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What's in a Handshake? Multi-Faith Practice as a Starting Point for Christian Migration Ethics

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journals.sagepub.com/home/sce**Ulrich Schmiedel** 

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Abstract

This article assesses the tension between cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches to the ethics of migration by analysing how the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) has responded to the current so-called migration crisis in Europe. I argue that the statements of the EKD frame people on the move either as migrants or as Muslims. These frames come with competing ethical consequences. Whereas migrants are presented as passive victims in need of some form of support by Christians, Muslims are presented as active victimisers in need of some form of suppression by Christians. However, when the then chairman of the EKD shook hands with people on the move who were arriving at Munich station in the summer of 2015, the surplus of meaning communicated in this encounter demonstrated that these people cannot be reduced to their respective framing, thus resisting the construction of both the cosmopolitan migrant frame and the communitarian Muslim frame. Accordingly, I advocate for a re-conceptualisation of the theological ethics of migration which takes multi-faith practices, such as these handshakes, as a point of departure.

Keywords

Communitarianism, cosmopolitanism, Islam, Islamophobia, migration, refugee crisis, touch

Saturday, September 5, 2015: Hundreds gather at the station in Munich to welcome refugees who have made their way into Germany.¹ Since Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany would open its borders to what would turn out to be about one million refugees, mainly from Syria, the news had been buzzing with stories about migration. Greeted with

1. All translations from the German are mine, unless stated otherwise.

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clapping and cheering, refugees arrived in trains at Munich after they made their way along the 'Balkan Route' through Europe. The then chairmen of the two mainline churches in Germany—Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, representing German Protestantism and Reinhard Marx, representing German Catholicism—were among the crowd who welcomed the people on the move with handshakes.² The scene made headlines, both nationally and internationally.³

Considering the controversies that migration has stirred up, it is no surprise that it is a concern for ethicists. The field of migration ethics displays a tension between communitarian and cosmopolitan approaches. Generally, communitarianism focuses on the self-determination of a political community which can come at the cost of the individual right to freedom of movement, while cosmopolitanism focuses on the individual right to freedom of movement which can come at the cost of the self-determination of a political community.⁴ Accordingly, the communitarian approach follows a more particularist account of justice, bound by civilisation, culture or country, while the cosmopolitan approach follows a more universalist account of justice, unbound by civilisation, culture or country. Although there are combinations of both approaches,⁵ this tension characterises the field. It is mirrored by theological accounts of migration.⁶

In what follows, I assess how the tension between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism plays out in practice by analysing one church: the Evangelische Kirche in

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2. A short video of the scene, 'Refugees Welcome to Munich Main Station', probably filmed with a mobile phone by one of the people who gathered at the station, is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhM7ta8c7n4>.
 3. See Emma Graham-Harrison, Patrick Kingsley and Tracy McVeigh, 'Cheering German Crowds Greet Refugees after Long Trek from Budapest to Munich', *The Guardian*, 5 September 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/05/refugee-crisis-warm-welcome-for-people-bussed-from-budapest>; Katrin Bennhold, Steven Erlanger and Alison Smale, 'Germans Welcome Migrants after Long Journey through Hungary and Austria', *New York Times*, 5 September 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/06/world/europe/migrant-crisis-austria-hungary-germany.html>.
 4. Usually, Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) is taken as representative of the communitarian approach, while Joseph Carens, *The Ethics of Immigration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) is taken as representative of the cosmopolitan approach.
 5. Seyla Benhabib's work, particularly *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and *The Rights of Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), has been very influential. Lukas Meyer, *Fremde Bürger: Ethische Überlegungen zu Migration, Flucht und Asyl* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2017) offers a succinct overview of the debate. His migration ethics is inspired by Benhabib. See also Reiner Anselm, 'Who are the People? Toward a Theological Ethics of Citizenship and Community', in Ulrich Schmiedel and Graeme Smith (eds.), *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 227–42.
 6. As far as I can ascertain, there is no succinct summary of the state of the field that takes developments since 2015 into account. For a helpful starting point, see David Hollenbach, 'Migration as a Challenge for Theological Ethics', *Political Theology* 12.6 (2011), pp. 807–12. For communitarianism and cosmopolitanism in theological ethics, see Kristin Heyer, 'Migrants as Feared and Forsaken: A Catholic Ethic of Social Responsibility', *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* 6 (2020), pp. 158–70.

Deutschland (EKD) which brings together most Protestant congregations and churches in Germany. Given Germany's position in what came to be called the current refugee crisis in Europe,⁷ a study of the ethics of migration communicated through the announcements and actions of the EKD allows for a theological account of the tension between cosmopolitan and communitarian ethics. I argue that the statements of the EKD present the people on the move who arrive in Germany in two ways: either they are framed as migrants or they are framed as Muslims. These frames come with competing ethical consequences. Whereas migrants are presented as passive victims in need of some form of support by Christians, Muslims are presented as active victimisers in need of some form of suppression by Christians. In both frames, the ethics of migration centres on the *imago Dei* according to which human beings are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). What I call 'the migrant frame' interprets the image of God in a more universalist, cosmopolitan fashion, while what I call 'the Muslim frame' interprets the image of God in a more particularist, communitarian fashion. Although the people on the move who have arrived in Germany have a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds, migrants and Muslims are identified in public perception.⁸ Given that most people who are seeking asylum in Germany currently come from countries with Muslim majorities,⁹ it is crucial to think through this identification in the ethics of migration.

The scene at the station in Munich where the chairmen shake hands with people on the move who have arrived in Germany, I continue to argue, calls both the cosmopolitan migrant frame and the communitarian Muslim frame into question. The surplus of meaning communicated in these handshakes rattles and resists the construction of both frames by clarifying that the people on the move cannot be reduced to their respective framing. Performatively, the handshakes open these frames to ethical re-considerations. Drawing on the scene at the station, I advocate for a re-conceptualisation of migration ethics that takes multi-faith encounters, such as the scene at the station in Munich, as a point of departure to develop and discuss the theological ethics of migration in dialogue with Muslims.

Constructing Ethical Frames: Migrants or Muslims?

Since its constitution in 1945, the EKD has influenced public and political debates in Germany. Combining more descriptive and more prescriptive accounts of controversial

7. Due to the acceptance and accommodation of Syrian refugees in 2015, Germany has been the only European country in the UNHCR's list of top five hosting countries. See the 'figures at a glance' at <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

8. See Gert Pickel, 'Perceptions of Plurality: The Impact of the Refugee Crisis on the Interpretation of Religious Pluralization in Europe', in Schmiedel and Smith (eds.), *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis*, pp. 15–37.

9. At the time of writing, most people who seek asylum in Germany come from Syria. According to Bundesamt für Migration, *Migrationsbericht der Bundesregierung* (Berlin: BAMF, 2020), pp. 90–91, Syria has been at the top of the list since 2014. Combining data from 2014 to 2019, Syria (33.4%) is followed by Afghanistan (11.7%), Iraq (10.7%), Albania (4.6%) and Iran (3.6%). While the Federal Government's report offers no information about the religion of the asylum seekers, these statistics suggest that most of them are Muslims.

public issues, the statements of the EKD present political positions rooted in the theology of the church, including policy recommendations.¹⁰

There is significant overlap between the two mainline churches in Germany when it comes to statements about immigration and Islam. While I point to ecumenical engagements, I present the position of the Protestant EKD to provide an account of one concrete church.¹¹ The EKD's support for Germany's migration policy has stirred up controversy among ethicists connected to this church. In a succinct summary, Christoph Picker criticised the heated debate between defenders and despisers of the EKD's position on migration as not subject-oriented enough because 'identity debates' were pushed to the fore.¹² While these identity debates merit attention in as much as they clarify that migration challenges the self-understanding of German Protestant ethicists inside and outside the academy, I concentrate on the EKD's framing of immigration and Islam here. This framing has not yet featured as a topic in these debates. Hence, going back to the 1990s, I analyse how people on the move who seek asylum in Germany have been presented by the EKD's statements, drawing attention to the chasm between the statements on immigration that frame them as migrants and the statements on Islam that frame them as Muslims. This chasm, I argue, has crucial consequences for the ethics of migration. The same theological trope—the *imago Dei*—is theorised to call either for a cosmopolitan or for a communitarian ethics.

