

INTRODUCTION

The presence of Muslims in Europe and the theological training of pastoral workers

1. In recent years, the presence of Muslims in Europe has produced contradictory reactions. In some countries social conflicts have degenerated into religious controversies: two examples are the relations between Bulgarians and the Turkish minority, or the tragic events in Yugoslavia. In others (for example in the United Kingdom with the Rushdie affair or in France with the discussions on girls wearing headscarves in state schools), debates have centred on religious matters, leaving Europeans with a negative impression.

Elsewhere, international politics (e.g. civil war in Lebanon, the Gulf war) have caused tensions within the European Community. Greater attention has been paid to negative events than to the positive experiences in most areas of Europe (e.g. the already frequent practice of prayers for peace, at different levels). Nevertheless, Christians and Muslims must continue to talk to each other and work together, even if in some countries serious crises have affected inter-religious activity. The basic reason for these crises is that Muslims now live in Europe on a permanent footing, a fact of which the Churches are only now beginning to take account.

2. The number of Muslims living in Europe is estimated at around 24 million, which makes Islam numerically the second religion after Christianity. While countries of eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Russia) have known Muslim fel-

THE PRESENCE OF MUSLIMS IN EUROPE AND THE THEOLOGICAL TRAINING OF PASTORAL WORKERS

Birmingham 9 - 14 September 1991

Final Report

low-citizens since the occupation by the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century or the Russian colonisation of the 19th, the Muslim presence in countries of western Europe results from the economic development of these countries, as well as from the economic, social, and political situation in the countries of origin of immigrants or those seeking asylum on political grounds.

3. Muslims have been migrants for a very long time. Today we speak of 'the Muslims' and this is an obvious fact. Muslim immigrants from North Africa, Turkey, Pakistan, India, the Near East, or sub-Saharan Africa are settling in Europe as residents. They are seeking to move from the status of labour force or immigrant workers to that of a recognised sector of the population. They are well organised in all European countries, being in possession of mosques, premises for prayer, private schools and centres for Qur'anic instruction, newspapers or information bulletins, and with their imams and intellectuals. All this allows them on the one hand, despite their minority status, to lead a life in conformity with their traditions and, on the other hand, to bear witness to their religious beliefs.

4. This evolution holds consequences also for secular society. All the states of Europe have been built upon a tradition strongly influenced by Christianity and, since the French Revolution, by laws guaranteeing the equality of all persons and by the democratic system. In this sense, the European states form a religious, political, and civil whole. Starting from these fundamental principles, European society and public order still today have as their basis a body of moral and political values and criteria which, however, can vary from one country to another.

This unity is not called into question by the fact that every European state has found its own *modus vivendi* in the way Christians and Muslims live together, more or less stable or in search of stability. The concepts and the reality of 'nation', 'State', and

'religion' are very ancient in Europe, whereas Muslim immigrants come from regions characterised by a different concept of state and society, without the experience of the same cultural development (e.g. Enlightenment) that the society of the host countries has known.

5. At a first stage, Christians or Churches were mainly concerned with the situation of Muslims in this socio-political context. They became involved in social, charitable, and political activities. Mostly they defended the rights of the underprivileged.

6. The encounter between Christians and Muslims has extended into the pastoral sphere: on the occasion of mixed marriages where one partner is Christian and the other Muslim; in Christian kindergartens or in religious based schools, for children of Muslim families; in Christian youth movements; with regard to conversions; or, again, for adults who ask to take part in family groups.

7. Social interaction between Christians and Muslims nowadays extends also to theological research. Christians of Europe are faced with the fact that society has become multi-religious. Themselves confessing the One God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, Christians live side by side with other believers who follow a different religious tradition. Muslims thus ask Christians questions concerning revelation, prophethood, faith in God as Trinity, Christology, etc. All branches of theology are involved and should be able to provide an answer.

8. The Christian Churches of Europe have not remained indifferent to this situation, and have created secretariats or working groups. Their activities have been twofold: They have helped Christians to meet with Muslims, and have given advice to Church leaders in pastoral work.

9. Since Christians and Muslims meet each other at all levels (human, pastoral, theological), the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CEE) and the Conference of European Churches (KEK) in 1987 jointly created an 'Islam in Europe' Committee which took over from the 'CEC Consultative Committee on Islam in Europe' established in 1978. One of its first tasks was to draw up a survey of the Muslim presence in Europe and of the questions which this situation puts to the Churches as well as States. On that basis, it has seemed necessary to put the emphasis on the theological training of future priests, pastors, teachers of religion, and pastoral co-workers, so that their training should be adapted to this new situation.

