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Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations

ISSN 0143-893X

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By Lissi Rasmussen* & Jørgen S Nielson

Introduction

Since Muslim communities have come into existence in a significant way in the various countries of Western Europe over the last two decades, the churches and Christians have responded in varying ways and at different levels. It is probably true to say that the common factor in most of the response has been bewilderment and confusion. This confusion is partly to be explained at the personal level. The known methods of behaviour and social interaction do not function as usual. Linguistic and cultural differences, which were irrelevant when the groups were separated by days and weeks of travel, suddenly become a daily challenge across the shop counter or the factory workbench. But an explanation must also be sought in social structures and institutions, for in so far as they perform many of the functions which bind society together and serve to express, in part at least, social and cultural identities, such institutions can reinforce or modify attitudes and patterns of social interaction. It is therefore of enormous significance that bewilderment has characterized also the responses of the churches to the growing presence of Islam in Europe. This paper is essentially an annotated documentation of this response. The documentation is not complete, nor does it attempt to present material from all countries of Europe. While some of the texts referred to and quoted are official documents of churches and Christian agencies, others are the views of individuals who in one way or another are influential or reflect the thinking of significant groups of Christians.

In evaluating these texts it is important to remember the institutional structures of the churches which form part of the context contributing to the Christian response to Muslims. In general, it is true to say that the European churches have over the last two to three centuries organized themselves on the basis of a division of labour partly between service and evangelization and partly between home and abroad. The result has typically been the existence of specialized service agencies concentrated at home and providing resources of material and personnel on a national or regional level. Complementing these agencies have been mission societies whose work has been concentrated abroad, usually in Africa and Asia, and has encompassed both service and evangelization. Local ministers, pastors and priests at home, have tended to depend on the resources of the service agencies on the one hand and, on the other, to leave the mission societies to get on with the responsibility of evangelization. Not only has this situation left local congregations ill-equipped for the encounter with a growing number of people of a strange culture and

religion, it has also often left national churches with an organization singularly unsuitable for the new situation. Church initiatives in response to Islam in Europe have come mainly from two perspectives corresponding to these structures. The concern for migrant workers' welfare tended to come first and, naturally, came from service agencies. The traditional emphases on physical welfare - health, housing, working conditions, legal security, etc. - were the primary concerns, often to the exclusion of aspects of religious identity. Rather later has come a concern for these aspects of religious identity, most commonly from the various forms of mission structures; this concern has then at an even later stage been taken up also by the service agencies. Often, as a result, the whole area of dialogue and theological response to Islam has fallen to mission societies and agencies. The debate between "conservatives" with their emphasis on evangelization and "liberals" stressing dialogue has been heightened in this situation, and already sensitive Christian-Muslim relations have been exposed to more possibilities of misunderstanding.

International documents

While the statements adopted by international church organizations are not necessarily the earliest, either in time or in development of ideas, they will be considered first. In their genesis they often bring together and summarize the various ideas which have been developing in local situations, but they can also contain innovation both of content and formulation. In both these aspects they may provide an incentive to further thinking and these constitute a booster in the continuing process of response and renewal. The main church organizations which are involved in one way or another with this question are the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, for the Roman Catholic Church, the Vatican.

As far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned the basic document is the so-called *Nostra aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to the Non-Christian Religions, which was adopted by the Second Vatican Council in October 1965: (1)

1. In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions. Ever aware of her duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, she reflects at the outset on what men have in

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common and what tends to promote fellowship among them.

All men form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (cf. Acts 17:26), and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all men (cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4) against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illumined by the glory of God, and in whose splendor all peoples will walk (cf. Apoc. 21:23 ff).

Men look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. The problems that weigh heavily on the hearts of men are the same today as in the ages past. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behaviour, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19), men find the fulness of their religious life.

The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.

3. The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they worship Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.

Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values. (2)

This document must be read together with the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, called *Lumen gentium*, adopted in November 1964, where a section treats the relationship between Christians and other believers in the following words:

16. Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in

various ways. There is, first, that people to which the covenants and promises were made, and from which Christ was born according to the flesh (cf. Rom. 9:4-5): in view of divine choice, they are a people most dear for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts of God are without repentance (cf. Rom. 11:29). But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Moslems: these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day. Nor is God remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, since he gives to all men life and breath and all things (cf. Acts 17:25-28), and since the Saviour wills all men to be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ, or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation. Nor shall divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life. But very often, deceived by the Evil One, men have become vain in their reasonings, have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and served the world rather than the Creator (cf. Rom. 1:21 and 25). Or else, living and dying in this world without God, they are exposed to ultimate despair. Hence to procure the glory of God and the salvation of all these, the Church, mindful of the Lord's command, "preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:16) takes zealous care to foster the missions. (3)

One of the complications encountered by observers of such councils and their statements and felt particularly by Muslims, concerning whom such documents speak, is uncertainty over the status of the texts. Are they authoritative? Can one assume that the individual and corporate members of the church will follow up and abide by the declarations and recommendations made? If the answer to such questions in relation to Vatican statements must increasingly be in the negative, that has certainly always been the case with documents emanating from the World Council of Churches. Here, attitudes to Islam have particularly been expressed in documents on dialogue. At the General Assembly in 1975 in Nairobi this question was a particularly controversial one, and in consequence a theological consultation was held at Chiang Mai, Thailand, in April 1977. One of the reports from that consultation deals with Christian-Muslim relations and reads in part:

1. *The present situation*

There has been increasing contact between Christians and Muslims, and in terms of formal meetings this has been partly in the context of WCC-sponsored dialogues. Several meetings have been held on theological and religious issues as well as on the wider significance of the religious plurality such as at Ajaltoun, Broumana, Colombo, Chambesy and Cartigny. All this is in addition to several regional and local conferences. Sometimes Christians' and Muslims' concern with political and special issues has pointed in the direction of attempts to reconcile the tensions of a given area. Under these circumstances we have had to proceed with each other at the pace and in the manner

that seem particularly relevant to the situation.

2. *Specific aspects of the relationship*

(a) We are aware of the many values we share with Muslims, and our meetings have been facilitated by this common ground. But we would not wish to minimize differences, such as the sometimes negative views whereby Islam sees itself as fulfilling and superseding Christianity or whereby Christians dismiss Islam as a heresy or false prophecy. Somewhat going beyond these points of controversy is the more open attitude of, on the one hand, Muslims who have a sense of Abrahamic kinship with Jews and Christians and, on the other hand, Christians who see Islam as a critical judgement upon the Church and then as endowed with its own sense of faith in one God and obedience to Him.

(b) We Christians recognize that Islam claims to possess in its sacred Scriptures a revealed knowledge of Christ some of which does not accord with our own understanding. Not only do Christians and Muslims differ as to their understanding of the authenticity of Christian, Islamic (and Jewish) Scriptures, but they are also unreconciled in their assessment of the significance of the Cross or of the Trinity. It is just as unrealistic to refuse to acknowledge these facts as it is unproductive to insist on them; for example, our past attempts to minimize the religious or moral stature of the Qur'an and Muhammad are unhelpful.

(c) Historically also there has been tension and rivalry from which we are still recovering. The whole history of our relationship in the Middle Ages and beyond and of western colonial expansion in Muslim lands is steeped in this tradition of mistrust and misunderstanding. Even our understanding and practice of mission has fostered a spirit of competitiveness and rivalry.

(d) Muslim concern with politics in many parts of the world, not least the Middle East, is sometimes coupled with a sense of religious vocation in which Christians may be invited to participate. For example, some of us have been approached to join Muslims to ward off atheism and secular ideologies. While by no means wishing to form a common religious front against others, we are deeply conscious of the need to allow our Muslim partners in dialogue to suggest what agenda they would like to adopt for discussion, and we welcome the potential contribution to the unfinished debate of the critique of religion and ideology among people of many faiths and ideologies.

(e) Another aspect of our relationship with Muslims is characterized by a keen interest in religion and theological issues, and this is especially the case in black Africa and Southeast Asia. Some of us are aware of a lively exchange of theological views in Indonesia, for example, where literary works are devoted to this theme. In various parts of Africa Muslims have shown an initiative in discussing questions of theological substance concerning the nature of revelation, the Person of Jesus and inspiration of Scripture. This means that what could appear as stumbling blocks in rival theories of the supremacy of one tradition against another in fact turns out to be a motivation for deep-level contact and encounter.

