truth of Christian faith is primarily an existential and experiential, personal and
 988 relational truth. The Hebrew word which is translated as "truth" is "*emet*". It means reliability,
 989 trustworthiness, credibility, steadiness, fidelity. It indicates a quality of relationship. Truth in that
 990 understanding cannot be claimed as an ideological position but needs to be performed (John
 991 3:21). It is not theoretical, but practical in nature.

992 At the same time, reliability, trustworthiness, credibility, and all the qualities of relationships are
 993 only possible if there is someone to trust and rely on. The theoretical framework of the truth
 994 question in Christian theology was misleading, because in the end it treated God like a definite

995 spatio-temporal object. It is similarly misleading if the idea of a correspondence of truth is given
 996 up with the critique of the theoretical model. Understanding truth as a practical concept, in the
 997 tradition of the biblical concept of “*emet*”, also implies a correspondence of the tenets of faith
 998 with the one to whom faith relates.

999 In a practical, personal understanding of truth, in the last instance, Godself and God’s Word
 1000 are the truth. Religious truth-claims are true only insofar as they depict the truth of God. God
 1001 proves this truth in realizing it. There is a close connection between “truth”, the “way” of
 1002 practicing the truth, and “life” which the divine truth intends to promote. In John 14:6 that
 1003 connection is clearly expressed. 'Being in the truth' of God means being on the way to true life,
 1004 which is the way Christ has prepared.

1005

1006 4.2.3. Living in the truth provides space for openness

1007 This biblical understanding of truth has enormous implications for the encounter with adherents
 1008 of other religions. The truth of the Christian faith has nothing to do with religious imperialism.
 1009 It has nothing to do with a sense of superiority which denies the truth of other religious
 1010 certainties. As embedded normativity it exists in, and with, the persons who live in it and who
 1011 connect with God in a living relationship.

1012 If religious assertions are understood in this sense as being personal and existential witnesses
 1013 to the truth, they will enable us to give space alongside them for other expressions of truth;
 1014 because truth about faith, love and hope cannot claim to be *the* absolute truth. Distinguishing
 1015 between the truth of God and the truth of religious assertions is an important condition for
 1016 interreligious (as well as for ecumenical) dialogue. Assuming that God's truth is more
 1017 comprehensive than all the religious truths certainly does not need to reduce the confidence
 1018 of the believer in the truth of God.

1019 Interreligious openness grows from human curiosity, interest in knowledge and interest in
 1020 communication with our fellow human beings. It can be lived out in a relaxed way on the basis
 1021 of our own religious certainty. Interreligious dialogue can be particularly fruitful when
 1022 participants are well informed about their own religion and are confident in the foundations of
 1023 their own certainty of the truth. It may well be important to acknowledge that religious truth
 1024 needs to be inspired by the truth of God, “who lives in unapproachable light” (1 Timothy 1:16).
 1025 Only a person who is open for being addressed by God’s word again and again, can really
 1026 understand other persons who are reaching out to encounter God in other ways of
 1027 understanding and devotion. So strengthening our knowledge about our own faith can be an
 1028 important asset that enables openness to adherents of other faiths. Such openness involves
 1029 the possibility that the understandings, doctrines and practices we bring to the encounter will
 1030 be seriously questioned, and could indeed be changed and extended. The tradition held by
 1031 others may come to appear in a new light, but so may our own tradition. Christians can even
 1032 expect that the radical gracious God expresses Godself through the manifestations of non-
 1033 Christian religions, so that those manifestations can become sources of theological inspiration
 1034 and transformation. This experience can be challenging, and indeed perturbing. But it can also
 1035 give the horizons of our own faith, and our reflections on it, a breadth and depth they did not
 1036 have before.

1037

1038 4.3. A closer look at biblical texts regarding religious plurality

1039 How can an understanding of the truth of faith, which is open to communication with other
 1040 religions, and interested in it, be compatible with exclusive claims found in the New Testament?
 1041 Acts 4:12 says “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven
 1042 given among mortals by which we must be saved.” Another prominent example is the claim of
 1043 Jesus Christ “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except
 1044 through me” (John 14:6).

1045 These claims, and others like them in the Bible, seem to challenge the openness to
 1046 interreligious dialogue and its interest, as well as the attitude of accepting and respecting other
 1047 religions, other religious practices, and their followers. In the interpretation of biblical texts
 1048 concerning the relation of Christians to people of other faiths, we have to consider the historical
 1049 context and probably the conflicts expressed in the respective statements. In the past, there
 1050 has sometimes been a misuse of some biblical texts because they were taken as a timeless
 1051 and everlasting truth, and not considered expressions of specific historical constellations and
 1052 conflicts. A well-known example of this is the wrongful use of the anti-Judaic statements found
 1053 in the New Testament – like Matthew 27:25 (“Then the people as a whole answered, ‘His blood
 1054 be on us and on our children!’”), John 8:44 (“You are from your father the devil”) or
 1055 1Thessalonians 2:15 (“who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out; they
 1056 displease God and oppose everyone”) – to justify of a general hostility of Christians to Jews.

1057 There are more examples of misuse of Biblical texts for the justification of doctrines and
 1058 practices, to which originally these texts did not refer. For instance, the biblical texts which
 1059 claim Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation, have been used to oppose other religions,
 1060 even those which did not exist in biblical times – like Islam – and which the biblical authors
 1061 knew nothing about (such as the Eastern Asian religions).

1062

1063 4.3.1. Old Testament

1064 The Old Testament presupposes and, in most of its parts, states that there are other gods
 1065 beside Yahweh. It acknowledges that different people have different gods. In the process of
 1066 its formation, the Jewish people learned to understand their various gods (like the gods of the
 1067 Fathers) as being in fact the same God, who revealed himself as Yahweh (see e.g. Exodus
 1068 6:2; Exodus 3:13-15). This God is nevertheless different from the various gods of the other
 1069 people. This is expressed in God’s claim of exclusivity in the first of the Ten Commandments,
 1070 “Then God spoke all these words, ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of
 1071 Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me’” (Exodus 20:1-3,
 1072 see Deuteronomy 5:7). In first instance, the emphasis of this commandment is not the claim
 1073 that there is only the God of Israel (*monotheism*), but the obligation of the people of Israel to
 1074 obey and serve only this God (*monolatry*). Deuteronomy 4:19-20 can even say that the God of
 1075 Israel has given the celestial deities (like the stars) to other people; as for himself, he has
 1076 chosen the people of Israel. Micah 4:5 states, “For all the peoples walk, each in the name of
 1077 its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever”.