The Migrant Frame

The EKD's statements on immigration have been consistent since the 1990s, putting the *imago Dei* at the centre of a cosmopolitan ethics of engaging migrants. An ecumenical statement, published together with the Catholic German Bishop's Conference, is paradigmatic for the EKD's ethics of migration.¹³ It took almost five years for the statement to be completed.¹⁴ Published towards the end of the 1990s, it is a recurring reference in debates about the ethics of migration.

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10. Most statements are available at <http://www.ekd.de>. See particularly EKD, *Das rechte Wort zur rechten Zeit: Eine Denkschrift des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland zum Öffentlichkeitsauftrag der Kirche* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), where the Council of the EKD presents its position on the public responsibility of the church.
 11. Both mainline churches have reached comparable conclusions on immigration, captured in joint statements. When it comes to Islam, however, there are convergences and divergences—with consequences for ethics and politics. For a comparison of the mainline churches' responses to anti-Muslim racism in Germany, see Hannah Strømmen and Ulrich Schmiedel, *The Claim to Christianity: Responding to the Far Right* (London: SCM, 2020), pp. 66–91.
 12. Christoph Picker, *Flüchtlingsethik* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), p. 2, including a bibliography of the debate in the German *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik*. See also Arnulf von Scheliha, 'Politische Flüchtlingskrise und öffentlicher Protestantismus', *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik* 61 (2017), pp. 264–73, who also points to the differences between German Catholicism and German Protestantism. Picker, *Flüchtlingsethik*, pp. 9–12, 54–55, discusses the main points of contention among Protestant ethicists.
 13. EKD and DBK, '*...und der Fremdling der in deinen Toren ist*': *Gemeinsames Wort der Kirchen zu den Herausforderungen durch Migration* (Hannover/Bonn: EKD/DBK, 1997).
 14. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, p. 7.

The authors of the statement survey the causes of migration among refugees and the circumstances of migration among receivers, calling the government to respond to the challenge.¹⁵ This call itself is remarkable. German governments had consistently claimed that there was no need for immigration or integration laws because the people who were arriving in the country as ‘guest workers’ would return to where they came from.¹⁶ Countering these claims, the authors argue that migration concerns all spheres of society.¹⁷ The EKD continued this call in subsequent statements. Even when the German government ratified immigration laws in the 2000s, thus putting into practice what the churches had called for, the EKD’s statements continue to engage migration, advocating for a humanitarian approach.¹⁸ The EKD insists that the criminalisation of migrants across Europe is unacceptable.¹⁹ In addition to the status of the refugee as specified by the United Nations, the ecumenical statement creates two new categories: the economic refugee, fleeing from intolerable economic conditions, and the environmental refugee, fleeing from intolerable environmental conditions—thus anticipating the controversies in the current conceptualisation of the Global Compact on Refugees.²⁰

The theology that undergirds the EKD’s humanitarian approach is rooted in the Bible. According to both mainline churches, the commandment to care for people in need is centred in the story of the Exodus: God’s liberation of God’s people.²¹ The Exodus connects the central concerns of the Old Testament to the central concerns of the New Testament. The responsibility of the church comes from the experiences of liberation collected in the Bible.²² While the Bible is referenced to explain the motivation of the churches, the churches’ ethics of migration is rooted in one theological trope: the *imago Dei*. The statement argues that the account of human beings as created in the image of God is accessible to both Christians and non-Christians because it has been translated into the concept of human dignity.²³ Drawing on the need to protect this dignity, the churches call for engagement with migrants, particularly in a Europe that has been shaped by Christianity.²⁴ The ethics of engaging migrants that is presented by the EKD, then, is cosmopolitan: the *imago Dei* is the root of human dignity.

15. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, pp. 14–15.

16. For a history of labour migration in Germany, see Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

17. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, p. 29.

18. See EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten: Ein Beitrag des Rates der EKD zu Fragen der Integration* (Hannover: EKD, 2002) and EKD, ‘...denn ihr seid selbst Fremdlinge gewesen’: *Ein Beitrag der Kommission für Migration und Integration der EKD zur einwanderungspolitischen Debatte* (Hannover: EKD, 2009).

19. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, p. 32.

20. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, pp. 32–34.

21. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, pp. 45–46; EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 4; EKD, ‘...denn ihr seid selbst’, pp. 7–8.

22. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, pp. 47–48; EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 4.

23. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, pp. 49–50.

24. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, p. 49.

Human dignity needs to be protected, because it is universalist, not particularist. It is independent of civilisation, culture, country or indeed religion.

A statement about the church's engagement with migrants without documentation exemplifies the EKD's ethics of engaging migrants.²⁵ The authors draw on the *imago Dei* to criticise the differentiation between 'legal' and 'illegal' migrants. Since all human beings are created in the image of God, their presence in the country must not be prohibited, even if their status of residence can be il/legalised.²⁶ 'In the history of Europe, which has been characterised by Christianity, the image of God has become a relevant root to reason for the recognition of human dignity', the authors argue.²⁷ 'Despite all their differences, human beings share the same dignity because they all are children of one father'.²⁸ 'Hence, nobody is illegal'.²⁹ The statement concretises the dignity of people on the move by telling the stories of three of them.³⁰ Each story ends with a short sentence stressing how they found support despite their lack of documentation.

The EKD's recommendations for immigration and integration policies clarify that the church is not naïve. The challenges that come with migration are acknowledged and analysed. Throughout, the EKD presents the *Grundgesetz*, the constitution of Germany, as a framework that allows for the negotiation and re-negotiation of plurality.³¹ According to the EKD, the *Grundgesetz* is central to the challenge of migration because it protects the dignity of both refugees and receivers. The EKD draws on the *Grundgesetz* to call for a path to citizenship for the people who have arrived in Germany so that everybody living in the country can eventually participate in the political process.³² As the EKD acknowledges, neither the active nor the passive right to vote ought to be granted to everybody who enters the country.³³ Yet it ought to be possible to develop projects that empower everybody to political participation.³⁴

Integration is interpreted as a continuous process that demands changes from receivers and refugees.³⁵ The *Grundgesetz* sets the limits in which these changes can be charted.³⁶ Here, the EKD points out that in accordance with the *Grundgesetz* the state ought to be neutral towards all religious and non-religious worldviews. This neutrality is welcomed.³⁷ While the statement acknowledges that churches have claimed

25. EKD, *Zum Umgang mit Menschen ohne Aufenthaltspapiere: Eine Orientierungshilfe des Kirchenamtes der EKD* (Hannover: EKD, 2006).

26. EKD, *Umgang*, pp. 7–8.

27. EKD, *Umgang*, p. 9.

28. EKD, *Umgang*, p. 9.

29. EKD, *Umgang*, p. 10.

30. EKD, *Umgang*, pp. 15–16.

31. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, pp. 79–82.

32. EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 4.

33. EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 4.

34. EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 16.

35. EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 4.

36. EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 4.

37. While arguing that the state is neutral, the EKD acknowledges that the mainline churches hold a special status. See EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 22.

social, cultural and political dominance throughout history, the EKD argues that the neutrality of the state is itself rooted in Christianity, so Christians ought to approve of it.³⁸ A neutral state allows all worldviews to contribute, indirectly rather than directly, to the public and political debates central to democracy.³⁹

The EKD points to the significance of Islam for immigration and integration.⁴⁰ Throughout the statements, Islam is situated in the context of encounters between religions. However, Islam is discussed as a challenge for the churches' contribution to society, as object rather than subject of integration.⁴¹ The relationship between both religions, the EKD argues, ought to be characterised by mutual tolerance.⁴² The churches commit themselves to do more for such tolerance, calling for faith to fulfil a cohesive rather than a conflictual function in society.⁴³ The church is committed to re-thinking the roles and the relations between Christians and non-Christians because religion is so central to integration.⁴⁴

Altogether, then, the EKD's statements on immigration have been consistent since the 1990s. The concept of human dignity, rooted in the *imago Dei*, is central to the ethics of engaging migrants. The dignity of those who have arrived in Germany needs to be protected. Protecting dignity, the *Grundgesetz* is interpreted as a framework that covers the rights and the responsibilities of refugees and receivers. Ethically, the EKD's approach to immigration is cosmopolitan rather than communitarian, universalist rather than particularist. Yet how are the people who have arrived in Germany introduced and interpreted? As my analysis of the migrant frame has indicated, throughout the EKD's statements on immigration, they are addressed as passive rather than active, identified by the risks they respond to. Religion is seen as a positive feature because it is primarily related to the receivers rather than the refugees.

The Muslim Frame

The EKD's statements on Islam have been consistent since the 2000s, putting the theological trope of the *imago Dei* at the centre of a communitarian ethics of engaging Muslims. Answering a call for clarification by some of the churches that constitute the

38. EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, pp. 22–23.

39. EKD, '*...denn ihr seid selbst*', pp. 18–19.

40. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, pp. 80–82, 93–95; EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, pp. 5, 9, 24–25; EKD, '*...denn ihr seid selbst*', pp. 14–15, characterises Islam as central to the challenge of integration before it criticises stereotyping on all sides.

41. See EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, pp. 80–82, 93–94; EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, pp. 5, 24–25. In both statements, Islam is discussed in sections that describe the tasks of churches. The same holds for EKD, '*... denn ihr seid selbst*', where the authors argue that 'the lack of a representative committee' (p. 5) of Muslims in Germany, following the model of the mainline churches, impedes dialogue.

42. EKD and DBK, *Fremdling*, p. 80.

43. EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 27.

44. EKD, *Zusammenleben gestalten*, p. 10. The fact that religion is considered central to integration marks a difference between the EKD's pre- and post-9/11 statements.

EKD, a statement published in 2000 breaks, according to its authors, ‘new ground’.⁴⁵ For the first time, the EKD sets out its relation to Islam.⁴⁶

‘As a consequence of migration’, the authors argue, ‘about three million Muslims are living in Germany’, so that churches have to offer guidelines for how to engage with them.⁴⁷ Already in the statement’s preface, the limits for any engagement are stipulated. The *Grundgesetz* offers the same opportunities to all religious and non-religious communities in Germany.⁴⁸ Encounters take place within the limits set by Germany’s constitution. However, according to the EKD, Christianity must come to terms with two Islams in these encounters: one that is moderate and one that is militant. It is the ‘other Islam’ that ought to be welcomed in Germany.⁴⁹ Rhetorically, it is striking that the moderate rather than the militant Islam is ‘othered’ here. Prayer with Muslims is problematised,⁵⁰ setting the tone for the subsequent statements of the EKD, particularly after 9/11.

After the attacks, the EKD elaborates on a theology of religions. The authors point to the ambiguities of faith, its potential for both cohesion and conflict.⁵¹ In a statement published a few years after 9/11, the EKD’s critique of religion is centred on one religion—Islam.⁵² Although some commentators have criticised this statement as ‘Islamophobic’,⁵³ the EKD has not abandoned it.

The theology that undergirds the EKD’s position aims to avoid two potential pitfalls: focusing on either Islam’s convergence or Islam’s divergence from Christianity.

45. EKD, *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen in Deutschland: Gestaltung der christlichen Begegnung mit Muslimen. Eine Handreichung des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000), p. 7.

46. The statement was written by a committee for ‘Muslim Questions’. This committee consisted only of Christians, although Muslims were consulted from time to time. See EKD, *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen*, p. 12.

47. EKD, *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen*, p. 7.

48. EKD, *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen*, p. 8.

49. EKD, *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen*, p. 14.

50. For a short overview of the debate, see Alfons Teipen and Alex Pumphrey, ‘Muslims and Christians Praying Together, or Not: Some Observations on German Protestant Attitudes toward Common Prayer’, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 50.1 (2015), pp. 143–52.

51. EKD, *Christlicher Glaube und nichtchristliche Religionen: Theologische Leitlinien. Ein Beitrag der Kammer für Theologie der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (Hannover: EKD, 2003).

52. EKD, *Klarheit und gute Nachbarschaft: Christen und Muslime in Deutschland. Eine Handreichung des Rates der EKD* (Hannover: EKD, 2006). This statement refers to *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen in Deutschland*, but contends that the circumstances have changed. Due to 9/11, the EKD’s approach to Islam must be radically rethought.

53. For the criticism, see the contributions to Jürgen Miksch (ed.), *Evangelisch aus fundamentalem Grund: Wie sich die EKD gegen den Islam profiliert* (Frankfurt: Otto Lembeck, 2007) and Wolf-Dieter Just, ‘Der Islam und die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland: Klarheit und gute Nachbarschaft’, in Torsten Gerald Schneiders (ed.), *Islamfeindschaft: Wenn die Grenzen der Kritik verschwimmen* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), pp. 391–402.

According to the EKD, both approaches are flawed.⁵⁴ The EKD insists that the ‘faith in God that has been inspired by the Bible has always debunked the ambiguities of religion’.⁵⁵ This critique echoes Karl Barth’s contrast between religion and revelation, leading to his characterisation of religion as a ‘great lie’: while religion does not come from God, revelation does come from God, thus founding the Christian faith.⁵⁶ Christian faith, then, has a special status: it is not about religion, but about revelation—a revelation that calls all religions into question.⁵⁷ Consequently, the authors of the statement criticise standpoints that claim to be neutral, above the variety of religions. According to the EKD, that which unites all religions is that which divides all religions: Jesus Christ.⁵⁸

Theologically, the authors argue that the *imago Dei* is central to the Christian concept of God.⁵⁹ As a consequence, Christians ought to ask non-Christians whether their religion can or cannot contribute to the protection of the dignity rooted in the *imago Dei*. The authors argue that Islam tends to concur with Christianity, because it draws on a concept of creation that comes close to the Bible.⁶⁰ Rhetorically, this argument is remarkable because it asserts—implicitly rather than explicitly—that any application of dignity in Islam is *not* due to Islam. It is due to Islam’s concurrence with the concept of creation in the Bible. Accordingly, both the EKD’s pre- and the EKD’s post-9/11 statements on Islam suggest that dignity is not known to Muslims.⁶¹

54. EKD, *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen*, pp. 14–15.

55. EKD, *Christlicher Glaube*, p. 2.

56. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), vol. I/2, §17.

57. Arguably, Barth marshalled the concept of revelation against both Christian and non-Christian religions, so that it could provoke criticism and self-criticism. Yet in EKD, *Christlicher Glaube*, revelation is turned into a tool to single out Christianity. The contrast between religion and revelation is reflected in the title *Christlicher Glaube und nichtchristliche Religionen*: what is Christian is faith and what is not Christian is not faith—but ‘religion’. Reinhold Bernhardt, ‘Zur “Legitimität” Gemeinsamen Betens von Christen und Muslimen’, in Miksch (ed.), *Evangelisch aus fundamentalem Grund*, pp. 186–206, argues that this use of Barth’s contrast between religion and revelation is not as Barthian as it appears to be. If God can reveal Godself, as Barth famously formulated, through a ‘dead dog’ (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, p. 55), ‘then perhaps also through the Qur’an’ (Bernhardt, ‘Zur “Legitimität”’, p. 199).