(f) A more recent aspect of our relationship related to the increasing appearance of Muslim communities in the West. The growing awareness on the part of the Church of this phenomenon is leading to increased contacts with Muslim organizations and representatives. Quite often these Muslims are concerned with acquiring a new self-confidence

in their religious culture, with the result that they are more conservative in outlook. Yet some of us can testify of a real spirit of openness and sharing with such Muslims. For example, there are joint Christian-Muslim projects in various parts of the world in addition to several meetings and consultations in other places. At the international level both the WCC and the Vatican have been involved in discussions. There is also the hope of creating co-ordination between the Churches in Europe in their approach to their Muslim neighbours. (4)

Over two years later, in December 1979, a further consultation was held, this time in Kanamai near Mombasa, Kenya. The subject was restricted to relations with Muslims, and the final recommendations received the assent of participants, who included Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants from 40 countries:

The above report was received and discussed by participants in the Mombasa conference. They requested the appropriate bodies of the WCC, its member churches and all fellow Christians to study the report and to take up the following recommendations:

1. Attitudes in dialogue

We recommend:

- that Christians understand dialogue with Muslims as a mode, a spirit, an attitude which may appear new, but which is in fact integral to the theology and the history of our respective faiths.
- that Christians view the movement of "renewal" in the Muslim world with an open but discerning mind, and be encouraged to seek mutual encounter, communication and collaboration with Muslims in shared practical and spiritual concerns.

2. Preparations for dialogue

We recommend:

- that churches study and make known the WCC publication *Christians Meeting Muslims: WCC papers on 10 years of Christian-Muslim dialogue* (Geneva 1977) and the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians' *Guidelines for a Dialogue between Muslims and Christians* (under revision).
- that churches undertake catechetical preparation and pastoral training of people both young and old, laity and clergy, many of whom are not ready for encounter with people of other living faiths and ideologies.
- that the several study centres and programmes specializing in the field of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations be strengthened and encouraged to develop their activities to meet the needs of Christian-Muslim dialogue in the 1980's and beyond; people should be encouraged to give themselves to the task of Christian and Islamic theological reflection, interpretation and witness recognizing that effective theology and witness are not however the exclusive domain of experts.
- that the WCC, the Vatican and Muslim world bodies but also Christian and Muslim regional and local bodies be encouraged to continue planning formal dialogue conferences, planned and executed on a cooperative basis; that further consideration be given to the possibility of arranging multilateral dialogues between Muslims, Christians and others; and that real attempts should be made to involve young people of both sexes in such meetings on an equal footing with adults.

3. Relationships between Christians and Muslims

We recommend:

- that Christians and Muslims spare no effort to live and work with each other and with others, towards reconciling conflicts and helping grassroot level communities to act upon their own choices in self-development towards a more just participatory society.
- that with the cooperation of the WCC sub-units of DFI and CCIA a joint Christian-Muslim commission be established with responsibility as a monitoring and mediating body in situations of grievance between Muslims and Christians.

4. Human rights and legal and pastoral issues

We recommend:

- that, following the WCC stand on human rights and religious freedom, most recently enunciated at the Nairobi General Assembly and at the Geneva 1979 Executive Committee of the WCC, exact information should be communicated to other churches and religious organizations through the WCC, the Vatican and Patriarchates, about situations where religious freedom is violated, but also where it is being safeguarded and promoted. Joint efforts might be also undertaken by the WCC, the Vatican, World Muslim Congress, World Muslim League, in cooperation with international organizations like the United Nations, for organizing an International Year of Religious Freedom.
- that, in situations where marriages between persons of different religions create tensions and difficulties, churches should exercise special pastoral care for the partners and their families.

5. Theological engagement

We recommend:

- that more theological reflection about Islam take place in coming years among Christians on a widely ecumenical basis; we covet a further theological consultation among Christians about Islam; Christians' varying theological presuppositions and cultural experiences concerning Islam might wherever possible be observed and collated at the level of national and regional councils of churches and then contributed for international sharing among Christians, and perhaps among Muslims too.
- that a major international consultation between Christians and Muslims be held in 1981 on the theme "Christians and Muslims Living Together" and that matters of theological concern should be included in Christians' proposals to those Muslims who will share in the planning.
- that eventually and after careful preparation a joint Christian-Muslim theological commission be created to undertake rigorous study and reflection in the areas of theological concern mentioned in this report, and in such other areas of theological concern as Muslims might wish to propose.

6. Mutual witness between Christians and Muslims, and their mutual witness to the world

We recommend:

- that the possibility of mutual witness between Christians and Muslims, and their mutual witness to the world, raised in an

exploratory fashion in this report, should continue to receive critical examination as the WCC's programmes for Christian-Muslim dialogue develop in the future. (5)

The last sentence in the excerpt from the Chiang Mai report quoted above mentioned the hope of coordination among the European churches in their approach to Muslims. The background to this was the fact that the Conference of European Churches (CEC) at that time was known to be preparing a consultation on the subject of "The Church and the Muslim in Europe." The consultation finally met in February 1978 in Salzburg, Austria, having been organized jointly with the European Liaison Committee of the Islam in Africa Project. No statement as such was adopted, but it was intended to produce four section reports. In the event the disagreements between different views made it impossible to adopt a report on "Christian theological perspectives on relationships with Muslims." But the other three groups did report and, since the consultation was an explicitly European one, it may be useful to give the complete texts of the reports in the following. (6)

Section II worked under the title "Christian and Muslim cooperation in questions of civic responsibilities and rights in a pluralistic Europe":

As Christians coming from churches all over Europe we welcomed the appeal from the Final Act of the Helsinki Declaration 1975 in which the participating states in agreement with the UN Declaration on Human Rights declared that "they will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion".

We also endorsed the appeal from the Nairobi WCC Assembly "The Gospel leads to become ever more active in identifying and rectifying violations of human rights in our own societies ... It leads us into the struggle of the poor and the oppressed both within and outside the Church as they seek to achieve their full human rights, and frees us to work together with people of other faiths or ideologies who share with us a common concern for human dignity".

More immediately our thinking was inspired by our Bible studies on God's covenants with all humankind and our responsibility to our neighbour and the "stranger in our midst". As we reviewed the European scene we were aware that too often we have failed or are failing in supporting our Muslim neighbours in obtaining their human rights in various fields. Nevertheless we were encouraged at this CEC consultation to hear of various activities in different churches, groups and individuals often in cooperation with their Muslim neighbours in tackling issues connected with human rights notably in the areas of *education, facilities for worship and civic rights for migrants, new settlers and religious minorities*.

In different countries of Europe there are different issues affecting minority communities. One of the important factors will be the kind of government that exists whether it be secular, socialist or a state with a privileged church. Nevertheless Christian churches and individuals are seeking out those things which with good conscience they can support taking into account the existing laws of the country.

Education

We noted that many new experiences and experiments are taking place in the fields of

state education, church education and Islamic education. We attached particular importance to:

1. The training and recruitment of teachers of all faiths.
2. The development of curricula and text books which reflect the pluralism of Europe and which show sensitivity to all religious scruples.
3. Language teaching in appropriate non-European languages as well as in the lingua franca of the country.

Facilities for worship

We were sensitive to the importance attached by Muslims to finding suitable places for worship, religious education and social activities. In countries where such facilities do not yet exist in sufficient number we noted various forms of response from Christian organisations and Christian individuals, such as: support for allocation of sites or buildings from planning authorities; renting or selling church buildings or lands; invitations to use church rooms and sometimes even sanctuaries; token donations and collections for the building of mosques. We realised that these examples may not be applicable to every situation and that for some they may require deeper consideration on the part of Christians and Muslims.

Civic rights for migrants, new settlers and religious minorities

The institution designated by the title "migrant worker" is in many respects maintained in opposition to the standards of human decency and rights contained in the Gospel of Christian love. We noted however, that in the face of the widespread insecurity of our Muslim neighbours in Europe, many of whom are classified as "migrant workers", Christian churches, action groups and individuals are seeking to uphold the fundamental principles in the area of civic rights for migrants, settlers and religious minorities.

1. Wherever job opportunities, housing, training and educational facilities are available priority should be given to the reunion of the nuclear family.
2. Any coercion in repatriation proposals is unacceptable.
3. All persons should be entitled to civic and political rights after a specified time of residence.
4. Patterns of consultation and cooperation should be established between countries of origin, reception countries and countries of possible eventual return, for example in the matter of training schemes, taxation, and family law (marriage, divorce and rights of women).

We greatly appreciated the presence of Muslim speakers at our Salzburg consultation and we look forward to local and regional consultation and cooperation between Muslims and Christians in order to promote peace and human rights as was done in the World Congress: Religious Workers for Peace, in Moscow, June 1977.

Section III, with the title "Christians and Muslims in the encounter with a secularized society" was perhaps the group to attempt to tackle most seriously the deeper implications of pluralist coexistence:

In Europe today Christians and Muslims live together. In the 17th century, and even earlier, the process of secularization start-

ed, liberating progressively more and more areas of life - science, law, state, the arts, etc. - from the tutelage of church and theology. This process has not led to the disappearance of religion. Characteristic of the secularized world is its dynamic openness based on the desire for enlightenment and self-determination. In the name of freedom and justice, however, it is critical of a religion which it accuses of sticking to out-dated spiritual and social ties.

