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**Title of Master Thesis**

**“The contribution of The Arab Evangelical Church towards The Arab Christian  
Refugees in Bremen in the issue of Integration”**

**Submitted by:**

**Francis Abdelmassieh**

**Supervised by:**

**Prof. Dr. Dr. Frieder Ludwig  
Prof. Dr. Dr.h.c. Martin Tamcke**

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MA Program Intercultural Theology

Declaration

I, (Francis Abdelmassieh) hereby declare that this thesis, entitled ( **“The contribution of The Arab Evangelical Church towards The Arab Christian Refugees in Bremen in the issue of Integration)”**), submitted as partial requirement for the MA Program Intercultural Theology, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within it of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the Bibliography or List of References.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction:**

As a visiting scholar who came from Egypt to study in Germany, I myself went through a lot of difficulties due to living in a new and different culture. When I arrived in Germany I found the weather so cold and after some weeks I found that everything was different from my background in Egypt: the way to live, the food, the language, the way of worship in the churches, and the way of studying. That was not easy for me. The Arabs new comers to Germany are also in a similar situation, especially those who were forced to leave their homelands.

Over the decades, large numbers of the Arabs fled, but in recent years the number is increasing. After the Uprising in the Middle East 2011 or so-called Arab spring revolution, there was a lot of violence, troubles, problems that have been spread. They had to flee to other Arab countries in the neighborhood that have a better situation, or to USA or to Canada or to Europe. This uprising happened in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Libya and was a result of many years of dictatorship regimes, corruption and poverty. The Arabs in these countries were hoping for a better future but what happened was the opposite and the situation became worse full of fear, despair and frustration.

Therefore in this master thesis research that grew out of my project report, I will try to describe, analyze and record the contribution of the Arabic Evangelical Church in Bremen among the Arab refugees community within the broader context of the institute, the background and the actual situation in Bremen. Among the Arabs there are Muslims, Christians and Yazidis religions, which are too wide topics so I decided to focus my task with the Christians who are joining the Arabic Evangelical Church in Bremen. I will analyze: The Arab Christian refugee's background in home countries, the current religious challenges in Bremen and their interaction with Germans and with other religions. Then I will try to look into the role of the AECB with the refugees to help them to adjust and integrate successfully in the new and different culture.

As the religious and spiritual factor is very vital for all human beings especially for Arab Christians and religious satisfaction is very helpful in such a difficult situation I have decided to focus particularly my research project on this religious factor.

I will put my Master Thesis Paper in seven chapters: The First chapter will introduce the background of my research project. The second chapter I will present previous studies conducted in U.S.A and Europe. In the third chapter I will present the organizational theological structure of the religious Institute (AECB). In the Fourth chapter I will

explain the wider background of the refugees in their homelands. The Fifth and the Sixth I will review the collected data and the Interviews content. The Seventh chapter will focus on explaining the contribution of AECB towards its joiners in the issue of integration in the German society.

**1.1 Motivation:** The difficult situation of the refugees when being uprooted, living in exile in a new home, the need to adapt to a new environment, their memories of the past, and the inability of the world to realize the depth of misery of being refugee motivated me to study about this subject. My purpose is to give an overview and an analysis of the different aspects of this crisis.

During my early months of studying in Germany in December 2013, I visited the AECB frequently after receiving an invitation from the leader. My first impression about this community was that they were so friendly and the time of worship was so good for me. I also liked their fellowship; it was very interesting to speak together. While I was attending this church and interacted with the congregation, many questions rose up in my mind regarding the refugees' issue and the personal problems of those people and the importance of the church for them. In addition, I noticed there are some problems related to their spirituality in Germany and interaction with the new different culture. Then I started to think about their stories and challenges that made me decide to search and doing my project with them in order to find out their religious and spiritual situation and how much religion could support them in such difficult situation. Thus I chose the Arabic Evangelical Church in Bremen because of these reasons: -These people were really in need for help and were so friendly, the responsible minister was so cooperative and opened the door for me, the issue of refugees is very hot today in the international society due to the intercultural diversity that these people represented.

Before the project started, I expected that I could acquire these goals: Trying to find out: 1- the motives and the background of the Asylum seeking of the Arab Christian refugees in Bremen. 2- The current religious situation of them in Bremen and the meaning of the AECB for them. 3- Their interaction with the German Churches and society.

**1.2 Preparation:** After some time of joining this Arabic Evangelical Church in Bremen (AECB), I talked with the Council of the Church to do my research on their church community. Their response was positive and encouraging; they were so open and expressed their willingness to cooperate and help. I explained to them my master program studies and how these studies are important

Before starting my research project, I collected the data about the people I would like to interview, telephone numbers, jobs, nationalities, the age and gender that could help me to put an organized framework to my research project and to choose the best way to approach every one of them. This information also helped me to select people covering a wide area of refugee cases. I also started to collect information regarding the transportation between Hermannsburg (my living place) and Bremen, the costs of the transportation inside the Bremen city. I calculated all the other expenses regarding my living two nights weekly in Bremen and I put the budget. I applied for a covering from “Brot für die Welt”. They supported me partially, which made my task achievable.

Part of my preparation was visiting one of the Asylum seeker houses (Asylheim) that is located in Überseetor 1, Walla in Bremen where I stayed for a whole day.

I interviewed most of the people in their houses, what was very good for deep, friendly and open talking without fears. That gives my research reality and credibility.

The minister of the church after the usual worship announced my project, which was good for encouraging the people to be open with. That also gave me and my duty credibility and knowing with whom they will speak about their personal stories. That made most of them giving me their data without fear or hesitation.

**1.3 Supervision:** Throughout the time of preparing, doing the interviews, and writing my master thesis paper I found a good supervision. Before presenting the interviews content I would like to mention here a little idea about the supervision, to show how it is very important. I will put my observation of it in two levels; the first: the supervision of prof. Dr. Dr. Frieder Ludwig that was from the very beginning of thinking and forming the topic. prof. Ludwig was always challenging my ideas in a positive way. He has a great knowledge that enriched my thinking and deepened my understanding. I learned from him how important to think and to write academically, every detail must be documented. Although he is a very busy person he was always trying to be available for answering my questions regarding this evaluation report and directed me to the suitable references. That could really help me and pushed me forward.

The second level was the key person supervision in AECB in Bremen. He was a cooperative and helpful person. His name is Brother Behnam Michael. He presented me knowledge regarding the history and the structure of the AECB. He opened the door for me and helped me very much to contact the church people easily. He provided all the needed data of the people in the Church and encouraged them to

help me and cooperate. He was always ready to go with me and explain to me the best way of reaching the people that could save time and energy. We communicated via emails or met and talked. He was humble and gave me the feeling that he is working with me in this research. He was cooperative minister that made me finish my project successfully.

**1.4 The significance of the title of the Church AECB:** The name of the congregation as Arabic Church needs to be explained. Firstly as Arab, I asked the interviewees: "Are you Arabic people?" 17 of them did not like this definition especially those who came from Coptic Orthodox Church and those who came from Assyrian traditional Church. When I asked them why? Their answers showed three main reasons like, 1-The word "Arab" is a definition and connected with Islam, so that they are not happy with Muslims because of discrimination and persecution that they faced from radical Muslims back home. 2- They are trying to show how much they are proud of their Christianity and being followers of Jesus Christ; they want to be identified as a Christian before any other definition. 3- They are also concerned more about their nationalities and their countries' name than using the word Arab. For example the people coming from Syria are very much fanatic to their Assyrian identity. When I asked them "why do you identify your congregation as Arab", they answered "because of the language and to attract Muslims to visit our church". They are facing difficulties to master the German language and most of them cannot speak English as well, so finding this environment of speaking Arabic together it is comfortable to express themselves easily. Two of the interviewees said: "It is really good to speak Arabic and to identify ourselves as Arabs: That makes us feel at home to come together spending some time as a family. We feel at home with the Arabic language." They said: "It does not matter which language we speak but we are also very proud to be identified as a Christian." Arab Christians found themselves historically forced to identified as Arab and lose their roots as Syrian or Egyptian, they did not choose it freely.

„Perhaps the most common Arab characteristic is adherence to the Islamic faith. Muslim Arabs comprise about 93 percent of the Arab population and belong to several different sects including Shia (Ithna Ashari and Ismaili), Alawi, Zaidi, and Sunni, which is the largest. The other 7 percent of Arabs are largely Christian or Druze. "The link between Arabs and Islam has deep historical roots. The conquered populations were subjugated politically, but their administrative skills, crafts, arts, and worldviews gradually transformed their conquerors. This transformation of Arab identity and tradition has been a continuing process for over 1,300 years. Pre-Islamic poetry indicates that in the year 600 "Arab" referred to the Semitic-speaking tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. Quranic usage and other Arabian sources suggest that the word referred primarily to the pastoral Bedouin tribes of the



region. Even though camel-herding pastoral nomads were only a minority during Mohammed's lifetime, it seems clear that Arabs were an important social and political force. Their rich oral literature, especially their poetry, and their rejection of authoritarian political forms presented a powerful cultural ideal. Nevertheless, townspeople and others often used the term "Arab" in a pejorative sense. Southern Arabians, both farmers and urban residents, probably did not at first regard themselves as Arab. They probably only adopted this identity when there were political and economic advantages to doing so after the adoption of Islam. The early Islamic period was a time when Arab identity meant that once belonged to an all-encompassing matrilineal descent system. Membership in an Arab descent group brought recognition, honor, and certain privileges, such as exemption from some taxes<sup>1</sup>.

Regarding the definition as a Church, all the 19 interviewees like to meet in church according to their culture back home. For example one said to me the word "Church" is a biblical word and one other said it is a kind of big institute. To say we are going to church makes me very happy because it is a holy place guiding us to meet God and meet each other. But if it would be only a kind of meeting or congregation (Gemeinde) it is not really satisfying them or attract them to take part. The definition as a Church and the design building are very vital and significant for the Arab mentality.

It is significant to put the word "Evangelical" as well in the definition of the Arabic Church in Bremen. That is avoiding the tension between their different denominational backgrounds. "Evangelical" is not meant to be an expression of denomination but refers to the biblical basis. The Church is founded on being evangelized by the Gospel of Christ giving eternal salvation.

**1.5 Tips for conducting research with AECB:** I strongly recommend fellow-students to do their project at the AECB in Bremen and my advices for them are: Before starting the project try to visit the place and contact the people to build relationship with them. That will make you familiar to them, and then the doors will be open for you. Begin with contacting the key person the minister of church; this is a kind of respect and a suitable way of access. Ask your questions in many different ways. Then you could have a better understanding. Be humble and friendly with them. Calculate your budget carefully because the costs of transportation and living expenses are high. Try to give the interviewees a kind of security and respect regarding their stories; otherwise they will not give the whole picture and the actual information. Sometimes it is good

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Encyclopedia by world biography, powered by Jrank, Countries and their cultures, Arabs and Religions, the link is [www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Arabs-Religion](http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Arabs-Religion)

bringing a present when you meet them. It is important to read about Arab culture and about Christianity in Middle East.

**I.6 Accommodation, living costs, and social environment in Bremen:** Most of the church people expressed their welcoming to host me to stay in their homes. But I stayed with an Egyptian refugee in his flat two days weekly and sometimes in a hostel. That gave me better understanding about real life and the situation of one refugee in Bremen. He was kind and friendly. I paid him some money for each night.

Regarding the living expenses they were a burden especially because I am living in Hermannsburg and had to travel weekly. To spend two or three nights weekly in Bremen including the food, transportation through the project period cost me a lot. I asked for some support from “Brot für die Welt”. They replied positively and supported me partially. This support made me able to finish my research in a comfortable way.

I designed the questions of the interviews form in four main ideas according to the four dimensions of the research project. I put these four ideas in the next two chapters in two main points. The first point is addressed in Chapter IV, which is “The past and the present situation of AECB Attendants”. The second point is in chapter V that is “The Interaction with the German society and with other faiths”.

## **Chapter two**

### **Previous studies:**

In this chapter I will display previous studies that deepen my understanding and gave me guidelines in my field research project in Bremen, Germany.

### **2.1 “Religion and the new Immigrants, continuities and adaptations in Immigrant congregations”<sup>2</sup> by Helen Rose Ebough and Janet Saltzman Chafetz:**

**2.1.1 Introduction:** This study research project conducted in Houston, Texas in 2000. In the last three years before this research project, Ebough observed five different religious centers within a two-mile radius: an Islamic mosque; immediately across from it a golden domed Hindu temple; a quarter mile down the road a Vietnamese Buddhist center; a mile farther on, nestled in a residential area, a Chinese Buddhist temple complex; and beyond that, another Chinese temple that incorporate both Buddhism and

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<sup>+</sup> Helen Rose Ebough, Janet Saltzmann Chafetz, Religion and the New Immigrants, ALTAMIRA, New York, Oxford, 2000.