1078 The many assertions in the Old Testament which denounce the cult and rituals of other peoples
 1079 (especially the Canaanite worship of Baal) as idolatry - like 2Kings 17:7ff; 21:1ff; Psalms 31,
 1080 78, 96, 97, 106, 115, 135, and the books of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea -,
 1081 also presuppose that these peoples have their own gods. From the perspective of Yahweh,

1082 these gods are evaluated critically. The often polemical tone of these texts indicates that this
 1083 critique does not really refer to these gods, but rather warns the people itself against an
 1084 exaggerated adaptation and assimilation of the Jewish religion to the Canaanite religion.

1085 In a late development, the theology of the Old Testament questioned the existence of other
 1086 gods. It developed the understanding that the gods of other peoples were only seemingly gods.
 1087 This is a consequence of the monotheism worked out during the Babylonian exile, where
 1088 Yahweh was compared with other gods. In Isaiah, this comparative way of considering the
 1089 plurality of Gods is addressed critically with monotheistic statements (see Isaiah 40:18.25;
 1090 44:6-8; 46:9). To comfort the expatriates, and to raise their hopes, the prophet shows that the
 1091 gods of the other people are not only powerless and silent, but that they do not even exist,
 1092 because they are identical with their temporal images created by human beings. Being different
 1093 from these gods, Yahweh can truly claim, "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is
 1094 no god" (Isaiah 44:6; see as well Isaiah 43:10-11: "Before me no god was formed, nor shall
 1095 there be any after me. I am the Lord, and besides me there is no saviour"; see as well Isaiah
 1096 45:14.18.21-22; Deuteronomy 4:1-40).

1097 This shows a development in the understanding of God in the Old Testament: the claim of an
 1098 exclusive worship of Yahweh in Israel during the course of history is increasingly understood
 1099 as a critical evaluation of the gods of other peoples, considered as pseudo-gods only.
 1100 Consequently, Yahweh was understood to be not only the God of his people, but of all people
 1101 and of the whole universe. The universality of God's activity is emphasized. In Psalm 67, God
 1102 is praised for judging the peoples with equity and guiding the nations upon earth. According to
 1103 Amos 9:7, he has not only brought Israel from Egypt, but has also brought the Philistines from
 1104 Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir – guiding even people who do not worship him. In Isaiah
 1105 19:24f, Isaiah 45:1 and Jeremiah 27:4-11, we find more examples of God guiding and directing
 1106 other people. Malachi 1:11 even states that Yahweh is worshipped in other nations.

1107 In the Old Testament, however, the other nations are not called to worship Yahweh. One can
 1108 find in some parts of the Old Testament the idea of a pilgrimage of all peoples to the Zion, the
 1109 earthly seat of Yahweh. This has to be understood as an acknowledgment of Yahweh as the
 1110 universal God (see Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4). Apart from that, even when Yahweh is
 1111 understood to be the only true God, and to act universally, he still is seen as exclusively
 1112 worshipped by the people of Israel. Although this God also governs all other people, only the
 1113 people of Israel is called to, and obliged to worship this God.

1114 The Old Testament does not grant much interest in general statements on the essence and
 1115 general activity of God. The focus is on the narrative of God's relation to his people. In this
 1116 perspective, God is understood as the creator of the whole universe, who has created every
 1117 single human being in God's own image, and entered into the universal covenant with all
 1118 human beings (see Genesis 1 and 9).

1119

1120 4.3.2. New Testament

1121 We also find in the New Testament some of the motifs known from the Old Testament, as well
 1122 as a critique of the turning away of people from God. This critique is partly directed against the
 1123 fellow Jews, and is partly universal and directed to other – non-Jewish – peoples and even to
 1124 all human beings. This is expressed for example in Romans 1:18-32, where it is claimed that
 1125 God has shown all human beings what can be known about him. Therefore, "they are without

1126 excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him”
 1127 (Romans 1:20-21). In 1 Corinthians 10:20, we find the claim that the Gods the pagans sacrifice
 1128 to are not really gods, but only demons. This continues the perspective of the Old Testament.
 1129 In line with this critique of religions, people converting from their former religion to Christian
 1130 faith is seen as a turn “to God from idols, to serve a living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9).
 1131 Still in line with the later developments in Old Testament, it is stated that “the Gentiles ... do
 1132 not know God” (1 Thessalonians 4:5), although the God known in Israel is universally God.
 1133 These New Testament texts (and others) illustrate the ongoing reflection, known from the Old
 1134 Testament, on the God of Israel increasingly understood universally as the God of all human
 1135 beings. In this line, we find reflections in the New Testament about the consequences of this
 1136 understanding of God, which to the Apostle Paul finally became fully clear and distinct in Jesus
 1137 Christ. The God of Israel, witnessed by Jesus and indeed rendered visible and incarnate in
 1138 Jesus himself, is the radical gracious God of all human beings! In the New Testament writings,
 1139 especially in the letters of Paul, we can observe the authors of the various texts struggling with
 1140 the consequences of this understanding of God. These consequences were not always and
 1141 everywhere the same. They depended on the contexts in which the participants in these
 1142 discourses lived as well, as on the problems they experienced. Therefore this discussion about
 1143 the consequences of the understanding of the universality of God did not finish in the New
 1144 Testament but went on throughout history.

1145 Christians in the first century A.D. had difficult relations with the Jewish communities, in
 1146 Palestine and all over the Roman Empire. Some of these conflicts are documented in the New
 1147 Testament, in very polemic expressions directed against the fellow Jews and the Judaism as
 1148 the sister-religion of Christianity (see above). These polemical phrases are of no use for a
 1149 contemporary general definition of the Christian relation to Judaism. They are of no use either
 1150 in defining the relations between Christianity and other religions, because they are specific to
 1151 the relations of Christian to Jews in the first century, in particular regional settings.

1152 A definition of the relationship between Christianity and other religions needs primarily to be
 1153 found in the teaching and practice of Jesus, as expressed in the testimony of the four gospels.
 1154 Secondly, faith in Jesus Christ needs to be considered through its expression in many voices
 1155 and reflected in all the writings of the New Testament.