58. EKD, *Christlicher Glaube*, pp. 9–10. Theologically, the authors argue that God is active in Jesus Christ, regardless of whether his activity is accepted or not accepted. Hence, he unites and divides all religions.

59. EKD, *Christlicher Glaube*, p. 12. The statement concentrates on the createdness of all human beings.

60. EKD, *Christlicher Glaube*, p. 13.

61. EKD, *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen*, pp. 33–35, singles out Islam from the Abrahamic religions because the Qur’an does not refer to human beings as created in the image of God. On the contrary, according to the EKD, Muslims believe that human beings are servants and surrogates for God on earth. EKD, *Klarheit*, pp. 20–21, concludes from the lack of the *imago Dei* in the Qur’an that there is no acceptance of dignity in Islam.

Christians, then, cannot believe in the God of the Qur'an.⁶² The EKD statement presents a strikingly stereotypical account of the Qur'an, according to which there are more surahs legitimating violence than surahs limiting violence.⁶³ The idea that the sacred scriptures of both religions might include passages that justify violence is not entertained. Islam is singled out.⁶⁴

Again, Christianity must come to terms with two Islams: a militant one and a moderate one. But in the statement published after 9/11, neither of them is welcomed anymore, because Islam is rendered as a civilisation clashing with Europe.⁶⁵ Because the Qur'an offers no account of the *imago Dei*, the authors argue, Islam cannot accept the conceptualisation of dignity. In Islam, dignity is distributed differentially: Muslims are more valuable than non-Muslims.⁶⁶ To avoid such a differentiation, Europe must be protected from Islam.⁶⁷ The ethics of engaging Muslims that is presented by the EKD, then, is communitarian: the *imago Dei* is the root of human dignity. Human dignity needs to be protected because it is not universalist, but particularistic. It is not independent of civilisation, culture, country or indeed religion.

The consequences of this communitarian ethics are spelled out in the EKD's account of the *Grundgesetz*. Again, the statements on Islam point to the neutrality of the state, but now the neutrality of the state is interpreted in a communitarian rather than a cosmopolitan fashion: 'The church affirms the principle of the neutrality of the democratic state towards all worldviews. Precisely this ... neutral state that privileges no religion,

62. EKD, *Klarheit*, p. 19.

63. EKD, *Klarheit*, p. 43.

64. Any hermeneutics that prioritises quantity over quality ought to be questioned, particularly if criteria for the counting are not made transparent. According to Arnulf von Scheliha, 'Die religionstheologische Hermeneutik der EKD-Handreichung', in Miksch (ed.), *Evangelisch aus fundamentalem Grund*, pp. 65–79, the lack of a comparison to the Bible showcases the self-idealisation of Christianity in the EKD statement.

65. EKD, *Klarheit*, pp. 20–21.

66. EKD, *Klarheit*, pp. 20–21, 35. Taking up a classic Islamophobic cliché, the authors argue that inequality between women and men is ingrained in Islam (pp. 39–42). The statement stresses that such inequality can be caused by culture, as the discrimination of women among Christians demonstrates. Yet through sharia, the authors continue, Islam has allied itself with a culture of inequality so that culture reinforces religion as much as religion reinforces culture. Zentrum für islamische Frauenforschung (ZiF), 'Offene Fragen zum Zusammenleben von Muslimen und Christen', in Miksch (ed.), *Evangelisch aus fundamentalem Grund*, pp. 293–310, points out that the EKD statement offers neither primary nor secondary sources for its suggestion about Islam's inherent gender inequality. See also Zentrum für islamische Frauenforschung, *Ein einziges Wort und seine große Wirkung: Eine hermeneutische Betrachtungsweise zum Qur'an, Sure 4, Vers 32, mit Blick auf das Geschlechterverhältnis im Islam* (Köln: ZiF, 2005).

67. The EKD ignores statements, such as the 'Islamische Charta' of 2002, published by the Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (<https://www.zentralrat.de/3035.php>). The charta argues that there is no contradiction between Islamic rights and human rights.

however, is dependent on the formative powers that come from Christianity'.⁶⁸ The neutrality of the state is claimed as a Christian rather than a non-Christian invention, characterised as a consequence of the Reformation's concept of faith which anchored the relation to God in individual Christians rather than Christian institutions.⁶⁹ By contrast, Islam is characterised as a religion that cannot protect dignity.⁷⁰ Accordingly, the EKD concludes its statement on Islam with a critique of the concept of the 'multicultural society'.⁷¹

Altogether, then, the EKD's statements on Islam have been consistent since the 2000s, with 9/11 foregrounding a critique of Islam that had been formulated before. The concept of human dignity, rooted in the *imago Dei*, is central to the ethics of engaging Muslims. But it is the dignity of the Christians that needs to be protected. By tracing the protection of dignity in the *Grundgesetz* to Christianity, the EKD interprets the neutrality of the state as a Christian invention. Islam is interpreted as a threat to such neutrality. Ethically, the EKD's approach to Islam is communitarian rather than cosmopolitan, particularist rather than universalist. Yet how are the people who arrive in Germany introduced and interpreted? As my analysis of the Muslim frame has indicated, throughout the EKD's statements on Islam, they are addressed as active rather than passive, identified by the risk they represent. Religion is seen as a negative feature because it is primarily related to the refugees rather than the receivers.

Cracking Ethical Frames: Shaking Hands with People on the Move

Presenting the migrant frame and the Muslim frame in parallel points to the chasm that separates the EKD's statements on immigration from the EKD's statements on Islam. Again, the people to which these statements refer are not necessarily identical: in Germany there are Muslims who are not migrants and there are migrants who are not Muslims. Yet, given that there is significant overlap between them, the chasm is curious. The same theological trope—the *imago Dei*—is theorised in both frames, but with decidedly different consequences.

Throughout, the dignity that safeguards the equality of all human beings is traced back to the Bible, where human beings are said to be created in God's image. However, the significance of the Bible for the protection of dignity has conflicting consequences for the people on the move who have arrived in Germany, depending on the frame in which they are limned: in the case of immigration, dignity is interpreted in a way that

68. EKD, *Christlicher Glaube*, p. 21. Here, the EKD alludes to Ernst Wolfgang Böckenförde's account of the rise of the state through the process of secularisation. Böckenförde's conclusion that the liberal state draws on presuppositions that it cannot itself guarantee is a repeated reference in debates about the role of religion in the public square in Germany. See Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Constitutional and Political Theory: Selected Writings*, ed. Mirjam Künkler and Tine Stein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

69. EKD, *Christlicher Glaube*, pp. 21–22.

70. See again EKD, *Klarheit*, pp. 20–21.

71. EKD, *Klarheit*, p. 48.

calls for confirming the presence of migrants in Germany; in the case of Islam, dignity is interpreted in a way that calls for curtailing the presence of Muslims in Germany.

Religion is also accounted for in different ways. In the case of immigration, religion is seen as a resource brought by the receivers rather than the refugees. It is the receivers' religion that motivates the EKD to promote the other's accommodation in the country. In the case of Islam, religion is seen as a risk brought by the refugees rather than the receivers. It is the refugees' religion that motivates the EKD to prevent the other's accommodation in the country. Particularly after the attacks of 9/11, the church recognises the ambiguities of all religions. However, drawing on a distinction between revelation and religion reminiscent of Barth, Christianity is taken out of these ambiguities. Religion's potential to cause conflict is allocated differently: *Islam* is the religion that is dangerous. Correspondingly, in the migrant frame the other is seen as passive rather than active, a receiver of support whose religion is irrelevant; in the Muslim frame the other is seen as active rather than passive, a producer of struggle whose religion is relevant.

Both frames confine people on the move to the role that has been ascribed to them by the respective ethical approach. If seen through the cosmopolitan migrant frame, the other cannot be registered as active anymore, she is a victim. If seen through the communitarian Muslim frame, the other cannot be registered as passive anymore, he is a victimiser.

