

"Remembering the Past in Reconciliation – Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Europe” : Lecture for the Dublin Council of Churches

Bishop Wolfgang Huber, Chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD): www.ekd.de/vortraege/huber

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I.

Speaking about reconciliation in the Republic of Ireland as a representative of the Evangelical Church in Germany gives me great pleasure. This beautiful island on the Western margin of Europe has been particularly influential for the history of this continent. To this day, we can find traces of the Celtic language in my original home county in Southern Germany, in Baden-Württemberg.

Speaking about reconciliation in view of Ireland's more recent history, however, is at the same time a special challenge. Just a few weeks ago, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement on April 10th. After almost thirty years of violence, in which about 3.600 people died and at least 40.000 people were injured, in which terror and fear were a part of everyday life especially in Northern Ireland, all the conflicting parties involved signed a peace agreement. The parties promised to dedicate themselves to "the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all". There is a long way to go from retaliation to reconciliation.

Not only the history of Ireland, but also the history of our European continent gives us an example for the way from revenge to forgiveness, from retaliation to reconciliation. The European Union, founded more than fifty years ago with the treaty of Rome from 1957, has this background. The founding fathers of the European Union give us good examples for that.

For instance the former French Foreign Minister and co-architect of the European Economic Community, Robert Schuman, a committed Catholic, taught us when dealing with the legacy of the Second World War fifty years ago, that forgiveness is better than retaliation. 'Building peace through economic cooperation' was the pragmatic concept developed by another great European – Jean Monnet, the then director of the French Planning Commissariat. They started with the commodities of coal and steel; in the beginning, there was the European Coal and Steel Community. At the time, no one would have thought that one day, steel and coal would be imported into Europe from other continents. But they wanted to make sure that these important commodities – as well as the new facilities producing nuclear energy – would not be put into the service of an uncontrolled armament. Soon after this achievement, the barriers to the free movement of goods, services and capital were

removed. These measures were so successful that the member states were even willing to transfer core sovereignty to the community, thus preparing the way for a political union. When the division of Europe by the iron curtain was overcome after several decades, Eastern European states could also prepare themselves for membership and achieve it. The European Economic Community became the European Union. The originally six member states have increased to 27.

Many of the most important agents of the union received the strength to believe in the reconciliation of enemy states from their faith. "The contribution which an organised and living Europe can bring to civilisation is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations", it says in the so-called Schuman Plan already in 1950. In this far-sighted political design, France offered the "arch enemy" Germany, which had to capitulate unconditionally in 1945, an equal partnership without discrimination or limitations. These actions broke with the tradition of European peace treaties, which were often a dictate of the victor over the defeated. The Treaty of Rome is a turning point in European history.

This original objective seems to sometimes fall into oblivion in view of the many European regulations and announcements today. Securing the peace through economic cooperation is an excellent concept. But replacing retaliation with forgiveness is a revolutionary idea which rarely prevailed in the history of mankind. Its origin is found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Whenever the question arises whether the Sermon on the Mount can provide a guideline in politics, I am surprised that the history of the European Union is rarely mentioned as a successful example. The Sermon on the Mount can provide a guideline. This is my starting point as we think about how we can face the past in a spirit of reconciliation. And you hopefully can accept that the aspect of reconciliation makes the European project at least for someone from Germany in a specific sense very attractive. It is the reason why we say again and again that the European project should not only be seen as a project of economic cooperation but at the same time as a community of shared values.

This perspective gains even more importance in a situation in which Europe turns to be a intercultural and interreligious entity. In such a situation ethnic and religious conflicts gain additional importance. There are many examples for that not only worldwide but also within Europe itself. What is the role of religion in such a context. In my view this is quite obvious: to stand for non-violence and for reconciliation. We have to speak clearly about forms of religion – either in Islam, Christianity or Judaism – who are denying the principle that all monotheistic religions stand for the equal dignity of every human being and for the principle of non-violence in dealing with social, political or religious conflicts. But to take this principle seriously means to develop a very self-critical evaluation of the history of the respective religions – including Christianity and its adaptation not only to the interests of political, but also its giving religious legitimacy to the use of violence and military force.

II.