1156 Jesus understood himself as sent to the Jews (Matthew 15:24). Consequently, he also sent
 1157 his disciples to the Jews (Matthew 10:5f.) and had no reason to deal with non-Jewish religions
 1158 and cults, and their respective gods. He did not, for example, mention the multireligious
 1159 situation in the Hellenistic town of Sepphoris, which was only eight kilometres away from his
 1160 hometown Nazareth. We do not know of words of judgement from his mouth about other
 1161 people and cults. But he warned his own followers to take his invitation seriously, otherwise
 1162 God would invite others (Matthew 8:11f; Luke 14:16-24); so he was aware at least of the
 1163 possibility of God relating himself to other people.

1164 In his preaching, Jesus praised even non-Jews for being elected by God, like the widow of
 1165 Zarephath to whom the prophet Elijah was sent by God, unlike the many other widows in Israel
 1166 (Luke 4:26), or Naaman from Syria, who was the only one cleansed among the many lepers
 1167 found in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha (Luke 4:27). As an example of faith, he pointed
 1168 to the woman from Canaan (or Syrophenicia), whose daughter he healed (Matthew 15:21-
 1169 28), or to the (Roman) captain from Capernaum, who asked Jesus to help his sick servant
 1170 (Matthew 8:5-13).

1171 The gospel narratives tell that the people of Nineveh followed the preaching and call for
 1172 repentance of the prophet Jonah (Luke 11:30-32), and Jesus let the foreign exorcist do his job
 1173 as long as he was doing it in Jesus' name (Mark 9:38-40). In the parable of the merciful
 1174 Samaritan, Jesus emphasized not the priest, nor the Levite who rushed to worship in
 1175 Jerusalem, but a man from Samaria, whose people were considered to be without Yahweh,
 1176 helping in an altruistic way a man who was robbed (Luke 10:29-37). In John 4, Jesus was
 1177 sitting beside a woman from Samaria next to a fountain; he stayed in her village for two days.

1178 Overall, in the gospels it is obvious that for Jesus neither social nor religious boundaries were
 1179 crucial, when the kingdom of God was at stake. Jesus mainly interacted with Jews. But in
 1180 Samaria or in the Northern boundaries of Galilee, he obviously had contact with people of other
 1181 ethnic groups and other faith, and this was no problem for him. He seems to have encountered
 1182 these people with the same attitude formed by his awareness for the nearness of the kingdom
 1183 of God. This God was for Jesus unconditionally and radically gracious. Here is the centre of
 1184 the message of Jesus Christ: God is striving for the salvation of all human beings. He is like a
 1185 good father to those who are lost, and is pursuing them like a good shepherd looking for each
 1186 one of his sheep (Luke 15). God is extending his invitation to a festive dinner to people far off
 1187 from him, when those first invited do not come (Luke 14:16-23). "Then people will come from
 1188 East and West, from North and South, and will eat in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29). For
 1189 Jesus, the confession of faith seems not to have been crucial. What mattered for him the doing
 1190 and fulfilling of God's will: active solidarity with people who are hungry, sick, foreign, in prison
 1191 (Matthew 25:31ff). "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark
 1192 3:35). According to Acts 10:34-35, Peter learned "that God shows no partiality, but in every
 1193 nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him". In the light of the
 1194 imminent kingdom of God the traditional social, cultural and religious differences become less
 1195 important, and even actually irrelevant. The important thing is to live according to the nearness
 1196 of the kingdom. To acknowledge that the kingdom of God is at hand and to orient one's own
 1197 life accordingly makes the difference, compared to all the people who do not do so. Not all the
 1198 people who Jesus addressed actually followed him. Some could not change their lives
 1199 according the nearness of the kingdom of God, in which God's justice is realized.

1200 The inevitable consequence of the belief in the unconditional love and grace of God is that the
 1201 New Covenant extended beyond the Jewish people. Paul, especially, was arguing for this
 1202 consequence and the book of Acts gives witness to it as well. If there is no religious (or other)
 1203 precondition for God being gracious and loving, then principally nobody can be excluded from
 1204 this grace and love of God on the basis of their religious affiliation. Surely they can reject or
 1205 ignore this grace and love – and thus remain separated from God like through a profound
 1206 abyss. But God's will to save every human being embraces and integrates even such a
 1207 separation and parting, and brings back those who are separated.

1208 According to Paul, God has revealed himself in the works of creation. Therefore, no creature
 1209 can appeal not to have access to this revelation (Romans 1:18-20). God has written the law
 1210 into the hearts of the heathen. In Acts 14:15-17, we learn that God will not be without witness
 1211 among the nations. And in Acts 17:22-31, Paul testifies to the citizens of Athens in his speech
 1212 at the Areopagus that the unknown God, whom they worship, is identical to the God of Israel
 1213 that Jesus addressed as father. This God "is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live
 1214 and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his
 1215 offspring'" (Acts 17:27-28).

1216 What follows from this New Testament testimony as regards the relations of Christians with
 1217 members of other religions? It is not in line with Jesus' example to fear contact and have
 1218 reservations about them. Following the example of Jesus, Christians should show openness
 1219 and interest in communication with people of other faiths. There are no limits or restrictions to
 1220 dialogue with the adherents and representatives of other religions. Such dialogue and
 1221 communication, in the first instance, has its meaning in itself. Consequently, communication
 1222 with people of other faiths – which in fact concerns all aspects of life (economy, culture, family,
 1223 science, politics), is respectful in religious terms: respecting the religious freedom of the partner
 1224 of communication and acknowledging his or her religious autonomy. According the New
 1225 Testament, Christians should view people of other faiths as Jesus viewed them, and in the
 1226 way they are viewed by God. They are, like all Christians, but also like atheists and agnostics,
 1227 objects of God's radical grace. Because of that, and because of the acknowledgement of
 1228 nowadays autonomy of every human being (which includes one's religion), religion and
 1229 religious affiliations may be, and should be, part of the communication of people of different
 1230 faiths as well. Because of God's radical grace, there are no limits, no boundaries, and no
 1231 restrictions to address every human being – whatever kind of religious affiliation he or she has
 1232 – with the entreaty “on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). This is
 1233 because it is the radical gracious God making this appeal to every single human being.
 1234 Christians are God's ambassadors in this entreaty to be reconciled with God.