These frames map onto what Susanna Snyder has analysed as an 'ecology of faith' and an 'ecology of fear' in her account of the Bible as a resource for churches' responses to asylum seekers.⁷² By 'ecology', Snyder means 'a space within which different kinds of encounter can happen', clarifying that different ecologies lead to different encounters, thus defining what sort of relationship can be established between refugees and receivers.⁷³ Elena Fiddian-Qasmieh's intersectionalist interpretation of public discourse in the current so-called refugee crisis has exposed a binary representation of the 'good Muslim' in contrast to the 'bad Muslim'.⁷⁴ Similar to Snyder, Fiddian-Qasmieh suggests that these representations affect people on the move in as much as they constrain both the refugees and the receivers in their response to the European migration regime.⁷⁵

The chasm between the cosmopolitan migrant frame and the communitarian Muslim frame is particularly pressing for ethicists because the frames cancel each other out. Given that most asylum seekers who arrive in Germany currently come from countries with

72 See Susanna Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 139–62, 163–96. For a succinct summary, see also Susanna Snyder, 'Encountering Asylum Seekers: An Ethic of Fear or Faith?', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 24.3 (2011), pp. 350–66.

73. Snyder, 'Fear or Faith?', p. 355.

74. Elena Fiddian-Qasmieh, 'The Faith-Gender-Asylum-Nexus: An Intersectionalist Analysis of Representations of the "Refugee Crisis"', in Luca Mavelli and Erin K. Wilson (eds.), *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), pp. 207–21. For the concept of culture talk that runs through Fiddian-Qasmieh's interpretation, see Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon, 2004).

75. Fiddian-Qasmieh, 'The Faith-Gender-Asylum-Nexus', pp. 218–19.

Muslim majorities, Christians in Germany who would like to follow the guidance from the EKD are confronted with a dilemma. It is not clear why they should welcome migrants, given that by virtue of being Muslims, most of these migrants are supposed to be threatening. It is not clear why they should not welcome Muslims, given that by virtue of being migrants, most of these Muslims are supposed to be threatened.

The people on the move themselves are not subjects, but objects of these ethical frames. According to Kristin Heyer, the approaches of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism prioritise the acts of migrants as sites for policy interventions, thus losing track of the social, structural and systemic sites of the il/legalisation of migration.⁷⁶ Drawing on Mae Ngai, Heyer explains that in both approaches, people on the move become ‘impossible subjects’, ‘persons who cannot be ... , produced by immigration restrictions’.⁷⁷ In the ethics presented by the EKD, the tension between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism that leads to the production of these impossible subjects is distributed in two frames, but in the actual encounter with the people on the move who have arrived in Germany, these frames collide. German ethicists have highlighted the overlap of ‘migrantness’ and ‘Muslimness’ in public perception.⁷⁸ Arnulf von Scheliha proposes that this perception could be countered by pointing to intra- and inter-religious plurality among people on the move.⁷⁹ While I agree with his pointer, I suggest that this perception—which, as mentioned above, has a foothold in the statistical data about asylum seekers in Germany—is taken as a point of departure to bring together reflections on immigration and reflections on Islam.⁸⁰

The scene at the station in Munich, where the chairman of the EKD, Bedford-Strohm, welcomed people on the move together with his colleague from the Catholic Church, could be characterised as an encounter with the impossible subjects Heyer writes about. Hence, by analysing this scene, I aim to assess how the encounter called into question both the migrant frame and the Muslim frame. Performatively, I argue, the scene at the station allows the people on the move to come into view as persons who are neither simply passive threatened migrants nor simply active threatening Muslims. They are

76. See Kristin Heyer, ‘Migration, Social Responsibility and Moral Imagination: Resources from Christian Ethics’, in Silas Allard, Kristin Heyer and Raj Nadella (eds.), *Christianity and the Law of Migration* (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 230–48. See also Kristin Heyer, *Kinship Across Borders. A Christian Ethic of Immigration* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012).

77. Heyer, ‘Migrants Feared and Forsaken’, p. 159, drawing on Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

78. See the summary by Mira Sievers, ‘Beobachterinnenbericht zum Forum: Wie verändert Migration die Gesellschaft?’, in Christian Ströbele, Mohammad Gharaibeh, Anja Middelbeck-Varwick and Amir Dziri (eds.), *Migration, Flucht, Vertreibung: Orte islamischer und christlicher Theologie* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2018), pp. 118–22.

79. Arnulf von Scheliha, *Religionspolitik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), pp. 332–33.

80. Armina Omerika, ‘Migration und Flucht als existenzielle Erfahrungen im Kontext des Islam’, in Ströbele et al. (eds.), *Migration, Flucht, Vertreibung*, pp. 77–94, proposes that shared experiences of migration might provoke a re-thinking of categories of religion.

more than the frameworks through which they are approached. The scene stresses that something is missing from both the cosmopolitan ethics of engaging migrants and the communitarian ethics of engaging Muslims—the people on the move themselves.

Bedford-Strohm explained that the scene at the station happened spontaneously. He was having lunch with his colleague Marx, when their phones kept interrupting them, buzzing with news of the arriving trains. They decided to make their way to the station to welcome the arrivers.⁸¹ For somebody like Bedford-Strohm, a pastor and a professor, then chairing the council of the EKD, shaking hands is day-to-day business. Given his position, he will have had countless handshake photo opportunities. But there is more to the handshakes at the station. Investigating practices such as these handshakes is not meant to pit symbolic performances against programmatic statements. On the contrary, my point is to show how both the performative and the propositional impact the ethics of migration in practice.

In *Touch: Recovering Our Most Vital Sense*, Richard Kearney argues that ‘the first act of civilisation was touch: the handshake between two people laying down their arms to place one bare palm on another’.⁸² The handshake is crucial to Kearney’s ‘carnal hermeneutics’, the interpretation of the surplus of meaning that arises from carnal embodiment.⁸³ Drawing on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, he describes touch as a ‘double sensation’ where touching and being touched come together.⁸⁴ The handshake is a poignant example of ‘flesh experiencing flesh in a fundamental reciprocal way’.⁸⁵ It clarifies that touching means being touched.⁸⁶ As Robert Vosloo argues, ‘the embodied performativity’ encapsulated in touch communicates ‘mutual recognition of one’s shared humanity’.⁸⁷ The handshake, then, has potential for both personal and political ethics.⁸⁸ The ‘political wagers of touch’⁸⁹ that Kearney presents have a role to play in encounters between refugees and receivers, particularly when religion is involved.

In *The Real Peace Process*, Siobhán Garrigan explores the significance of greeting gestures for liturgy.⁹⁰ During her fieldwork on sectarianism in Ireland, Garrigan

81. See Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, ‘Vorwort’, in Picker, *Flüchtlingsethik*, pp. xi–xiii.

82. Richard Kearney, *Touch: Recovering Our Most Vital Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), p. 15.

83. Richard Kearney, ‘What is Carnal Hermeneutics?’, *New Literary History* 46.1 (2015), pp. 99–124.

84. Kearney, *Touch*, p. 46.

85. Kearney, *Touch*, p. 46.

86. Kearney, *Touch*, p. 119.

87. Robert Vosloo, ‘Touch Gives Rise to Thought: Paul Ricoeur and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela on Mutual Recognition and Carnal Hermeneutics’, in Daniël P. Veldsman and Yolande Steenkamp (eds.), *Debating Otherness with Richard Kearney: Perspectives from South Africa* (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2018), pp. 273–85 (280).

88. Kearney, *Touch*, p. 42.

89. Kearney, *Touch*, p. 15.

90. Siobhán Garrigan, *The Real Peace Process: Worship, Politics, and the End of Sectarianism* (London: Equinox, 2010).

studied how newcomers are welcomed in churches. She argues ‘that church participates in sectarianism ... at those seemingly benign moments, like saying hello at the church doors’.⁹¹ Drawing on Garrigan’s study, the scene at the station can be read in a new light, both sociologically and theologically.