Many Christians experience not only the negative aspects of the secularized world, whose rise is inconceivable without the Christian faith, but also the positive ones. On the other hand, Muslims today entering Western European countries have mostly come from a religiously, socially and culturally closed world. They find themselves projected into a secularized world with no preparation and feel their identity threatened. Experience so far has confirmed them in this. What Christians in Europe feel as being freedom and responsibility to shape their own lives Muslims experience as a way towards moral bankruptcy. This makes it even more difficult for them to bear their feelings of anonymity, loneliness and loss of human warmth and fellowship, and brings with it the danger of withdrawal into ghettos. In considering our common situation we have found the distinction between "secular state" and "secular society" helpful. While we are critical of the ambivalent aspects of secular society where fundamental values have become relative and where humanity is endangered, we welcome the secular state since it makes religious and cultural plurality possible.

Listening to the experience of Muslims we came to see that this plurality has only been partially realised in our states. In various West European countries churches still have many institutional privileges and advantages and are favoured relative to other groups. The Muslim minorities suffer under this manifest inequality. They have, for example, little way of participating in the formulation of public opinion or in the shaping of the educational system, and they are often excluded from political decision making. Therefore their spokesmen demand that account be taken of their interests in a more equitable manner.

It is a task particularly for Christians, for the churches and congregations, to take up the interests of the Muslims and the Muslim communities. The Biblical call to love the stranger as a neighbour and brother, which we have heard in our Bible study, acquires a new, inescapable relevance. The pressures of the secularized world, which the Muslims face amongst us, undermine their way of life and faith. They are in danger of loss of identity unless they obtain the breathing-space necessary to work out a response to the pressures and to find a place in secular society corresponding to their self-determined identity. This process will take time and will develop in ways which will gradually alter the relationships of the Muslims to their new and old homelands.

The experience of the churches in Eastern Europe, especially the Orthodox churches, e.g. in Yugoslavia, Rumania and Poland, shows that full integration and equality of the Muslim minorities has been achieved there. For generations the two religious groups there have been in a relationship of partnership.

Consequences

For the churches and Christians this means that they, together with the Muslims and the Muslim communities, must take action to create living space. This involves help to

self-help without paternalism. We are conscious of the fact that we Christians also face the problems of our secular society in uncertainty. Therefore we are attentive to our Muslim neighbours in their search for new responses to the challenges of our common situation.

1. In relation to the state and the public we should work to:

- a) ensure easier access to full civil rights for Muslims as for all minorities so as to make possible existence in security. Independently thereof, participation in public and political life at all levels should be made possible.
- b) obtain legal and public recognition of Islam as a religion (e.g. in the Federal Republic of Germany by granting it recognition as a community in public law);
- c) give access for the Muslim communities to the media (so as to represent themselves) and to ensure a more equitable treatment of Muslim religious concerns, a demand also being made by the churches;
- d) make Muslim qualified religious education of its youth possible on an equal footing with the Christian communities (in countries where Christian instruction is a normal part of curriculum similar facilities must be granted in the public education system; in countries where comparative religion is taught to increase understanding of the religious and cultural heritage full account must be taken of Islam);
- e) ensure equality of opportunity for Muslim youth in training for the crafts and professions.

2. We must work to establish a new relationship between the churches and the Muslim communities,

- a) taking seriously, as churches, the fact that Christian and Muslim communities live in the same world and have to preserve their respective faiths. This takes into consideration that both communities must in full mutual respect not compromise in the witness of their faiths to each other;
- b) learning, as churches, in our unity and variety, to listen to the unity and variety of Muslim voices. In doing so we should particularly take note of those which take up the challenges of our secular age and are prepared for common action. There are areas in which Christians and Muslims can make common cause on the basis of spiritual values and in resistance to de-humanizing tendencies in secular society.

3. Inside the churches and congregations this requires

- a) that we inform ourselves as openly and thoroughly about our new neighbours as possible;
- b) that we reassess the meaning of Islam and our current encounter with Muslims in the light of the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We recall the WCC conference on "Dialogue in community", held in Chiang Mai (April 1977), which said: "In dialogue we actively respond to the command 'to love God and your neighbour as yourself' ... We adopt it ... as a means of living out our faith in Christ in service of community with our neighbours".

The title for the work of Section IV was "Problems of common life, including education, integration and discrimination":

We are aware that the encounter of Muslims and Christians in Europe takes two forms:
1. As a meeting between established communities with a long history of living together; in this first case we have heard with interest the report of harmonious relationships between Muslims and Christians in several European countries.

2. Where there is recent immigration e.g. of workers and students. This immigration may be temporary or permanent.

The report of this group takes account primarily of this latter situation. However, we believe that the churches of Western Europe could benefit greatly from the experience of those countries where Muslim communities have existed for centuries.

We recognize the responsibility of the churches:

- to prepare the receiving communities to accept the Muslims;
- to meet new migrants at their point of need;
- to develop true encounter between Christians and Muslims.

Introductory questions

We suggest that a church should ask itself "what is the situation of Muslims in our area?" The following questions may be helpful as a starting point:

- a) Does the individual, or the Muslim community as a whole, suffer from a sense of isolation and oppression? Is he affected by our racism and prejudice?
- b) To what extent are language and culture, both his and ours, a barrier to communication?
- c) What social problems connected with housing, work, education, health and welfare, confront the Muslim, and how far does he accept or seek to change them?
- d) What are the specific problems of Muslim immigrant women as they settle in our community?
- e) What problems confront the children of Muslim immigrants? What roles does the school play in creating or removing these problems?
- f) Are there people in your community who demand the repatriation of immigrants? What does the Muslim immigrant feel about it? What is his attitude to the land of his adoption? Does he suffer from a sense of insecurity or wish to be able to return to his original home?

1. The Church has a responsibility to prepare the receiving community

It can do this through:

- recognition of the community's involvement in the conditions which confront the Muslim;
- education about customs, beliefs, attitudes of the Muslims;
- promoting a deeper study of the Christian and Biblical Faith, and exercising pastoral care, especially in cases of mixed marriages, and in situations of colour prejudice.

2. The Church has a responsibility to new migrants at their point of need

- Examples: special problems of migrant women
- forms of discrimination against migrants.

2.1 Special problems of women

2.1.1. In Eastern Europe Muslim women have historically been very much a part of the community, however in Western Europe they are newcomers and suffer from many problems.

2.1.2. On the whole Muslim women coming from rural areas in North Africa and Turkey, for example, are used to living in a familiar world with the supporting comfort of other women. The courtyard experience of their homes, celebration of feasts, visiting other women all provided security and company. But when she arrives in France and Germany all these familiar experiences of her life are absent. She is alone and frightened and unable to become a part of her new community.

2.1.3. This new community has many strange aspects. She is confronted with bewildering bureaucratic offices, she is forced to deal with male officials and she must endure strange medical ideas and expectations.

2.1.4. The dilemmas of accepted ideas, cultural expectations and the clash with new ideas is perhaps best seen in the case of Djemila. Djemila is the 18 year old daughter of a very traditional Algerian family. Rejecting the accepted ideas of her parents choosing her husband, she left home to live with a French boy. Although the young couple appear to be happy, her intended marriage is unacceptable to her family.

2.1.5. One responsibility of Christian women is to meet with Muslim women not only to assist them with their problems but also to enter into a dialogue which is mutual and equal.

2.2 Forms of discrimination

2.2.1. In Western European countries immigrants, including Muslims, suffer prejudice and discrimination. Not only is it the negative attitudes of people which must be endured but they also must live in communities which actively discriminate against them. Institutions like schools for example so often systematically discriminate against their children by not recognizing their languages, their difficulties and the contribution they can make to school life.

2.2.2. A part of those prejudiced reactions comes from the fact that people do not know immigrants at a personal level. Their knowledge is too often built on false or distorted images. Frequently, the European sees someone who is a stranger even to himself because he is uprooted and unable to speak the language or find his way around his new community.

2.3. Christians must endeavour to provide opportunities for Muslims to develop and maintain their cultural identity. One of the ways this has been done is by providing facilities including buildings and rooms for the celebration of festivals or the display of folk art.

3. Responsibilities of churches to develop true encounter between Christians and Muslims

In the points noted above, we want to avoid the paternalism of trying to solve the Muslim's problems for him. We want rather to get to know him in a situation of mutual respect, in which both partners may find their true dignity. It may be that sometimes the Christians can make it easier for the Muslim to solve his own

problems and find his own identity; we hope equally that the Christians can learn and benefit from the relationship.