Daoism. These religious centers represent a diversity of religious structures and groups. Within a five-mile radius of that road there exist at least thirty churches, temples, mosque, storefronts, community centers, and homes where religious groups meet not like thirty years before. In Houston people are accustomed to seeing a variety of religious beliefs and costumes. The changes in religious landscape that have occurred in Houston reflect the religious diversity of new immigrants in the past thirty years. It describes part of the American religious mosaic that recent migrants helped to create.

RENIR, (The Religion, Ethnicity and New Immigrants Research) project that provided the data reported in this book grew out of challenges other immigration scholars, other related studies and other similar workshops Helen Rose Ebaugh has participated in. Her housing the project in the immigration center has had many benefits, primary of which is the daily interaction with colleagues, studying varied immigration issues. So she could see the role of religion in immigrants' communities and given her the opportunity to include religion more systematically in their analysis of immigrant institutions.

This book has two parts, the first is Trends and Themes, and the Second is 7 case studies.

### **2.1.2 Part I: Trends and Themes:**

**2.1.3 Introduction:** This chapter is describing the content and the process of the RENIR project. The religious diversity, evident in the thousands of ethnic congregations being created and in multi-ethnic congregations struggling to incorporate many groups into one body, constitutes the focus of this book.

**2.1.4 The Background of RENIR project:** Approximately one million immigrants annually enter the United States, the largest wave of immigrants in the nation's history. From the data, history and the percentage of immigrants they could notice the religious, ethnicity and cultural diversity and the different motives behind the immigration in the last 50 years. All of these factors contribute to the increasing diversity of racial and ethnic composition in U.S. Society. While they knew a lot about the new immigrants, they knew relatively little about their religious patterns. Yet, field researchers who observe immigrant communities and conduct interviews with their members reports are often at the center of immigrants' sense of identity, discovered that religious institutions serve as focal points for ethnic gatherings, celebrations, and re-creations of ethnic language and customs, as well as for obtaining assistance with the practical issues of finding jobs, housing, schooling, and the papers.

The reason for the lack of studies of religion among new immigrants is because of

immigration researchers use data collected by government agencies, which are not allowed to ask questions about religions. In addition those studies lie in an anti-religious bias of only ethnic studies.

During the planning stages of the project, developed the themes that constituted the basis for constructing research instruments, including observation protocols, interview schedules, and sample frames. Then she wrote detailed reports that summarized the data pertaining to each of the themes. Ebough and Chafetz As editors, they made the decision to limit these chapters to descriptions of each immigrant congregation without incorporating references to any literature, including theories, case studies of immigrant religious institutions, or studies of specific religions or ethnic groups. Such references are incorporated into the chapters that emerged from the thirteen ethnographic studies plus some additional information from other aspects of the project.

**2.1.5 Previous studies:** Ebough mentioned that admonitions by historians and sociologists commenting on the salience of religion in the lives of earlier waves of immigrants sounded like a warning that any analysis of new immigrants that ignores the role of religions is probably incomplete and skewed.

**2.1.6 Data Collection:** Ebough explained that for the researchers who study religious institutions cross-culturally, vocabulary is a major challenge. For example, Warner and Wittner say about the term of people gathered together for spiritual purposes “gatherings” and in the title of their book “congregations”, while some other groups such as Hindus do not find the term “congregations” comfortable because of its historically Christian connotation.

Data for the RENIR project were gathered in several ways: 1) identification of religious institutions (congregations) in Houston that have significant numbers of immigrants and mapping their location with census tract data; 2) a telephone survey of these congregations; 3) focus groups with immigrants, their offspring and congregational leaders who work with them; 4) intensive field research in thirteen congregations.

**2.1.7 Identifying Religious Congregations:** in Houston metropolitan area, by noting religious groups listed in newspapers and directories provided by organizations and from other projects studies based on these sources, Ebough and Chafetz identified 793 immigrant congregations in Houston area. In addition some other small groups are short-lived or move frequently. By the software program MapInfo they plotted the geographical location of each congregation on a Harris/Ft.

**2.1.8 Telephone Survey of Immigrant Congregations:** Contacting the pastors or

secretaries to get these information: type of religious group (e.g., Buddhist, Hindu Catholic, Presbyterian, etc); membership size; estimates of members, Languages, predominant ethnicity, types of social services offered and types buildings.

**2.1.9 Focus Group:** Conducted eight focus groups from different religious backgrounds with two goals. 1) to get suggestions regarding potential field research sites. 2.) to determine the issues of concern to immigrant communities regarding the role of religious institutions. Data proved to be very helpful, both in the selection of research sites and in generating questions and issues that guided the field research.

**2.1.10 Field Research:** This field research conducted in thirteen congregations over eighteen months. Seven of them are individually described in part 2. They were determined on the basis of the following criteria: representation of the major national origins group in Houston; representation of major religions practiced immigrants variability in size homogeneity of congregation and convenience in terms of ethnicity, interest, and language skills of research team. Each research in each congregation extended from three to six months, depending on the size of the congregation and the number of varied activities that were occurring during that practical time frame.

**2.1.11 Plan of the book:** Part1 begins with Introduction and a chapter by Nestor Rodriguez briefly describing the history of immigration in Houston. Chapter 3-8 are focus on general themes or issues that cut across religious and ethnic lines and draw upon data from thirteen case studies and from other aspects of the RENIR project. These chapters reflect the most theoretically and practically important issues pertaining to immigrant religious institutions, primarily as they emerged inductively. Finally chapter 9 suggests what the future religious mosaic in Houston-and in the U.S.

**2.1.12 Part II of the book (Selected Case Studies):** Seven examples contemporary case studies are described in this part, including description and analyze of the commonalities among the thirteen congregations in terms of the roles they play in the immigrants' lives, their structural adaptations to a new environment, their conflicts, problems, and successes.

This research of Ebough and Chafetz helped me to plan my research. Previous studies could guide and open doors for sharper and clearer ideas. To live some time with the people of the case study helps to feel the atmosphere. I learned from this research, the way of collecting data and analysis it. To study the backgrounds give deep understanding of the people. The 7 case study structure in part 2, helped me to know what the significant issues inside any religious institutes are.

**2.2 “Rum-Orthodox in Germany”:** These three articles are written by George Tamer as a kind of three perspectives of the situation of the Rum-Orthodox in Germany.

**2.2.1 The first** perspective was in 1999 under the title, **“Laßt uns hier ein Dorf gründen´ Rum-Orthodox Christen aus der Türkei in Deutschland”**<sup>3</sup>. Tamer focused on specific groups coming from Turkey background to Germany and gathered in church then called themselves Rum-Orthodox. He reviewed their development in Germany and described the nature, the numbers, and the structure organization of these groups. He mentioned backgrounds, motives and reasons behind their moving.

Although these groups did not learn a lot about Church teachings and structures they founded their churches in Germany because their children needed baptism, their died people needed religious funerals, and their marriage weddings needed the blessing of the Church. In addition it met their need being together, sharing social time as one family, to help and to support each other. Therefore for them the church expresses their searching for a new home.

This study presented discussion on the problem of identity as Syrian Arabic or Turkish or Germans, the church congregation as a new home, the youth and the question of identity, and their experiences and challenges in a foreign country.

**2.2.2 The second** was in 2003 under the title: **“Kirche der Übergänge: Die Rum-Orthodox Kirche im Libanon und in Deutschland”**<sup>4</sup>. George Tamer tried in this perspective to deal with the Rum-Orthodox Church in its original and present surroundings. Tamer started with a kind of classification on terminology. For ex. Oriental church, is normally in the diaspora situation called the Greek-Orthodox Church of Antioch. This does not mean that the members are Greeks but it indicates that the Christians are of the same confession like in earlier times the Byzantines. The own name of the Church is, Rum-Orthodox’, ‘Ar-rum’ is the name for the Byzanz, the

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—————<sup>†</sup> Tamer, Georges, “Laßt uns hier ein Dorf gründen’ – Rum-Orthodoxe Christen aus der Türkei in Deutschland,” in: Gerdien Jonker (Ed.), Kern und Rand. Religiöse Minderheiten aus der Türkei in Deutschland. Arbeitsheften des Zentrums Moderner Orient, Berlin 1999.

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—————<sup>†</sup> Tamer, Georges, “Kirche der Übergänge: Die rum-orthodoxe Kirche im Libanon und in Deutschland,” in: Sabine Gralla (Ed.), Oriens Christianus. Geschichte und Gegenwart des nahöstlichen Christentums. Villigst Profile Bd. 1. Lit Verlag Münster/Hamburg 2003.

Eastern Roman Empire of Rom and they understood themselves as Romans.

Then he reviewed a survey of the history and the development of the Rum-Orthodox Church in Lebanon. Tamer also explains in this study the Orthodox youth movement that started at the seventieth of the twentieth century by Georges Khodr, which established in Beirut. Tamer introduces the Rum-Orthodox Church as ecumenically open being a member of the world council of Church since 1961.

Tamer presents a kind of statistic information about the Rum-Orthodox Church in Germany and discusses its meaning as home for the people. He explains the transitions of the church and its ability of translating its Christian theological teachings according to the context whether in Lebanon or Germany.

**2.2.3 The Third** was in 2004 under the title **“Kultursynthese als Friedenspotential: Rum-Orthodoxe aus Nahost in Deutschland”**<sup>5</sup>. George Tamer focused in this perspective on the Rum-Orthodox as a minority living in the Germany. He explains that their concern of identity is connected to their history and also to their integration into the new society. Tamer discusses in this paper that this group has a kind of rich combinations of cultures and languages like Jewish, Greek, Christian, and Islamic Arabic culture. They can speak Greek, Syrian, and Arabic. This richness makes them able to deal with different cultures and religions that could help them to integrate better. Their religious teaching is focused on ecumenical attitudes and to live in peace with the other. Therefore they are able to adopt the new situation easily. In such combination they are also able to build peace between the Western and Islamic Culture. They can work as a bridge between Muslims and Germans in Germany.

Tamer's study gave me a picture of the most important issues of an Arab Christian group uprooted and planted in a new land. That could give a better understanding of the Arab culture, the challenges, and their background. The motive behind starting a church in Germany, the organization structure, and the significance of it explained to me the meaning of the church as a new home for the Arab Christian refugees living in Bremen. The second generation study and it's important for the future of the church was impressive and guided me in my research in a similar situation in AECB. I realized that

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<sup>+</sup> Tamer, Georges, “Kultursynthese als Friedenspotential: Rum-Orthodoxe aus Nahost in Deutschland,” in: Hans-Martin Barth/Christoph Elsas (Ed.), *Religiöse Minderheiten - Potentiale für Konflikt und Frieden*. E. B.-Verlag Hamburg 2004.

the issue of identity of the Arabs in Germany is an essential question with lost people. These studies show the role of the Arab Christian in Germany as a cultural bridge.

**2.3 “The African Christian Diaspora, New Currents and Emerging Trends in world Christianity”<sup>6</sup>.** Written by Afe Adgame, in 2013. This research study focuses on how important the migrant groups to the hosting society are. Afe Adogame says that Christians in Diaspora are not just passive recipients but active participants. This migration movement is influencing both sides the comers and the hosting society, so that all have to work hard for better and positive interaction.

Adogame reviewed the classic theories of immigration. The motives behind these movements of people from the classic perspectives as economic reasons were according to “Push Pull” theory. Later on another theory arose focusing on humanitarian reasons. Currently the explanation behind the immigration is complex and bases on different motives and attitudes.

A good start of any study related to immigration researches should study the history and what happened in the past to the migrants, the hosting society, the original society, and study what happened through the journey of immigration.

These migrants could become a good link between the origin and the new society, a part of the bridge between cultures.

Religion and spiritual beliefs play a big role in the process of migration. He explores how migrants use religion in six stages of the migration process: decision-making; preparing for the trip; the journey; the arrival; the role of the ethnic church in immigrant settlement and the development of transnational linkages. The religion and the church helps the migrants through teaching, charity support, and social fellowship.

Afe Adegame presents an analysis about the African churches’ contributions to the hosting society. These churches inserted themselves into the new societies religion map throughout the gradual expansion of active evangelism, house cells and para-church organizations, cooperation of work, and building new mission societies. The migrant churches could enrich the hosting society spiritually, socially, and culturally. These churches are producing the common good by exchanging benefits and experiences.

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<sup>†</sup> Afe Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora, New currents and Emerging Trends in world Christianity*, published by JKB; London, 2013.



The mission field in Europe is in need to wake up. So he supported the idea of reverse mission again to Europe by the migrants' missionaries. Mission moves as a circle and now the time of the gospel comes back again from the south to the north. He sees that the migrant church is the starting point to this mission and revival in Europe.

Adogame negotiates in the last part of this study identity, citizenship, and power with connection to the integration issue with less conflicts and tensions. There is a wide impact of the migrants in the entire world, they use the media and the trans-nationalism to spread their religious views in a wider scale. And also throughout the international seminars they share their religious charismatic ideologies. It is a necessity to have a good network, common projects, Christian Internet sides, and alliances, Church associations to spread the gospel and empower the migrants to bring the Christian mission back to Europe.

