

Interreligious Breakfast

Vienna, Austria

6. May 2017

By Elisabeth Cook

An Interreligious Breakfast meeting is taking place every other month at Vienna Headquarters, organized by our brother **Alois Seidl**, who keeps contact to many different religious groups and individuals.

The meeting has become well known among religious groups because every group gets the chance to introduce their belief or organisation, something of which they are happy about and grateful for. After the introduction of 2-3- groups usually someone of the Family Federation speaks about the Divine Principle and our organisations. This time I explained about True Parents and the Blessing, and all the guests got a booklet about the Blessing ("Liebende Familien und Weltfriede"). At other occasions, we used to distribute True Father's autobiography to all the guests.

This time the groups which introduced themselves were the **Ahmadiyya Muslim Community**, is an Islamic religious movement founded in Punjab, India, near the end of the 19th century. It originated with the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908), who claimed to have appeared as the divinely appointed Mujaddid (renewer) of Islam, the promised Messiah and Mahdi awaited by Muslims. Thus, Ahmadis view themselves as leading the revival and peaceful propagation of Islam. Contemporary Islamic thought and mainstream Muslims consider Ahmadi Muslims as heretics. That's why they face heavy persecution in Muslim countries,



The speaker of the Spiritists' Group with Alois Seidl, the initiator of the Interreligious breakfast meetings.

especially in the country of their origin, today's Pakistan.

At the breakfast meeting the presenter of the Ahmadis explained that Ahmadiyya adherents believe that Ahmad appeared in the likeness of Jesus, to end religious wars, condemn bloodshed and reinstitute morality, justice, and peace. Also, in his words, Islam needs to divest itself from fanatical thoughts and needs to be purified by returning to its roots.

We all felt very uplifted by his description.

The second group which introduced themselves was the **Spiritists' Association**. Their beliefs are based on a spiritualistic philosophy from the 19th century. The founder is the French educator Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, known under the codename **Allan Kardec**. His book, **The Spirits Book** is the basis of their beliefs.

Spiritism postulates that humans are essentially immortal spirits that temporarily inhabit physical bodies for several necessary incarnations to attain moral and intellectual improvement. It also asserts that spirits, through passive or

active mediumship, may have beneficent or maleficent influence on the physical world.

In the early 1930-ies some spirit mediums received revelations that Allan Kardec is a prophet of a new universal religion.

Today Spiritism is widespread in Vietnam and specially in Brazil where it is the third largest religion of the country. In Austria, it is mainly represented by Brazilian immigrants. They are divided into three groups.

The lady's presentation at the breakfast meeting was very moving, because she emphasized Jesus' love for all fallen people.

At the meeting there were also members of the **Gülen movement**, an Islamic transnational religious and social movement led by Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen.

One of the main goals of the movement is to provide better education to the people, regardless of their social class.

Since 2015 the Gülen movement is classified as a terrorist organization by Turkey. After the failed coup attempt in 2016, the government of Turkey blamed the group for the coup. Fethullah Gülen condemned the coup and denied his involvement. But his followers are being persecuted in Turkey and also in all other countries.

After the presentations, the participants stayed until lunchtime in order to share and get to know each other better. At these meetings, we always can feel God's love for all his children, regardless of their religious affiliation, and his desire to reach out to each one of them.



Member of the Gülen movement speaking.