Is evangelism a part of the church's responsibility in the encounter with Muslims? We agreed that commending the Lord Jesus Christ is an integral part of Christian discipleship. But such commendation needs to be offered in the context of loving human relationships and of the search for justice. Attempts at evangelism outside of such a context are likely to lead to misunderstanding.

Once confidence is established, Muslims often take the initiative in asking religious questions, and sometimes it is the Christian who is unable or even afraid to answer. Many Christians need help to be able to speak at all about the deep things of the spirit, and then specifically need help to be able to listen to and speak with Muslims.

* * *

Individual countries

The following survey of material from particular West European countries does not, it must be repeated, attempt to achieve a complete coverage of relevant material nor representation of all countries.

In Scandinavia the relationship of church and state is so close that in some aspects the church is part of the state. This has tended to contribute to both delay and hesitation in response to what are, in any case, numerically among the smallest Muslim populations in Europe. In Norway the response has generally been concentrated on the problems of migrant labour, and it is out of that concern that the "Ecumenical Committee for Foreign Workers" issued a booklet entitled *The Foreign Workers and the Parish*. Its main aim is information and guidance for service, and it draws a pointed analogy with Norwegians preserving their culture as immigrants in North America. Having explicitly excluded Christian witness from its terms of reference, the booklet concludes:

Involvement with the social problems of foreign workers must not be regarded nor be perceivable as a means to reach the foreign workers with the essential, namely the Gospel. Service to one's neighbour is a Christian responsibility in itself, and the foreign worker must be able to accept our support even if he does not share our religious point of departure. (7)

Following the publication of this booklet, the Ecumenical Committee, consisting of representatives of state church (Lutheran) diocese, missionary societies, church aid and welfare agencies including the Roman Catholic Caritas, organized a survey of church activities and concerns in relation to foreign workers. On the basis of the survey a further booklet was published with the title *Christian Work among Foreign Workers*. Under the heading "Religious problems", the booklet states:

Most foreign workers belong to a religion other than Christianity. Most are Muslims, some are Hindus, and a few belong to other religious groups

Some are probably indifferent to their faith, but many seek opportunities to practice their faith also in this country. How, then, do we face the question of, e.g. a mosque for Muslims in Oslo? On the principle of freedom of religion, on which Norwegian missions in other countries depend, we consider it to be right and reasonable

that foreign workers be free to practise their religion in this country. But this is not a task which falls naturally to the church and Christian organizations. It must, however, be a task for the government authorities to consider an initiative from the foreign workers favourably and eventually to grant the financial aid to which they have a right according to the "Religious Communities Act" of 13 June 1969. We regard this as a concern which also Christian politicians should support as a matter of course. Last and not least it is our duty to give the foreign workers the Gospel. (8)

This last sentence suggests that part of the reason for the second booklet being published may have been dissatisfaction in some church circles over the categorical exclusion of the subject of evangelism from the first publication. The question is taken up later in this second booklet under the heading "Witness":

For Christian witness to Jesus will always be a natural part of life (or at least it ought to be). Wherever one is, one is present as a Christian. Therefore witness should also find its place in friendship with people of another religion.

In relation to foreign workers, friendship has been shown clearly to be the best environment for witness and conversation about religion.

The booklet includes a number of practical guidelines mainly in the area of social service and ends with a few references to sources for further information and material for distribution in evangelization.

In Denmark, the links between church and state are so close that the church as such can undertake no initiatives independently. Individual church members or ministers consequently work through independent organizations, whether charitable institutions, missionary societies or the like. While there has been a long tradition of working for the welfare of foreign workers, it is only during the last few years that the religious dimension is being taken seriously. By the welfare organizations this has on occasion meant supporting moves to secure the services of an *imam* or providing advice and help in getting permission to open a mosque. However, initiatives working from a religious framework have come from the missionary societies, and here the debate between "conservatives" and "liberals" has been particularly strong. Smaller groups of the former persuasion have tended to go their own way, while the established missionary societies (encompassing a wide range of all attitudes) have refused to approach the question in simplistic terms. These societies appear to have decided that to all intents and purposes the Danish Missionary Society should take the lead, partly because it has long experience of working in the Islamic world, but also because it has put most effort into breaking the distinction between "home" and "abroad".

One result of this interest was its participation in the publication of a Danish translation of David Brown's *A New Threshold* (about which more later). (9) This immediately inspired a strongly negative evaluation by a group of young theologians, the concluding paragraph of which read:

We had hoped, when the book appeared, that our congregations here at home really would have been helped to understand the Muslims so that they might be better equipped to reach out with the Gospel of salvation both to Muslim guest workers and to Danes who have become Muslims. But what we have encountered in the book is confusingly similar to syncretism (the mixing of different

religions), where the significance of Christ - despite many correct formulations - is betrayed. In this way a bomb has been planted under everything which can be called Christian mission! (10)

By an interesting coincidence, this critique was followed a month later by an article by Bishop T. Graesholt, who is also the chairman of the board of the Danish Missionary Society. Reflecting on an extended visit to the Arab world, he says:

Muslims believe in God. Muslims lead a life of prayer. Muslims consider Jesus a very special human being and use expressions about him derived from Christianity.... Both Christians and Muslims have a strong conviction that they through their faith have been given authority in the world. So far Christianity has been on top. Perhaps things are changing now. We are going to be talking a lot to the Arabs over the next decade - because of oil. We shall be getting close to them in a completely different way than previously. Getting closer together makes it possible to realise a mission which has always been attempted, but which we in our churches have not done nearly enough about.

We can start at home. There are lots of Muslims in this country amongst us but in a different world. Doesn't the Old Testament talk of sensitive and protective behaviour towards the "stranger within the gates?" Would it not have been natural, had we helped them to rooms where they could pray, while they are living here uprooted from their home surroundings? I dare not say that they have never received such offers. But it has not been common. (11)

It was along the lines of the concerns expressed towards the end of that passage that the Danish Missionary Society in July 1979 appointed a person with particular reference to Muslim immigrants in Denmark. Shortly before taking up his appointment, the man in question was interviewed by the press:

The church must...take on itself the role of the unorthodox Good Samaritan. The essential is that one's deeds say as much as what one says. It must be impressed on the Danish church that we here have a group of citizens who have been neglected and whom we must help to live their lives among us. Here my task is through information to get rid of some of those prejudices which we all carry around. (12)

* * *

The churches of the Federal Republic of Germany, Protestant and Catholic, have taken stock of their attitudes to Muslims in a much more systematic way than most other European churches. This may, at least in part, be due to the fact that the West German churches are directly involved in social welfare and education on a very large scale. Inevitably, the church agencies thus involved are immediately challenged in their approaches to their own work. In the Protestant church this challenge was taken up in the first instance by the Office for Foreign Affairs (EKD Aussenamt), which was responsible for matters relating to migrant labour. Subsequently, coordination as regards attitudes to and information on Islam has been taking place in that structure. A number of booklets and pamphlets aimed at expanding knowledge of and sensitivity towards Muslim immigrants have been published, and care has always been taken to involve Muslims in the writing of these from the first planning stages. For a time it was possible to lay the emphasis thus on information and on continued efforts to improve the conditions of foreign workers and their families. Thus a decree adopted by the Synod of the Protes-

tant churches meeting in November 1978 and entitled "Equal opportunity for the children of foreigners" could make do with a short reference to Islam at the end of the first paragraph:

1. The presence of 3.9 million foreigners in the Federal Republic of Germany is a challenge to a re-examination of the teaching content. The growing together of Europe demands openness towards other cultures as well as ability and readiness to talk with the Orthodox churches and to the encounter with Islam. (13)

The conservative-liberal debate and events in the Islamic world have placed increasing pressure on the church structures to face officially the question of its relations to Muslims as Muslims rather than merely foreign workers. This was done at the meeting of the Synod in February 1980 with the adoption of a decision, which appears to be rather an admission that much more work needs to be done:

Today, there are 1.5 million Muslims living in the Federal Republic of Germany, the majority coming from Turkey. Neither the German population nor the various Muslim groups are prepared for living together. The lack of understanding on both sides leads to mutual rejection, to the strengthening of prejudices and to the formation of ghettos. Church congregations have a particular responsibility to break through the "wall of silence" now existing in many places and to make an effort in the cause of the legitimate human, social, legal and political expectations of Muslim immigrants. This includes taking the Muslim seriously in his faith, learning more about it and promoting open forms of encounter. This should also be a special task in religious education. In this connection the Synod recalls the booklet published in 1974 by the Aussenamt entitled *Moslems in der Bundesrepublik* which states:

"Christians cannot omit witnessing to their own faith to Muslims. It is the mission of the church everywhere as an instrument of this world to witness to the love of God and salvation in Jesus Christ, and to help men and women to recognize His love and to respond to it. This commitment to preach is an inalienable part of the nature of the church. At the same time this witness should be based on great openness and respect for people of other faiths and for their religious experience and character. The living model of Christian life carries conviction in itself."