Adogame's study gives a significance to study about the history of immigration in Germany, the hosting society, to bring a better understanding of the current situation. He put big emphasize to the role of Christianity for the migrants through the entire moving trip. That gives a clarification to the motive of having AECB. Adogame put big emphasize on the migrants mission in Europe bringing the Gospel back. That gave me a kind of explanation to their activities and to their future vision.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Description of the nature, the organizational structure and the aims of the Arabic Evangelical Church:**

**3.1 Bremen and its environment:** Bremen is a city in Germany that the Arabic Church is located in. Bremen has got a multicultural atmosphere with all religion backgrounds, according to the witness of the Arabic interviewees.

“The proportion of the population with an immigrant background has risen in the city of Bremen from 26 % in 2005 to 29% in 2011. Absolutely the number of people with an immigrant background of 142,000 has risen to 159,000. Compared to the major German cities, the city of Bremen is very affected by the growing number of migrants”<sup>7</sup>.

There is an example from the University of Bremen shows that the education system in Bremen is included all cultures and religions:

“There is no faculty of theology in the University of Bremen but it is part of the faculty of Culture

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<sup>†</sup> [www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/148820/migrantenanteil-in-deutschen-grossstaedten-waechst](http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/148820/migrantenanteil-in-deutschen-grossstaedten-waechst)

Studies (Kulturwissenschaften) and this is exceptional in Germany. Bremen is multicultural city with a religiously mixed population. Jürgen Lott, professor of religious education and one of the founders of RE (Religious Education Anm. d. Autors) program at the University of Bremen, summarized the Bremen model of RE when he coined the phrase "Identity and communication" in which it argued for confessional RE as a basis for dialogue at a later stage"<sup>8</sup>.

The Arabic Refugees interviewees said that, they feel better with improvement of their situation in Bremen during the last years. Actually, there is improvement of the migration law from 2005 and especially for refugee's situation:

"First German Immigration Law Takes Effect" After much wrangling with the opposition, the German government drew up an immigration law to regulate migration last year. From Jan. 1, 2005, things have changed for foreigners. The law also brings small improvements for refugees by being more specific on the recognition of non-state and gender-specific persecution. Refugees from countries that cannot provide protection from persecution will have the right to asylum, including women who fear genital mutilation in their home countries. With the exception of Bavaria, Lower Saxony and Bremen, all German states have said they will set up such commissions in 2005"<sup>9</sup>. One could find in this report that Bremen was one of the initiative cities in Germany for improving the situation of migration from 2005.

"Bremen is located in North West Germany on the river Weser, which reaches the North Sea some 60km, downriver from Bremen. For historic reasons, the city of Bremen and its downriver sister-city of Bremen's urban development and economic history is closely related to its function as a major international port. The main modern port activities are now concentrated in Bremerhaven"<sup>10</sup>.

"In Bremen there is 24 mosque available for every Muslim to join the ritual worship, the oldest and the biggest mosque of them is Fatih Moschee that is located in Gröplingen"<sup>11</sup>. Bremen is a city of multi-culture, open economy, and open mind with different people from different backgrounds.

**3.2 The history of the Arabic Church in Bremen:** "In Germany the total number of the Arabic Christians is not quite known. All Arabs in Germany are estimated at 700:000. "The majority of Arabs are refugees of the conflicts in the Middle East, e.g. the Lebanese Civil War, Palestinian

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Alberts Wanda, integrative religious education in Europe, Study of religions approach, published DE/G, Berlin 2007.

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Gäßler Bernd, DW, [www.dw.de/p/63J3](http://www.dw.de/p/63J3) 1.1.2005.

10

Blöger Jörg, Bremen city report, research center CASE report 39, page 4, 2006.

11

Fatih moschee Bremen, internet page, Moscheen in Bremen, June 2015.

exodus and the recent Iraq War, Libyan Civil War, and current Syrian civil war. The Arabs in Germany are not a homogeneous group, because they originate from about 20 countries”<sup>12</sup>.

“About 10% of the Arabs in Germany are Christians of all denominations. Arab Protestant congregations’ number is about 30 congregations and groups. The oldest communities emerged in the late 70s in Frankfurt and early to mid-80s in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Ludwigsburg and Wiesbaden. There are about 30 Arabic ministers in the protestant congregations. There is the "Evangelical Alliance Arabic-speaking in Europe EAAS" since 2009 and since August 2014 “Central Oriental Christians in Germany” ZOCD. The income of these congregations is weak and comes from the personal donations”<sup>13</sup>.

The AECB has started in 1993 in Kreuz-Gemeinde in Bremen. There was a person his name is Basem from Jordan who was studying doctorate. Basem and Brother Behnam, the current minister of the Arabic Church, discussed together and prayed for this new beginning.

Before 1993 there were some small Arab groups. They used to meet in their houses to read the Bible, to share spiritual meditations and to pray together but irregularly.

Then the continuation of meeting to share the word of God and pray together was very important for some of them. In 2000 the number of the Arabs joining these group increased and they started a kind of regular worship in the Kreuzgemeindegkirche in the baptism church in Bremen when they borrowed a hall.

The attendants of AECB are living everywhere in Bremen. They are not cantered in limited place in the city.

There is a big Church conference being given in Germany every four years that is called “ProChrist” and the name of the pastor having been responsible about is Ulrich Parzany. Most of the leaders in AECB said to me that this conference in 2000 ac, was spiritually and socially the turning point for them. In this conference most of the AECB leaders met each other and agreed to support the Arabic ministry in Bremen. That conference was also the starting point for some of them to build good and correct relationship with God and also to be part of a Church and try to serve God actively and faithfully. That became a strong motive to visit the Arabic congregation and to be active ministers in it.

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<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Weikibedia. [www.schule-ohne-rassismus.org/fileadmin/pdf](http://www.schule-ohne-rassismus.org/fileadmin/pdf).

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<sup>13</sup> Kades Tharwat, Michel Youssif and Behnam Michael, Arabic Minister, Bremen, via email and by telephone, December 2014.

When I searched about this conference I found that was under the title:

“Evangelistic Initiative ProChrist2000 Reaches across Europe“ and was held in Kassel-Bremen, Germany. This conference was heard by over one million people simultaneously across the continent of Europe from 19-25 March 2000. Evangelistic programmes were aired via television satellite from the northern German city of Bremen to 1,200 sites in 15 countries from East to West, North to South. Over 3,000 local churches cooperated in what will likely be the largest evangelistic outreach in Europe this year. More than 60,000 local volunteers were involved in the effort. The central event from Bremen included an evangelistic message by German YMCA General Secretary Rev. Ulrich Parzany and a programme including music and interviews. Other elements were added locally by the participating sites. The ProChrist2000 Committee of Reference includes several well-known personalities, such as Mayor (of Bremen) Henning Scherf, former mayor and presently Representative of the German government to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hans Koschnick and professional golfer Bernhard Langer. <sup>14</sup>.

“AECB registered in the German government in January 2013 as an NGO”<sup>15</sup>. That gives the congregation a kind of stability and credibility between the Arabs themselves because their culture background gives more respect and more sanctification to the official institutes than to just a small friendly group meeting.

From 2014 until now the number is increasing and has become about 200 people attending the several meetings of the Church because of the increasing number of refugees in the last years and because of the need of the refugees for this active church.

From the historical story I found that the most important reasons that made them start this church community were: first, they wanted to meet and talk and have fellowship together. Second: they felt fear of the free and open society in Germany. So they wanted to protect each other from the new environment that they saw as devil life and bad behaviours. Third: because they were far from their homelands and their families, they felt an inner insecurity (they liked to meet God in the church worship that would give them peace). Finally: the church was a place that helped the refugees with their papers or languages or solving some daily life problems that they were facing as foreigners. Finally, they had children needed to be baptized; adults needed to be married and died needed to be buried.

### **3.3 The nature of the attendants of AECB; diversity, interaction and mutual help**

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— Lussane Newsletter, July 2000, online article, Evangelistic Initiative ProChrist2000 Reaches across Europe. [www.lussane-newsletter-july-2000.org](http://www.lussane-newsletter-july-2000.org)

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— Arabisch christliche Gemeinde, Bremen e.v. gegündet 01-01-2013, by Telephone with Benam Michel, June 2005.

The old and the new are joining worship together. They come from different Arab countries and different confessions backgrounds and they meet together in homogeneity. For example Assyrian “Ashoreyya” Catholic Oriental old church in Syria, Syrian Orthodox Church, Coptic Orthodox and Evangelical Church of Egypt and Rum Orthodox Church of Syria. They call their church “The Arabic Evangelical Church in Bremen” (AECB). They prefer to be known as a nondenominational Church.

After each Sunday services, there is a free meal held in the same hall but after re-organizing the tables as an open square shape. That gives a good opportunity for social fellowship and for answering questions. This time is also very important because they could get helps in their problems they face in a new society whether as a kind of counselling or on their paper issues.

The last two years 2014 and 2015 the number of attendants is increased, from 40 or 50 and become more than one hundred and in some occasions become more than 200. The worship hall is not a sufficient for the number of joiners and for all activities.

There is a variety of age of the attendants of AECB. I noticed in Sundays that all ages are joining the worship, old, young, children, men and women but the number that is between 30-50 years old is about 60% and the women number is about 60%.

“After the starting of my research project and conducting the interviews, the council of AECB met and re-organized the activities and the spiritual responsibilities as a kind of developing the services of the church”<sup>16</sup>.

There are several kinds of social services. For example, some of the leaders and the members provide a transportation help for those having no car, baby sitting for the children when needed, translating the papers for the new comers, guiding them for shopping, giving advices to find a job. There also is a charity fund available to help in emergency cases and the most important services. The church is doing, is welcoming and receiving the new comers with especial care and is trying to support them in different ways: Visiting and supporting each other’s in all occasions like in sickness in hospital, in financial crises, in birthday’s parties, and in baptism, funeral and marriage celebrations. All these actions support the attendants materially, spiritually, and emotionally. In AECB, they celebrate all the Christian festivals together like Christmas and Eastern. They provide the traditional food and have some activities similar to what

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<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Francis Abdelmassieh and Behnam Mikhail, The responsible leader of AECB, by telephone. March 2015.

they used to do back home. Some families also invite the newcomers to their homes. All spiritual and social activities in AECB are led by lay people; no one of them is ordained pastor. AECB tries from time to time to collect offers and send it back/ home to help the churches and the Christians facing troubles and financial crises. I was there once when the leader of the worship explained the bad situation of the Christians in Iraq. When he announced that there is a big need in one of the churches there the attendants at that Sunday started to offer some money and the AECB sent it to Iraq.

### **3.4 The Theology of AECB, Worship, preaching and teaching**

I used to visit AECB mostly every Sunday and several times I stayed in Bremen city for two days weekly to join other meetings like bible study and prayer meetings during the period from October 2014-to- March 2015. Throughout these six months I observed and I noted down the main lines of the sermons and the theological discussion among them.

Theologically, the AECB is “a non-denominational, non-charismatic and evangelical Church and has a strong missionary commitment. AECB is concentrated on spiritual religious programs more than on political activism. Teaching focuses mostly on these subjects like new birth, gaining salvation of Christ by grace, believing in inerrant Bible, in second coming of Christ, and in baptism by immersion”<sup>17</sup>.

The aims of AECB are, firstly, to present the Christian message of salvation and eternal life and to express the love and the forgiveness of God for all people in general and for the Arabic speaking in especially. They are helping the people to establish a good relationship with God. Secondly, to help the new comers in their daily life needs and challenges in coping with their homesickness. Thirdly, counselling, that help people suffering from the bad experience they faced in their home countries.

The Sundays worship program is flexible and lively. The language used in the worship is Arabic, sometimes with a written German translation for the hymns on the overhead projectors. The music and all the hymns are Arabian production and thought; it is very lively and active. The worship includes sermon, prayer, collecting offer, and announcement. It always starts in time, which is different from the system back home. They used to start the worship late. The time of worship is every Sunday at 15:00 in a hall under the Kreuzkirchengemeinde”, this is an Baptism Church in Bremen. The worship is enjoyable and active.

The preaching trends and methods are not very clear or we could say it is not written in

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<sup>17</sup>

— Interviewee, member of the council of AECB.

a plan as a vision. The sermons mostly are a call for conversion, salvation and healing by Jesus Christ. Sometimes some of the preachers try to present the biblical stories speaking about the people of God in a foreign land. The focus is on God's support and help, that God will not forget anyone of them, God is our Father, our Home, our Friend and our family. For, example they chose the story of Jesus when he was a child and fled to Egypt seeking for refuge, God prepared protection to Him in Egypt. Like the story of Josef and Daniel in foreign land; because they lived honest to God's commandments so He protected them and gave them success. Some others focus their sermons on encouraging the attendants to behave as a real Christian, like to be honest, active, and friendly in order to express the picture of Jesus Christ in the society. The preachers are different people every Sunday. The responsible leader, brother Behnam, told me that when they invite someone to preach in Sundays services they give him freedom to choose the topic and the bible text. Behnam said: "The Holy Spirit will guide him to speak, we could not limit the spirit, but we could pray for him".