Sociologically, Garrigan observed two extremes when entering churches as a newcomer: interrogation and ignorance. On the one hand, interrogating the newcomer ‘is one of the main ways in which sectarian relations are reinforced’, because it allows the church to separate insiders from outsiders.⁹² According to Garrigan, vetting the newcomer at the door actualises the formal and informal procedures of interrogation that are in place in several contexts in Ireland, whether intentionally or unintentionally. On the other hand, ignoring the newcomer communicates that ‘there is no category of “guest”’ so that again ‘you are either an insider or an outsider’.⁹³ There is no support for the newcomer here either. According to Garrigan, both gestures—interrogating and ignoring—tell the newcomers ‘that they do not really belong in this environment’.⁹⁴

What might seem too sketchy and too superficial a gesture at the station—a handshake here, a handshake there—can be characterised as a careful attempt to strike a balance between the extremes of interrogating and ignoring. Prior to their arrival in Munich, most refugees will have experienced both extremes as some of the trains were stopped and stood for hours in the blistering sun in Hungary. Whatever else the handshakes of the two men might have meant to the refugees arriving at the station in Munich, then, it communicated a welcome. Through their open hands, the smiling clergymen resisted the reinforcement of a strict distinction between insiders and outsiders so central to the sectarianisms that Garrigan studied.

Theologically, a handshake is more than a gesture of greeting. Garrigan points out that the passing of the peace in church ‘usually transpires as a handshake’.⁹⁵ In antiquity, the peace was passed through a kiss. ‘Following Christ’s command to “leave mother and brother and follow me”’, Garrigan explains, ‘the earliest Christians adopted the sign of filial bond (a kiss on the lips usually being reserved for one’s immediate family members only) to indicate that the people with whom they gathered in Christian community were now their family’.⁹⁶ Although it fell out of fashion for a while, the passing of the peace was re-introduced into the liturgies of many churches.⁹⁷ Garrigan argues that the gesture is about ‘God’s own gift of peace that we are called to signal to one another. It is a universal peace in which we are invited to participate by God’s grace, not just some gesture for our little denomination to feel self-satisfied about. It is

91. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 71.

92. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 71.

93. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 73.

94. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 74.

95. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 86.

96. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 88, drawing on Edward L. Philips, *The Ritual Kiss in Early Christian Worship* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1996).

97. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 88.

potentially the most reconciling gesture in the whole of Christian worship'.⁹⁸ The scene at the station, then, could be captured as a passing of peace.

While there is no formal formulation that stipulates passing the peace in Muslim communities, it is practised by many, often after Friday Prayer. Derived from the Qur'an, '*as-salamu alaykum*' means 'Peace be upon you'. Often it is accompanied by a handshake. The shaking of hands, then, takes on new significance. Given its history as a symbol that demarcates members from non-members, the scene at the station opens the gesture up: peace is passed from the Christian to the Muslim and from the Muslim to the Christian. The scene comes close to Pope Francis' engagement with migrants, including three Muslims, whose feet he washed during a service in a refugee reception centre near Rome a few years ago.⁹⁹ In her analysis of this service, Snyder argues that 'liturgical habits such as footwashing brim with potential' to challenge established powers and established perceptions that shape migration ethics.¹⁰⁰ Although the handshakes at the station are perhaps less obvious as habits, they hold a similar potential, particularly in view of multi-faith encounters.

In 'On the Touch-Event: Theopolitical Encounters', Valentina Napolitano analyses the theological and the anthropological significance of touch. She argues that touch events, such as the handshakes I have investigated, hold 'a moment of disruption that becomes an event within existing infrastructures'.¹⁰¹ Napolitano shows how 'the Christian touch—in some of its theopolitical forms—becomes the ... dwelling of an immanent otherwise to the Law'.¹⁰² Methodologically, her concern is to criticise the equation of theology with the transcendent and anthropology with the immanent.¹⁰³ Yet, theologically, she presents a variety of touch events—again, Pope Francis features prominently—to point to the 'potentially messianic' significance of touch as a force that calls ethical and political norms into question. Napolitano's analysis supports my interpretation of the handshakes in the station at Munich, including their significance for an ethics of migration that goes beyond the capture of people on the move in either a cosmopolitan migrant frame or a communitarian Muslim frame.

However, handshakes are far from benign. In the context of inter-cultural encounters, handshakes have stirred up controversy across Europe. Historically, the handshake implies that two equals are meeting.¹⁰⁴ Not only in Germany have cases made headlines where men refused to shake hands with women, claiming that their Muslim faith prohibits

98. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 90.

99. Susanna Snyder, 'Walking, Wounds and Washing Feet: Pedetic Textures of a Theo-Ethical Response to Migration', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 32.1 (2019), pp. 3–19 (10).

100. Snyder, 'Walking, Wounds and Washing Feet', p. 19.

101. Valentina Napolitano, 'On the Touch-Event: Theopolitical Encounters', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 64.4 (2020), pp. 81–99 (82).

102. Napolitano, 'Touch-Event', p. 85.

103. Napolitano, 'Touch-Event', p. 89.

104. See again Kearney, *Touch*, pp. 15, 42.

such touch.¹⁰⁵ In public and political debates, this has led to recurring reflections on whether Islam can or cannot be integrated into the country.¹⁰⁶ Had the encounter at the station been planned, the clergymen might have chosen a less conspicuous and less controversial gesture, such as putting their hands on their hearts. In the short scene at the station, however, the clergymen seem to make no distinction between women and men. The gesture is reciprocated by both women and men. Of course, the open hands of the clergymen could be interpreted as some sort of colonial embrace, where the arriviers are not even asked whether they want to follow the custom. But what happens at the station looks otherwise. Some approach the two clergymen reluctantly, sometimes responding and sometimes not responding to their open hands. Some try to exit the scene altogether. What is remarkable is that none of it is considered problematic. The handshake is day-to-day business. Whether it is or is not reciprocated, it is fine.

Arguably, the approach signalled in the encounters at the station is reflected in the statements on immigration and Islam that the EKD has published since 2015. There is no way to prove that the handshakes provoked the new statements of the EKD. Many factors, including shifts in the portrayal of people on the move in the media, play a role here.¹⁰⁷ Again, my point is not to pitch symbolic performances against programmatic statements. On the contrary, my point is that the EKD's most recent statements destabilise and disrupt the frames through which it had approached migrants and Muslims thus far—just like the handshakes.

While migration dominated the news, the EKD published a new statement on encounters between religions.¹⁰⁸ Theologically, the statement affirms plurality. Against the well-worn alternatives of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism in the theology of religions, the authors argue that the truth of religion is not 'completed', so that no clear-cut claim to truth can be made.¹⁰⁹ For the cohabitation of Christians and

105. In Germany, Thomas de Maizière, then Federal Minister of the Interior, argued in “Wir sind nicht Burka”: De Maizières Thesen zur Leitkultur’, *Bild*, 2 May 2017, that it is crucial to German *Leitkultur* that men and women shake hands. An abbreviated version is available at <https://www.bild.de/news/aktuelles/news/wir-sind-nicht-burka-de-maizieres-thesen-51560496.bild.html>. Jürgen Habermas responded that, given the German constitution, ‘Keine Muslima muss Herrn de Maizière die Hand geben’, no Muslim women needs to shake Mr de Maizière’s hand. See Jürgen Habermas, ‘Keine Muslime muss Herrn de Maizière die Hand geben’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 3 May 2017, available at <http://www.rp-online.de/politik/deutschland/leitkultur-das-sagt-juergen-habermas-zur-debatte-aid-1.6793232>.

106. For an analysis of the debate, see Ufuk Olgun, ‘Does Islam Belong to Germany? On the Political Situation of Islam in Germany’, in Maria Grazia Martino (ed.), *The State as an Actor in Religion Policy: Policy Cycle and Governance Perspectives on Institutionalized Religion* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2015), pp. 71–84.

