

Zeitschrift: Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift : neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie

Band: 95 (2005)

Heft: 2

Rubrik: Kirchliche Chronik

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Kirchliche Chronik

Statement of the Anglican-Old Catholic Bishops' Conference on False Depictions of Muslims and Christians, 19 November 2004

The Anglican and Old Catholic Bishops in mainland Europe, during our Conference in Wislikofen, Switzerland, 17-19 November 2004, have observed with great concern that, in a number of countries in central and western Europe, tensions have risen between the Islamic and non-Islamic populations, provoked by a number of acts of violence.

Many comments by journalists and politicians with respect to this development have given the impression that among the non-Islamic population a radical Christian “fundamentalism” – or even Christendom as such – is at work as a counterpart to a radical Islamic “fundamentalism”, and which is equally open to the use of violence.

The Bishops reject all such characterizations in whatever form they are presented. Since at least the end of the Second World War, European churches represented in ecumenical bodies in central and western Europe have never furthered a radical Christian “fundamentalism” which has preached violence or permitted it to be preached. On the contrary, the churches have supported and encouraged a continuing dialogue with non-Christian religions, which has often led to positive results. Moreover, the Bishops also condemn any tendency to label Islam as such as a religion that promotes violence.

Journalists and politicians have a responsibility to be more conscious of what they say in their comments or write in their reports. Over-simplified depictions, which may convey such a false opposition, whether conscious or merely careless, do not contribute to the goal of peaceful coexistence, and at worst, they create new divisions.

The Most Revd Dr Joris Vercammen, Archbishop of Utrecht, Co-chair

The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, Co-chair

Christkatholisches Kirchenblatt 128 (2004), Nr. 25, S. 12f.