1235

1236

5. Living together in religiously plural societies

1237 The previous chapter outlines a theological reasoning for the constructive engagement of
 1238 Protestants with people of other faiths. God's radical grace sets us free to interact with others
 1239 with confidence and openness. The term most often used for such interaction is “dialogue”,
 1240 which entails confident speaking and attentive listening to all the partners involved. Further-
 1241 more, “dialogue” refers not only to the actual conversation between different people, but
 1242 characterizes a basic attitude towards the other, a way of life or an ensemble of interaction.
 1243 Many people actively participate in the *dialogue of life* as neighbours, colleagues and friends.
 1244 Instead of simply living side-by-side, different communities and different people intentionally
 1245 and constructively want to live together and to relate to one another. The first of following
 1246 sections introduces basic elements that constitute a dialogical culture (5.1.). The second
 1247 section reflects on the challenges and possibilities of interreligious relations and dialogues
 1248 (5.2.). A survey of possible areas of interreligious collaboration concludes this chapter (5.3.).

1249

1250

5.1. Developing a dialogical culture in living together

1251 Protestant Christians and churches in Europe are actively involved in manifold dialogue
 1252 processes on different levels. The themes and issues they deal with relate to theological and
 1253 spiritual matters as well as ethical and socio-political issues. Spontaneous dialogues emerge
 1254 in everyday life when people of different faiths live together as neighbours, family members,
 1255 colleagues, team-mates and citizens. Meetings between top-level religious leaders are
 1256 arranged to discuss matters relevant to their communities and to society as a whole. For
 1257 congregations and religious communities it has become an important practice to visit one
 1258 another's places of worship, and to meet and greet one another on the occasion of religious
 1259 festivals. In youth work and religious education some playful new methods are introduced in

1260 order to give space for curiosity and engagement with others. Different forms of dialogical
1261 encounter are equally important as they respond to different needs.

1262 Encounter and dialogue help to overcome fear and indifference vis-à-vis other religious
1263 communities or even religion in general. Religion is regarded with suspicion or even hostility
1264 by quite a significant number of people in Europe. At the same time, an increasing number of
1265 people seem to be religiously illiterate, not understanding the nature of religious commitments.
1266 Others who belong to the Christian community are afraid of contact with people of a different
1267 faith, as they do not know how to articulate their own faith and have hardly any experience in
1268 dealing with difference in religious matters. They withdraw into their community because they
1269 perceive it as a safe haven in an increasingly complex world. Such a withdrawal, however,
1270 counteracts the call of the church to engage with the world.

1271 Among those who engage in dialogue there is a great variety of motivations for entering into
1272 dialogue. Some of them are:

- 1273 - trying to understand how people of other faiths describe their faith journey,
- 1274 - looking for reliable information regarding other faiths,
- 1275 - seeking to clarify misunderstandings between people of different faiths,
- 1276 - participating in religious celebrations and rituals together
- 1277 - sharing your faith experiences with others,
- 1278 - responding to theological challenges that are triggered through other faiths,
- 1279 - listening to other faith experiences,
- 1280 - establishing good neighbourly relations with people of other faiths,
- 1281 - jointly advocating for people in need.

1282 For some, dialogue is part of their spiritual journey; for others, dialogue is more of an
1283 intellectual adventure. For others again it is a socio-political necessity. Regardless which
1284 dimension is at the centre of a concrete dialogue process, dialogue is always a movement that
1285 tries to bridge divided or fragmented entities and to foster understanding.

1286 Without qualifying the act and aim of interreligious encounter/dialogue, it is clear that *religious*
1287 difference is anticipated, expected and needed in order to call an activity interreligious
1288 dialogue, interfaith dialogue or transreligious dialogue. It follows that the differences between
1289 the participants with regard to religious identity, belonging, and background are most
1290 commonly indicated to be the most important differences. Cultural, social, ethnic, and gender
1291 differences are often not signified in the same way. This does not mean that they do not exist.
1292 Nor does it imply that these other differences are not crucial in meaning-making processes and
1293 the construction of agencies within the dialogues. These other differences may sometimes
1294 actually play a greater role than religious identity and representation in the dialogues.
1295 Depending on the context and the relevant social, cultural and religious challenges facing the
1296 churches and the dialogues they participate in, it is important to be more sensitive to other
1297 human differences and similarities than to religious affiliation, belief, or background.

1298 One of the characteristics of dialogue is that it somehow presupposes that dialogue partners
 1299 meet on an equal footing: both come to listen, and both come to talk. There is a joint
 1300 commitment to seek understanding. This assumption of equal participation in the concrete
 1301 dialogue process is being made in the midst of many differences and asymmetries. One
 1302 important part of the dialogue process is to come together in order to set the agenda together.
 1303 Another assumption that is vital for interreligious dialogue is the presupposition that faith is a
 1304 living reality, created and sustained by the living God. This implies that dialogue is not just an
 1305 exchange about fixed religious traditions, but about religious teachings and practices that
 1306 relate to contemporary challenges and take shape in the lives of concrete persons.

1307 One of the key insights is that dialogue processes rely on educational processes that empower
 1308 people to participate in dialogue, but at the same time dialogue experiences are themselves
 1309 educational processes that form and transform people. This implies that the practice of
 1310 dialogue is a space for learning and for empowerment of those involved. Dialogue is a form of
 1311 resistance against two extremes: religious ignorance on the one side, and religious absolutism
 1312 on the other side. Those who engage in interreligious dialogue take religious commitments,
 1313 and thereby also difference, seriously. They challenge any relativistic or absolute views in
 1314 matters of faith. Any generalized talk about religiosity or spirituality will be questioned by the
 1315 embodied and concrete forms of faith that people actually adhere to and live out.

1316 Interreligious dialogue is often very closely connected to intercultural dialogue. In recent years
 1317 there has been a growing awareness of the internal cultural diversity within each religious
 1318 community. Sometimes, interreligious dialogue triggers intercultural dialogue and vice versa.
 1319 Both areas of dialogue are of high importance for the future of Europe. Whenever religious
 1320 communities engage in such processes, where people learn to live with difference, this
 1321 contributes in very concrete ways to the wellbeing of the societies. Interreligious dialogue helps
 1322 to overcome segregation between communities, and empowers individuals to find their way in
 1323 life, becoming mature believers and mature citizens.