This reflection inevitably leads us back to European history which to a great extent is a history of ethnic and religious conflicts, a history of the use of violence and its religious legitimization. What is the meaning of reconciliation with respect to this history?

I do not forget how astonished I was when I first stood before the Genocide Memorial in one of the side chapels of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. There I found the following inscription: "The religious mission of the 21st century is to combat prejudice, to condemn the crime of genocide, and to prevent the destruction of the innocent." Three sculptures in the chapel remind the visitor of the genocide of the Armenian people in the years 1915 to 1923, the Holocaust of the years 1933 to 1945, and the genocide in Bosnia since 1992.

In all three cases, people were killed because they were seen as "inferior." In all three cases, "ethnic" reasons for this inferiority were linked to religious reasons. The mistreated people were Christians in the Armenian case, Jews in the Shoah, and Muslims in the so-called "ethnic cleansings" of Milosevic. Religion was, in these cases—and, all too often, still is – used as an instrument of separation, as a means of self-justification, as a force fuelling hostility and hatred.

Again and again we ask how to deal with the guilt of the past. What could be the answer to the Holocaust? Awareness came very slowly. When the first agreement on "Wiedergutmachung" (reparation) for the Jewish victims of the Shoah was signed, it was clear to everyone—even for those of us who were youngsters in those years—that contributions to the building of the state of Israel, in these days sixty years ago, or compensations to individuals could by no means balance the harm that was done to human beings. There is no compensation for killing. There is no reparation for genocide. In the best case, there are weak signs of repentance or modest contributions to those who suffer under the consequences of their destiny. It would be out of proportion, in fact, to really call these "reparation" or "compensation" or "Wiedergutmachung." I say this despite the fact that these terms were and are used in this context.

It was due to the inconceivable dimensions of the Shoah that the discussion on the responsibilities of the present generations of Germans, with regard to our past, was concentrated, primarily, upon the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The other victims of Nazi mass murder came into perspective only seldom: Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, mentally handicapped people, communists, political prisoners and so forth. The tremendous number of victims of the war in other countries – more than 20 million victims in the former Soviet Union, for instance – was rarely addressed. And the same was true for the group of forced labourers – a topic which we addressed only over the last decade.

Our church confesses to being part of this guilt. To the extent that we know of our involvement, we publicly acknowledge it. We want to underscore that society as a whole, including our church, bears responsibility for the consequences of past guilt.

"Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future"—this is the name of the foundation, which was established for the purpose of working through the problem of forced labour on German soil during the Second World War "Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future" is a good name for such a foundation. It underscores its purpose. In addition to the activities of the foundation, however, we as a church want to turn to the surviving victims and support them with at least a small contribution for the years that lie before them. And, we want to help prevent anything like that system of war

from ever happening again. For that reason, open, public confession of faith should never again be separated from the willingness to become politically involved.

There are, from time to time, people who propose that we close this part of our history. This proposal, of course, is completely misleading. Most of the people who think that such final closure is necessary are those who still fall victim to a concept of collective guilt. They fear that the purpose of remembering would be to cast guilt upon Germans living today, a guilt for which they cannot be held responsible. Indeed, there is no such thing as collective guilt. I am not responsible for some other person's guilt as I am for my own. Young Germans of today, understandably, do not accept being taken as collectively guilty for the crimes of their ancestors. If you look at the years of birth of the present German population, only less than 15 percent of Germans living today could have participated in the crimes of the years from 1933 to 1945, either as perpetrators, willing spectators or bystanders. This is not, however, an excuse.

There is no collective guilt, but there is collective shame. And, even more, there is a collective responsibility for the consequences of historical events, which took place in the name of Germany, on or from German soil, under the German flag. No generation can evade the moral obligations and the political consequences that originate from the Holocaust. On the contrary, we have to open up our minds, we have to strengthen our collective memory, we have, also, to search for the traces of these historic events in the history of our own families. And we have to develop compassion for the victims, for the survivors, for their families.

