

Bonner Querschnitte

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The University of Oldenburg: Descendants of the Genocide committed against Oriental Christians

(Bonn, 27.11.2014) The Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom, Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher, has recently held a lecture at the University of Oldenburg on the topic of the descendants of the genocide committed against Oriental Christians in 1915. In that lecture he drew parallels to the present. Schirmmacher is also the Deputy Chairman of the Kuratorium of the Central Council of Oriental Christians in Deutschland (Zentralrat der Orientalischen Christen in Deutschland, or ZOCD).

His lecture “As if it happened Yesterday and not 100 Years ago . . . Culture of Remembrance of the Descendants of Genocide committed against Oriental Christians during the phase of Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire” was part of a symposium entitled “Limits of Pluralization? On the potential for conflict associated with the Establishment of Identity and a Culture of Remembrance in Europe since the early Beginnings of the Modern Age.”

According to Schirmmacher, within the framework of the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the new Turkish Republic, there were 2.1 million Armenians, 750,000 Syrian Christians (Assyrian-Aramaic), and 350,000 Orthodox Pontos-Greeks who died. Millions fled to countries all around the Orient (e.g., Russia) or emigrated to Europe, North America, and Australia.

In conclusion, Schirmmacher took stock: “Academic occupation with Christians from the Orient who have emigrated to the West is completely overshadowed by the immigration of Muslims from the same region. Overall, Christians integrate faster and better, cause fewer social problems (e.g., by attending school as required), and do not have extremist wings. For that reason, they are less interesting for the media and the political arena, and academia has simply followed those in ignoring the topic. ‘Christian Oriental Studies,’ which can be found at fewer rather than more universities,



Thomas Schirmmacher in a conversation with Prof. Georges Tamer (greek-orthodox) after his testimonial lecture in the Town Hall



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www.vkwonline.com

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www.gebende-haende.de

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www.hilfe-weltweit.de

Institute for Pro-life and Family Studies
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International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance
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www.thomasschirmmacher.net

Theological Commission of “Hope for Europe” (European Evangelical Alliance)
www.hfe.org

Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/

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at five German universities at present, is currently receding further or even dying out (most recently at Bonn, for instance).”

The symposium was a cooperative project put on by the Federal Institute for Culture and History of Germans in Eastern Europe (Bundesinstitut für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa, or BKGE) and the Department of Early Modern History at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, supported by the Commission for Culture and the Media of the Office of the Chancellor of Germany (Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, or BKM). The symposium was under the direction of Prof. Dr. Beate Störckuhl.

The special characteristic of this symposium was the fact that the participating professors and university lecturers represented a large spectrum of disciplines. The high point of the symposium was a keynote lecture entitled “Remembrance and the Formation of Identity in Islam” by the Islamic scholar Prof. Dr. Georges Tamer (Erlangen) in the ballroom of the Old City Hall in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Federal Institute.



Round table of professors in the Federal Institute

Schirmmacher, whose ancestors are from Danzig and Königsberg, congratulated the Director of the Federal Institute, Prof. Dr. phil. Matthias Weber, for the outstanding academic achievements of the Institute in keeping the memory of a part of German history alive.

Schirmmacher’s congratulations also extended to thanking Prof. Weber for simultaneously using this part of German history, which continues to exert a major influence up to the present day, to promote understanding between

peoples.

Schirmmacher also applauded the topic of the symposium. “The many facets of religious cultures of remembrance throughout history and into the present have been investigated and presented here, and they have been shown to be determinant in the formation of the identity of millions of people in Europe. We need much more research in order to process the enormously differing manner in which religious thought influences people and society.”

Links and Downloads:

- <http://www.bkge.de>
- Symposium: <http://www.bkge.de/Veranstaltungen/Kalender/3717-Tagung-Grenzen-der-Pluralisierung.html>

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- Symposium: Flyer:
http://www.bkge.de/Bildarchiv/Downloads/Folder_Tagungsprogramm-Konflikthaftigkeit_100x210.pdf
- Keynote Lecture: <http://www.bkge.de/Veranstaltungen/Kalender/3728-Erinnerung-und-Identitaetsbildung-im-Islam.html>
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- [Photo 1](#): Thomas Schirmmacher in a conversation with Prof. Georges Tamer (greek-orthodox) after his testimonial lecture in the Town Hall
- [Photo 2](#): Round table of professors in the Federal Institute
- [Photo 3](#): Schirmmacher during his lecture

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