Their concept of prayer meeting is: God has the Authority on the world so that when we pray we call Him to interfere in the situations and change it. They have a special time for prayer every Sunday Service and they have a special meeting every Friday for prayer, they call it "Prayer meeting". In this prayer meeting they give opportunity for meditation, for each person to pray and to share their personal experience, meditation. He can ask the other to pray for him or her for a special personal matter. In this time women can share the word of God or the prayer. They repeat prayers every time: praying to get their own Church building, for the people suffering back in their home countries, and for the unity of Christianity that is the sign of the "Christian love".

Evangelism is a very essential goal in AECB. The way of converting people is not clear during Sunday's time, but the sermons mostly are a call for conversion. I noticed some attendants from Islamic background. The number of attendants is increasing every month. They believe that evangelism is to save the souls of the people for eternal life; Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. They believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ and the Eternal life for the believers and the hell for the nonbelievers.

AECB as a non-denominational church means that there is no specific doctrine focus. The only thing is their focus in Jesus Christ, the saviour and the Lord, Brother Behnam said. The Church is open for all people from different religious backgrounds. Even we could notice the church is free but we could not consider it a charismatic church. I could not see speaking in tongues or the similar way of worship.

Lord Supper is offered only for “the Real Believers”. They are very strict on this part of the service, they always announce before the participation that is only for Christian believers. They believe that is very holy but only for memory, to remember the redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross. They practice it in a separate meeting not in normal Sunday service and make sure that the invitation is received from them who deserve to take part the “Believers”.

**3.5 The organizational structure of the church:** Br. Behnam told me that they don’t like to spend more time of organization and administration matters. If they spent more time on prayers and giving space to the Holy Spirit to guide and to lead them working hard for the people away from God that would be better. Therefore the lack of structure seems to be a kind of spirituality.

AECB has a council that consists of five laymen leaders and one German pastor. His name is Pastor Torsten Mostein; there is one responsible person of the Church, they call him Brother or Minister Behnam Mikhail. The five laymen of the council leaders are participating in both services: the spiritual and the administrative matters. There is shortage in pastoral counselling ministry and youth ministry as well. No one of them is ordained pastor, which means the leading system of the AECB is done by lay people. Three of them did some theological courses, Biblical studies, and training programs. In 2014 AECB had (gameeia omomia) a general assembly of the official members that are written in the church document (11 members), but the non-official attendance was about 60-80 person and in the big events more than one hundred. In 2015 during the last four months the number of attendants is increased to be between 150-200 worshippers.

The official situation of the Church was beginning under the umbrella of Kreuz-Gemeinde in Bremen until 2012. Then it became registered at 1.1.2013 at the German government as a social association that can do spiritual activities. They have a volunteer responsible minister, Brother Behnam, because of financial reason, but they express their wish to have a full time job ordained pastor. Br. Behnam does not live with the congregation, as he has to work in another job. Therefore the result is limited care for the congregation, absence of deep teaching programs and for putting a future vision. Br. Behnam is leading the Lord Supper once a month with the help of two leaders of the council. There is always announcement before the Lord Supper for the congregation that this spiritual meal is only open for the believers with a kind of warning to those who haven’t especial experience of ”new spiritual birth or conversion”. It is not allowed for them to take part in it. But I notice that most of the attendants participate in the lord



supper with very much respect, humble, and devout.

After three months of conducting the research project with AECB I have noticed that they started to develop the church organization structure, adding new activities. In meantime they gave another meeting in other German Churches. They formed four meetings and four committees, one for youth, one for Bible study, one for women, and one for prayers. Some of these meetings got to exist in st. Johannes Sodenmat Church.

**3.6 The Ethnic & The Religious Identity:** The identification as a Christian of the people joining the AECB is neglecting the Arabic ethnic definition. It welcomes everybody from Arabic speaker's background and offer help and mission to them. Sometimes I noticed that there are some Germans joining the worship, but their number is very small. The Arabic language is commonly used in the worship and during their communication as well. The AECB concern is to present a chance for the attendants to enjoy their home culture atmosphere in these meetings together and attracting non-Christians from the Arabic speaking areas for proselytizes. They care little about the Arabic language, about the Arabic national festivals, and about the Arabic traditional clothes. There is no concern to have classes to teach the Arabic languages to their children although they concern to bring them to the Arabic church activities. There are several customs in which they participate, including Christmas celebrations, small prayer groups, and personal occasions meeting in the homes. That further reinforces the feeling that they are at home and strengthens their religious identity.

A Christian identity serves to ease tensions between Arabian and German identities; however a Christian identity sometimes creates tension among Arabian ones. Most of AECB believe that their origin ethnic is not Arabic, their roots went back to the history before Islam and they feel comfortable with the Christian identity. For example, the people coming from Egypt prefer to consider themselves Pharaohs or ancient Egyptians more than Arabian, the Syrians like Assyrians or as they call it Soriano more than Arabian, and the Lebanese as well.

Although the AECB attendants believe that the Arabian identity is part of Islam, they like to maintain their culture and tradition. I think, because they feel comfortable and stable with the culture and tradition they grew up in. It is a kind of home for them to keep their roots and tradition in a new environment like Germany. Some of them are proud of their origin nationality and the name of their home country, but not before their Christian religion identity. Firstly they say we are the family of Christ.

One also could notice that the people coming from Syria and Lebanon are more

homogeneous together than with those who come from other countries. People coming from Egypt and from Sudan are more homogeneous together than with others. When I asked about the reason, some answered because of the common history or because of the shared borders and the neighbourhood. In spite of the different nationalities backgrounds their common language and culture bring them together.

The ethnicity in some points is also different in AECEB: Syrians, Lebanese, Egyptians, Sudanese, Iraqis, and other Arabic roots. One of the common cultures is the habit of living in big families back home so that they try to replenish in being together in this Arabic congregation. The Lebanese and the Syrians are more liberal than the others in terms of the way of clothing of the women and of the way of understanding the Bible. But these different points do not make tensions; the other common culture and Christianity bring them together in homogeneity and harmony.

There is a kind of differentiation among the groups in AECEB along line of immigration date: those who immigrated earlier and the new comers. The newcomers have more indignation against their countries than the old comers. When I tried to search why? I found mostly two reasons, 1. It is because of the suffering and the difficulties they counter back home, 2. it is because the old comers still missed the good memories and are used to enjoy back home.

**3.7 The Role of women:** In AECEB; the women are not serving in a major decision making role, although they are very active in many other less leadership roles, for example singing in the Choir, teaching the children in the Sunday school, visiting people at their homes, and providing every Sunday food.

The women in AECEB are very effective in an indirect way, as a wife of leaders, as assistant to the responsible minister of the Church, and when doing warm welcome to the new people. They concern very much of all matters in AECEB in a hidden way, which could be a kind of being humble or a kind of wisdom to cope with the Arab mentality. Arabs sometimes do-not like women to be in leading positions.

Can women be a pastor, elder, and deacons? Brother Behnam the responsible leader of AECEB and 13 interviewees answered, "the Biblical teaching is there is no woman pastor and elder in the bible but there are women deacons". He told me that they encourage everybody to participate in the ministry of the Church including the women but they could not have a woman as an elder. The field of the spiritual work in Bremen is really wide and needs a lot of efforts and support. He expresses his happiness with the democratic system in AECEB in terms of decision making and the team work. But

because of the different backgrounds of the attendants they could not give opportunity to the woman to preach and to lead. Might be problems would arise among the people who are joining the Church.

There are various views and opinions among them. 5 interviewees have no problem if a woman would become elder and pastor, while the majority was opposite to it. One active woman expressed her wish for the women to serve as a pastor and elder not only as a deacon. But there are other women who did not favour women to get leadership position while they could take part actively in all other services in the Church. Another woman said that she can speak to the Council of the Church and her opinions are taken seriously. She did not feel that she received unequal treatment of the other male members. I think that the responsible leader of the Church has no intention of opening further discussion of this issue. As long as no strong opinions are voiced publicly and no incidents occur that force the Church to deal with it, they keep silent.

**3.8 The Second generation:** In AECB there are two kinds of group, the first is the group of newcomers who came the last four years and their percentage is about 60% of all attendants. The second is about 40% who came to Germany more than 15 years ago. This second group who came 15 to 25 years ago has children who grew up in Germany. Those who came to Germany as children or born in Germany one could call them the second generation.

Second generation Arabic Germans - now mostly their ages is between 5 and 25 years old - are currently attending high school or college. They are mostly attending the German Churches and might attend the Arabic Church in festivals only. They can speak German fluently but their Arabic is weak, therefore joining the German service is understandable for them. Some of them are active in the German Church and involved in children and diaconal ministry. Religion and Church brings comfort and joy for them. Some said that Church and Christian religion answered a lot of difficult questions about the existence, the life, and the life after death.

Their relationship with their parents culturally and religiously is a kind of commitment. The second generation is committed to their parents' values; for example as "a real Christian" they would specify as their future spouse someone who is joining a Church. He or she should share as well "the same moral standards" and it does not matter if the partner is German or Arabic. The parents try to teach their Children the Christian values, home country culture, and they concern that their children have friends whether Germans or Arabians but with the same moral standards. Most of the parents are not

concerned about teaching their children the Arabic language. The most important point would be to grow as real Christian believers.

A few of these second generations suffer from a kind of discrimination in school or in finding a job and feeling sometimes lost because of their colour or their nationality. They do not consider themselves fully as a German and in the same time they did neither experience nor learn much about their home countries heritage, traditions, and culture, they said. But most of them do not find any problem or different treatment in the German society. Most of them are fully integrated and acculturated with the German culture in terms of language, communication, and the way of life as Germans specially those who have one of their parents being German. Fifty percent of the second generation interviewees identifying themselves as Germans and fifty percent identifying themselves as parent origin nationality.

They dress, look, speak, and think somehow like Germans, different from their parents. Their parents speak to them in Arabic or Assyrian but most of the children reply in German. AECB members feel that their church has to compete with doing so many things to attract the young generation and meet their thinking and their understanding but not yet succeed.

## Chapter Four

### **The home background of AECB Attendants: Religiously, Socially, Economically, and Politically;**

**4.1 Religiously:** The Church in Middle East is very old and very central in the life of Christians living there. Christianity started in Middle East from the first century after Christ. The Church that has been started in Pentecostal day in Jerusalem was multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-culture, and did not lose its marks of Christian diversity. The Church in Middle East is always open for all different people, even after the conflict that happened between the Western and the Eastern Church in the fifth century and more after the protestant missionaries came from the West.

“Christianity, which originated in the Middle East in the 1st century AD, was one of the major religions of the region until the Arab Muslim conquests of the mid-to-late 7th century AD. Christianity in the Middle East is characterized with its diverse beliefs and traditions, compared to other parts of the old world”<sup>18</sup>.

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Willey, David (10 October 2010). "Rome 'crisis' talks on Middle East Christians". *BBC*. Retrieved 1 November 2010.

The protestant church did a good job in the Egyptian society in several fields from the Nineteen century.

“The protestant church started in Egypt and in Syria since 1854 when the first American missionaries arrived. The protestant church had a great work in the society in the field of education, health care, and social services“.<sup>19</sup>

The Church for the people in Middle East is more than a place they can practice their religious rituals but it’s a place where they could meet God, meet each other, practice social activities, and are getting social and psychological support. Thus the church is very essential in the life of the people, sometimes it takes the role of the state like in Egypt, working as social organization and educational institute.

Although the law of some Arab countries give freedom to all religions but many radical Muslims forced Christians violently to be Muslim and neglected the law of the state.

“The "Six Country Immigrant Integration Comparative Survey"—a five-year study of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Holland and Sweden—was published on December 11 by the WZB Berlin Social Science Centre, one of the largest social science research institutes in Europe. According to the study (German and English), which was funded by the German government, two thirds (65%) of the Muslims interviewed say Islamic Sharia law is more important to them than the laws of the country in which they live”<sup>20</sup>.

That could give part of interpretation of the conflict and the tension that exists nowadays in the Middle East between Christians and Muslims. When any small problem occurs it becomes a big fight and sometimes taken as a war, as a defence of being, and of life from both sides.

The Arab Christian refugees in Bremen described and explained that the living and the growing in a religious persecuted atmosphere from radical Muslims forced them to flee.

Najib Awad said: “The suffering and persecution the Christians have experienced in some of the Arab countries (like Egypt and most recently Iraq), and the general political, economic, and social suppression and difficulties in other Arab countries (like Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine), all exerted on the Christians unbearable pressures and compelled a large number of them to immigrate into other lands, searching for better and more secure context, opportunities and future”<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup>

— Zaki Andrea, al akbat wa althara, Copts and revolution, Dar A lthakafa, page 69;70, 2015.

<sup>20</sup>

— Kern Soeren, The Islamization of Germany in 2013.  
January 15, 2014 at 5:00 am <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4130/islamization-germany>

<sup>21</sup>

The Guardian newspaper in February 2013 reported analysis of the decreasing number of the Christians in Middle East and said:

“The number of Middle Eastern Christians is dropping due to such factors as ethnic and religious persecution. Recent spread of Jihadist and Islamist ideology, foreign to the tolerant values of the local communities in Syria and Egypt has also played a role in unsettling Christians' decades-long peaceful existence”<sup>22</sup>.