What finally counts is truth. No one of us can live without truth. A person dies if he or she can no longer be entrusted with truth, be confronted by it, or communicate truth. Human beings are relational, thus they live in communication with one another, and they live by truth. It was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, which shed a new light on the political meaning of truth. Desmond Tutu's Commission based its work on a fourfold concept of truth. It distinguished between factual, legal truth, true personal stories told, social and dialogical truth, and, ultimately, truth that heals and restores.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was accused of not giving the necessary attention to the investigation of factual, legal truth. It was also accused of not having used all possible means available to it by law. On the other hand, the Commission was accused of not reaching true reconciliation. In the end, when one looks objectively at the Commission's work, the choice had to be made between truth without reconciliation or reconciliation without truth.

Perhaps the great merit of Desmond Tutu's Commission is that it bridged this unmerciful gap. It shed light on the dimensions of truth, which normally do not play a role in legal proceedings or in political debates. Priority was given to personal experience and expressed truth, which could authenticate the truth. Truth only discloses itself when different perceptions of the same event enter into the dialogue. In the case of massive violations of human rights, it is clear that the perspective of victims takes precedence over the perspective of perpetrators. But truth can only be revealed if the perpetrator can face the truth and look the victim, hopefully still alive, in the eye. Truth, when it discovers the facts about past crimes and guilt, inevitably takes on the characteristics of dialogue. Only a person who is liberated by truth can

accept it. Such a person no longer needs to evade truth out of self-protection or for other reasons. One who is ready to face the truth needs to have experienced reconciliation. To be reconciled means to be liberated from the fear of truth.

In 1998 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission submitted a final report of its nearly four years work. The report of its Amnesty Committee followed in 2001. Its work remained unfinished, however. In South Africa, the process of reconciliation must continue. Many of the perpetrators have yet to experience liberation from the fear of truth. Many of the victims have yet to experience the healing effect of truth. The significance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, however, goes far beyond what could be achieved in such a short time, because it provides a new model of how truth, guilt and reconciliation can interact in the political field.

Not the institutional structures, but the basic assumptions of Desmond Tutu's work inspire me whenever I address the question of historic guilt. It is my conviction that we come very close to the church's task when we look at those situations from this perspective. Liberation by truth and for truth happens whenever we truly worship, whenever we celebrate Christ's presence in our midst. The church's ministry for reconciliation opens our minds for the fourfold meaning of truth. It confronts us with the hard facts of our history and our presence. It creates the space for the telling of personal stories, which alone make history a living history. It helps us to enter into dialogue and to realize the social meaning of truth, which includes the concrete balancing of burdens and the effort to compensate suffering to the small extent to which this is possible. And, finally, it opens our hearts for the only truth that can heal and restore: the truth of God.

It is my conviction that the 21st century will be shaped by a return of religion and to religion. This return can happen, as we experienced in the 20th century, in the spirit of separation and exclusion, in the spirit of self-justification and arrogance, in the spirit of hatred and irreconcilability. But, this return may also happen in the spirit of truth, in the readiness for repentance and new beginnings, in the hope for forgiveness and reconciliation. It is our responsibility to pray for and to work in this direction: the direction of truth, confession of guilt and reconciliation.

III.

My own country, as well as the Church I serve as a bishop, has in the last 60 years had in many aspects to face the question how to deal with the burden of a fraught past. I would like to tell you about two significant points.

This question was as virulent at the end of the criminal NS-regime in 1945, as at the end of the SED-regime in 1989/90. After their division into two states in 1945/49, the Germans responded to their common NS-past in very different ways. After 1989, the East and West Germans were faced with the challenge to deal with their separate past together in a unified Germany. Today, I will speak about the more recent part of German history.

Different to the social processes for example in South Africa, the challenge to reconcile victims and perpetrators in the new Federal Republic after 1990 did not

coincide with the challenge to achieve national reconciliation. The developments in both parts of Germany took a different course:

On the one side, the remaining issues between victims and perpetrators were regarded as an "East German legacy", which was supposed to be sorted out by those directly affected with the aid of the now available constitutional avenues.

These issues were rarely raised in the states of the old Federal Republic. They seemed only important for former GDR citizens, who had lost all their possessions when they left or escaped from the GDR as refugees. But after the peaceful revolution in 1989, many West Germans held the rather generalising opinion that East Germany was a land of political hangers-on and informers of the state security service. On the other side, a fierce debate was raging in the political parties and also in the evangelical churches asserting that the causes and effects of the German division constitute a "common German legacy". Could the opening of the Berlin wall and the restoration of German unity be attributed to West or East German efforts only? The intention behind the debate was to facilitate the integration and to overcome the estrangement of the two parts of Germany. But how was this political reconciliation process supposed to work and how could Christians and churches contribute to it?