1324

1325 5.2. Interreligious relations and dialogues – challenges and possibilities

1326 What kind of challenges and possibilities interreligious relationship-building and dialogues
 1327 meet will vary greatly according to the context and the people and groups involved. For some
 1328 churches, their local context is not marked by religious diversity whereas others exist in a
 1329 diverse environment and may even be a religious minority as Protestants or as Christians.
 1330 Sometimes the challenge is to create space and opportunity for people of different religious
 1331 affiliations to actually meet face to face or engage together in shared activities or to establish
 1332 contact at all. But the challenge can also be to create satisfactory premises for the encounter,
 1333 based on equal partnership. Who to engage in a dialogue or encounter, what themes to
 1334 address, where to meet and what activities to perform are important issues to reflect on. The
 1335 answers to these questions shape the form and the content of the encounters.

1336 Organized dialogue first and foremost involving religious leaders may be important to legitimize
 1337 the overall contact and legitimize dialogical encounters for the religious congregations and lay
 1338 people. On the other hand, exclusive meeting points for the leaders can represent limitations
 1339 regarding which voices are present and able to articulate their views in the dialogues, and they
 1340 can become male-dominated - as most religious leaders are men. Because the view on gender
 1341 and gender roles diverge between religious traditions and because these diverging views at

1342 the same time are a source of conflict both between and within religious communities, this
 1343 question requires particular attention. For women clergy in Protestant churches attending
 1344 interreligious dialogues it is important that they be included by their male colleagues and
 1345 leaders so that establishing a 'brotherhood' between religious leaders does not prevent them
 1346 from being fully respected partners in the dialogues. Participants in the dialogues should also
 1347 avoid playing up gender questions into polarized politics of identity. Rather, the religious
 1348 traditions represented can challenge each other in the encounters on the question of gender
 1349 justice and the gap between ideal and practice in questions concerning gender and women's
 1350 rights.

1351 Sometimes interreligious dialogue and *diapaxis* is established as women's groups. These
 1352 groups are often close to the grassroots and everyday life, and may provide an important
 1353 reality-check for the more leader-oriented initiatives. To establish contact between such grass-
 1354 roots dialogues and the more leader-oriented dialogues is also important. The expectance of
 1355 differences in an interreligious dialogue provides opportunities to address controversial issues.
 1356 The aim in a dialogue is not to come to a full unity, religiously speaking, or to agree on every
 1357 matter, but to establish relationships and friendship across differences. This means the space
 1358 of dialogue is sometimes very open for sharing, and for some, more open than the space they
 1359 will find in their own community.

1360 In some contexts, the level of conflict between different religious groups is low. In other places
 1361 tensions may be found, both on a local and national level. Contact, relationship-building and
 1362 dialogue is important in both cases. If there is a local or national conflict related to religion or
 1363 religious practice, it is important to interpret what is going on through several perspectives:
 1364 What is the religious component in the conflict? What are the social, cultural, political
 1365 components? In some cases, it may be important to decrease the focus on religion and
 1366 religious identity and increase the focus on other factors.

1367 Religiously based identity-politics are challenging both for religious communities but also for
 1368 the relationship between the religious and the non-religious population. The churches have a
 1369 task to nurture the congregations' faith in Christ, and at the same time remain open for others.
 1370 This should also be reflected in the preaching and the general work of the churches, reflecting
 1371 on co-existence and respect for other religious (and non-religious) people and groups. In a
 1372 Europe where xenophobia, anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic/anti-Muslim attitudes are present, the
 1373 churches need to provide alternative, respectful and knowledge-based ways to talk about
 1374 groups and people and denounce any use of the Christian message as a platform for othering
 1375 and de-humanizing language and policies.

1376

1377 5.3. Cooperation in practical areas of interaction

1378 One challenge that local communities, national governments and European institutions are
 1379 currently dealing with is the significant number of refugees primarily from the war in Syria, and
 1380 also an increase in refugees and migrants from other conflict areas. Since summer 2014, the
 1381 immediate needs of the refugees and migrants as well as the longer term need for safety and
 1382 belonging have created an increased awareness for the humanitarian crisis. Civil society,
 1383 including many Protestant churches and other faith communities, has offered concrete
 1384 practical assistance and an atmosphere of hospitality and care. Among the Syrian refugees
 1385 are Muslims and Christians, and caring for the refugees in different ways may be one

1386 significant task for Muslim-Christian dialogue groups and other dialogue efforts in the near
 1387 future. Through establishing meeting places and facilitating contact between the refugees and
 1388 the church members as well as the general population, there is a good chance of reducing
 1389 mutual fear, and avoiding possible friction and the acts hostile to refugees that have happened
 1390 in a number of places .

1391 A look back at historical developments within Europe reveals another phenomenon calling for
 1392 attention as it has left traces on the situation of religious communities today. In modern
 1393 European history, deep conflicts between religious communities have led to the secularization
 1394 of the state in many countries, thereby not only liberating the state from religious hegemony,
 1395 but also liberating religious communities from undue state interference. The secular state that
 1396 has emerged from this historical process provides a framework for different religious
 1397 communities to interact with one another and create shared space.

1398 In recent decades, however, an immediate challenge has come to the fore in a number of
 1399 European countries: not only have the state and its institutions been secularized, but also
 1400 society and the public sphere, even leading to the call to regard religion just as a private matter.
 1401 From this perspective, the plurality of religious commitments may be seen as a danger for the
 1402 public sphere, as it is potentially divisive.

1403 In order to counter this call to tame and domesticate religious commitments, religious
 1404 communities have the task to cultivate interreligious relations showing that there are indeed
 1405 sustainable and peaceful ways to deal with difference. Religious vitality is not a threat to the
 1406 public sphere, but a resource for a plural society. If societies do not try to push back religious
 1407 commitments to the private sphere, but acknowledge their public role, then one of the key
 1408 areas needing attention is religious education. Religious education needs to equip believers
 1409 with dialogue skills, nurturing their religious literacy and empowering them to be active agents
 1410 in dialogue. Another issue that has been addressed recently is the question of how religious
 1411 leaders are being trained, and how theological training can be offered at university level for
 1412 different religious communities. In a number of countries, new chairs for Islamic theology or
 1413 confessional Islamic studies have been established in order to respond to that need.

1414 Interreligious councils and platforms are being established to create structures that enable
 1415 regular und sustainable exchange among people of different faiths. There are initiatives, where
 1416 people of different communities come together and work together in order to address a specific
 1417 challenge in society or between religious communities help to deepen understanding of the
 1418 meaning of religious commitment and practice.