10. The 'Islam in Europe' Committee was faced with two possible ways of proceeding: either to develop a study programme for an introductory course on Islam, or to prepare a study programme underlining Islam's impact in every branch of Christian theology. At the Committee's first meeting, at Oegstgeest in the Netherlands in 1988, the members opted for the latter formula, since it allows the questions raised by Muslim doctrine to be more clearly set out and it gives teachers of theology the possibility of replying to these questions.

11. The 'Islam in Europe' Committee has studied these questions in three stages:

- during its second meeting, at Gazzada, near Milan in 1989, members worked on the points relating to Dogma, Exegesis, and Pastoral Theology.

- during the third meeting, at Leningrad (now St Petersburg) in the then Soviet Union in 1990, they studied questions relating to Church History, Moral Theology, and Missiology.

To assist in this work, the Committee has been helped by teachers of theology in the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches.

- the third stage took place from 9 to 14 September 1991 at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, where the results of the two preceding conferences were presented to professors of theology and to persons in charge of theological training. The results of this consultation on 'The presence of Muslims in Europe and the theological training of pastoral workers' will be found in this document. It contains:

◇ Reports of groups:

- Exegesis
- Dogmatic Theology
- Pastoral Work
- History of the Church
- Ethics
- Mission and Dialogue

◇ Proposals for putting the conclusions into practice

◇ Names of Committee members

◇ List of experts who took part in the meetings and the final consultation

◇ Addresses of Centres or persons responsible for relations with Islam

◇ The list of lecturers and the titles of their contributions at the meetings and the consultation.

(Translation: Dr. Penelope Johnstone)

EXEGESIS

The presence of Muslims in Europe affects the exegetical task of Christian theologians; this term refers not only to those who teach in universities or seminaries but also to preachers, teachers, to parish and pastoral assistants, catechists, and all who use the Bible.

The position of Muslims, who consider the Qur'an as the Word of God addressed to all humanity, is opposed to the Christian affirmation that God has spoken to mankind through Jesus Christ, His eternal Word became man. This Muslim position carries with it certain consequences.

- Christian exegetes find themselves confronted by questions concerning
 - (a) the nature of the biblical revelation,
 - (b) the meaning of the expression 'revealed scriptures', and
 - (c) the Canon and canonicity.

- Questions of this kind oblige Christians to adopt a new approach to the texts they study. Translations of biblical texts into modern languages are always regarded by Muslims with suspicion; for them the Qur'an is untranslatable.

- There must be an understanding and collaboration of exegetes and biblical scholars with the masters of systematic theology and other teachers who deal with the fields of philosophy. The complex nature of encounters with Islam demands this collaboration.

In the light of these few preliminary considerations we can see that in the Muslim-Christian encounter the role of exegesis has two diverse but closely related areas:

1. Firstly, for the exegetes, there are important tasks concerning the witness of other religious convictions

1.1. in the Old Testament monotheism/henotheism; idolatry, the knowledge of God outside the Covenant (e.g. Melchisedech, Abimelech, Job, etc.), the significance of the narratives concerning Ruth, Jonah, etc.; the Wisdom literature. In the same way, in the New Testament, certain narratives need to be considered closely, e.g. that of the Roman centurion (Mt. 8:5 f), of the Syro-phenician woman (Mt. 15:21 f), the Prologue of John, the implications of the narrative of Cornelius (Ac. 10:1 f), the preaching and behavior of St Paul at Ephesus and Athens (Ac.17:15f, 19:1f)

1.2. Special attention is required in the explanation of texts such as Jn. 14:6 and Ac. 4:12 (I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no-one comes to the Father but by me. - There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved).

1.3. In Christology, it will be necessary to point out the relationships between the teachings of the gospels and those of St Paul, with the concordances between the two and the progression in the Pauline corpus.

1.4. In the study of cultural and religious traditions contemporary with the New Testament, such as the Samaritans, Canaan, it would be possible to include the traditions of pre-islamic Arabia and their influence on the early days of Islam.