In Germany, the government tried to set the agenda for its dealing with the GDR past as quickly as possible. When the Unification Treaty came into force on 29th September 1990, the way ahead was already marked out. The main points were the prosecution of the crimes of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED, governing party in the GDR), provisions for the use of documents held by the state security service, compensation for the victims as well as examination procedures for the admission to civil service.

The prosecution focussed on major human rights violations like the death strip and the fatal shots at the Berlin wall and the inner German border. A guiding principle was the assumption that reconciliation did not exclude punishment. The proposition of a general amnesty was not accepted in the German discussion. The punishment of the perpetrators was given priority over their undiscerning integration. In no way was the political development ever determined by a strategic-illegitimate concept of reconciliation. And yet, the legal reappraisal of the past could not fulfil the expectations of the victims.

The government established the Federal Office for the Personal Records of the State Security Services of the former GDR. This office proved itself to be of decisive importance in the information of those spied upon by the state security service about their personal experiences, it provided essential data for rehabilitation processes as well as for the imposition of sanctions outside the criminal law. The fundamental idea behind these actions was that reconciliation is only possible on the basis of a commitment to truth. At the head of the office was a theologian: the civil rights campaigner Joachim Gauck. Later on it was a former catechist, also a civil rights campaigner and politician, Marianne Birthler. Up to this day, 2.471,945 individual applications for access to personal records have been filed. In order to gain access to their files, the affected go through a ritualised procedure of a preparatory talk, then the examination of their files and a follow-up talk. In many cases, just knowing the truth about the links their acquaintances or friends may have had with the state security

service, helped to start an individual reconciliation process. But we have to add: in other cases this created deep splits in families and among friends and not seldom ended up in tremendous personal crisis'.

Complex legislation provides the preconditions necessary for the victims' compensation, for their professional rehabilitation and their rehabilitation according to the statutes of criminal and administrative law. Even if victims' organisations quite rightly complain about the difficulties experienced in individual cases when claiming their legal rights, at least a differentiated legislation enabled these legal rights to be asserted in the first place. However, the state did not create the conditions for the moral dimension of the victims' compensation.

After 1990, incriminated staff in offices and institutions were not "destasified" according to the example of the "denazification" after 1945. But those who had personally committed crimes or grave offences were professionally disqualified. Generally this is the case for the civil service. On the basis of individual decisions it is partly also true for the field of business. In these cases the decisions were made by the employers themselves. Up to this day, 1.753,715 applications to investigate the integrity of staff members of the civil service were filed in the "Gauck-office".

The state security service topic was also dominant in the public debate. During the Stasi-debate in 1990/91, the media focussed solely on the question whether an individual had been an Informal Operative. Their aim was to allocate responsibility and attribute guilt. The "healing of the nation" or the "healing of memory" was not part of the official agenda. The public and sensationalist debate about the Informal Operatives turned out not to be helpful for a growing sense of togetherness among the Germans in the East and West, and it generated a climate which was decidedly unhelpful for mutual understanding, especially it rather hindered people in the West to comprehend the way of common life in "really existing socialism", a developed society under a socialist regime. The image of the GDR as a state of informers was created in the public consciousness, although "only" little more than one percent of the population probably had been working for the Ministry of State Security (MfS) as Informal Operatives. A number of East Germans took the extremely narrow view personally that the image of the Stasi complex represented the GDR-past, and considered it a humiliation attempt in the inner-German fight for recognition.

The public focus on the issues around the Informal Operatives, the obvious limits of the legal reappraisal of the GDR past and the growing disillusionment and disenchantment with democracy in view of increasing unemployment, replaced the unification euphoria and gave rise to demands for a public tribunal to review GDR history in 1991. It seemed necessary to comprehensively and publicly shed light upon the power structures and responsibilities of the SED dictatorship. Anything that could not be dealt with legally, was supposed to be brought up in a different forum. So I am very glad that the German film "The Life of the others" has also been given much attention in Ireland.