The Synod asks,

1. that the theological commission for questions relating to Islam, set up together with other European churches, should by the next meeting of the Synod have prepared a presentation of the basic questions regarding the commitment to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Muslims. The Committee for Service, Mission and Ecumenics of the Synod will follow this work and consult in a separate meeting;
2. that the member churches of EKD appoint persons with responsibility for matters relating to Islam and that sufficient personnel be allocated to this task in the Aussenamt;
3. that the EKD Council provide suitable information material especially to ministers teachers and parish councils. The handbooks *Moslems in der Bundesrepublik*, *Zusammenleben mit Muslimen* together with the information pamphlet *Muslime - unsere Nachbarn* shall be sent to the members of the Synod as well as to their substitutes. (14)

At roughly the same time as the Protestant churches were putting together their first comprehensive publications, the German Catholic Church was beginning to take action on the question of Islam. Here also it has grown out of social activity on behalf of migrant workers. In the Federal Republic the first arrangement had been that the Roman Catholic Church should particularly concern itself with those migrant workers who were themselves Catholic. It is on this background that the Synod of the Catholic Diocese of the Federal Republic of Germany, in the context of its 1973 statement of principle, particularly notes Christian workers:

The Church has the task of serving the realization of the Kingdom of God. In this way it also serves the salvation of man. This task knows no national boundaries. The Church adopts above all the strangers and the afflicted, takes upon itself the sufferings and concerns of marginal groups and the oppressed and makes itself the advocate and defender of their rights.

Christian service seeks, in accordance with the will of God, fullness of human life and a more humane and fraternal world, even if a complete defeat of want in this world is not possible. It thus witnesses to and points out the truth of all fully-lived humanity, also outside the bounds of the Church.

This service of the Church encompasses all strangers and afflicted with no exception or distinction of descent or religion. There is, however, a special responsibility for the Catholics and for all who confess to Christ; for solidarity within the Church is also a sign of unity to all mankind. The Church sees the human being in the totality of his destiny and in the totality of his distress and peril. For this reason the Church is also duty bound to make itself the advocate of the people whose rights and freedom have unjustly been restricted or infringed because of social conditions. This duty is at the same time a task of social political significance. In fulfilling this duty the Synod acts in accordance with the word and the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and the social encyclicals of the Popes. Human beings must genuinely be treated as human beings and not merely as labour. This means that the economy must be in the service of men and not men in the service of the economy. The foreigners are not goods which can be dealt with solely on the basis of the law of supply and demand. (15)

As realization has grown of the religious aspects of immigrant workers' situation, so also has the interest in the Islamic aspect of immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries. This was reflected in a lengthy report on the subject of the integration of foreign workers and their families, adopted by a joint conference of the German bishops and the Central Committee of German Catholics in June 1979. In the concluding section on proposals for action, one paragraph reads:

The increasing number of foreign fellow-citizens of the Islamic faith makes it necessary that training programmes and religious education impart more knowledge of Islam. In regions with a high proportion of Muslims there are new tasks for nurseries, schools, church social work and lay work. Since it is to be expected that this numerically growing group (nearly 1.2 million Turks) will remain here permanently, the church must adjust its work in the long term to the solution of this situation. (16)

In 1973, a different Catholic initiative started. To an extent inspired by the encouragement given by Vatican II to an open encounter with Muslims, the Archdiocese of Cologne decided to concern

itself with its Muslim workers from the basis of faith rather than primarily social circumstances. The order of the White Fathers, with their long experience of North Africa, was central in the development of this concern, and it was to their Vicar-General that a proposal for an Ecumenical Contact Centre for Non-Christians was presented in April 1974:

The Lord God is also present in the thoughts and hearts of non-Christians. Therefore we must respect and love these people as they are, and not as we would wish them to be. God has started the dialogue of salvation for non-Christians. We must continue it. In this, we start from the religious values which they already possess.

We owe our help also to those who from genuine conviction want to remain and die in their faith. We cooperate in the work of the Holy Spirit if we lead them to a correct practice of their religious values and protect and purify them. We must meet the faithful of Islam in respect for their faith and their freedom, in a spirit of dialogue which is constantly in search of God and which enriches in mutual experience. (17)

The proposal quoted from a document prepared by the White Fathers in North Africa for the 1974 Synod of Bishops at the Vatican:

Because of the particular situation in our countries we are called on to witness to the Gospel in the following manner:

- We must meet the one who lives differently as well as his profoundest feelings, which constitute the true meaning of his life, in a sympathetic manner.

- We must learn from the other so as to share his existential wisdom, to experience for ourselves his joy, his hope, his sorrow and his fears, and so as to understand how to think, feel and live as he does.

- We must encourage the possibilities of living together with the other, so that together with him we may devote ourselves to the restitution and the advancement of the poorest. In this way the preaching and the witness of the Gospel is today primarily realized through Christian living. (18)

The author of the article in which these documents are quoted, himself a White Father and deeply involved in the establishment of the Ecumenical Centre, concludes:

The aim of our work among Muslims must not and cannot be conversion to Christianity. Our aim is encounter at the human level, so that from there we may slowly approach God who is the Creator of us all, giving each other support and help on the way. (19)

The Centre finally opened in November 1974 as primarily a meeting place, in a quite literal sense, for Christians and Muslims in the Archdiocese of Cologne. But out of it soon sprang a number of other ventures: conferences, courses, provision of information, and a documentation centre (known as CIBEDO).

* * *

The experience of the White Fathers, which has been drawn on so heavily in Catholic responses to Islam in Germany, also plays a role in France. An informal arrangement was made by the French bishops already in 1971, and this became a small office with a permanent staff in 1973. Since 1975 it has carried the title Secretariat for Relations with Islam (SRI). As described by its Permanent Secretary, Father Michel Lelong, again a White Father, the SRI has three objectives, namely providing information about Islam, theological research in the field of relations with

Islam, and a common contemplative life of devotion to God. He identifies four contexts for the work of the SRI:

- In relation to Catholic social work among immigrant workers the concern is to help social work professionals to deepen the religious dimension of the encounter.

- Among students and academics, people involved in what is often an ideological confrontation, need similar support.

- The apostolic mission in which the French church has traditionally been engaged needs much deeper reflection in the light of the Vatican II statements.

- The many isolated efforts at Muslim-Christian dialogue in France need to be supported and encouraged. (20)

Father Lelong concludes his article:

Whatever its structures, it would appear to be indispensable that, in one form or another and in conformity with the guidelines set in 1971 by the French bishops, the principle must be maintained of a group for reflection, for action and for prayer with a specific ministry to pursue the effort undertaken in the field of Muslim-Christian relations.

Perhaps the best way of realizing this project would be to constitute an ecumenical team in France, in which Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox together would seek ways of deepening the dialogue with Judaism and Islam in our country. Such a structure could help the church in France better to respond to the two great appeals made by Paul VI and repeated by John Paul I on his election: appeal for Christian unity and for a fraternal dialogue with the believers of other religions. (21)

* * *

One of the comparatively early statements to appear in the United Kingdom did not deal exclusively with Islam but with other faiths generally in the context of a debate over the appropriateness of inter-faith religious services. A report prepared for a meeting of the British Council of Churches (BCC) in April 1968 said in part:

The statement by the General Secretaries of the Anglican missionary societies welcomed dialogue as aiming 'not at argument but at a deeper understanding. Starting from mutual recognition of the seriousness of one another's religious aspiration, the participants engage frankly in a study of disagreements as well as of grounds of agreement, and neither is asked to blur or compromise the faith he represents'. This we accept. Quite clearly the apostle Paul engaged in dialogue with both Jews and Greek philosophers. But the much discussed 'method' of dialogue does not annihilate all other aspects of mission and methods of evangelism. At one level, as among scholars at a special conference, dialogue must presuppose considerable knowledge. But at the more everyday level, as between ordinary men and women at their work or in their social life, dialogue is hardly different from mutual conversation. In neither case is dialogue to be confused with syncretism, compromise or a betrayal of the missionary imperative. Nor can dialogue helpfully take place in a vacuum or merely at the level of talk. The best preparation and context for dialogue will normally be common action and common life. Indeed, such actual involvement with one's neighbours (of Christian or other faith, or none), in common situations, needs

and tasks, is perhaps itself dialogue in the truest sense.