The AECB attendants learned in their home countries about Christianity from early childhood. 90 % of them spent their early years joining the Sunday school in the Church. Sunday school Christian meetings in Middle Eastern Churches in general and in Egypt in special are very important and very essential for all children to join it regularly. Sunday school is the first basis for Christian education, Bible study, and Church liturgy. In some countries like Egypt Sunday school people can join it from 4 years up to 18 years old. There the people learn their Christian faith, Church liturgy, and the Biblical educations. According to Coptic Orthodox Church, Sunday school was very important for its revival and advancement. Sunday School started as a reaction to the protestant and Catholic mission to Egypt from the middle of the nineteenth century:

“Before he became the head of the renowned Theological Seminary in 1918, Habib Girgis felt that preaching and adult education were not sufficient enough for the advancement of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Protestant and Catholic Missionaries have been at work since the mid-nineteenth century, with the aim to radically influence the views of the Copts in order to abandon their long lasting faith in Oriental Orthodoxy. Thus, with many issues at hand, Habib Girgis decided to establish Sunday schools at the turn of the twentieth century as a means of satisfying the need for education. As a result, Coptic Orthodox Sunday schools were founded in major cities in Egypt in the year 1900–15 years before there were even Egyptian public schools. The Sunday school movement flourished in Egypt after much hard work, and now, Coptic studies thrive in Egypt and abroad. Sunday school was the main pillar for the renaissance of Coptic Orthodox Christianity in the twentieth century until present.”<sup>23</sup>.

At least 60 % of the interviewees described that they were influenced by a kind of evangelical movement happened in the eighteens of the twentieth century in the Middle

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<sup>22</sup> Awad Najip George, *And freedom became a public square*, political, sociological and religious overviews on the Arab Christian and the Arabic spring page 62, LIT, Berlin 2012.

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<sup>23</sup> Chrisafis, Angelique; Kingsley, Patrick; Beaumont, Peter (9 February 2013). "Violent tide of Salafism threatens the Arab spring". *The GUARDIAN* (London).

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<sup>24</sup> St. Mary, St. Shenouda, *Coptic Orthodox Church in South London*, website, *The history and Importance Of Sunday School*, On 22 June, 2013.

East that was very effective in their spiritual life. This movement resulted in a lot of seminars and conferences of spiritual revival meetings, overnight payer meetings, leadership training, and Bible study groups. Those were happening in many local churches and in many big conference centres as well. They said to me that was a turning point, new spiritual birth, and a call for mission. From that time on they have become very active in their local Church and participated in the services strongly. This movement made them rise up against their religious ritual routine and being close to “the free evangelical believe”.

In 1987 Makram Nageeb, professor in the Theological Seminary in Cairo, wrote a book under the title “The Charismatic movement”. This book was reaction and analysis of this movement in Egypt as well. Makram Nageeb said:

“The Evangelical Charismatic movement” started to appear in Egypt during the sixties of the twenty century by the evangelising training schools and in the nineties with a wide scale so called spiritual conferences among big numbers of the youth and among the adult church members as well”<sup>24</sup>.

The Charismatic movement book was a translation of the English book, “In the later days, the outpouring of the holy spirit in the twentieth century” by Vinson Synan.

Synan wrote:

“These facts highlight a major development Christianity in the last years of the twentieth century: 1- the fastest growing denomination in the world are those associated with the Pentecostal Charismatic movement. 2- The largest family of Protestants in the world are those known today the denominational Pentecostals. 3- The five largest protestant congregations in the world are the Pentecostal Churches”<sup>25</sup>.

They used to live in their home countries in a religious environment. Religious character is everywhere and any time, it is always around them in public: in the public transportation, in the daily life conversations, and in the pictures of saints and of Biblical verses hanging at the walls of their houses.

They used to live in a conservative faith and Muslim environment. They have learned, how much important it is to obey the Biblical commandments and to live in front of the world according to the Christian faith and as God’s family. They should show to the

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<sup>24</sup> Nageeb Makram, elharaka alkarezmata, The Charismatic Movement, Dar elthakafa, page 28 Cairo 1987.

<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Vinson Synan, In the later days, the outpouring of the holy spirit in the twentieth century, Xulon Press; page 23, USA 2001:

Muslim surrounded context “the real and the correct “Christian belief.

I could conclude that the religious home background of the Arab Christian refugees of the AECB with at least four main points has a very effective impact on their religious perception and current religious beliefs. First are the historical Christianity and the surrounding of the Islamic persecution. Second, the Church in Middle East is very central in the life of the Arab Christians. Third, Sunday school basis Christian education is very strong and ethical obligatory for all Christian Children in Middle East. Fourth the evangelical Charismatic movement that started about 25 years ago.

What I found very clear of AECB people religious background is that they grew up with hunger for religion and deep desire to experience the comfort and the love of God and to satisfy and obey the Biblical commandments.

**4.2 Socially:** Something was interesting for me during my talking with one Syrian boy (11 years old). He expressed his first impression when he arrived at Germany, that he found all the people around him have strange faces. This experience explains how difficult it is being uprooted from home, family and friends. To live with people having a different colour and language is really a burden for such a boy.

Most of AECB attendants used to live in a very close relationship with relatives and friends back home, so that they suffer from home-sickness because their loved one are not nearby any more. In Middle East people used to share everything: the food, the money, and work. For example, when someone has financial problems he can ask his relatives and friends and will get support. If someone is in a health problem he starts by calling his neighbours, his relatives, and his friends, not the ambulance or the police. When a family moves to a new home they find help of moving all furniture from relatives and friends. If there is a wedding party, everything is provided and organized by relatives and friends.

In Middle East people can visit each other regularly at any time. No need to fix appointments one week before but just a few hours before or even without phoning, just knock the door or ring the bell. There are special visits at personal occasions like birthdays parties, getting birthdays, marriage wedding, and religious celebrations. They cook together, eat together, clean the houses together, and sometimes in some occasions they sleep together as a kind of big concern of each other.

In disturbing conditions, when someone is in a big trouble, people come together and spend long time with the person until the problem is solved. It is a kind of support and solidarity to be with a person in his trouble that strengthens and encourages him. If



someone dies all the family and the friends come immediately and stay at least three days with the spouse and the children. Sometimes the women do all the housework and cook the food for the people coming to share in the funeral and after.

For religious occasions like the Christmas feast there are special habits like joining the church together as a family and congratulate each other after the worship. If there is a dispute or quarrel happened between two people it must end up in the Christmas or the Eastern days. They say to each other: how comes we enjoy the feast celebration while we are in dispute and quarrel! They find the religious feasts as an opportunity of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Food is very significant in all occasions and events of the home land of AECB attendants. There is a special food for the birth celebrations, for the Christmas feast, and for the national festivals. The food brings them close together as one family as one body and when eating together they have to be faithful and honest to each other.

Some of AECB were born and lived most of their life in the countryside and are not used to high-tech life, modern structure, and forms of interactions in Bremen. Their confusing started in the airport when they could not use the trolley and this fear moved to dealing with all kinds of machines, buying a transportation tickets, ordering for the food, using the cell phones, and finding their addresses.

Back home they used to speak loudly or using their hands to touch each other. They did not get used to see man women kiss each other in public places, but in general they are greeting each other with a lot of kisses and hugs, only among relatives. Women did not get used to wear a few pieces of clothes they must cover all body in public places. They did not used to be very sharp in time, in eating the daily meals, in appointments, and in dealing with mistakes. They used to sleep late and wake up late and have a nape during the daytime because of the hot weather in their home countries. When they talk and tell something mostly they exaggerate and they do not see it as a kind of lie. They can easily use the personal things of each other sometimes without permission.

The relationship inside the family in Middle East is male domination. The husband mostly is practising oppression against the wife, for example the wife cannot go somewhere without permission from her husband and also in general, girls and women in Middle East need this permission from their fathers and from their brothers. In Middle East, sons and daughters are raised and treated differently, for example the disadvantages experienced by the girl child stemming from the restriction she has to contend with compared to the boy child. She is also given more responsibilities inside

the house because of the expectation that women should learn how to do household work. The future of girl child socialized to be is limited in the future options (I don't understand the sense.). They are socialized in the concept, that the husband and the brother always should protect the wife and the sister from the danger that surround them against the men especially in public places because of the sexual harassment. The women should submit to the male authority and must live for the family to the point of self-denial and self-sacrifice.

“The MDGs have not been entirely successful in eliminating the social and legal constraints and discriminatory behavior against women in the Arab world throughout the past ten years. Therefore, discriminatory laws against women should be abolished, positivist laws to ensure women's rights should be developed like a unified penal code for instance, and most importantly, Arab governments should withdraw their amendments to Article two of CEDAW. Steps should be undertaken to develop women's access to the employment market and decrease the gender gap. The content of the different Arab curricula should be reformed not only to develop the rights of women, but should also March 2011 Journal of International Women's Studies Vol. 12, 3 41 address discriminatory social practices against women, to eliminate discrimination at the grassroots level. Without directly addressing discrimination against women in the Arabworld, the realization of the MDGs in 2015 by all Arab Countries is highly unlikely<sup>26</sup>.

**4.3 Economically:** The economic situation of the home countries of the Arab refugees in AECB is weak. It became very weak after the so-called Arab Spring revolutions throughout the last four years.

The economic situation in the homeland of AECB attendants is in three different dimensions according to the background of three different groups. The first group is the youth people who were suffering from the unemployment and hopeless future. The percentage of unemployment in some Arab countries is very high for instances in Egypt and in Sudan as well. The second group is the older people who already had a good business in their home countries but because of the insecure situation they lost their money and their shops. For example, there is a family living now as refugees in Bremen and the husband was working in a good position in a factory. But facing a threaten conditions he and his wife then left everything and fled to Germany. Another one told me that as a Christian in the Arab a Muslim country is too difficult to build your own business and to have a free a trade project. The radical Muslims were disturbing the Christians and attacking them in their private business, stole the precious things, and

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<sup>†</sup> Nadine Sika, article online, The Millennium Development Goals: Prospects for Gender Equality in the Arab World, Journal of International Women's Studies, Volume 12, Issue 3 Arab Women and Their Struggles for Socio Economic and Political Rights Article 3, published by Bridgewater state University, Mar-2011.

destroyed the shop and the rest of the things. The third group sometimes could not find the food for their children might be because of the war like in Syria or might be because of the bad economic situation like in Somalia.

In Arab Countries,

“Growth remains positive, but too weak to boost job creation. Average growth (excluding Libya) is estimated to have inched up to 2.8 percent in 2013 from 2½ percent in 2012. Meanwhile, growth declined in Egypt and Tunisia, and a sharp drop in oil production precipitated a recession in Libya (-9 percent real GDP growth). Such a growth performance is far below what is needed to stem the rise in the number of unemployed, which climbed to 5.8 million, by the end of 2013—an increase of 1.5 million since end-2010. Downside risks remain high. The Syrian crisis and continued violence and instability in other parts of the region could lead to a further increase in the number of refugees, and damage trade, confidence, and growth. Setbacks to the political transitions would further delay economic reforms and deter investment.”<sup>27</sup>

We could notice from this the chances of finding job in most of the Arab world are very weak, the secure life is absence, and the future is not clear.

In other words, Lahcen Achy who is an economist with expertise in development, institutional economics, trade, and labour focused on the Middle East and North Africa describes the current situation in Middle East in this way.

“Given the tough challenges that the region is facing, this is a modest figure that does not meet the level needed to reduce the high unemployment rates, especially among the youth, and to improve the low living standards. The economic prospects seem blurrier in oil-importing Arab countries, especially in Syria, Egypt and Tunisia, where security concerns harm the general investment environment and hamper economic activity. Moreover, the slow economic growth exacerbates social anger and breeds more strikes and protests that delay economic recovery. As a result of this controversy, efforts to achieve political transition stall further and countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen fall into a vicious cycle that threatens the trust of the people in the future”<sup>28</sup>.

The economic situation during the time before the Arab spring was even worse. Najib George Awad explained it and its influences on the population and said:

“The failed economic strategies put the Arabic authoritarian regimes of the 60s under serious scrutiny and criticism from the population. Though many things changed in the situation and circumstances of the North African and Near Eastern Arab countries during the past five decades, the economic situation did not witness and serious improvement, and the drastic living conditions of the

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<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Staff of the International Monetary Fund, Arab Countries in Transition: An Update on Economic Outlook and Key Challenges, Online article, May 2015

<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Achy Lahcen, online article, Author is, translated by Pascale Menassa.

[www.almonitor.com/pulse/business/arab-world-economic-problems-unemployment](http://www.almonitor.com/pulse/business/arab-world-economic-problems-unemployment) Posted in 26.2.2015.

majority of the population therein even worsened”<sup>29</sup>.

I could conclude that the economic background of the AECB attendants in their home countries was too bad before fleeing and they found no hope to be better. Most of them said to me that the future for them was dark and unclear and they chose to escape to secure their children’s life and future.