107. For a cross-country analysis, see Myria Georgiou and Rafal Zaborowski, *Media Coverage of the Refugee Crisis: A Cross-European Perspective. Council of Europe Report* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2017).

108. EKD, *Christlicher Glaube und religiöse Vielfalt in evangelischer Perspektive* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015).

109. EKD, *Vielfalt*, p. 36.

non-Christians in Germany, the EKD's new affirmation of plurality means that Christianity is not the 'civil religion' of the *Grundgesetz*.¹¹⁰ On the contrary, there ought to be multiple approaches to the freedom of religion guaranteed by the *Grundgesetz*. Alluding to the concept of constitutional patriotism, the authors of the statement insist that the *Grundgesetz* is not dependent on a confession to the Christian faith.¹¹¹ Thus, the statement differentiates between 'Genese' und 'Geltung', clarifying that, although Christianity might have been crucial to the genesis of the *Grundgesetz*, the constitution is open to multiple ways of life in its application. The statement points to the *Grundgesetz* to deal with the plurality of religious and non-religious worldviews in the public square, but unlike previous EKD publications, it does not describe Christianity as neutral and neutrality as Christian.

Islam is mentioned positively rather than negatively. The authors recognise that Islam is increasingly interpreted as a threat to the 'identity of Europe'.¹¹² To counter such interpretations, the authors argue that European Islam has made significant contributions to European life throughout history.¹¹³ The differentiation between European and non-European Islam that they introduce clarifies that Islam is itself also European. In the public and political debate about whether Islam does or does not belong to Germany, then, the EKD has given a new answer. Practically, the question of how to encounter the other is taken to the local level—to the congregations, where democratic procedures ought to be developed to allow all congregants to make their decisions:¹¹⁴ 'Today nobody can claim to be capable of deciding about community with others based on their certificates of baptism'.¹¹⁵ Instead, encounters are crucial. Statements like these led Joshua Ralston to refer to the current so-called refugee crisis as a 'kairos moment' for dialogue with Muslims.¹¹⁶ This 'kairos moment' is also apparent in the EKD's new statement on migration.

In collaboration with the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland*, a committee connecting a variety of churches, the paradigmatic statement that the EKD published with the German Bishop's Conference in the 1990s was updated. Published in 2021, the title of the new statement, *Migration menschenwürdig gestalten*, highlights

110. EKD, *Vielfalt*, p. 23.

111. EKD, *Vielfalt*, p. 24. For the debate about the *Grundgesetz*, see Andreas Fisch, 'Wie verändert Migration die Gesellschaft? Über die angemessenen Orte von Gelassenheit und Entschiedenheit im gesellschaftlichen Dialog', in Ströbele et al. (eds.), *Migration, Flucht, Vertreibung*, pp. 97–109. Fisch presents three approaches to the *Grundgesetz*. Arguably, the EKD is moving towards constitutional patriotism, thus somewhat relativising Böckenförde's theory mentioned above.

112. EKD, *Vielfalt*, p. 67.

113. EKD, *Vielfalt*, p. 67.

114. EKD, *Vielfalt*, p. 46.

115. EKD, *Vielfalt*, p. 49.

116. See Joshua Ralston, 'Migration as a Kairos Moment for Protestant-Muslim Dialogue', *Concilium* 4 (2020), pp. 34–43.

the significance of human dignity for the churches' ethics of migration.¹¹⁷ While the approach remains the same—the authors draw on biblical and ethical reflections in conversation with historical, social, legal and political studies—the statement has grown from about 100 to about 200 pages. One reason is that the new statement connects what had been disconnected so far: immigration and Islam.

The statement acknowledges that there is overlap between migrants and Muslims.¹¹⁸ Intersectionally, the authors point to the securitisation of migrants and Muslims as a consequence of the terror attacks that followed in the wake of 9/11, criticising that both are met with suspicion.¹¹⁹ The consequence is that 'anti-Muslim racism'—it is striking that the authors opted against the softer and shallower term 'Islamophobia'—is recognised as a challenge for churches.¹²⁰ Christianity stands against racism.¹²¹ Christians have the responsibility to resist interpretations and instrumentalisations of their religion that target others, particularly Muslims.¹²² To counter such interpretations and instrumentalisations, the authors point to networks of interreligious dialogue.¹²³ 'Faith communities stand by each other'.¹²⁴ Here, the statement clarifies that Muslims can help Christians as much as Christians can help Muslims. Both are active agents. To address the challenge of societal cohesion, plurality—explained as both an intra- and an inter-religious phenomenon—ought to be accepted as a 'normal' condition that occurs with or without migratory movements.¹²⁵ Normatively, the authors root plurality in the *imago Dei*.¹²⁶

The preface of the statement makes clear: 'Migration is not an abstract ... phenomenon. It is about concrete human beings'.¹²⁷ Hence, the authors outline a 'compass of migration ethics' to offer orientation for concrete ethical and political decision-making processes.¹²⁸ While the universality of human dignity is confirmed,¹²⁹ the authors bring communitarian and cosmopolitan approaches to justice into conversation with each other,¹³⁰ leading to nuanced suggestions for migration policy on local, national and global levels. In this new statement, then, the migrant frame and the Muslim

117. EKD and DBK in collaboration with the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland, *Migration menschenwürdig gestalten. Gemeinsames Wort der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz und des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland in Zusammenarbeit mit der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland* (Bonn/Hannover: DBK/EKD, 2021). See particularly pp. 70–74 for a detailed discussion of dignity.

118. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 31.

119. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 35.

120. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 63.

121. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 199.

122. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, pp. 199–200.

123. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 201.

124. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 201.

125. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 30.

126. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 80.

127. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 10.

128. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 96.

129. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, pp. 100–104.

130. EKD, DBK et al., *Migration*, p. 99.

frame are brought into conversation with each other—a conversation which calls both frames into question. Migration ethics is opened to intersectional analyses of the effects that come with the identification of people on the move as ‘migrant’ or ‘Muslim’.

Altogether, the surplus of meaning communicated through the handshakes at the station crack open the cosmopolitan ethics of engaging migrants and the communitarian ethics of engaging Muslims communicated by the EKD. Both sociologically and theologically, the welcome clarifies that these frames cannot capture the people who arrive: the chairmen of the churches meet neither only passive victims nor only active victimisers. The people who have arrived in Germany cannot be reduced to the respective framing. Performatively, the handshakes open these frames for ethical re-considerations which can be seen in the statements on immigration and Islam that the EKD published since.

Countering Ethical Frames: Multi-Faith Practice as a Point of Departure

To summarise: I have assessed the tension between cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches by analysing the EKD’s announcements and actions during the current so-called refugee crisis. I have argued that the statements of the EKD frame people on the move either as migrants or as Muslims. These frames come with competing ethical consequences. However, when the chairman of the EKD shook hands with people on the move arriving at Munich, the handshakes highlighted that these people cannot be reduced to their respective framing, thus resisting the construction of both the cosmopolitan migrant frame and the communitarian Muslim frame. By way of conclusion, I would like to advocate for a re-conceptualisation of Christian migration ethics that takes multi-faith encounters, such as the handshakes at the station, as a point of departure to tackle the controversies stirred up by migration in dialogue with Islam.

Globally, communities of refugees and communities of receivers have become more and more diverse.¹³¹ This pluralisation is perceived as problematic,¹³² particularly when politicians and pundits pedal the construct of a clash of civilisations.¹³³ Hence, any ethics of migration must take both religious pluralisation and perceptions of religious pluralisation into account. The EKD’s earlier statements on immigration and Islam cancel each other out because they tackle the issue of migration in isolation from pluralisation and the issue of pluralisation in isolation from migration. Yet, as the handshakes at the station exemplify, migration means that Christians encounter Muslims, that Muslims encounter Christians, and that their encounters require theological reflection. For such

131. See Joey Ager and Alastair Ager, ‘Challenging the Discourse on Religion, Secularism and Displacement’, in Mavelli and Wilson (eds.), *The Refugee Crisis and Religion*, pp. 37–51.