In dialogue at whatever level it operates, participants may find a new and deeper experience or awareness of God, through they will doubtless describe it in a variety of ways. But the Presence which claims men in such an encounter is a reality despite these differences of understanding and religious language. It needs to be stressed, however, that this experience is most likely to come to those who have been deeply engaged in personal contact and communal activity, and may often take the form of silent prayer - or just the silent waiting and apprehending of a small group. The precise nature and implications of this experience need further theological examination but the fact of it seems undeniable.

The meeting then adopted the following resolution:

The Council encourages its member Churches and its associated local Councils of Churches to help their members

- (a) To engage in common action with their neighbours of other faiths and to seek ways of affirming with them our common humanity and yearning for justice, brotherhood and peace
- (b) To arrange with due care occasions on which those of different faiths may engage in informed dialogue and give unambiguous testimony to their beliefs.
- (c) To take opportunity where permitted for sympathetic observation of the worship of other faiths and so make possible a deeper understanding
- (d) To accept gladly whatever experience of communion with God arises in such relationships.

In pursuing these aims, Churches should scrupulously avoid those forms of inter-faith worship which compromise the distinctive faiths of the participants and should ensure that Christian witness is neither distorted nor muted. (22)

Six years later, plans were announced in London for a World of Islam Festival to take place in 1976 with a number of exhibitions, symposia and television programmes featuring the culture of the Islamic world. The BCC was confronted with bewildering questions from various quarters. Together with the Conference of British Missionary Societies (CBMS) an Advisory Group on the Presence of Islam in Britain was set up. While the group was to consider the subject in general, it was also asked specifically to consider questions relating to the 1976 World of Islam Festival. It was soon recognized that some general guidelines were needed with the result that the group's chairman, Bishop David Brown, who had previously worked with the Church Missionary Society in Sudan, produced a booklet entitled *A New Threshold*, (23). The bulk of the booklet is taken up outlining the principle aspects of Islam, the history of Christian-Muslim relations and a discussion of the theological issues in the encounter of Islam and Christianity. The shorter final chapter looks at "problems and Relationships":

A. Some problem areas

Up to this point this document has discussed attitudes and relationships in theoretical and general terms. Such general attitudes, however, are tested in the many decisions which have to be taken at various times about the specific relationships between particular groups in this or that local situation. Moreover, even if such decisions are made in the context of Christian-Muslim relation-

ships, they are normally taken in association with other parties which do not adopt a specifically Christian or Muslim stance, such as local authorities and education departments. The involvement of such third parties greatly complicates the problems which may arise and the search for solutions to them. Not only must the solutions be worked out in the light of the issues which arise in any encounter between Muslims and Christians and which have been discussed in the preceding sections of this document, but they must also be relevant to considerations of community and race relationships within the total complexity of modern British society.

The areas in which problems will most frequently arise include the following

1. HUMAN RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

This area is one about which there is much concern in Britain today, but it is not one which is concerned specifically with Muslim groups. The problems are shared by other immigrant groups as well as by indigenous groups which suffer particular deprivation or isolation. The most important fields in which such problems arise are those of housing, employment and education. All too often these minority groups experience hostility or are denied equality of opportunity.

2. CONFLICT BETWEEN PLANNING FOR SOCIETY AS A WHOLE AND THE RELIGIOUS DEMANDS OF PARTICULAR GROUPS

Christians and Muslims share a common concern that educational policies should help children to acquire an understanding of the religious dimension of human life and sympathy with it. They are likely to differ, however, when considering the contents and methods of suitable religious education.

They are similarly involved in issues of public morality and in seeking that the various authorities should maintain decency and order in public life and in the media. There are, however, important differences of opinion between Christians and Muslims about the ordering of society. Both groups may concur in the condemnation of what appears to be immoral or anti-social, but they often find it difficult to agree on the standards or practice which they think society should accept as the norm. Thus, for example, Muslim concern for the provision of privacy for adolescent girls in schools and in employment would not be endorsed by Christians who accept the implications of an open society (nor, incidentally, by many of the younger Muslims).

There are many other issues which are of peculiar importance to Muslims, such as the provision of facilities for the fulfilment of the religious duties of prayer, fasting and pilgrimage, and the observance of dietary restrictions, within factories, offices, hospitals and educational establishments. The provision of plots of land for mosques and of separate plots in cemeteries, as well as the recognition of Muslim religious law in all matters affecting their personal lives (like marriage, inheritance, gifts and wills), are also matters of urgent concern for the Muslim communities. Many of these concerns could have very wide and serious consequences, and in all these fields there is urgent need for informed and patient mutual discussion.

3. THE SHARING AND USE OF BUILDINGS

Muslim communities are obliged to set aside a building for congregational worship and for the instruction of their children in the

beliefs and practices of Islam. Proposals to do this often cause difficulties with local planning authorities because of the hours at which Muslim prayers must be recited and for other reasons.

Christian Churches own redundant buildings and other property which would be suitable for Muslims worship or instruction, but their members often hesitate on religious grounds to make them available for such uses.

4. RECOGNITION OF ISLAMIC OCCASIONS BY THE CHURCHES

Muslims in Britain are growing in numbers, and in self-confidence, and they are quickly developing their own organizations. As a result there is likely to be an increase in the number of occasions (festivals, marriages and the like), to which they will think it both courteous and right to invite representatives of the Churches. Many Christians will find these invitations an embarrassment for fear lest attendance at such occasions implies recognition of Islam's claim to be the final and complete revelation of God's will. This question will no doubt come to the fore in connection with the World of Islam Festival which is to be held in Britain in 1976.

One particular instance of this problem area is concerned with the question whether it is right for Christians and Muslims to share together in joint services of prayer and worship. (The Muslims also finds this a difficult question because he holds the Christian's intention (*niya*) to be deficient.)

5. EVANGELISM

Both Christians and Muslims believe that they have a duty to commend their faith to others and so to win their allegiance to it. The Christian is called to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Muslim to summon men to believe in God's truth as revealed in the Qur'an and to strive for the extension of the Household of Islam. This latter call has often in the past had political overtones. Thus there are many questions which have to be asked, in different ways on both sides, about the proper methods of propagating a religious faith, especially when the members of other communities are in a vulnerable or isolated position. The principal missionary societies are making a reappraisal of mission and are able to give valuable help and advice to the Churches in Britain in this respect.

* * *

C. A code of practice

1. Christians are servants of Jesus Christ. They seek to be guided in their judgments by the Holy Spirit in the light of the Gospel. They have a continuing responsibility to share with all men the light and truth which has come to them through Christ, and to seek their freely-given allegiance to him.

2. Christians believe that God is present in grace to the whole of his creation, and that he is working out his will to bring all to fulfilment in Christ. They are content to play their part within the great symphony of God's involvement with the universe. As part of their responsibility they work wholeheartedly for the building of a truly human community, and co-operate with all men of goodwill in doing so. They give their support to whatever sets forward the Kingdom of God.

3. Christians affirm those things which they believe to be true, good, and wholesome within Islam, thanking God for them. They count it a privilege to help Muslims to dis-

charge the obligations which they believe they owe to God.

4. Christians pay attention to the criticisms which Muslims make of their faith and practice, and they do all they can to articulate the Gospel more effectively and intelligibly to them. They recognize the many discrepancies between Islam and Christianity, without either minimizing or putting improper emphasis upon them. In courtesy they question the doctrines and claims of Islam which conflict with the Gospel.

5. In all circumstances, Christians seek to be true disciples of the Lord Christ, and to conform to his gentleness, humility and love. They offer all their endeavours, both of witness and of friendship, to God, the Father of all, for him to use as he wishes.
(24)

Of the various constituent churches of the BCC, the United Reformed Church (URC) has been particularly active in trying to come to terms with the new multi-religious context. Its Mission and Other Faiths Committee in 1980 published a booklet entitled *With People of Other Faiths in Britain: A Study Handbook for Christians*, the aim of which is to provide guidelines and support for both action and discussion. The approach is based on the practical daily meeting of Christians with people of other faiths, not only Islam, but also, for example, Bhuddism Hinduism Judaism and Sikhism. In this context the booklet deals with "Our Christian Response":

Do we avoid meeting people of other faiths, afraid that they will corrupt *our* faith?
Do we wish they would go away because they compete with us in witness? Do we welcome them as sharers in the religious experience of the human race? Do we help them only because we want to convert them? How should we "greet" them?

We have a basic responsibility as Christians to obey our Lord's teaching to love and care for our neighbours.

Most of our neighbours of other faiths face special problems as members of different races and cultures, and we have responsibilities in community and race relations towards them:

- to help them find a proper place in the society of which they are now a part;
- to help them protect their own culture from erosion and destruction, so that they may contribute to society from a position of strength;
- to help build good community relations;
- to give support to efforts to protect them against victimization, discrimination, injustice, local intolerance, misrepresentation and so on;
- to help in matters such as housing, educational opportunity, employment, facilities for worship, and in dealing with the law;
- to discourage racist attitudes and thoughtless talk which cause hurt and offence.