**4.4 Politically:** The political situation in the Middle East is unclear and unstable. After “The Arab Spring Revolutions” the events and troubles change every day, as well as challenging to comprehend with numerous news that we receive from the region every day. From 2011, the presidents of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have been shouted or put in the jail, or lynched by a mob. Yemeni was forced to step aside, while the Syrian regime is fighting a desperate battle for bare survival. One does not know what the future might bring and, of course, foreign powers are closely watching the events.

“The Arab world has a long history of struggle for political change, from leftist groups to Islamist radicals. But the protests that started in 2011 could not have evolved into a mass phenomenon had it not been for the widespread discontent over unemployment, low living standards, several years of corruption, and ageing dictatorship. The anger of university graduates forced to drive taxis to survive, and families struggling to provide for their children transcended ideological divisions“. Arab regimes have been sitting on a demographic time bomb for decades. According to the UN Development Program, the population in Arab countries more than doubled between 1975 and 2005 to 314 million. In Egypt, two-thirds of the population is under 30. Political and economic development in most Arab states simply could not keep up with the staggering increase in the population, as the ruling elites’ incompetence helped lay the seeds for their own demise“<sup>30</sup>.

The Christians minorities in the Arab Countries are suffering because of the persecution of radical Muslims who forced them either to become Muslims or to be killed.

The dictatorship regimes in only used the Christians in the election game but did not give them support or equal chances in the political process and in the high governmental position. As a Christian in Middle East in many places you are not free to build Church, to make your religious rituals, to evangelize, and to practice your political rights.

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<sup>29</sup> Awad Najip George, And freedom became a public square, political, sociological and religious overviews on the Arab Christian and the Arabic spring page 4;5, LIT, Berlin 2012.

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<sup>30</sup>Online article by Primoz Manfreda, The Reasons for the Arab Spring, The Root Causes of the Arab Awakening in 2011. About news, middleeast.about.com.

“ In addition, political turmoil has been and continues to be a major contributor pressing indigenous Near Eastern Christians of various ethnicities towards seeking security and stability outside their homelands”<sup>31</sup>.

The political situation in the Arab countries is an unhealthy environment to include the different thoughts and attitudes. It is very difficult because the dictatorship regimes exist there since more than forty years ago. The undemocratic situation does not allow the people to express their ideas freely and does not give chance to have any kind of clean elected parliament or presidents.

“The political regimes before the Arab spring revolutions January 2011 characterized by the Absence of the law state, and the situation working by relations and corruption”.<sup>32</sup>

The political situation does not give equal opportunities and equal rights for all people and for all minorities.

## Chapter Five

### Collected interviews data: Part 1

**Introduction:** In this two following chapters I would like to review the interviews data that I could collect from people in Bremen whether from Arabs joining AECB or from Germans having some contacts with them.

My project based on qualitative research took 5 months from September 2014 to January 2015 on AECB between collecting data, reading literature and writing the evaluation report. From February to June 2015 I was writing this master thesis.

I gathered information by using two ways, the first is interviewing 27 persons (19 Arabs and 8 Germans), and the second is by writing my observations on their setting.

The interviews questions formulated in four dimensions:

1. The background of the Arab Christian refugees and the motives behind asylum seeking.
2. Their current spiritual situation in Bremen and what does the AECB mean for them.
3. Their interaction with the Germans.
4. Interaction with other Christian denominations and with Muslims in Bremen.

I started my work plan by contacting the key persons in Bremen, like the responsible

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<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Chrisafis, Angelique; Kingsley, Patrick; Beaumont, Peter (9 February 2013). "Violent tide of Salafism threatens the Arab spring". The GUARDIAN (London).

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<sup>32</sup> Zaki Andrea, alakbat walthara, Copts and revolution, Dar althakafa, page 14, 2015.

person of the AECB who is Egyptian, Br. Behnam Michael, and the Council of the Arabic Church as well. Then I visited the Arabic Church several times as a kind of orientation and to build a trust relationship with the people there. While joining the worship and the fellowship time, I formed the sample interview questions, which all together took some time. Later on during the time of interviewing people I also made some changes on it. I recorded all the interviews with permission of the interviewees. I also collected my data by making about 20 phone calls, via e-mail, face-to-face short talk with the attendants during their meetings in the church and by writing my observations. I put the interview questions in various and open forms, and tried to be flexible for interfering when any new effective question came to the fore during the interview time not interrupting the flow talk of the interviewees.

In chapter five I present two points: The past and the present situation of AECB Attendants:

### **5.1 The Past of Arab Christian refugees back home:**

Regarding their background situation and motives behind seeking for asylum I noticed their silence for a while, the deep breath and then they started to talk.

15 interviewees told that they fled because of religious problems: They faced persecution, violence and injustice just because they are Christians. They mentioned many stories and examples to explain the problems they countered back home. I will present only one of these stories told by a Syrian. He was working as a cemetery taker and there is a habit for Christian women that they visit the cemeteries every Saturday with some food to distribute for poor people and sometimes for their neighbours. A group of young Muslims used to disturb these Christian women and were sexually harassing them. He tried to protect the women, but this Muslim group hurt him strongly. This situation happened nearly every Saturday. Until once this Syrian Christian man nearly died after having been beaten violently. But someone took him to the hospital to have a treatment until he recovered. When he filled complain in the police station he did not get any protection or justice because he is a Christian, he said. Afterward he tried to find another job but he could not. In the end he decided to flee abroad. The significance of this story is determining the main motives behind the fleeing. It describes the difficult situation of Christians in the Middle East. It is not easy to be Christian in Middle East and to be women because of the problems and the sufferings.

One told about the hopeless life in Egypt, the rare chances of jobs. He graduated 2011 stayed unemployed although he like many others had searched actively for jobs. He fled

looking for hope and for achieving his dreams of a better future, he said.

One attendant of the AECEB fled because of political reasons, but he refused to be interviewed. 17 are searching for security and protection; there is only one who is looking for studying and discovering a new modern world. He said to me that he still is young and wants to learn and to study in Germany, so that he could find an environment to gain high education in order to get a good future job.

I noticed that at least 13 interviewees were not happy when we talked about their life back home. Some said because of the homesick and others because of the bad memories coming up again disturbing their new life.

Regarding their religious life in the home countries I was astonished about their strong connection with AECEB. 13 interviewees did not concern much with joining Churches regularly or having been involved in Church activities back home. But their relationship with God always existed and they wanted to satisfy God in the daily life behaviours. Therefore when they came to Germany they looked for God by joining the AECEB. 6 used to participate in the worships and in the church services back home. 3 Syrians interviewees were very active back home and they had the initiative to build an evangelical church in their village and they found help and collect funds until they succeed to build this Church. They used to join a traditional Church before but after attending a charismatic conference they used to have spiritual meeting in their home for some years and then decided to build an evangelical church. After about three years of working actively, this church grew fast. These three people are now very active in AECEB and happy to support it very effectively, they said.

Regarding the social life the 19 mentioned that they missed their families and closest friends. Then they smiled and their face became bright and they remembered some situations from the time of their childhood or some significant places or specific kind of food. Most of their stories focused on the exchange visits, the festival celebrations atmosphere, the food, and the support they found in difficulties from others whether spiritually, psychologically and sometimes financially, they said.

18 had a long, hard and expensive process to come to Germany. Some came through Georgia especially the new comers from Egypt and some came through Turkey especially the Syrians. Although they faced a big danger during the journey to Germany most of them explained that the suffering in their countries was much worse. Some of them said: "the life under threat and without future is a kind of death." They appreciate what Germany is doing for them currently.

14 interviewees came from strict religious environment. One example from Egyptian: a woman told me that her father used to force her to wear a full cover clothes as a traditional religious command. Another one told when he had fallen in love with a Muslim girl the surrounded both sides, Muslims and Christians, tried to hurt him. 5 women that I interviewed are happier than men in Germany. Their life here is much better than in their countries because of freedom, equality and dignity they said.

I could conclude that there are at least three main reasons behind their asylum seeking: Islamic persecution, oppressive political regimes, and the bad economic situation.

The 19 feel nostalgic to the social life back home.

## **5.2 What does AECB means for the Arab Christian refugees?**

I asked them what is emphasized in the AECB what they could not find in other clubs or cultural and political groups. 11 interviewees put priority on the Christian fellowship after the worship. It would be different and very healthy. When I asked how, they said: we feel free to speak without fear and we could express our problems and concerns with confidence that would find a Christian advice, solutions and offering help. 5 interviewees said the wonderful worship, the preaching, the music and the singing that could comfort their souls and remind them by the worship back home. 3 interviewees said the help that the Church is offering to us regarding their papers matters. One said: "I do not know the German language and in Germany many things need paper, paper, and paper. That is too much and I was not used to it in my home-country. The AECB is doing a very good job to me in this matter that is a kind of support lessening my stress being unable to communicate with this different society".

The 19 interviewees said: "The AECB is our home here in Bremen". The most repeated sentences: "we feel that we are among our family. We like the atmosphere, the freely speaking and the easy understanding to each other. We are happy with the Arabic worship, with the music, the Arabic Christian songs, the spiritual sermons and the listening to the word of God. In AECB we could celebrate our wedding as we were used back home with a lot of people surrounding us, with a lot of food to eat together, and with the spiritual blessing by the church that could bless our marriage. In AECB we could bury our beloved people when died and find warm support from our brother and sister in the Church. In AECB we could participate in the Lord Supper that feeds our souls and strengthens our spiritual life". The gathering in AECB gives them spiritual comfort that is very close to their homeland environment. Thus the urgent factor, that made AECB start and grown is the search for a new home in a foreign and new land.



When the question arose whether they were Arabs or Germans, the oldest congregation members and the new comers were very sensitive with this definition as Arab. Although they are speaking a good Arabic they do not feel comfortable to identify themselves as Arab as they explained to me as I already mentioned before.

The responsible leaders told me, when they put a name for the Church they tried to avoid the different confessional tension by this definition “The Arabic Evangelical Church of Bremen”. As the attendants of AECB come from different Christian confessional denominational backgrounds the only identity, which is not questioned in the old group and among the new comers, seems to be the Church relation and the Christian Identity. Especially the German identity is not yet adapted because of the language challenge, the culture gap, the difficulties of getting official paper, and the difficulties of having the German citizenship that requires long process and long time.

Regarding the children of the old members who are the second generation in this community in Germany are doubtful about their identity. When I interviewed 7 of them I found out that 5 of them understand themselves as Christians coming from the Middle East. German is a language they command best. Most of them are not interested in joining the AECB, one of the main difficulties for them is the Arabic language. The liturgy is held in the Arabic, some songs are translated into German but it’s not enough. 5 of them are joining a German Church like, Matthäus-Gemeinde, Kreuz-Gemeinde, and St. Johannes Sodenmat Gemeinde and some of them are even active in the ministry. One girl said to me that she takes part in the Sunday school meeting being happy to participate in the service of the Church. 5 of them are confused in their identity, the way of life of their parents and the way of life of German society surrounding them.

For the new comers the question of identity is not yet urgent. Their answers were very clearly connected to their Christian and their national Identity.

The 19 interviewees are ready to help in the church services without any hesitation. One told me that she is full of desire to serve God but there is no clear advice offered by the church. Five are really taking part in the church services; clearly those who are the Council leaders. 4 of these leaders used to be active in the spiritual services in their Churches back home.

17 interviewees wish to have their own church building. They do not have enough places for children Sunday school as well as for youth meetings and other activities. They meet in Kreuz-Gemeinde in Bremen in a down stairs hall only once a week on Sundays.

But after six months of contacting the AECB some developments happened in the spiritual and the organizational structure. For instance, they start four more kinds of meetings for youth, prayer, Bible study, and women meeting. And they create new four committees from the believers to lead the activities of these new meetings.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Collected Data Part 2**

In chapter I present two main points in four ideas: The interaction with the German Society and with other faiths:

#### **6.1.1 The interaction with the German Society:**

According to a forecast by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the number of asylum seekers in Germany will rise in the coming year, again. "We expect for next year 200,000 first-time applicants and 30,000 follow-up applications," the president of the Federal Office, Manfred Schmidt said. From January to November 2014, Germany had a total of 181.453 asylum applications, 155.472 of them initial claims and 26.026 follow-up applications. In 2014 the initial reception had occurred to partly chaotic conditions. The authorities were completely overwhelmed by the increased influx of refugees. Schmidt hopes that he can reduce the duration of the asylum procedure with the additional employees. The federal government has ordered to shorten the average length of about seven months to three.

The human rights organization "Pro asylum" criticized the forecast of the Federal Office because Germany isolates herself. Günter Burkhardt: It is necessary "to meet them with new reception centre and additional staff in the asylum office bringing short-term relaxation. We need an integration concept and not a concept of how we avoid homelessness."<sup>33</sup>

We notice these positive actions and the awareness of the German federal government.

But how the refugees could feel that?

The first impression of new comers is very important and unforgettable. 16 remember the first moments and their first impression of Germany in the airport. They spoke positively that people treated them in a kind and in a respectful way. One of them told that he felt a human being here in Germany. The 19 interviewees witnessed that they found a good concern from the foreigner office regarding the daily life matters.