2. Next, where Islam is concerned more directly, more specific questions remain to be studied; these concern biblical themes which are very enigmatic for the Muslims; they know them, but

either doubt or deny them. The most important, though not the only ones, are:

- 2.1. Christian monotheism (because of the Trinity);
 - 2.2. the Sonship of Jesus Christ (seen in conjunction with the exploits of divinities in mythology);
 - 2.3. Mary and the Virgin Birth;
 - 2.4. the Holy Spirit (confused with Gabriel; the Paraclete = Muhammad);
 - 2.5. the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (which they deny);
 - 2.6. Messiahship;
 - 2.7. the single Gospel of Jesus Christ and the four texts (synoptic problem);
 - 2.8. In the study of certain biblical themes it would be necessary to add the different notion which the Muslims have of these; for instance, prophetic office, the law, inspiration, the Covenant, election, grace, etc.
 - 2.9. the significance of Abraham and the traditions concerning Hagar and Ishmael would be present in one's mind; and one must not forget the place of Israel in the Qur'an and among Muslims today. In this domain especially, for many subjects exegesis requires collaboration with systematic theology.
3. Finally, the orientation of the teaching of exegetes and biblical scholars should seek to open minds

- 3.1. a sense of dynamism and progression in the biblical texts, in their development and explanation,
- 3.2. a sense of anthropological and ideological exegesis in dealing with biblical texts, including a critique of cultural elements in exegetical approaches,
- 3.3. an understanding of the motives and principles which guided the formation of the Canon; this should include certain notions concerning the reasons why the Bible is different from the Qur'an; it would be possible to include teaching on the apocrypha, the Gospel of Barnabas; the relation between Scripture and Tradition, the role and place attributed to each in the different Churches - Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant - and in what ways they differ from Qur'an and Hadith,
- 3.4. Exegesis should assist a view of the Christian Scriptures and the beginning of Christian doctrine in their historical and cultural contexts, in particular in the context of the different religions present at various periods of biblical history.
- 3.5. In studying scriptural texts, it will be necessary to pay attention also to the relation of the text to prophecy in action, not only prophecy in words, and its relation to the notion of power and the exercise of power and its relation to the 'foundation mystique', that is to say, with living history.

gical training programme. The course thus developed should be the result of a partnership between theologians, historians, islamists, sociologists, and pastoral workers.

DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

Several questions hold our attention when Islamo-Christian relations are approached at the theological level.

What are the points of departure of our theologies when they touch on religious pluralism and the relations between Christianity and Islam? For instance, what are the anthropological, philosophical, or spiritual presuppositions at the base of our theological reasoning?

How do we handle the question often put to us: "Can we say «We have the same God»? For instance, what underlies the position taken by *Nostra Aetate* 3, where it is stated: "The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims who adore the One, Living and Subsistent God, merciful and all-powerful, Creator of heaven and earth?"

There could be questioning as to whether there exist active conjunctions and significant equivalents between Christianity and Islam in the following contexts: Christology, pneumatology; the concept of Covenant, of salvation, of revelation or the receiving of revelation, of community, of divine law, of eschatology, of mediation; the exemplary nature of the founders; administration of the holy; the language of faith; attitudes of adoration, submission, prayer, love and service; relationship to modernity, secularization, unbelief, to new forms of religiosity; the links between evangelization, mission, and dialogue.

Any theology, whoever it is destined for, should today integrate a serious training on Islam, dispersed throughout the whole theolo-

In a theological course including this reference to Islam, it would be desirable to start from a study of religious experience in general, even outside the main Judaeo-Islamo-Christian line: what do we call 'religion' or 'the religious'? What is the aim of each great religion?

Research is also necessary on the anthropological and philosophical introduction (prolegomena) of a theology in dialogue with Islam or working in the Muslim-Christian field.

In addition, it would be necessary to assess the differences between concepts or systems of reference, underlying the theological structures of Christianity and of Islam. In fact, it is appropriate to reflect upon the different ways in which Christianity and Islam pursue what we call theology. There is in the Christian faith a concept of our relationship to revelation which calls for a certain way of doing systematic theology, in particular a linking with an allegorical use of language (metaphor, symbol, analogy, etc.) for which it is difficult to find an equivalent in the language of Islam. Hence the difficulty of dialogue at this level. An epistemology of theological and religious language does not help.

It is certainly not sufficient to include Islamics within the multidisciplinary theological course. The training proposed cannot do without theological reflection and questioning on the very transformations which are brought about by the meeting between Christians and Muslims and on the effects of the confrontation between Christianity and Islam. It happens that the Muslim-Christian field leads the Christian, though also the Muslim, in important new questions, on the way to consult sources and to work out a language of faith.

But Christianity is also constructed with reference to others. And dialogue, as well as taking account of the way in which Muslims and Christians face up to major events and times in their lives, how they regard each other in depth, examination of the foundations and mechanics of respective and mutual prejudices, all these are places for developing theological reflection and ascertaining its consistency.

In every case, it is best to distinguish the levels at which the divergences between Christianity and Islam take effect. Are they in fact questions dealing with revelation itself? or more concretely differences at the level of religious traditions or modes of beliefs? or rather a problem of cultural barriers? or even, again, of divergences or differences linked to social and economic disparities between communities or arising from causes linked to history?