1419 Neither the Protestant Christian traditions, nor the other living faith traditions in Europe,
 1420 express themselves as static or streamlined. There are local and contextual variations,
 1421 different organizations and various beliefs, doctrines and practice within the large traditions of
 1422 e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and Christianity themselves. Seek
 1423 knowledge about a dialogue partner or a neighbour's tradition is significant in order to
 1424 understand and engage. Knowledge can be sought through the actual encounters, and in
 1425 studies and literature about the traditions.

1426 Protestant churches in Europe are involved in interreligious dialogues and encounters at many
 1427 levels and in different ways. The form and the levels of the dialogues are, for instance,
 1428 dependent on whether the Protestant Church is a majority or a minority church, as well as on
 1429 the structure and the presence of the other religious communities present in the different

1430 contexts. Most of the dialogues aim at building constructive and good relationships between
 1431 people of different faiths as fellow citizens in a country, or as neighbours in a community.
 1432 Knowledge from each side about the other is important, but building trustful human relations is
 1433 the key to changing negative images and accepting differences. Knowledge, ability and skills
 1434 in articulating one's own faith challenge the Protestant churches in their educational activities.

1435 New challenges for the churches are emerging from the religiously more diverse populations,
 1436 Religiously mixed marriages and multi-religious upbringing of children in many families raise
 1437 the questions of the baptism and blessing of babies. Interreligious wedding ceremonies/
 1438 liturgies are sometimes requested, the same happens with funerals. Interreligious, shared
 1439 prayers are arranged in some places. A number of young people develop double and triple
 1440 religious belongings, one shared with their families, another with friends. Experience shows
 1441 that established, well-functioning interreligious relations and dialogue may be good places to
 1442 reflect over such shared challenges. At the same time, the Protestant churches can find
 1443 different ways to engage with such challenges, from more restrictive to the more open. The
 1444 challenge is not primarily to keep the churches and its members out of all religious
 1445 hybridization, but to embrace people's need to belong to the church and at the same time have
 1446 a partner, a child, or parts of their own life in a different faith community. Religious diversity is
 1447 also a fact in the life of individuals, not only in social and political life. Radical grace combined
 1448 with religious plurality is in Protestant churches' contexts still a field in the making.

1449 Shared narratives of mutual encounters in which trust is built do not only affect the people
 1450 directly involved in the dialogues, but also their colleagues, families, and friends, when these
 1451 narratives are shared further. Ethically and socially shared responsibilities for urgent issues or
 1452 local conflicts are often part of these. The most significant task of, for instance, Muslim-
 1453 Christian dialogue in Europe at the moment is probably to replace fear on both sides with
 1454 mutual trust. But the shared challenges faced by religious communities in Europe are multi-
 1455 faceted, and call for creating spaces of *diapaxis* in many social areas: religious education and
 1456 teaching dialogical attitudes among young people, social care for asylum seekers and
 1457 refugees, care for elderly people, and other activities known in the churches as diaconal work.
 1458 Through acknowledging shared challenges in these areas, *diapaxis* may develop from the
 1459 dialogues and strengthen the sense of community across religious boundaries. To a various
 1460 degree, in different European locations, the future will bring more multi-religious families and
 1461 interfaith marriages, as well as people with an experience of multiple religious belonging for
 1462 various other reasons. Showing that the creation of a shared humanity across religious and
 1463 non-religious affiliations is possible, as a valid witness to *radical grace*, will empower Europe's
 1464 Protestants to emphasize a radical *relationally open* dimension in a multi-religious Europe.

1465

1466

1467
1468
1469

Appendix 1: List of documents submitted by the CPCE member churches

Church	Title of Document	Year	Language	URL
Arnoldshainer Konferenz/ VELKD	Religionen, Religiosität und christlicher Glaube	1991	DE	- (cf. http://www.ekd.de/ezw/Publikationen_2608.php)
Protestant Church in Austria	Evangelische Christen und Muslime in Österreich. Eine Orientierungshilfe	2011	DE	http://www.rpi-virtuell.net/workspace/CFF7AB46-2FDA-475C-A6C7-3F92D3174C51/Web-INTRA/Ev.%20Christen%20u.%20Muslime%20%C3%96sterreich.pdf
Evangelical Church of Baden	Einander mit Wertschätzung begegnen. Zum Zusammenleben von Christen und Muslimen in Baden	2005	DE	http://www2.ekiba.de/download/Votum_EOK_KA_Islam_030505.pdf
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria	Multireligiöses Beten. Handreichung	1992 41999	DE	-
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria	Erste Schritte wagen. Eine Handreichung für die Begegnung von Kirchengemeinden mit ihren muslimischen Nachbarn	2000 32009	DE	-
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria	Erste Schritte konkret. Gelungene Beispiele aus dem Arbeitsfeld des christlich-islamischen Dialogs ...	2005?	DE	http://www.bayern-evangelisch.de/www/download/Broschuere_erste_schritte.pdf
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria	Begegnungen von Kirchengemeinden mit Muslimen, islamischen Gruppierungen und Moscheevereinen	2005	DE	http://www.bayern-evangelisch.de/www/download/Islam_komplett.pdf

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria	Ein überzeugtes "Ja". Praxishilfen für christlich-muslimische Trauungen	2012	DE	http://www.bayern-evangelisch.de/www/img/elkb12_hr_trauung_neu.pdf
Evangelical Church of Berlin – Brandenburg – Silesian Upper Lusatia	Diskussionsbeitrag: Grundlagen für den Dialog	2012/13?	DE	http://www.berliner-missionswerk.de/fileadmin/documents/Grundlagen_des_Dialogs.pdf
Evangelical Church of Berlin – Brandenburg – Silesian Upper Lusatia	Theologische Grundlagen zur Begegnung und zum Dialog mit Menschen anderen Glaubens, mit anderer Religionszugehörigkeit	2012/13?	DE	http://www.berliner-missionswerk.de/fileadmin/documents/Theologische_Grundlagen.pdf
Reformed Churches Bern-Jura-Solothurn	Er hat Liebe und Barmherzigkeit zwischen euch gesetzt – Handreichung für die Trauung von christlich-muslimischen Paaren "Il a mis entre vous de l'affection et de la bonté" – Guide pour le mariage de couples islamo-chrétiens	2007	DE FR	http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/OeME_Migration/OM_Pub_christ-muslim_Trauung.pdf http://www.refbejuso.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/Francais/PDF_divers/mariages_couples_islamo-chretiens.pdf
Conference of the Churches on the Rhine	Freedom of religion as a human right in Christianity and Islam	2009	DE/ FR (summary in EN)	- Press release: http://www.leuenberg.eu/node/1805
EKD	Zusammenleben mit Muslimen in Deutschland. Gestaltung der christlichen	2000	DE	http://www.ekd.de/glauben/44716.html