In August 1991, Pastor Friedrich Schorlemmer called for such a tribunal involving the whole German society to promote integration and reconciliation. Such a "catharsis" was to unite East and West Germany in a common verdict and to free it up for democracy. Connecting guilt and reconciliation was to be considered more important

than the connection of crime and punishment. Arranging such a process was an important task for the Churches, Schorlemmer thought. The ensuing debate finally led on March 20th, 1992, to the establishment of the Federal Parliament's Enquete Commission for the Reappraisal of the History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship. The head of the commission was an Evangelical pastor, the civil rights campaigner Rainer Eppelmann. Among the members was the Generalsuperintendent of Berlin, Martin-Michael Passauer. Three years later in 1995, a second commission was installed: Overcoming the Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in the Process of the German Unification. In establishing this commission, the federal legislative body took on the responsibility to review the GDR past. These two commissions were set the task to engage in the historical and political analysis and the political and moral evaluation of the SED dictatorship. At the same time, the commissions were meant to contribute to the rehabilitation of the victims by public hearings and other measures accompanying the legislation. The commissions tried to fulfil these tasks by listening to witnesses of the events and to researchers, by conducting public hearings and considering the reports of experts. These commissions facilitated reconciliation through truth as non-governmental agents. They contributed to the reconciliation of society by becoming a personal forum of reconciliation for the victims. The hearings were often public; the victims could tell their stories in public. However, the narrative approach was increasingly pushed to the background in order to give prominence to an accurate historical profile of the Enquete Commission's work.

The publications of the two commissions, of which two volumes are dedicated to illustrate role and identity of the churches during the SED dictatorship, are still a treasure trove for any further research, but the question arises whether the commissions' findings can become part of our collective memory. The debates and hearings had comparatively little impact on the public. Since the end of 1998, the work of the two commissions was continued in the government funded Foundation for the treatment (*Aufarbeitung*) of the SED Dictatorship. Outside of this Foundation only in one or the German regional states, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, a comparable structure was built, even more directly prepared for an encounter between perpetrators and victims. In general the assumption is rather that reconciliation is a private matter.

However, initiators within the civil society, often the churches, provided institutionalised frameworks for such encounters in perpetrator-victim-circles. The circle around the former member of the Commission for the Dissolution of the MfS and protestant pastor Ulrich Schröter needs mentioning here. Until 1999, this circle met once a month in the rooms of the Church of the Redeemer in Berlin-Lichtenberg, and was joined by affected individuals and partly high-ranking former employees of the MfS. Such circles adopted a proxy function for a reconciliation process which needed to be embraced by the whole society. For the opportunity to share an individual's experiences is the basis for a catharsis involving the whole society. The establishment of perpetrator-victim-circles is a sign of hope; these agents of reconciliation made use of the churches in order to facilitate encounters and make room for the victims' stories. The Evangelical academies were also often used for debates about the GDR past. The victims were given a forum in which they could tell their stories. Additionally, these encounters and debates will provide us with a deeper understanding of the political context of the time.

The churches can strengthen the political reconciliation process by making room for mourning, for sorrow and for healing, and by creatively facilitating reconciliation. In the political debate, they should warn against the illegitimate usurpation of reconciliation in a strategic perspective and point to the socially liberating potential of the morally legitimate concept of reconciliation. For reconciliation is not possible without a detailed knowledge of the past. But reconciliation can open up the future. Reconciliation is an ethical imperative and a political necessity. For us Christians, it is founded in God's own work of reconciliation.

IV.

But how is the reconciliation process within the Evangelical Church itself going? The dominance of the Stasi topic dealt a blow also to the Evangelical Church in Germany. When the first cases of collaboration between church staff members and the MfS were uncovered, the public image of the Evangelical Church changed very rapidly: While it had enjoyed great respect for the part it played in the "peaceful revolution", there were now doubts about the church's independence. There was great dismay at the discovery that the Ministry of State Security had managed to spy upon parts of church life. Every single case created by good reasons awareness and mistrust. And the necessity to follow every single case as seriously as possible was obvious. But speculations about the church's entanglement with the Stasi reached unreal proportions; church staff members suffered from insecurity, fear and suspicion as well as grave personal offences.