Finally, this training cannot ignore particular situations which face men and women of our day, and, among these situations, those which take on a sharper outline in the Muslim-Christian field: the crucial question of inequalities, of under-development, of hunger, of violence; problems of society: human rights, secularism, discrimination, insecurities, etc.; the various demands on persons living in contact with Muslims: request for baptism, marriage, burial; requests for spiritual assistance in places of education, in hospitals, in the prison establishment and the army; accompanying groups of Muslim-Christian exchange, with increasing requests in the sphere of sharing prayer; the rise of fundamentalist religious currents; the ever-increasing number of sects and of new religious movements.

These questions, these situations, these requests should be studied in such a way as to bring out also the theological implications.

(Translation: Dr. Penelope Johnstone)

PASTORAL WORK

The countries and Churches of Europe have varying perceiving of the Muslim presence in Europe and what this signifies. These differences are connected with historical events, the sociological situation (majority/minority), the psychological situation (security/threat), as well as the Church's role in the life of its people. For example, where the concept of secularisation is concerned, there are variations between the ancient countries of the East, such as Yugoslavia and the former GDR.

Just as the Christian churches do not form a homogeneous group, there are also different Islamic ethnic groups, which have varying experiences and ideas of the Churches.

Pastoral Theology

Pastoral theology is based on an evangelical awareness of faith, hope, and love. It presupposes an in-depth awareness of socio-economic realities. It concerns every aspect, ad intra and ad extra, of the Christian community.

1. Places for prayer

One priority would appear to be the strengthening of faith and Christian identity to enter into inter-religious relationships: which in turn presuppose a certain self-confidence and awareness of one's own identity. The Churches' attitude regarding Muslim religious practice in societies of a traditional Christian background has considerable effect upon wider attitudes towards minorities in

general. What should be the general attitude concerning mosques and rooms for prayer? Should the local Church take an active part in helping Muslims to find places for prayer? When a building is no longer used as a church, is it a wise move to lend it, or even hand it over to Muslims? Such a decision should not be taken by one person alone, but after consultation with the Christian community and other Churches. This raises other questions: what sort of witness is given by an empty church in an area where the population is atheist or Muslim? How will the Muslim community interpret the fact of a church being abandoned, deconsecrated? and so on .

2. Symbolism

It would seem important that theological training - at different levels - should incorporate religious symbolism, in the Christian tradition as well as in Islam: gestures and movement, space, places, rituals. This symbolism is an important means of anchoring the Christian faith in a way of expression which should not be purely intellectual.

3. Catechesis and preaching

The younger generation manifests a new way of thinking with regard to different cultures and religions. This does not take away from us the task of teaching the Christian faith, showing clearly and with no sense of superiority the ways in which religions both differ and resemble one another. This is all the more necessary since the presence of neighbours, colleagues and friends who hold different religious convictions can lead towards complete indifference, or towards syncretism.

In this perspective, it is up to the Churches to prepare guidelines - for educational levels from kindergarten up to theological semi-

nary - taking account of the positive challenge represented within Islam by the observance of prayer and the solidarity of the Umma.

There is also a need for simple materials to present the Christian faith to Muslims who might so wish. Such materials should preferably be prepared and written in collaboration with persons who know the Muslim world well.

4. Christian schools and kindergartens

The school is a particularly opportune place for meeting, but also a place of potential conflict. The vocation of schools run by the Church has been called into question: whom do they exist for? only for the wealthy, both Christian and Muslim? how can they be at the service of the poor, for example children of the unemployed, whether Christian or Muslim?

In some cases, it could seem useful to include Muslims among the teachers: something which may not be possible everywhere. In every case, it is vital for these schools to show clearly their educational plan and its Christian inspiration, even if the majority of pupils are of Muslim origin.

Some do not consider obligatory religious instruction at school to be necessarily the best solution, for Christians nor Muslims. The question is raised in particular today in certain countries of Central Europe, where the Churches are in the midst of a process of reorganization. Different solutions will certainly be reached (religious instruction at school, in the parish ...)

5. Social and communal life

The general view is that youth movements should be encouraged in an open attitude towards Muslims, while still keeping the specifically Christian line of these movements. It is also important to

further informal contacts between Christian and Muslim youth groups sharing the same objective: this can help avert ethnic and social confrontations which could be understood as interreligious conflicts.

