

Contributions from Religion and Science towards a positive Worldview

Hamburg, Germany, 24. April 2016



After a musical performance provided by rhythmical folklore from Benin, Ulrich Ganz, the regional representative of UPF, introduced the topic by quoting from Dr. **Eben Alexander's new book:**

'More than anything else, the future of civilization depends on the relationship between the two most powerful forces of history, science and religion' (Alfred North Whitehead, philosopher 1861-1974).

The inter-generational audience was made up of school-children, students, scientists and non-scientists from diverse social groups and countries of origin such as Africa, Asia and the West.

Then followed an example from **scientific research, known as the 'Out of Africa' theory**. This process was clearly demonstrated with the use of a chart that showed the migratory course of modern man over the whole planet over the past 50,000 years. But also spiritual trends such as the Judeo-Christian culture, Greek philosophy, Hinduism and Buddhism as well as Confucianism have accompanied and guided **mankind's spiritual journey**. Today theologians and experts on religion in the Academy of World Religions in Hamburg University are studying these trends and are examining the central meaning of the Holy Scriptures. These

experts consider that their meaning is to **be found in love for one's neighbor and** in the establishment of a peaceful human community. Seen in this way, one can infer a positive perspective for the future. However, it is necessary as a matter of urgency to put an end to one-sided materialism and to recognize a holistic view of the cosmos which includes spirituality.

The next topic was: 'Why does education need to be connected with the transcendent?'

Gerhard Toelke, who has a Master's degree in philosophy, expanded on this point with several philosophical

foundations using the example of Emanuel Kant. He made it clear that transcendence is first and foremost an activity concerning the topic of God. Science often has the tendency to deny the spiritual and where economic interests are concerned, to see religion as superfluous. And from this perspective, the family is also seen merely as an economic factor. And this is the origin of the impression that modern society does not need God. With time, the connection with transcendence has disappeared from education in schools. But still reverence for God is the goal of education in the constitution of many (German) states. Hamburg, Lower Saxony and Schleswig Holstein are exceptions. The ideal of a transcendence orientated education comes from the unity of God and man, said Mr. Toelke. This is education to work together to build the kingdom of God.

Membership amongst the German population of the main church denominations has fallen from almost 100% in 1970 to about a half of that today.

Changes in the legislation of sexual crimes with a shift in emphasis from protection of the public moral to protection of individual sexual orientation and the liberalization of the abortion laws have had a lasting influence on the society in which we live today. Therefore, the Christian foundation is losing, and secularization is making progress.

Our next speaker, the retired teacher **and expert on 'near-death', Jörgen Bruhn**, stressed in his presentation



about modern near-death research that it is important that parents and teachers, as well as children and young adults, become familiar with this topic. Children experience the death of a close relative and early on ask questions about life and death. And because of the continued development of medical technology in the field of resuscitation after cardiac arrest and accidents, young people increasingly have transcendent experiences. They need an explanation and should be met with understanding. Experimental science has long since been unable to adequately explain the phenomena of the universe and human consciousness. He himself, in his forty years of experience as a teacher, experienced over and over again that students who felt that he was open-

experiences, were able to be open with him. This was a great relief for them. In **his book 'A Glimpse over the Horizon'**, he gives examples as to how teachers can bring up this topic with students of different ages. For older people such as teachers and parents, this knowledge is not only a comfort about the meaning of the end of life on earth, but it is also armor for young people who are approaching adulthood, to have guidance about the purpose of life on earth. At the end of life, as reported by those who have had near-death experiences, what counts as the criteria for a successful life are love and worldly wisdom, and this is helpful when it comes to deciding what way to take in life. Extremism and material values are thus excluded. The insight, that a life lived for the sake of others is the best

preparation for the after-life and the best for our own life, is a similar feature of all near-death experiences. This truth has always been known, but seems to have been forgotten in our time.

Mr. Bruhn willingly answered many questions posed by the audience and related near-death experiences shared with him by his audiences. Mr. Bruhn was given recognition as an **'Ambassador for Peace' for the inter-denominational and intercultural message of the presentations that he has delivered all over German - speaking Europe.**

To conclude, there were animated discussions between the participants and everyone was able to come away with important impulses and inspirations.