The social communication with the Germans is weak. 13 because of the language, 4 that

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<sup>33</sup>Quoted from Yahoo Deutschland page online in 22.12.2014.

Germans like to keep boundaries and 2 their fear or hesitation to be rejected. Although they are happy with the freedom in the German society, they are critical when they find people behave in a different way from what they are used to in their home countries. 15 find Germans kind and like to help. 4 find them very individual.

Interesting for me was that they have no problem to build relationships with Germans. They are encouraging their children to have German friends and exchange visits. One of the old Syrian families has four children, three of them married to Germans.

Positive and negative points of Germans from AECEB view are: 15 agreed, the order and to be in time, telling the truth and the perfection in the work. 16 agreed that legitimacy of homosexuality are the most negative point. They reflect their own culture when they give their personal impression.

Regarding the intercultural tension between Western and Arabic oriental, 17 told that there is no big tension in terms of adapting to a new culture. But they concern very much to keep their Christian values in their lives in Bremen. 14 told that friendship is possible and important.

The AECEB members are expecting the German Church coming to them in the sense of more and deep contacts. 13 think of more programs together is considerable and having worships and fellowship together is possible. 6 are expecting financial support to have their own church building and have their own pastor.

### **6.1.2 The Germans reaction and impression about the Arab in Bremen:**

I interviewed 8 German persons living in Bremen (2 of them are German pastors in Bremen city). I have tried to diversify my selections and focused my questions on these areas: their point of view of receiving more refugees in Bremen, their personal experiences and responsibilities towards the Arab refugees.

The 8 interviewees are aware of the issue of refugees quite well and have no problem to receive and contact refugees. 6 are tolerant with foreigners and have no problem to take more responsibility with people in need. 2 are afraid that more problems might happen.

Regarding the criteria of receiving refugees, 3 expressed clearly that they prefer Christians. Their reasons were: the Christians are facing difficulties and persecutions especially in the Muslim countries. They think that Christians can integrate into the German society easier and faster with fewer problems. 5 explained that there is no specific distinction between the people; the only one criterion is the need and seeking for protection. 5 think that the German state is doing a good job for the refugees in terms of accommodation matters. Further on they think that German people should learn

more about the culture of welcoming and learning more about the culture of the new comers. One mentioned that social clubs, churches, places for practicing hobbies and training centres are very essential in this matter.

Regarding the German picture of Arabs, 5 think that the media is presenting Arabs as aggressive or terrorists Muslims what is not correct, they said. They believe that only a few Arabs are terrorists, every nationality has negative and positive points. I asked if they have specific experience with Arab Muslims; they said no. One told me that he sold some house furniture staffs for Arabs and he did not find anything especial or different. One working in a Christian Social Organization for children told me the same. Three interviewees avoided to speak about their religious background. I could not understand exactly the reasons behind it. When I asked the Christian social worker about the biblical basis for their great work, I also did not find a clear answer. The only word I heard from him was helping people.

Four interviewees having a direct contact with the AECB gave a very positive contribution. They found them friendly, hospital and their worship is very lively. I asked them about specific experience: They answered that the people in AECB are concerned about living their faith and attending the church services frequently. 4 wish that the German Church and the state should support AECB financially. 4 believe that having more Arab Christians is very good for the society and for the church. It might become a good point to compensate the declining number of Church attendances in Germany. 3 explained that Arab Christians could help Germans to understand the Arab Muslim mentality and be a good bridge between the two cultures.

### **6.2.1 The Interaction with other Christian denominations:**

AECB has no problem with taking part in worship services of other denominations, especially if they are using the rooms for their own services. As there is no other Arab Christian denomination in Bremen there are no common activities. As AECB has a diversity of confession backgrounds they are open and flexible to other confessions. There are re-presenters for several Christian denominations, for instance Coptic Orthodox of Egypt, Assyrian and Mormon Church of Syria and Lebanon, Evangelical church of Egypt and from other countries and Catholic Church as well. Although they used to have a tension back home they now meet and worship in harmony in AECB.

About relationship with other confessions 14 expressed their openness to respect other confessions and their readiness to cooperate with them in some activities. They said that they are out of their countries and away from home, so that we need to be together to

strengthen each other and support each other. The responsible leader said that our Christian Biblical understanding is to be one in Jesus Christ and to express our love and our respect to each other. He also said that in AECB they do not concern on the doctrine and the differences but are mostly focused in teaching in the common ideas that build love and peace. The only thought being very much concerned is Jesus Christ as our saviour and our lord that He can unify us in Him.

17 interviewees think that the most important hope for Christianity is unification among all Christian confessions. One of them said: “I hope that all denominations one-day become one, and all Churches become one, then the tensions will disappeared and we could the peace and the unity”. They use the Biblical text of John 17 the prayer of Jesus Christ that all become one and that is the sign of Christian believers to love each other and be one in Christ. One lady from Lebanon then asked me to pray for her family, because they are joining one of the traditional Churches. She wants them to have the new birth of Jesus Christ because if they die now she thinks they might not go to heaven with Christ in the glory. About 60% of them have the same belief of converting other Christian traditional confession members to have the new spiritual birth life.

There is one Coptic Orthodox priest visiting Bremen once a month to give an orthodox liturgy. About 10% of the attendants of AECB join this Orthodox liturgy in one of the outreach Churches. 5 interviewees appeared critical toward the “Traditional Churches” like the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. They found their ritual liturgy it’s not lively and routine. The said that the Catholic and the Orthodox intolerance with the Evangelicals and treating them in aggressive way.

**6.2.2 The Interaction with Islam:** In relation to the Islam the 19 interviewees see that they are not close to the Arabic Muslims and are not interested in communicating and discussing with the radicals. They still feel not comfortable because of the difficulties and religious violence faced before. 7 try to forgive and to make a new start, but it needs some time and efforts to build good contacts with the open mind Muslims.

5 interviewees are open to contact Muslims in Bremen. They think mission as a Christian is to express their love to everybody. One told me that he used to have Muslim friends at home country. He knows how they think; he studied some course about the Islam religion. He believes that solving the economic, political, and social problems in the Middle East could help to solve the radicalism mentality and the extremist thinking. One woman said to me that the Arabic Christian people in Bremen have responsibility toward German Muslim relationship. They could take part in the field of making

dialogue between both sides.

Muslims from time to time are joining the AECB. The responsible leader mentioned that about four persons come to Church every week to attend the worship and ask questions. The last four years about twenty Muslims converted to be Christians and so many others just come to have a look or ask for help in some personal matters. He has no problem to build dialogue with Muslims in Bremen like making some meetings and activities.

With Muslims, 13 Interviewees told me two significant stories that had happened in Bremen. One story is about a specific Mosque in Bremen, which is a place for Salafist thinking and teaching. “One lady told me that they normally meet some Muslim women and have a little talk with them in Market or in the Public transportation. She found them very open and kind with her but after spending some time in Bremen they changed their style of dressing and started wearing the Veil (Hegab) and became very conservative. When she asked to understand what happened to them she found the reason behind this changes is these women were joining that specific Mosque where the Imam is very radical and a Salafist, she said”<sup>34</sup>.

The other story that they repeat is that the Church and government in Bremen supported “Fatih Moschee” with some hundred thousand Euros to build it but on the other side they refuse to support the migrants churches which is not understandable for them. But on the homepage of the Fatih Mosque in Bremen city and in the other Fatih Mosque in Bremerhaven website of “Radiobremen” is written that they did not get any donation from public:

“Die ungewöhnlich lange Bauphase ist damit zu begründen, dass die neue Moschee ausschließlich aus Spendengeldern (ohne öffentliche Mittel) finanziert werden musste. Daher konnte nur Stück für Stück gebaut werden; immer wenn genügend Spenden zusammen kamen.”<sup>35</sup>

“Finanziert wurde der Moscheekomplex aus Spenden”<sup>36</sup>.

This attitude of the state of Bremen is to help Muslims to integrate better and they want to include them in the society.

“On January 14, the City-State of Bremen signed a so-called state treaty with city's 40,000-strong Muslim community. The agreement guarantees the protection of Muslim community properties, the approval of the construction of mosques with minarets and domes, the allotment of land for Muslim cemeteries, the supplying of halal food at prisons and hospitals, the recognition of three Muslim

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<sup>34</sup> Interviewee woman, Decemebr 2014.

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<sup>35</sup> Homepage, [www.fatih-moschee.de](http://www.fatih-moschee.de) June, 2015

<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> [www.rediobremen.de](http://www.rediobremen.de), Festakt in Bremerhaven, Neue Fatih-Moschee ist eröffnet, 23 Mai.2015.

holidays, Muslim representation in state institutions and several other rights and privileges. Critics say the agreements do little to encourage Muslim integration into German society and instead will boost the growing influence of Islam in the country by encouraging the perpetuation of a Muslim parallel society”<sup>37</sup>.

From the intercultural perspective and the social peace the AECB has a good ecumenical attitude with other Christian denominations and with each other inside the Congregation. But with Muslims it still needs a lot of work in different fields.

The history with Muslims of AECB people back home has two different sides, one is positive and the other one is negative. Positive side is, in terms of common language, mutual understanding, and common culture. Regarding the negative side is because of the tension, conflict, and religious problems that happen in some places in Middle East between them. 13 interviewees have a bad experience with Muslims that made them leave their country and ask for asylum in Germany.

The social environment is healthy whether inside the church community or outside in the society of Bremen. Inside they are communicating with love and with warm welcoming that gives happiness to the new people. They share a meal after the worship with a nice fellowship; you feel the family. Bremen City is also a good environment for refugees and international people. 17 interviewees said to me: “Germans like to help”. In a bus in Bremen when I asked for help to book a ticket from the machine I found cooperation and concern.

Although the direct communication of most of the refugees with Germans is weak in terms of friendship they feel comfortable with the atmosphere in Bremen City. They find shops having a diversity of goods and food so they get their needs easily. There is a library available and free for refugees. They can read and borrow books, especially the language books. They have access to the Internet and communicate with their families and friends in home countries. The state is offering language courses for refugees free. That helps them to have a better communication with the German society. Thus the social environment in general in Bremen for the Arab Christian refugees is positive.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Toward successful Integration of the Arab Christian Refugees in Bremen:**

The Church plays a very essential role in the refugees’ and migrants’ life, it is a new home. The 19 Arabs interviewees are getting help by AECB in their practical and

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<sup>37</sup> Kern Soeren, The Islamization of Germany in 2013. January 15, 2014 at 5:00 am <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4130/islamization-germany>

spiritual problems of adaptation, assimilation, and integration to an unfamiliar society. AECB is very much aware of the difficult situation of people who are uprooted from one environment and transplanted to another. That makes the Church take a big responsibility towards the refugees in need.

Afe adogame said in his book *The African Christian Diaspora*, “The immigrant condition is riddled with hope, hardship, broken dreams, and measures of success. Immigrant Christianity serves as a balm in the entire process, ranging from why and how the immigrants come to their new countries, to how they cope in the new homeland. The journey begins with prayers in Pentecostal Churches for everyday survival needs such as working permits, employment, and money for rent mortgage, health insurance, and other bills. There is also added pressure to accumulate money and goods to transfer home. (Kalu 2008:282)”<sup>38</sup>.

That means the church is central in the life of these people, they find support and help.

“Nevertheless there are also equally reputable historians and sociologists who have pointed to the importance of religions in this field. Oscar Handlin writes: “the very process of adjusting immigrant ideas to the conditions of the United States made religion paramount as a way of life”. A.H. Neivia and M. Deigues , write about Brazil: “Catholicism is one of the most important means of promoting the assimilation of immigrants, mainly in their period of adjustment, by assisting them to make contacts and above all by giving them a sense of solidarity of mankind”<sup>39</sup>.”

The actual role of AECB for the refugees presents in several kinds of programs. That enables them to handle the new difficult situation. According to the collected data and to my observations I could organize the effective activities and programs of AECB towards the refugees in the issue of integration in the following factors:

### **Religious Factors towards a successful Stability and Integration:**

Stability, assimilation, adjustment, settlement, and adaptation, all these terms could express the process of integration steps but it is difficult to put it in specific order. As people are not on the same level of improvement steps have to be different: from person to person and from place to place. And also it is different according to, how much they are involved in the daily life activities in Bremen City and how could the integration progress speed go from the first day of arriving at Germany to some years of staying. Conflicts arise when the role expectations and the role demands do not fit together. This

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<sup>39</sup> Afe adogame said in his book *The African Christian diaspora*. Page 16, ALBANI, the Netherland 1961.

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<sup>39</sup> J. J. MOL R.E.M.P. BULLETIN, Churches and Immigrants; page 6, London, 2013.



conflict brings tension and instability. For example when refugees expect that they easily find a job with a high salary then they meet the challenges of required qualifications and the challenge of language. Another example, when some expected Germany to have “a religious atmosphere” being a Christian society. Then they find it as something different, it is “a secular society”, and then frustration and tension come.