6. Chaplaincies

Chaplaincies include not only priests and pastors, but also nuns and lay people. They can give a witness to the Christian life, with no ulterior motive, especially when the people concerned are isolated, in crisis, or suffering in some way. Attention is also drawn to the importance of hospital chaplaincies, as well as the part played by prison visitors, who can help Muslims - many of whom often seem to have been abandoned by their families - to regain their lost dignity and self-confidence. In this context, a practice of Christian radio stations has been appreciated: these have served to put families in touch with prisoners when the latter cannot receive visits (e.g. on Sundays); the prisoner can hear members of his family who phone in to the broadcasting station.

7. Mixed marriages

The Churches have published directives regarding mixed marriages. In this context, questions crop up, especially to know if there can be some kind of 'common worship'? In any case, it is necessary that couples who have different religious beliefs should be given support and friendship, after the wedding, as should divorced persons. Nor must relatives, the families of origin, be forgotten, since for them a Christian/Muslim marriage can be a source of great anguish.

8. Everyday life

Pastoral care is not limited to catechetical work or worship. It must also be concerned with those Christians who are in constant

daily contact with Muslims (e.g. in literacy classes, in clubs and groups, in various centres ...) to bring them the help they need.

At the same time, pastoral care should be aware of the existence of Christian-Muslim groups who attempt dialogue: for this makes its demands and needs assistance. These groups sometimes raise the question of prayer in common between Christians and Muslims.

Finally, pastoral care must not forget those who, for various reasons, refuse to have any contact with other religions. How can they be helped to leave behind their fears and be helped to consider the positive results which can emerge from inter-religious dialogue?

9. Finally, a general remark

Christians who live, or have lived, in Muslim countries can be a source of valuable help through their knowledge of Islam from within. They should be asked to collaborate with any project of dialogue and interreligious co-operation.

(Translation: Dr. Penelop Johnstone)

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

1. History and Theology

As a distinct discipline church history is different from other e.g. secular, national, political or economic histories in that it deals with its subject matter from a theological perspective. The history of the church or rather of Christianity is of course part of the general history of humankind. This theological perspective on history starts from the belief that all human history is the story of God's action with humanity.

Our perspectives on our own history and that of our fellow human beings relate to the heart of our understanding of ourselves under God. The presence therefore of Muslims, of followers of other major religions and of atheists raise the question of their and our place in God's design. As we believe that God carries out his designs and mission with the world by using people in past and present, (e.g. Isaiah 45,1 and Luke 2,1) also outside the communities of believers, it becomes also of paramount importance to make a common search for answers to questions concerning the views of others of their histories and ours. While seeking such tentative answers (church) historians will cooperate with colleagues from other disciplines. This will become the more imperative when we realize that after almost two millennia of Christianity every theological discipline (dealt with in this report) has as such its own history.

2. Historical training an essential subject

An historical perspective is necessary and essential to a critical understanding of the present and of one's role in it regardless of what one's function is within the (Christian) community. Our communities and institutions are what they are in part because of what they were. Their present has been built by what has happened within them and between them and the wider world in the past. Church history, as a distinct subject and discipline, is thus more than the history of a church let alone of the church or the churches by themselves outside their particular context.

3. Widening the issues from local to universal

The teaching of church history within our various systems of theological education is traditionally often isolated and concentrated towards issues relating to our own church. Relations with other churches were often only dealt with in the context of conflicts with them. This means that western churches usually ignored what happened in eastern churches after the council of Chalcedon in 451 and after the schism between the Roman Catholics and the Byzantine Orthodox in 1054. The result of such an insular treatment of church history could also imply that Protestants and Catholics were hardly informed about each others histories between the time of the Reformation and Counterreformation and the Second Vatican Council. This danger has partly been corrected as a result of the ecumenical movement.

But while this movement of mutually widening and improving the knowledge of each others particular church histories is gaining momentum a new comparable challenge presents itself by the arrival of new Muslims in western Europe and the reassertion of older Muslim communities in the Eastern part of our continent. Relations with them, as neighbours and fellow citizens, are strongly conditioned by events in the past. At a time when all the church-

ches, though with different grades of intensity and directness, have to relate to Muslims and/or the Muslim world, the cumulative recorded experience of the past is needed by all in order to draw history's lessons for today's mission and task.

This process of widening our historical horizon should not only relate to the subjects to be treated but also to our attitude and internal disposition. An approach to history limited to a community, be it national, ethnic or denominational, ignores that our histories have taken place in relation to others. It encourages self-glorification and self-centredness often based on a common identity founded in violence. History is usually written by those in control of the community culture, so it is biased against or even suppresses the people outside - other communities - or the people underneath, the colonized, peasants, women, the working classes or minorities. Widening the historical perspective allows us to re-discover lost traditions, and to enrich relations with others. It exposes the violent dimensions of our communal foundation myths - aggression in founding histories, the obsession with collective martyrdom - and can help us to find more positive and constructive reasons for being a community.