These are our basic responsibilities towards all citizens and it is critical for us to realise their implications in the light of the situation today where there is much racial prejudice and occasionally there are incidents of racial violence and discrimination, where there is much unemployment amongst young people, and where the National Front and others are stirring up feelings of racial hatred.

We confess, as Christians, our part in racial prejudice and pray God's grace to enable us to greet all as his people and to appreciate

differences of race and culture as part of the great richness of his creation. Part of our responsibility as Christians to love and care for our neighbours of other faiths is to meet and talk with them, to create friendships, and to begin to share with them in matters of deeper concern and conviction. (25)

* * *

Conclusion

These various documents, covering over a decade of Christian response to Muslims in Europe, illustrate clearly the tensions between theoretical and practical starting points. This is partially reflected in a statement, such as the first Norwegian one, which explicitly not only puts aside any evangelizing concerns but even allows that the "foreign worker must be able to accept our support" There is here clearly a process of mutuality, of allowing the other the dignity to accept or reject. It is perhaps unfortunate that such a positive first step was later brought into question by making friendship a means to an end, namely "witness and conversation about religion."

Another aspect of the tension between theory and practice is the question of experience. It is extremely difficult, perhaps even impossible, fully to understand and internalize the experience of another. This is quite apparent in some of the international documents quoted at the beginning. Thus, while the Vatican statements, especially *Nostra aetate*, have been widely welcomed by Christians as a great step forward, the Muslim reader is likely to see them as paternalistic and even patronizing in their tone. (This is, incidentally, a fault to which many Muslims also succumb when describing Islam's attitude to Christians.) In a different way, one sees it in the more theoretical documents. The WCC document from Chiang Mai, entitled *Dialogue in Community*, does not really get to grips with its theme. This is, of course, partly because the WCC likes to produce consensus statements, a process which tends to take the bite out of the final text. The phrases and expressions used very easily convey the hollowness of cliches. There is no sense of the human passions and frailties bound up with a daily practical struggle by Christians and Muslims, separately and together, for social and political justice, for recognition and dignity as individuals.

It seems reasonable to suggest that such blandness and perceived patronizing tones arise from the fact that all these documents have been produced by one group or individual writing about an absent object. Again there is this practical aspect: however much the authors may wish otherwise the fact that Muslims are not physically present in the formulation of the documents makes it virtually impossible to write about them as if they are anything but absent. This may account for the fact that the handbooks produced at intervals by the West German Protestant Church (not quoted here) and the reports adopted at the CEC consultation in Salzburg (quoted above) - while not free of the bland generalizations and cliches - are nevertheless formulated in a way which seems much more positively open towards Muslims, who were present in the preparation.

The CEC documents all bear titles suggesting joint Christian-Muslim approaches to common concerns, but in fact the contents reflect a Christian approach to Muslims in such concerns. The report of group 3 on secularization is no exception, and its discussion clearly arises out of a European heritage and context. Its distinction between secular state and secular society comes about partly because of Muslim participation in the discussion. But it did not really succeed in tackling the deeper implications of secularization. For example, it is

true that a secular state makes religious pluralism easier, but by its very secular nature it also reinforces the secular presuppositions of social and intellectual analysis and activity. Thus the secular methods and models of most of European academic sociology are encouraged and legitimated by the secular state which funds and ultimately authorizes the discipline. In such circumstances it becomes especially difficult to challenge sociologists' attitudes to religion, namely that it is a social function and that religious elements in identity formation are secondary to or even expressions of economic, social and psychological factors.

Peter L. Berger has described the secularised society as a society divided into cylinders with thick walls. In one cylinder man lives his political life, in another his commercial life, in a third his religious life, etc. Every single cylinder is autonomous and highly specialized. Man meets the ultimate meaning-giving world as a special institution. His personality as such is unimportant. It is the technical, political aspect that matters, not man as a human being. There is no total overall universe for what man does. There is no totality of meaning to connect these activities. Religion which was supposed to represent such an overall frame of reference has itself become one cylinder among many. If man is interested in religion, he has to dive into that cylinder privately and nurse his interest there. But it has no superiority over the rest because it has nothing to do with them. And it has only to do with man himself, in so far as he himself - privately - looks for it. (26)

This is the kind of society in which Muslims and Christians find themselves in Western Europe. Religion is disappearing from society. It is becoming fragmented and polarized. Daily life is not coherent because there is no coherence growing out of work, and there are no other places where coherence can be established so that it gives meaning to work. The identity and orientation, not only of Muslims but of all of us who live in secularized societies, are in danger of becoming destroyed from within because of the lack of cultural and social coherence in work and daily life. Our ideological and religious horizon is being secularized and wiped out without being replaced. This leads to a discussion of those factors forming orientation and identity which do not point in the direction of production of commodities as the basic norm of society. Man in the secularized society is yearning for identity and autonomy, as it was indicated in a number of the documents. But identity and autonomy to Muslims living in Europe does not only mean "the possibility of religious and cultural plurality" as group 3 of Salzburg has it. It does not only mean the freedom to distinguish oneself from others, but it means freedom and conditions to affirm one as a being - living a life which is not broken or divided - a life without the lack of security. But this unity in personality has become a private matter in the secularized society. If man wants identity he has to construct it himself. There can be no totality in life, as long as there is a contradiction between work and life in the family. One has to become another person after work. This is the time when one can "realize" oneself and form one's identity - privately. Without this totality man cannot live identically but only be "tempted" to live an activist life without motivation, without ideological or religious orientation. But as long as we just notice this disorientation as a mystical or spiritual power, there will be no faith possible meaningful to man. Life cannot be meaningful, unless there are daily experiences that can be interpreted as meaning-giving. There can be no capacity to enter into a relationship with God. The alternative to social dissolution in modern industrial societies is not the opiate of religion (as Marx suggested) but a

general ideological dissolution, blindness of daily life. The alternative is a feeling of emptiness and meaninglessness.

What is Christian-Muslim dialogue, or what is the Christian responsibility in this context of secularization? How do we dialogue meaningfully without just tinkering with the problems, as most of the documents tend to suggest. The question is intimately connected with the view of man in society. If we believe that dialogue is only to encounter each other as individuals, not only are our theological assumptions false but so are our anthropological and social assumptions. Society is a functioning whole. One cannot deal with an individual without reference to society. Man is not an abstract, isolated being; rather he is social being. His social-ness is an essential part of his human-ness. Therefore the transformation of the individual and the transformation of his social conditions fall in with each other in the practice of dialogue. Change of the individual without change of the conditions is an idealistic illusion. Change of the conditions without change of the individual is a materialistic illusion. And therefore our dialogue cannot only be to change the individual but must be connected with a humanizing change of the structures and principles of society. If the conditions are an obstacle to a mutual understanding, dialogue must seek to change the conditions so that there are objective possibilities of understanding.

The response of Christians and Muslims to God's call is not abstract but can and must be explained in concrete terms. If our belief in God is an 'idealist' profession which pretends an historical philosophical status, it only leads to alienation of man and mystification of reality instead of emancipation of man.

We know that ideas are shaped and given life by and because of the type of society in which they exist. We do not make the world in the image of our ideas (idealism) but rather our ideas are shaped by the social and economic environment in which we find ourselves. Beliefs in free enterprise, competition and the freedom of the individual reflect the basic values without which a capitalist economy would not function. The idea of individuality is a necessary precondition of a capitalist society. Religion and ideologies have often been expressions of a revolutionary attitude. But it is wrong to say that religion and ideologies create the conflicts, as for example in Northern Ireland. But religion is used to explain away the real causes. The revolution in Iran did not come out of the blue and was not a mere product of religion but it had clear economic and social reasons. The economic structures *do* determine or, rather, condition the various beliefs or ideas, at the same time as beliefs and ideas give authority to the social economic and political relations and conditions.

Thus, ideas and beliefs have a concrete and real basis in the constantly competing human groups who share God's world. We cannot be involved in theoretical discussions and formal meetings without also being involved in the struggle for the concrete historical expressions of human hope. Reality is a historical process where we are struggling towards one goal: true fellowship with God and with each other. Therefore, everything that separates us is evil and must be abolished. Faith is not to accept an already given situation but to work on a new world characterized by community. Dialogue must cease to be an abstract speculation separated from the historical engagement and become a critical reflection on our liberating practice in constant confrontation with God's demands. We have to engage ourselves in critical analyses of society. And we have to learn to be critical in relation to our own situation so that dialogue is not a one way traffic where the Muslims minorities always have to receive, but a two way

traffic which leads to a guidance and critique of our own belief and practice. Dialogue is only authentic when it bears the trade-mark of both Islam and Christianity. Therefore the responsibility of the Churches in Europe is not only to learn *about* and try to understand Muslims but it is also to learn *from* them and to listen to what they suggest could be done. This seems to be lacking in all the documents, and there is a strongly patronizing tendency in their approach. Thus Christians and Muslims must find ways of sustaining and supporting and being part of critical struggles within the European societies. Such a common practical commitment is not just a question of political engagement but it has to do with our relation to God. We live in a world where humanity is threatened, and man is in danger of being reduced to a part of an incomprehensible bureaucratic social machine, and technical improvements influence man's relation to moral and ethical values. Therefore we have to take interest in our common human existence and dignity under common threats, - pollution, resource-problems, nuclear power etc. We were given so much in creation but we have destroyed so much by an economy which is bound to exploitation. We have become captives of the system believing in permanent growth and profit. We cannot stop growth because that would mean enormous change of economy, social structures and modes of production.