There is conflict arising because of individualism and isolation in the German society. Back home they used to live in social relationships, which is not available in Germany.

Conflict of daily life different behaviors, they confronted with a liberal way of life in Germany while they used to live in a conservative religious atmosphere back home.

Sometimes these refugees are still suffering from the negative influences of dangerous situations that they escaped from back home. Might be they have nervous stress that making them psychologically unstable.

In such conflicts, AECB is doing very good jobs that could reduce the tension and gives a kind of stability during the integration process.

These following religious factors, that could help in the issue of integration, are inspired by “R.E.M.P. BULLETIN, Churches and Immigrants, by Dr. J. J. MOL; Section I”. I will put my analysis and explanation with new applications according to the contextual conditions of the AECB:

### **7.1 Theology and worship of the AECB:**

In AECB I observed that the content of teaching (Sunday sermons and Bible study meetings) mostly focuses on three main items:

First, encouragement speeches that could make the attendant handle the new situations. For example the speakers mostly uses Biblical texts like the story of Josef the son of Jacob, Daniel in the Babylonian Captivity, and the miracles stories in the new and old testament. The idea behind this is to portray God as the one who identifies with His people being in miserable situation and that He is taking care of all people in troubles like refugees as a kind of support to His honest people in alliance. Jesus Christ is always standing by the weak, stringer, and lost people. That could comfort them and encourage them for the new start. And the accompanying feeling may arise that God could relief their frustration and give hope of the future that could reduce their tension.

Second, proselytizing preaching that is concern about the “unbelievers or not Christians”. That aims to persuade them to be real Christians. The content of these teachings is presenting Jesus Christ as the only Savior, Lord, healer and the only real God. That sometimes may connect their coming to Germany as a kind of being saved

from very dangerous past to a promising future. In AECB they repeat that God Who saved you from the bad situation and brought you to Germany, can give you a new spiritual life, a new birth, an eternal life. They invite them to accept this new Christian life, confess their sins and get forgiveness from God. This kind of teaching gives happiness, relaxation, and frees them from a big burden of the feeling of being guilty. That could less the tension that they are in.

Third the “deep teaching” that is aim to help the attendants to grow in their Christian faith. That is not really clear in AECB and not very well organized but from time to time it exists. Some of the speakers, whether in Sundays sermons or during the Bible study meetings, but unintentionally and without specific plan, are presenting some theological topics about God, Salvation, and the holy life, and the fruits of Holy spirit.

These deep teachings could help the attendants for better thinking and better using and understand the Bible. That will improve their self-trust and self-dependence. Thus the level of tension and conflict could be reduced and their stability be improved.

If one deepen, organizes these kinds of teaching, present it in a planned way, and added the intercultural perspective of the Bible one could help the Arab refugees to improve their way of thinking toward the other, to understand each other, to respect the faith of each other, sharing values of each other, and acquiring the intercultural attitude with the others (live and work together with positive interaction). Deepening the spiritual and the theological attitudes of the refugee’s life would help them to build up a better understanding of reconciliation with God, with themselves, and with the others. This could improve their communication attitude in a peaceful way with Germans and with other Christian denominations. Thus could push the process of stability and integration with less problems, conflicts, and tension.

In ACEB the attendants find neither discrimination nor uncritical acceptance. There is concern to maintain the indigenous statue of the heritage of the refugees and not separate them totally from their roots. That could bring for them a kind of honorable worth and dignity to bridge cultures and make them feel equal as the Germans. That could make them improving smoothly.

The order and the content of Sunday’s services, the songs, the music, and the sermons give the feeling that they are at home with their family. Many sermons focus in the unconditional love of Christ and the justifying of fleeing with ideas like: this is the plan and the will of God for all of you to serve by spreading the word of the Gospel.

AECB people very much respecting the religion and the Church as holy and high value.

To adjust the new life as the better plan of God could help them feeling comfortable and stable. That also makes them able to accept and to enjoy their new life.

Therefore the reducing of the tension and conflicts that could the AECB do by its teaching and theology with hundreds of refugees in Bremen is clear and touchable. The church is working as a central bridge between two different worlds that could satisfy the nostalgic sentiments and channeled it to the active participation of the new society during the process of stability, integration and living peacefully in Bremen.

## **7.2 The Social activities and Pastoral counseling:**

AECB is the center of the social activities for the refugees. They can meet and talk freely to each other as one family. There they warm up Christian fellowship and share their traditional food together. They can enjoy and feel happy when they spend some time in such atmosphere related to their experiences back home. In this respect AECB becomes a new home for them that could help them to handle their homesickness. This time after the worship bring joy and comfort for them. That could compensate what they missed back home. The nature of living in distance in Germany increase their feeling of loneliness, loss, the bad need of warm and friendly relationship.

That need of belonging is a kind of security for them. That gives them the feeling that they are part of this Christian family or as they like to call it “we are the family of Christ”. In AECB they find unconditional love as their belief that Jesus Christ loves them without reason only by the grace of God. Actually this feeling of being loved ones and part of a big family could balance their feeling of being lost.

On the other hand the pastoral care is playing a very important role in the life of the refugees of AECB in the issue of stability and integration.

Being able to talk with someone one can trust in and can understand is very important when one are in trouble. In home-countries there is a close friend but now in Bremen, Germany, they have no new close relations yet, they feel that they are alone. In such critical and difficult situation the responsible leaders of AECB try to do a good job by caring for these refugees coming to the Church. Speaking the same Arabic language, having a similar situation, having the warm welcoming, and their attentive listening encourage the people coming to them and share their problems and concerns. This is a very good opportunity for the refugees to speak freely and get a useful advice.

The pastoral counseling happening in AECB is supporting the attendants to cope with many challenges whether ethically or culturally in the very different environment.

This pastoral care in AECB does not have a scientific basis but mostly depends on

honestly love, understanding and friendly listening that give rest and joy for the refugees. The feeling of concern and caring brings a kind of stability and adjustment to the new situation. But on the other hand the leaders and the attendants claim their need to an ordained qualified pastor to cover this part of need for such caring and counseling. This pastoral care could also work in many problems as a troubleshooter especially when there is misunderstanding between the refugees and the host society. For example, in some negative criticism from one side to the other, in conflicts that arises from the frustration because of different expectations from both sides. The pastoral care brings both sides together, the refugees and the hosting society, to make a better understanding to each other. That could push the process of cooperation and partnership of building and working together. I could name this role of pastoral care as translator, mediator, and peace maker. There is lack of common projects between AECB and the Germany Churches to work together and to solve the misunderstanding problem

In the early period of the newcomers they have the feeling of thankfulness and appreciate the security and protection they find from the hosting society. But after some time the tension starts because of the need of the self-realization and contacting the new social live. Then the conflicts of the adjustment and integration issue are arises.

Thus the Christian social fellowship and the pastoral care that shows the sacrificial are playing a very important role to help the refugees of solving a lot of daily life problems, calming their stress. This is giving a kind of stability and reducing their stress.

**7.3 Charity and Social work:** from the first day of the arriving of the refugees they are thinking of accommodation to live, a job to work, and some money for their daily life expenses. They need a kind of support in different sides of life to facilitate their orientation, adjustment, and stability in the new society. On the one hand the government in Bremen is doing a good job in terms of these living matters regarding the finding of accommodations, the financial assisting, the providing of the German courses, and the advices of the employment offices. On the other hand the AECB puts its emphasis on solving the minor social problems and helping the new comers to access this offers. AECB serves as an information office for the refugees in many different matters. For examples, translating the papers written in German language, answering questions regarding the law, proving and finding cheap markets for second hand clothes and for cheap food, communicating with the schools for their children, and how they could use the public transportation. AECB for refugees is a wonderful social agency and a channel to be able to survive in the new society. AECB is trying to provide these

services by self-support although most of its members are not really rich people, but as a kind of Christian love and solidarity they collect some money from each other and support each other needs.

This social work of AECB could also facilitate and ease the misunderstandings and the difficulties, which happen between the newcomers and financial government offices. Sometimes these offices cannot know the needs and the critical questions of the refugees. This matching role could solve a lot of problems, answer many questions quickly, and could be a step towards the integration of the newcomers.

Therefore this charity and social engagement of the Church makes the money which is paid by the government to the refugees to a visible return for the good investment. That creates a good atmosphere for the refugees to understand and learn. That persuades them to be a fruitful part of the new society. This not only a kind of stand-by the refugees but also AECB leaders aware of not making them just receiving support without working hard and taking their responsibility towards the hosting society.

There is a shortage of cooperation and common social projects with the German Church and with other religions. Those kinds of cooperation could help and push the integration process of the newcomers positively and bring mutual benefits for both sides.

In this respect the German government in Bremen and the AECB are working together in a harmony because of a humanitarian motive to give the refugees newcomers the needed stability, adjustment, and easier integration. In addition they give them a new successful start and being an active part of the building of the host society.

This last contribution points could lead to think of how important refugees and immigrants are for the hosting society culturally, economically, socially and religiously. There are positive effects on the hosting society in general and on the Churches in special. More comers from Christian background will give more advantages. If one looks for example to the Arab congregation in Bremen one can find strong commitment towards Christianity and to the Biblical teaching. Big numbers of them are already registered members in one of the German Churches in Bremen. They do efforts to keep the Christian faith to the next generation. And many of the migrant Christian leaders I met not only in Bremen but in other places in Germany, have a dream to bring the Gospel back.

Thus AECB is playing a very good role in such difficult situation with the Arab refugees. The teachings, the fellowship, and the mutual charity could comfort and calm the stress and the homesick. That could bring a kind of stability and better integration.

## **8. Conclusion:**

As Will Herberg in 1960 said, sooner or later the immigrants will give up everything from the old country and adopt the new ways of life but that does not include the old religion.

The AECB has played a very important role in the field of assisting refugees in finding a new home, handling their social and spiritual problems, adjustment and integration in a new, different, and unfamiliar society. In Bremen here and now they find their home in AECB. That helps them effectively according to their deep longing of finding a new home. AECB succeeds to meet the needs of the Arab refugees theologically, socially, and answers their questions.

The Arab Christian refugees in Bremen fled from very difficult situation back home. Religiously, they were persecuted violently by radical Muslims. Economically, they escape from very weak income without future hope. Politically, they liberated themselves from dictatorship regimes, insecure atmosphere and injustice society. Socially, they used to live in a big extended family and close friend's relations.

They belong to very different Christian denominations. By belonging to the AECB they become open to worship and have a warm fellowship together.

The Arab Christian refugees in Bremen are far from home, from families and from friends. They counter a new and different culture, a new and different people, a new and different language and living as strangers. The cultural impact among Arabs is extremely important. That underlines the difficult and challenging situation the Arabs are facing in this total different Western Culture. And it explains how much important the teaching of the AECB is in such setting. Sometimes there is confusion between what is Biblical and what just traditional habits are. For example, position of women according to the Bible gives equality and respect to her, but in the Arab culture and traditions mostly it is opposite.

Deeper teachings in the AECB could help the people to cope with the new and difficult situation and enable them to contact effectively with other value systems and without a hidden agenda or fear but with courage for a fruitful interaction. In the Arab congregations there is lack of deep teaching because the pastors do not have proper qualifications for the church tasks.

AECB attendant's interaction with the German society is weak but it is slowly improving. Although they have some critics on the German society, they are open and flexible to contact them for exchange learning.

They are open for ecumenical dialogue with other Christians and Muslims. Arab Christians coming from Islamic countries have a deep and long history of experience with Muslims. They were living, working and interacting together through centuries. In Middle Eastern countries Muslims and Christians have common language, common culture and common challenges. Therefore they can easily understand each other. So that Arab Christians in some points can serve as mediator of understanding between Muslims and Germans. Dialogue with Muslims could include and encourage Islamic people to integrate into German society instead of building more and more a Muslim parallel society. The future will undoubtedly have to include a rich diversity of immigrant congregations by creating vibrant religious institutions that simultaneously recreate for their members feelings of the homeland while helping them to adapt to their new land.

Most of Germans think positively and in a responsible way toward the issue of refugees. But they still need to learn more about other culture. Most Germans have an unclear picture about Arab people and their culture.

There is a misunderstanding and bad impression from some Germans against their Churches. So that the German Churches should declare clearly their efforts and their Christian basis of the great work that is performed on the ground through centuries especially regarding the humanitarian problems for example with refugees.

The increasing number of attendants in the migrant Churches makes me think optimistic regarding the number of Christians in Europe. God's position and Christian religion in the life of these AECB attendants is very deep and central. The living as a Christian in a certain time and in a certain place has to be taken seriously. That might lead them to give a new witness of the love of Christ. The dream of many Christian migrants is to help the Churches in Germany to increase the worshipers, to accomplish the Christian mission and bringing the Gospel back.

Thus theology, social fellowship, mutual charity in AECB in warm and secure atmosphere shows the sacrificial love and the close relation of Christ for every one of the attendants. That is playing a very important role and is very essential to help the refugees of calming their stress, of making a better understanding of their present situation, and of getting answers for many questions. This is giving a kind of stability to push the integration process further, smoothly, positively, effectively and successfully.

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