4. History of Christian-Muslim relations

4.1. One should while dealing with the history of Christian-Muslim relations be aware of the different beginnings of either religion.

4.2. History must also take into account the history of other communities, in the immediate environment and the wider Mediterranean. It is important to communicate some knowledge of the history of the countries where migrant Muslims in Europe come from and to take into account the history of Christian-Muslim relations in those particular countries.

4.3. The churches of Europe could assimilate the great period of the Arabic Christian debate with Islam, which stretches across for centuries after 750 AD until the present day and age.

4.4. The churches of the West should expand their perspective beyond the negative limits set by the Crusades or Luther's and Calvin's attitudes towards the Turks. They should instead seek positive points of contact as for example in the writings of Anselm of Canterbury, Nicholas Cusanus and Erasmus of Rotterdam, to mention only those. *Mutatis mutandis* the same applies to the churches of Eastern Europe.

4.5. The Churches of the East have to discover that the history of Christian-Muslim relations extends far beyond the single perspective of recent national conflicts and negative memories of the Ottoman empire.

4.6. This widening of the scope of historical subjects must include the history of Islam and Muslim views of Christianity, otherwise past conflicts will continue or may even deteriorate.

4.7. Some historical subjects may even lend themselves for a joint exploration by Muslim and Christians e.g. concerning the negative and positive impact of the Crusades for either faith community or the relations between religion and politics from either perspective, taking especially into account the position of Muslim and Christian minorities under the rule of the other as majority.

4.8. The study of history can also serve to liberate us from ideological hangups. In the recent past we have everywhere seen examples where elements of our religion, whether Christian, Muslim or other, have been taken out of their frameworks and inserted into secular paradigms of a nationalist or racist or "fundamentalist" character.

4.9. Study of history can help us to trace the roots of mutual prejudices and historical lies which bedevil our relations with each other.

4.10. In order to achieve the above described ends the teacher and student should develop a healthy suspicion of source material and go beyond consulting the traditional books and journals of their discipline.

4.11. The study of history can help us discover that all our histories include episodes of shame when we have betrayed our faith and became aware that all our action is under the ultimate judgment of God.

ETHICS

1. Reasons for studying Islamic ethics in Christian institutions

There is a creative tension between arguments of principle and the necessities of practical situations which lead to placing such a study on our agenda.

Among the arguments based on principle can be mentioned:

1.1. Some trends within Christianity see Islam as a vehicle of truth from which it is appropriate that Christians should seek to deepen their knowledge and awareness of the mystery of God.

1.2. The responsibility of the people of Europe for the global community suggests that there are many ethical issues which need an interreligious perspective e.g. environmental concerns and issues of justice and peace.

1.3. The mutual influence and interface between the religious communities and the secular perspective of contemporary Europe suggests a consideration of such issues as the autonomy of the human being, human rights and the tension between public and private life.

1.4. In various ways throughout Europe Muslims are seen by many as having an alternative way of life and ethico-religious system. This perception, which for many is threatening, needs to be explored and challenged.

community, and the nature of existing power structures (political, economic, media, religions, etc.)

3.1.4. The question of violence has a particularly high profile in matters relating to the social order (violence in crime and in response to crime), in intercommunal/international relations (pacifism, jihad, just war).

3.1.5. The relationship between the state, religion and religious institutions is a question which continues deeply to occupy both religions traditions.

We should note that these and many other ethical questions today equally challenge Muslims and Christians and that working together on them can be mutually beneficial. It is also to be noted that reflection on these problems raises questions which cannot be ignored by other branches of theology.

3.2. The place of ethics within theological studies highlights questions of methodology, sources, authority, provisional solutions and interaction with many other disciplines. It deals with the practical issues of human life and it is a focus for cohesion between theological thought and the practicalities of a living faith. These issues would all be augmented by a comparative study of Islamic ethics.

3.3. Ethics, as a constantly developing discipline, is by nature eclectic incorporating insights from various moral traditions. Islamic ethics ought to be regarded as such a tradition which can be brought to bear as a source of insight on particular questions.