It is a symptomatic thread through most of the documents that the point of departure for dialogue or Christian responsibility towards Muslims in Europe is a mutual understanding or change of attitudes. And there is a tendency to make the common practical interaction an appendix to such a theoretical understanding, instead of focusing on the present existential situation shared by both Muslims and Christians in Europe. We need a much more anthropological contextual approach to dialogue, where we see dialogue as the meeting between human beings (not religions) who try to reveal and transform the reality they are sharing, having its outspring in love to men and in the desire to make life more humane, to abolish inhumanity and oppression. To dialogue is to question status quo, with reference to a changed future. Dialogue between Christians and Muslims has its further motivation (or rather primary motivation) in the common belief in God. Islam and Christianity are both the response of human beings to God's call, to what God made them aware of - a response that creates or implies a certain understanding of reality. As God is at work in this world and gives purpose and meaning to this world, our theology can never be just to interpret reality but also to work with God in transforming it, to fight on God's side, knowing from where we have the strength to fight. That dialogue and not mere debate is necessary means that we do not believe that we have all the answers to the perplexities of life, but that we together have to seek the best way to deal with the sufferings and agony of human beings. For the ideas that separate us are not as important as the humanity and the faith that unite us.

Our dialogue must start at the level of practical action as a common struggle for full humanity nationally as well as internationally. It must start in practice and not in a theoretical discussion. Socio-political action is not an appendix to our theological debate but it comes first. The *whole* life belongs to God, and we are responsible for our political, economic and social actions and decisions. Christianity and Islam are not spiritual entities but active ways of living in society. Islam means 'surrender' to God's will, but an active surrender for the sake of man and society. Faith is not to theorize about but to act upon. It is man's historical-activity in his obedience to God, and this activity is essentially political. We cannot talk about or with God unless we do it in the context of political conflicts in the world -

out of the concern to live under God, out of the conviction that God has given the meaning to our action. We cannot relate to God without social and political relationships because we are relating as human beings in interrelationship with society. And relating to God is not a matter of thinking or saying but it is a matter of responding to his demands - from within our particular social and historical context. God wants to be present in our actual life situation. He want us to enter into partnership with him in history. We do not respond to God by quarreling over the truth about God but we respond by doing the truth of God, i.e. engaging ourselves in the actual history because that is the locus of God's activity. If our dialogue should not be merely elitist, and if it should have consequences, we have to realize that we cannot just theologize about or formulate the truth but we have to do it. To dialogue is to find out how we as Christians and Muslims find out how to do what God wants us to do.

The world is the context of what we are doing - the situation in which Christians and Muslims find themselves. Our point of departure is not Christianity and Islam as religions but human beings and their conditions in the world. Therefore we cannot deal with Muslim-Christian conflicts unless we try to understand the conditions which have produced them, nationally as well as internationally. There is no dialogue possible without study based on and aimed at practice. Out of such studies we can start to ask theological questions and explore together, in a reinforcing manner what each tradition contributes to an understanding of man, history, of nature and environment, freedom and humanity. We have to study the life into which Christianity and Islam enter or are kept outside before we can deal with our theological or ideological differences meaningfully. Without inspiration drawn from practice we cannot dialogue meaningfully or relevantly. History is constituted by man in a tension between theory and practice, between faith and hope and the concrete practice of changing the historical reality. Faith tells us that it is possible to form and change history because faith is the conviction that God is Lord over history and he intervenes in it. We have to hold our faith and hope together in an active relationship with our society. A God in whom we believe with words and concepts is theorized out of reality. If we have no experience to give meaning to our words they are only empty concepts. Faith always relates to reality, to the world under God. Therefore it is not enough to share at an intellectual level in a mutual openness, but we must be open to what God does in human history and cooperate with him at the level of a common search for a just society. Our faith is inseparable from the social process of life. Therefore the social dimension of our dialogue has importance for our efforts to respond to God.

1. A short outline of the background to *Nostra aetate* is given in *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin*, no. 74 (September-October 1978), "The Muslim-Christian dialogue of the last ten years," pp. 11-13, where its relation to the Constitution *Lumen gentium* is also discussed.
2. A. Flannery (ed), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, pp. 738-740.
3. *Ibid.* pp.367-8.
4. *Dialogue in Community: Statements and Reports of a Theological Consultation, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 18-27 April 1977*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977), pp. 25-27
5. *WCC Exchange*, no. 6 (December 1979), pp. 17-18, reprinted in *Newsletter/Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, no. 3 (May 1980), pp. 13-18.
6. *The Church and the Muslim in Europe - Matters for Reflection* (Geneva: Conference of European Churches, 1978), pp. 13-23.
7. *Fremmedarbeiderne og menigheten* (Oslo: Økumenisk utvalg for fremmedarbeidere, n.d.), p.13
8. *Kristen arbeid blant fremmedarbeidere* (Oslo: Økumenisk utvalg for fremmedarbeidere, n.d.), p. 3.
9. David Brown, *En ny taerskel - Kirken og muslimerne* (Hellerup: DMS-forlag, and Christiansfeld: Forlaget Savanne, 1978).
10. Erik Hadberg *et al*, "En ny taerskel - skal den overskrides?" *Dansk Missionsblad*, vol. 146, no. 4 (April 1979), p. 26.
11. T. Graesholt, "Strejftog i Mellemøsten," *Dansk Missionsblad*, vol. 146, no. 5 (May 1979), pp. 17-18.
12. "Muslimerne er forsømte borgere i Danmark," *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 29 June 1979.
13. "Gleiche Chancen für Kinder von Ausländer; Auszug aus der Kundgebung der 5. Synode der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland vom 5-10 November 1978 in Bethel," published by the EKD Aussenamt, Frankfurt a/M, 1978.
14. "Begegnung mit Muslimen; Entschliessung der 6. Synode der Evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland vom 1. Februar 1980 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen," published by the EKD Aussenamt, Frankfurt a/M, 1980.
The theological commission referred to in paragraph 1 has since been established under the auspices of the Churches' Committee on Migrant Workers in Europe.
15. *Die Ausländischen Arbeitsnehmer - Eine Frage an die Kirche und die Gesellschaft. Ein Beschluss der Gemeinsamen Synode der Bischöfe in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Heftreihe Synodenbeschlüsse* (Bonn), no. 3 (1972), pp. 7-9.
16. "Stellungnahme und Vorschläge der 'Gemeinsamen Konferenz' der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz und des Zentralkomitees der deutschen Katholiken zur Integration ausländischer Arbeitnehmer und ihrer Familien im kirchlichen und Gesellschaftlichen Bereich," (mimeographed) p. 13.
17. Werner Wanzura, "Die Arbeit der Ökumenischen Kontaktstelle für Nichtchristen in Erzbistum Köln (OKNI)," in Ständige Arbeitsgruppe für christlich-islamische Beziehungen und für Kontakte zur anderen Weltreligionen, *Christen und Moslems in Deutschland* (Essen, 1977), p. 85.

18. *Ibid.* pp. 85-86.
19. *Ibid.* p. 86.
20. Michel Lelong, "Le Secretariat de l'Eglise de France pour les Relations avec l'Islam" *Islamochristiana*, no. 4 (1978), pp. 165-174.
21. *Ibid.* p. 174.
22. "Resolution passed by the Fifty-Second meeting of the British Council of Churches at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 23-24 April 1968 - Inter-Faith Services" (mimeographed).
23. David Brown, *A new Threshold: Guidelines for the Churches in their relations with Muslims communities*, London: British Council of Churches and Conference of British Missionary Societies, 1976.
24. *Ibid.* pp. 26-28, 30.
25. United Reformed Church, *With People of Other Faiths in Britain: A Study Handbook for Christians* (London, 1980), pp. 14-15.
26. Cf. P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann: *The Social Construction of Reality. A treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* (New York 1966). P.L. Berger: *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Social Theory of Religion*, (New York 1967).

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