	Begegnung mit Muslimen			
EKD	Christlicher Glaube und nichtchristliche Religionen	2003	DE	http://www.ekd.de/download/Texte_77.pdf
EKD	Klarheit und gute Nachbarschaft. Christen und Muslime in Deutschland	2006	DE	http://www.ekd.de/download/ekd_texte_86.pdf
EKD	Christlicher Glaube und religiöse Vielfalt in evangelischer Perspektive	2015	DE	http://www.ekd.de/download/christlicher_glaube.pdf
Eglise Protestante Unie de France	Choisir la confiance	2013	FR	http://www.eglise-protestante-unie.fr/Toutes-les-actualites/Choisir-la-confiance2 (pamphlet about the church with short references to its position on interreligious affairs)
Fédération Protestante de France	Quel accueil pour les couples protestants – musulmans dans nos Églises ?	2013	FR	-
(Lutheran) Church of Hungary	Glaubensfreiheit und neue Religionsbewegungen	1997	Hungarian	
Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau	In Vielfalt leben – Gott auf der Spur sein Life in Diversity – On God's Trail	2003	DE EN	http://www.zentrum-oekumene-ekhn.de/fileadmin/content/Materialien/Dokumentationen/04-In-Vielfalt-leben--Gott-auf-der-Spur-sein.pdf http://www.zentrum-oekumene-ekhn.de/fileadmin/content/Materialien/Life_in_diversity_2003.pdf
Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau	Lobet und preiset ihr Völker! Religiöse Feiern mit Menschen muslimischen Glaubens	2011	DE	http://www.zentrum-oekumene-ekhn.de/fileadmin/content/Materialien/Dokumentationen/Broschueren/lobet_und_preiset.pdf
Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau	Wenn Christen und Muslime in der Schule beten	2014	DE	-

Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck	Ermütigung und Befähigung zur Begegnung von Christen und Muslimen	2008	DE	http://www.ekkw.de/media_ekkw/downloads/ekkw_handreichung_christen_muslime.pdf
Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck	Seelsorge und kirchliche Begleitung christlich-muslimischer Paare	2014	DE	http://www.ekkw.de/media_ekkw/downloads/ekkw_140311_texte_seelsorge_begleitung_christlich_muslimischer_paare.pdf
Czechoslovak Hussite Church	Církev československá husitská ve vztahu k ekumeně (The Czechoslovak Hussite Church in Relation to Ecumenism)	2014	Czech EN	http://www.ccsch.cz/snem.php?part=1#part
Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization	Understanding Muslims	2004	EN	http://www.lausanne.org/docs/2004forum/LOP49_I_G20.pdf
UMC Germany	Als Christ mit religiöser Vielfalt leben	2012	DE	-
UMC Central/Southern Europe	Den Islam verstehen (six texts)	1998-2000	EN / DE	http://www.emk-kircheundgesellschaft.ch/de/themen-und-dokumente/a-j/islam.html
UMC Central/Southern Europe	Ratgeber zu interreligiösen Veranstaltungen	2006	DE / FR	-
European Methodist Council	Der Fremde in unserer Mitte	1999	DE	http://www.emk-kircheundgesellschaft.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/kircheundgesellschaft/Themen%20und%20Dokumente/A-J/Asyl-Migration/fremde.pdf
World Methodist Council	Wesleyan/Methodist Witness in Christian and Islamic cultures	2004	EN DE	http://worldmethodistcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Statement-on-Islamic-Culture.pdf

				http://www.emk-kircheundgesellschaft.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/kircheundgesellschaft/Themen%20und%20Dokumente/A-J/Islam/weltrat_zu_islam.pdf
UMC	Our Muslim Neighbors	2004		http://www.emk-kircheundgesellschaft.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/kircheundgesellschaft/Themen%20und%20Dokumente/A-J/Islam/our_muslim_neighbors.pdf
UMC	Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses: Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships	1980-2008	EN DE FR	http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=IwL4KnN1LtH&b=4951419&ct=6480553 http://www.emk-kircheundgesellschaft.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/kircheundgesellschaft/Themen%20und%20Dokumente/K-Z/Religionsdialog/interreligioeserdialog.pdf
Protestant Church in the Netherlands	Integrity and Respect. Islam Memorandum	2011	EN	http://www.pkn.nl/Lists/PKN-Bibliotheek/Integrity-and-Respect-Islammemorandum-20110309.pdf
North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church	In guter Nachbarschaft. Christlich-islamischer Dialog im Bereich der Nordelbischen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche	2006	DE	http://nordelbien.de/download/synode_statements/reader.pdf (several translations incl. EN)
North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church	Interreligiöses Lernen in Schulen in Schleswig-Holstein	2009	DE	-
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Northern Germany	Gute Nachbarschaft leben. Informationen und Beispiele zur Förderung des christlich-islamischen Dialogs in der Nordkirche	2013	DE	http://www.nordkirche-weltweit.de/fileadmin/user_upload/zmoe/media/InterreligioeserDialog/christlich-islamischerDialog/Gute_Nachbarschaft_leben.pdf.pdf