3.4. One of the major areas of debate for contemporary ethics must be the relationship between religion, morality, and the law (be it secular or religious). This would focus on such questions as: The way in which religious belief shapes our perception of value systems and of moral obligations. Is it possible to establish a com-

2. Foundations of ethics

Underneath the reasons outlined lie theological questions which have been debated between Muslims and Christians in the past. Comparisons need to be made between both the convergences and the divergences of the two religious traditions in their anthropologies; their views on human will and responsibility; the relationship between law and morality; the human endeavour to discern God's will; the epistemological and hermeneutical challenges of our scriptural traditions; and the application of all these to the circumstances of the world we live in together today.

3. Reflection on the role of ethics in theological education

We approach this area under six headings:

3.1. The agenda for ethics in the training of ministers and theological workers is constantly affected by social, economic, political, legal, and scientific developments. This gives rise to regular new challenges in areas such as:

3.1.1. The nature of human life and dignity, including medical ethics, the issues of "genetic engineering", withdrawal of life support ("passive euthanasia").

3.1.2. Relations between individuals and the family concerns such as respect for person and property, responsibilities and roles of men and women towards each other, sexual ethics, marriage and divorce (especially where the partners are of different backgrounds), rights and responsibilities of parents and children towards each other.

3.1.3. Social ethics includes questions such as civil and human rights, the tensions between the claims of the individual and the

mon core of social values underlying different value systems in a pluralistic society? Within the history of Islamic thought these have been controverted questions, the study of which would have a contribution to make to the ongoing debate.

3.5. There is a special issue of interreligious relations, where our religious traditions have to take seriously the accusation that we have historically been the causes of conflict as much as (if not more than?) makers of peace. This is particularly relevant to Muslim-Christian relations. We need to look more closely at the ethics of mission and dialogue.

3.6. What is the relationship between the academic study of ethics and the development of the moral character? To what extent are theological educators and ministers and pastoral workers role models in terms of their ethical lives? An exploration of these questions in the light of the Islamic tradition would be fruitful.

MISSION AND DIALOGUE

1. Insertion into theological training

The question of mission and dialogue becomes highly topical in a Europe whose social and political structures are being radically affected by ethnic, cultural and religious pluralism. The subject of Islamo-Christian meeting should find a place in any curriculum of theological studies:

- missiology; the challenge of Islam is concerned as much with mission abroad as with the near neighbourhood;
- basic theology or apologetic: Islamic thought is encountered in the course of theological study;
- ecclesiology: the mosque and the Muslim world are part of the Church's meeting with the world;
- interreligious: with Judaism, Islam can extend the interreligious dimensions.

2. Intercultural and Inter-religious Theology

Today, mission and evangelisation projects for Christians in Europe experience the discovery of the meaning and value of co-existence with other cultures and other religious communities. Neighbourhood and social interaction call for a dialogue at depth so as to get to know the traditions, the perceptions, the resources of these partners: Christians of other cultures as well as Muslims or adherents of other religions.

This fundamental rethinking of missiology, which is neither one-way nor the preserve of the Churches overseas, leads to a theology of intercultural and inter-religious relationships which allows us to go beyond any presuppositions, whether confessional and cultural or social and cultural. It is a theology with a view to dialogue and resulting from dialogue, in which Islam is perceived in its political, cultural, and spiritual dimensions.

3. Mission and Dialogue

To clarify what is at stake in this new approach, care will be taken to rely upon a clear definition of dialogue, which is neither polemic nor apologetics any more than it is a simple comparative study between different systems of thought. It is also necessary to distinguish the different kinds of dialogue in relation to its aims such as

- to ensure a harmonious co-existence,
- to achieve a common aim,
- to deepen theological knowledge,
- to develop interreligious prayer or meditation.

It is also important to specify the relationships between dialogue and the mission of evangelisation in such a way as to avoid the double suspicion of betrayal: to misrepresent dialogue in reducing it to a missionary tactic, and betray the missionary effort in renouncing witness and conversion.

4. Meeting between Christians and Muslims

Study of the specific encounter between Christians and Muslims has to recognize the missionary character of both traditions with the search for a *modus vivendi* which respects the integrity of each. This is a particularly sensitive matter when it concerns the charitable actions of Christians or certain statements of identity for Muslims.

In this perspective, attention must be paid to the history of Muslim-Christian relations, and also to cultural differences and political frustrations, to try to define the conditions for co-existence and dialogue at all levels: daily life, shared activity, bearing witness to one's faith, and shared spiritual quest.

5. The Aims of Training

In assisting students to come to terms with the cultural shock and the challenge of religious diversity, we seek to form religious leaders and teachers who will be open to others' ideas, ready to adopt new points of view, freed from any complex of superiority because they are critical of their own religious institution, and wary of prejudice of any kind. They should be prepared to take the risk of encounter, out of love for others, ready to unlearn what they know to relearn for the sake of a new world, passing from a monolithic vision to the perception of a pluralist society. It is in learning to appreciate the 'otherness' of others that one can hope to transform one's relationship to the neighbour and open up one's own view of the world.

