

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD

Edited by INDUNIL J. KODITHUWAKKU K.

Preface by JÜRGEN MOLTMANN



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MESSAGE FROM THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

Secretary General, World Evangelical Alliance

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran stated at the launch of the document in 2011: “Today represents an historic moment in our shared Christian witness” and my predecessor as Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance, Geoff Tunnicliffe, said: “Today we write history”. Yet the document could have easily shared the fate of many other documents, who ten years later are only known to a small number of experts and did not really change anything. Paper doesn’t blush.

“Christian Witness in a multi-religious World” is well and alive. The document has not only been referred to all over the globe, has not only been translated in many languages, and did not only lead to many symposiums and books, but has been made the reference point by the World Council of Churches in its famous mission statement.

Having kept up to date with the use of the document worldwide, I would judge, that the three bodies are on an equal level in emphasizing the document globally. That is, they all constantly use the document on international, regional, national and local levels on their own motivation without waiting for the others to go ahead first.

The document seems to be living first of all because it is in line with the thinking of each body itself and not first of all because it is an ecumenical document. This is an unusual result of my research, yet proves that the document is not just a result of diplomacy and compromise, but reflects something, that all three bodies signing it see as genuine Christian. Somehow the document hit a mark and tells a story that belongs to the DNA of the Christian faith.

I see four areas of effects of the document:

1. Interfaith relations (interreligious dialogue): This kind of dialogue was accepted by all three bodies alike and is no longer seen in opposition to the mission mindedness of the church, as stated in the first sentence of the document. Since 2011 WEA has become a major actor in international dialogue between major religious leaders. WEA was also represented by its top people at all major conferences around the globe. One stream is to work to-

gether for the common good and a just and peaceful society, the other stream is to discuss matters of truth first-hand together, and not through the media or rumour or misperceptions.

2. Missio Dei: It led missiologists of all camps together and became a major document for mission studies. It made the discussion of "the ethics of mission" on the base of the "missio dei" an integral part of mission theology.

3. Intrafaith (ecumenical) relations: Meetings with the same range of the three world bodies became normal on an international, continental and national level, as never before.

4. Human rights: Interreligious dialogue and mission go hand in hand with human rights thinking and human rights are seen as a joint ecumenical heritage.

Paul calls upon believers in 1 Peter 3:15-17 to answer everyone's questions and to clearly defend one's own "hope," also towards those who wish us evil. However, believers should do this with "gentleness and respect." Christian witness is not an ethics-free space; it requires an ethical foundation which is biblically based, so that we truly do what Christ has assigned us to do. Peter reminds us of honesty, transparency, gentleness, and respect for others. These are not just unpleasant boundaries, but reflect the DNA of the gospel itself and the church of Jesus Christ.