Church of Norway	Guiding Principles For Interreligious Relations	2008	EN	- http://www.kirken.no/english/doc/engelsk/Principles_interreligious_relations_08.pdf
Church of Norway	Guidance for religion encounter	2006	EN	http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=37261 (look for "Veiledning i religionsmøte")
Church of Norway	When believers meet	2007	EN	http://www.kirken.no/english/doc/engelsk/believers_meet_07_08.pdf
Church of Norway (collaborating)	Beate Fagerli et al. (red.): Dialogteologi på norsk. Verbum 2016	2016	NO R	
Evangelical Church in the Rhineland	Abraham und der Glaube an den einen Gott Abraham and Belief in the one God	2009	DE (EN)	http://www.ekir.de/www/downloads/EKiR_Arbeitshilfe_Abraham_2009_deutsch.pdf -
Evangelical Church of the Rhineland	Christen und Muslime nebeneinander vor dem einen Gott. Zur Frage gemeinsamen Betens	1997	DE	-
Evangelical Church of the Rhineland	Mission und Dialog in der Begegnung mit Muslimen	2002	DE	-
Evangelical Church in the Rhineland	Religionsfreiheit gestalten	2012	DE	http://www.ekir.de/www/downloads/ekir2012religionsfreiheit.pdf
Evangelical Church in the Rhineland	Weggemeinschaft und Zeugnis im Dialog mit Muslimen	2015	SE	http://www.ekir.de/www/service/weggemeinschaft-zeugnis-19148.php
Church of Scotland	Mission and evangelism in a multifaith society and a multifaith world	1993	EN	-
Church of Sweden	Sann mot sig själv – öppen mot andra	2011	SW E	http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=825833
Federation of Swiss	Wahrheit in Offenheit	2007	DE	http://www.kirchenbund.ch/sites/default/files/publikationen/pdf/SEK-Position-8.pdf

Protestant Churches	La vérité dans l'ouverture		FR	http://www.kirchenbund.ch/sites/default/files/publikationen/pdf/FEPS-Position-8.pdf
Reformed Church of the Canton Vaud	Préparation et célébration d'une bénédiction de mariage entre un(e) partenaire protestant(e) et un(e) partenaire musulman(e). Recommandations du conseil synodal	2003	FR	-
Waldensian Church	L'Ecumenismo e il dialogo interreligioso	1998	Italian	http://www.chiesavaldese.org/pages/archivi/documenti/doc_ecumenismo.pdf
Waldensian Church	Religioni, dialogo, integrazione	2011	Italian	http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/26/2013_06_18_vademecum_esecutivo_low.pdf
Waldensian Church	Carta di Milano	2013	Italian	http://www.chiesadimilano.it/polopoly_fs/1.71698.1362039776!/menu/standard/file/Carta%20di%20Milano%202013.pdf
Evangelical Church of Westphalia	Mission – Missionsverständnis – Dialog mit anderen Religionen	2004	DE	http://www.evangelisch-in-westfalen.de/fileadmin/ekvw/dokumente/stellungnahmen/mission.pdf
Evangelical Church of Württemberg	Begegnen – Feiern – Beten. Handreichung zur Frage interreligiöser Feiern von Christen und Muslimen	2003	DE	http://www.elkwue.de/fileadmin/mediapool/elkwue/dokumente/begegnen_feiern_beten.pdf
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Württemberg	Miteinander leben lernen. Evangelische Christen und Muslime in Württemberg	2006	DE	http://www.elkwue.de/fileadmin/mediapool/elkwue/dokumente/landessynode/Erklaerung13Landessynode_ChristenundMuslime_2006.pdf
World Council of Churches (WCC)	Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies Leitlinien zum Dialog mit Menschen verschiedener Religionen und Ideologien	1979	EN DE	http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/guidelines-on-dialogue-with-people-of-living-faiths-and-ideologies http://www.oikoumene.org/de/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/guidelines-on-dialogue-with-

	Lignes directrices sur le dialogue avec les religions et idéologies de notre temps		FR	people-of-living-faiths-and-ideologies?set_language=de http://www.oikoumene.org/fr/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/guidelines-on-dialogue-with-people-of-living-faiths-and-ideologies?set_language=fr
WCC	Theological Perspectives on Plurality	1990	EN	http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/baar-statement-theological-perspectives-on-plurality
WCC	Ecumenical considerations for dialogue and relations with people of other religions	2004	EN	http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/ecumenical-considerations-for-dialogue-and-relations-with-people-of-other-religions
WCC	Religious plurality and Christian self-understanding Religiöse Pluralität und Christliches Selbstverständnis Identité chrétienne et pluralité religieuse	2006	EN DE FR	http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding http://www.oikoumene.org/de/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding?set_language=de http://www.oikoumene.org/fr/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding?set_language=fr
WCC	Learning to Explore Love Together Gemeinsam das Verständnis der Liebe erschließen - ein Lernprozess Apprendre ensemble à explorer l'amour	2008	EN DE FR	http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/learning-to-explore-love-together?set_language=en http://www.oikoumene.org/de/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-

				and-respect/learning-to-explore-love-together?set_language=de http://www.oikoumene.org/fr/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/learning-to-explore-love-together?set_language=fr
WCC/ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue/ WEA	<p>Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World</p> <p>Das christliche Zeugnis in einer multireligiösen Welt</p> <p>Le témoignage chrétien dans un monde multireligieux</p>	2011	<p>EN</p> <p>DE</p> <p>FR</p>	http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world http://www.oikoumene.org/de/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world?set_language=de http://www.oikoumene.org/fr/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world?set_language=fr

1470

1471

1472 **Appendix 2: Participants in the study process**

1473

1474 Drafting group

1475

1476 Prof. Dr Reinhold Bernhardt, Basel

1477 Prof. Dr Hans-Peter Großhans, Münster

1478 Prof. Dr Anne Hege Grung, Oslo

1479 Dr Simone Sinn, Geneva

1480 Dr Anne-Laure Zwillling, Strasbourg

1481

1482 For the CPCE secretariat: Prof. Dr Martin Friedrich, Vienna

1483

1484 Participants in the consultation at Arnoldshain, September 2015

1485

1486 Prof. Dr Reinhold Bernhardt (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches)

1487 Revd Susanne Faust-Kallenberg (Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau)

1488 Dr Szilveszter Füsti-Molnár (Reformed Church in Hungary)

1489 Prof. Dr Hans-Peter Großhans (Evangelical Church of Westphalia)

1490 Prof. Dr Anne Hege Grung (Church of Norway)

1491 Revd Detlef Knoche (Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau)

1492 Dr Ireneusz Lukas (Lutheran Church in Poland)

1493 Prof. Dr Wolfgang Reinbold (Lutheran Church of Hanover)

1494 Revd Peter Lööv Roos (Church of Sweden)

1495 Dr Simone Sinn (drafting group)

1496 Prof. Dr Christof Voigt (United Methodist Church)

1497 Dr Anne-Laure Zwillling (drafting group)

1498

1499 For the CPCE secretariat: Prof. Dr Martin Friedrich, Vienna