6. Necessary Knowledge

In this training, students need a solid body of knowledge in the field of other religions and their cultures, such as Islam with its development on the world scale; there should also be access to the different Christian theologies of the Third World, in particular those which have been worked out within a Muslim environment. On the historical level, there will be an awareness of the development of inter-religious and intercultural relations, for instance around the Mediterranean, and likewise of the Churches' evolving attitude towards religions in general and Islam in particular. All this should lead to a theology of religions which will be at the same time the product of experience.

7. Experience is vital

The programme as envisaged should include a necessary element of immersion in the world of Islam or, at the least, of direct contact with Muslims:

- an extended stay, within the framework of study;
- study travel and/or visit to a community;
- course given by an adherent of the religion being taught;
- meeting and dialogue arranged so as to ensure a feedback.

This is not a case of simply undertaking a kind of inter-religious tourism in adding new experiences, in line with T.S. Eliot's warning 'We had the experience but missed the meaning', but is to ensure the link between theory and practice, real life and interpretation.

8. Towards a Theology of Religions

With Islam, as with any other religion, it is not possible to post-ponе indefinitely the question of the value of salvation which this religion has for its faithful, nor on a larger scale that of God's action outside the limits of one's own religion. One of the most urgent tasks in secularized Europe, in this last part of the 20th century, is the path of a theology of religions which can account for religious pluralism, and for this the presence of Muslims forms a vital incentive.

(Translation: Dr. Penelope Johnstone)

SUGGESTIONS

In view of the variety of theological and pastoral training centres of the different Churches, the 'Islam in Europe' Committee ventures to put forward the following suggestions with the view of better incorporating reflection upon Islam within the training course.

1. Perspectives and methods

1.1. Thinking about Islam should be viewed within the more general framework of reflection upon religious plurality and its effects upon the Christian faith.

1.2. Within these perspectives it is desirable:

- to take as starting point common religious experiences, even from outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition,
- to examine the anthropological and philosophical presuppositions of the different religions,
- to promote theological reflection on the meeting between religions, inter-religious dialogue and its place within the Church's mission,
- to explore, in a historical perspective, the foundation and reciprocal workings.

1.3. This sort of training demands an inter-disciplinary approach (pastoral theology, systematic theology, exegesis, missiology, Church history, ethics).

1.4. Muslims of different backgrounds should be brought into the teaching programme, as is deemed appropriate.

1.5. There is no substitute for the meeting with Muslim communities. Provided there is good preparation, visits and extended stays of students in regions of Europe where there are Muslims and in Islamic countries provide an excellent way to discover the particular nature of Muslim faith and thought.

2. Specific suggestions

2.1. On initial training

- an introductory course on Islam should be linked with thinking about inter-religious dialogue in its specific Islamo-Christian form.
- it is desirable for an introduction to be given of Arabic, in its function as a religious language, if possible in conjunction with Hebrew and Syriac.
- exchange of Christian teachers and students is a good means of spreading information and sharing experiences.

2.2. Ongoing training

In some ways, the approach is easiest in the sphere of ongoing training. Those working in pastoral care, clergy and laity, are often aware of the need for more extensive training because of the situation in which they live and work. They will therefore probably be better motivated to seek additional training; this can take a variety of forms: study days, evening courses, etc.

This would be all the better for taking into consideration actual events such as the crisis in Lebanon or the Gulf, the Rushdie affair, immigration.

The study of ethical, theological, and missiological problems arising from such situations can provide an excellent opportunity of bringing into focus the Muslim and Christian points of view.

2.3. The trainers

The ongoing training of trainers, teachers or others is very important. It can be carried out in different ways:

- in attending lectures, sessions, conferences;
- in encouraging publications, research, and meetings;
- in developing documentation on Islam in centres of training;
- in collaboration with centres of Islamic studies, such as the Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica (PISAI) in Rome, and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham.

3. The CEC/CCEE 'Islam in Europe' Committee could play an important role in several areas:

- it can make known the institutions which have good experience of dialogue and training;
- it could give incentive to persons and institutions and request their co-operation to respond to the Churches' needs and to new pastoral questions;
- it can encourage centres of Christian-Muslim studies and help them to organize sessions for the benefit of teachers;
- it can further the development and distribution of appropriate materials.

The Islam in Europe' Committee can help to establish networks for the exchange of experience and for mutual help between the Churches.

(Translation: Dr. Penelop Johnstone)