These events made it particularly urgent to start reviewing the recent church history. But the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the GDR was in the process of dissolution and could not agree on a common course of action. Therefore, it fell to the regional churches to find adequate ways of dealing with the complex Stasi problem in the heated public debate. The first measures implemented in 1990/91 were aimed at the confidential and voluntary disclosure of any entanglements with the Stasi. The background was the biblical rule for dealing with transgressions in Matthew 18, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Mt 18,15-18; NKJV).

The churches established counselling or confidential committees. In spite of the strong public pressure, none of the synods could at first make the decision to conduct a general investigation, a systematic review of the staff members' political integrity by examining the MfS documents. Their hope that the affected themselves would come forward was fulfilled only to a very limited degree. The churches' instruction about their own staff progressed very slowly.

The initiative "Justice and Reconciliation" was founded in Berlin in November 1991, calling for the review of the Stasi problem in the churches through a general investigation of all their staff members. Its representatives argued that reconciliation could not be achieved by evading the law and avoiding the truth. Several regional

churches decided for a general investigation first of those in leadership positions (synods, church councils), then for all those participating in the ministry of proclamation; other churches only consulted the Stasi files in individual, ambiguous cases. Through the careful consideration of the individual cases, however, a complex picture emerged of how the contacts with the Stasi came about, of the motives behind them, of the character and the duration of the contacts. The proportion of pastors and leading church staff collaborating informally and conspiratorially with the MfS amounted to one or two percent. Even in the larger regional churches, the number of redundancies or formal disciplinary procedures did not go beyond single digit figures. Some staff members opted out of the proceedings by applying for their discharge or handing in their notice.

The churches made several statements of principle on their conversations and negotiations with the MfS and voted for a self-critical reappraisal of the past. However, the proposal of a general confession of guilt by the East German Churches was rejected. During the EKD synod in Suhl in 1992, East and West German synod members exchanged their views on the conduct of church personnel during the SED dictatorship. The synod itself gave new impetus to a reappraisal of the past by the whole German society as East and West Germans were challenged to share their diverse experiences and biographies with one another. So after the East-German legacy had been an important topic for discussion, now the all-German legacy was to become a central theme for narrative and dialogue.

At the same time, the churches commissioned academic historical research into recent church history and thereby gained insight into the interrelationship of individual responsibility on the one side, and the structural conditions for action on the other. In particular, the EKD established an academic research programme on "church and state in the GDR". This was a response to the work of the professor of contemporary church history, Gerhard Besier, on the relationship between state and church in the GDR, which came to the conclusion that the evangelical churches in the GDR maintained particularly close ties with the state. By now, both extreme positions – praise and defamation – have been toned down. The academic debate has been examining the role of the churches in the GDR with more differentiation. A second research project commissioned by the EKD during the 90s investigated the role of the Evangelical Church in divided Germany and focussed on convergences and divergences in the Churches' development in East and West Germany during the time of their separation.

But how did the churches develop when their separation came to an end? How did they understand and overcome their estrangement? The legal settlement of the churches' unification took a bit longer than the settlement of the states' unification. After intense discussions focussing among other things on the East German churches' concerns about their possible absorption and loss of identity, the relationship existing between the GDR regional churches and the EKD before 1969 was re-established without much ceremony by a new unification in June 1991. That the outer unity did not yet correspond with an inner unity, as indeed was not yet possible after years of separation, became obvious already in the course of the institutional unification process, but also afterwards. Our common confessional culture, formed in centuries of tradition, had recently developed in different ways in the different political and social contexts. It was only after 1990 that we could ascertain the extent of the differences in

the churches' situations, the mindsets and the attitudes held with regard to church politics – especially towards the relationship between church and state and the views on society. It seemed at times as though the great common ground of the churches for example in their order of service and liturgical practice, in art, church music and architecture, was pushed into the background. And yet, it is necessary for the process of our "growing together" that we are prepared to remember what separates us and what unites us, as well as the manifold experiences of our unity even in the time of our separation. In all our work, we know that the spirit of the reconciling Christ is at work in all of us.

© 1996-2008 Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Herrenhäuser Straße 12 30419 Hannover
Tel: 0511-2796-0 Fax: 0511-2796-707
Internet: www.ekd.de E-Mail: info@ekd.de