132. See again Pickel, ‘Perceptions’, pp. 15–37.

133. For the significance of the construct of the clash of civilisations for anti-immigration and anti-Islam propaganda, see Strømme and Schmiedel, *The Claim*, pp. 1–37.

theological reflection, Christian ethicists need to take Islam into account.¹³⁴ The theologies that form and inform Muslims' ways of belonging, believing and behaving are crucial for any ethics that aims to come to terms with Muslims arriving in countries with Christian majorities (or Christians arriving in countries with Muslim majorities).¹³⁵ The challenge must be confronted together.¹³⁶

To avoid the reproduction of a static communitarianism or a static cosmopolitanism as standard responses, a turn to the practices of refugee relief could be helpful. In migration studies, recent scholarship has concentrated on official and unofficial networks working with refugees, including faith-based organisations.¹³⁷ These organisations are more and more open to cooperation across faiths.¹³⁸ Maybritt Lyck-Bowen conducted a pilot study on what she presents as 'a multi-religious approach to integration' which had been initiated by the European Council of Religious Leaders. She investigated a variety of multi-faith refugee relief initiatives across Europe.¹³⁹ Lyck-Bowen points out that the post-secular turn in migration studies has led to investigations of religion as a bridge factor or a boundary factor for the integration of people on the move into their new countries, yet there is very little literature about multi-faith practices.¹⁴⁰ The same holds for theological ethics. There has been a surge of studies on the ethics of migration among theologians. While there are studies in comparative ethics that put Christian theology in touch with Islam (or Islamic theology in touch with Christianity), the ethics of migration is dominated by approaches that draw on the theology of one religion only. For a situation characterised by increased and intensified pluralisation, where migrants and

134. Drawing on the theologies of Calvinism and neo-Calvinism, Matthew Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018) argues that Christian hospitality must engage Muslims. However, Kaemingk's argument rests on a separation of the theological (where his position is exclusivist) from the political (where his position is inclusivist). By contrast, I argue that multi-faith practices can make a difference to both the theological and the political. For a more detailed discussion of Kaemingk, see my review in Ulrich Schmiedel, 'Review of Matthew J. Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear*', *Modern Believing* 63.1 (2022), pp. 76–78.

135. For a helpful overview, see the contributions to Ray Jureidini and Said Fares Hassan (eds.), *Migration and Islamic Ethics: Issues of Residence, Naturalisation and Citizenship* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

136. See also Amir Dziri and Anja Middelbeck-Varwick, 'Flucht, Migration, Vertreibung—Herausforderung für die christliche und islamische Theologie', in Ströbele et al. (eds.), *Migration, Flucht, Vertreibung*, pp. 299–310.

137. For a short summary, see Benjamin Boudou, Hans Leaman and Maximilian Miguel Scholz, 'Introduction: Religion and Refugees', *Migration and Society: Advances in Research* 4 (2021), pp. 99–109.

138. Maybritt Lyck-Bowen and Mark Owen, 'A Multi-Religious Response to the Migrant Crisis in Europe: A Preliminary Examination of Potential Benefits of Multi-Religious Cooperation on the Integration of Migrants', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45.1 (2019), pp. 21–41.

139. Lyck-Bowen and Owen, 'A Multi-Religious Response', p. 23.

140. Lyck-Bowen and Owen, 'A Multi-Religious Response', p. 26.

Muslims are identified as targets for hate and hate crime, Christian ethicists cannot be complacent with the current state of the field.

Snyder has argued that the public and political perception of people on the move needs to be considered in order to address the social, cultural, political and economic ‘roots of fear’ that provoke prejudices against migrants.¹⁴¹ Prejudices against Islam would have to be added to her list.¹⁴² Anti-Muslim racism is on the rise across Europe.¹⁴³ Drawing on her pilot study, Lyck-Bowen suggests that multi-faith cooperation might allow scholars to tackle it.¹⁴⁴ There is evidence that multi-faith initiatives allow people on the move to better understand the role that religion plays in their new country.¹⁴⁵ Dichotomies between insiders and outsiders that are rooted in religion—as in the clash of civilisations—are destabilised.¹⁴⁶ People on the move are empowered to establish networks in their new country, across religious and non-religious boundaries.¹⁴⁷ Given this evidence, ethicists could and should mine multi-faith practices to develop a theological ethics of migration. Napolitano’s ‘touch event’ is a helpful conceptual category to tackle both the anthropological and the theological dimensions of a variety of touches characterising these practices. Touch, the carnal communication at the centre of Kearney’s hermeneutics, is crucial for Christian ethics, as Vosloo and Snyder have shown. It is also, I suggest, crucial for opening Christian ethics to multi-faith practice. Particularly where the performative is ahead of the propositional, as in the station in Munich, migration ethics ought to take such practices into account.

To be sure, I am not advocating for Christian ethics to be turned into comparative ethics. Christian ethicists ought to draw on the themes, tropes and traditions of Christianity to develop a Christian ethics of migration. Yet I am advocating for the Christian ethics of migration to be opened to the other—in this case, to Islam. The turn to multi-faith practices would avoid the chasm between accounts of immigration and Islam so prevalent in the EKD’s earlier statements. Empirical explorations of such practices would enable the people on the move themselves to be present in the ethical reflection. The approaches of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism would not be obsolete, but ethicists could consider them in a new way—informed by multi-faith practice.

141. Snyder, ‘Fear or Faith?’, pp. 352–54. See also Snyder, *Asylum-Seeking, Migration and Church*, pp. 197–214.

142. Lyck-Bowen and Owen, ‘A Multi-Religious Response’, p. 26.

143. See Maleiha Malik (ed.), *Anti-Muslim Prejudice: Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 2010).

144. Majbritt Lyck-Bowen, ‘A Multireligious Approach to the Integration of Migrants in Europe: An Examination of Migrants’ Views on and Experiences of Taking Part in Multireligious Integration Projects’, *Border Crossings* 9.2 (2019), pp. 79–96 and Majbritt Lyck-Bowen, ‘Multireligious Cooperation and the Integration of Muslim Migrants in Sweden’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 690 (2020), pp. 168–74.

145. Lyck-Bowen, ‘A Multireligious Approach’, pp. 86–87.

146. Lyck-Bowen, ‘A Multireligious Approach’, p. 89.

147. Lyck-Bowen, ‘A Multireligious Approach’, p. 90.

Drawing on her fieldwork about peace-passing, Garrigan points to the consequences of such a turn to practice in liturgy. She suggests that in a conflictual context, any theology is always already seen 'to be in the service of one community', so that it is confirmed by insiders and criticised by outsiders.¹⁴⁸ 'Both groups would be likely to say, therefore, that my theology was not relevant to them'.¹⁴⁹ In response, Garrigan argues that the theological tables have to be turned: there is no need for theologians to develop a theology of reconciliation in order to pass the peace, but for theologians to pass the peace in order to develop a theology of reconciliation.¹⁵⁰ Of course, Garrigan's response cannot be transposed from intra- to inter-religious engagements in any simple or straightforward way, but the conclusion she draws is crucial for the ethics of migration in the current so-called refugee crisis: 'Ours is not a situation in which a singular theology is going to offer much insight. Indeed, ecclesial efforts at reconciliation may well have been hampered by the supposed norm of needing to discover a common theological formulation in order to acknowledge belief in the one ... God'.¹⁵¹ If Garrigan is correct, then multi-faith encounters in refugee relief practices might not be the consequence, but the condition for a theological ethics of migration that can address the current pluralised and polarised situation. A handshake at a station would not be the end. It would be a beginning.


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148. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 208.

149. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 209.

150. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 188.

151. Garrigan, *Peace*, p. 188.