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Relationship and challenge in Kenya and East Africa

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Bishop Mwaluda and Dr Mombo provide a shared historical and statistical introduction to their examination of the Christian-Muslim relationship in East Africa, especially Kenya. Their discussion takes them in different directions: Dr Mombo emphasizes the possibility of good relations between Christians and Muslims; but Bishop Mwaluda frankly faces the challenge represented by Islam on the ground.

A. Historical context: the planting of Islam and Christianity

The eastern coast of Africa first came into contact with Islam soon after the *hijra* of 622AD, as a result of the relationship that existed between the coastlands and southern Arabia even before Islam was born. Arab traders using the October north east monsoon winds and April south west winds crossed the ocean to trade for gold, ivory, timber, tortoise-shell, leopard skins and slaves in the coastal area. When the Arabian peninsula became Islamised, it was natural for the Arabs to carry the Islamic faith and influence to these East African coastal trading centres. Although it is difficult to date the exact time of the arrival of the Islamic faith, local traditions and archaeological evidence indicate an established presence in at least the 10th century (see *Daily Nation*: 1986:17, *Kenya Times*: 1987:9).

However it was not until the establishment of colonialism and the building of the Kenya-Uganda railway (1895–1902) that Islam spread into the interior. Muslim traders and railway workers established themselves along trading routes and in urban centres. In addition to this spread from the coastal region, the north eastern part of Kenya received its Islam from Somalia, which had a long-standing relationship with Arabia and Egypt.

Christianity was first introduced to Kenya by Portuguese traders at the Kenyan coast. For two centuries the Portuguese ruled the Kenyan coast but they were overthrown by the Muslim community in 1728. The Portuguese type of Christianity seems to have been wiped out and it was not until the first half of the 19th century that more aggressive contact began with Christian missionaries from Europe and America who reintroduced Christianity to Kenya, again through the Kenyan coast. In Kenya such missionaries included Ludwig Krapf from 1844.

The construction of the same railway line which permitted Muslim penetration inland also made travel easier for the Christian missionaries who moved to the interior of Kenya and spread Christianity through education,

evangelism, health services and industrial training. It is in this regard that O'Brien has observed that 'The colonial period, which saw the evangelisation of the up-country peoples and the development of the interior, was disastrous for the development of Islam in Kenya' (Hansen & Twaddle: 1995:200).

From their first contacts and again in the nineteenth and twentieth century contact, the Muslim-Christian relationship began in suspicion and outright confrontation. The Muslims harboured the memory of atrocities conducted by armies associated with Christianity in the crusades of the Middle Ages. The imperial western domination associated with Christianity gave Muslims good religious grounds to dissociate from it and even oppose it. Muslims reacted negatively to the education offered in Christian missionary schools because of their evangelizing stance. Christian missionaries on the other hand regarded Muslim communities as fundamentalist, and accused them of promoting slavery and the slave trade at a time when they were determined to condemn and abolish these evils. As a result of these tensions, Christianity tended to concentrate inland while Muslims were concentrated along the coast.

B. Statistics

The numerical statistics differ depending on the writers. In Kenya for example Muslim writers claim as high as 25–30% of the total population to be Muslims, when others give an average of 5–6% for Kenya, 30–33% for Tanzania and 7–12% for Uganda. The Catholic Mission Education Centre (LAMBEC) 1990 gives the following statistics for East Africa (AMBCFA Document service 451; see also CHEAM 1981, Barret 1982, CAMEC, 1990):

	Christians	Muslims
Kenya	75%	5.1%
Tanzania	53.5%	33.5%
Uganda	92%	7.9%

In East Africa we have two main Muslim groups: the Sunni and Shia Muslims. In Kenya the majority of Muslims live in Coast and North-Eastern Provinces. The Muslim communities include Africans, Asians (Ismailis, Bohras, Ahmadiyyas), Somali and Nubian peoples. The majority of these Muslims are Sunnis who follow the Shafi'i School of law (Shenk: 1983). There are a number of Muslim associations but the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) is the one that unifies the Muslim community in that country.

Christians in East Africa include Roman Catholics, numerous Protestant denominations and members of African instituted churches. In Kenya, Christian organisations include the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK) and the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), all of which are Protestant; and the Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC) which is Roman Catholic. As well as these organisations a distinctive feature of Kenyan Christianity is the resurgence of evangelical charismatic groups throughout the country using modern high tech. in their churches.

The political leadership of Kenya is largely Christian; most of the leaders are at the least products of mission schools.

The Christian-Muslim relationship in Kenya

Esther Mombo

1. Apparent tensions

On 23rd July 1998 an American evangelist, Edward Andrew Stagl, was reported to have gone to Nakuru town and in his preaching to have 'insulted the Prophet Muhammad'. This incident outraged the Muslim community and Stagl was arrested and later deported. After the deportation there were demonstrations in various towns of Kenya by Muslims. The demonstrators argued that Stagl should have been tried and sentenced rather than being deported. The demonstrations were against the government and the Christians. Three churches – two Protestant and one Roman Catholic – were destroyed in Wajir.

On 7th August 1998 a bomb was placed at the American Embassy in Nairobi. It destroyed the American Embassy killing 253 people, maiming hundreds and injuring five thousand others. The bomb planting was blamed on the exiled Afghanistan-based Saudi millionaire Osman bin Laden. In Kenya the Muslim community felt they were being blamed for the bomb blast. In some places Muslims were reported to have been pushed out of public transport and beaten.

On 30th September 1998 it was reported that Muslim fundamentalists had attacked Christian preachers in Kitui, Malindi and Wajir and they had burned down some churches.

Reading such incidents in the Kenyan press gives the impression that the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kenya is very tense. But as this paper will show, the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Kenya has been much more relaxed.

2. The complexity of the Christian-Muslim relationship

The Christian-Muslim relationship in Kenya is a complex one. At one level there are a lot of tensions, but at the same time the tensions are defused by the leaders of both the Christian and the Muslim communities. For example, on 29 August 1998 the Imam Muhammad Swalihu of the Jamia Mosque said that Muslims had been threatened and some of them had been thrown out of public transport since the bomb attack in Nairobi. They were accused of carrying bombs. Some had become afraid to board public transport while others were afraid of wearing Muslim dress. But, 'these incidents should be taken by the Muslim communities as tests and they must persevere.' Likewise on 31 August 1998 the head of the Catholic Church in Kenya, Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a'Nzeki, said revenge would not be the most suitable solution to acts of international terrorism as it would lead to even more deaths. Forgiveness should however not be mistaken as meaning that the perpetrators of the recent bombing should not be brought to justice. They should be tried according to the law.

On the whole Christians and Muslims in Kenya live at peace with each other. The accusations, blame, misunderstandings and prejudices have not hampered their living and working together in the same offices, studying in same schools, going to the same hospitals, petrol stations or private company garages. They live on the same estates and walk the same streets in towns. In rural areas they cultivate the same land and visit the same agricultural or veterinary officers.

Nevertheless in recent years tensions between Christians and Muslims have heightened. The reasons for these tensions include factors in the social, economic, political and religious situation both national and international. On the national scene these issues manifest themselves as corruption in private and public sectors of society; poverty as a result of the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), which have resulted in high unemployment and a reduction in public services such as education and health. Other pressures include the problem of AIDS, issues raised by the role of young people and women, and the problem of refugees among others.

Both Christians and Muslims are faced with these challenges daily and they seek ways and means of dealing with them. It is in meeting these challenges that fears and suspicions of each other arise, and the motives of each group are suspected. Some church leaders have been outspoken concerning some of the above issues, using the Bible as the basis of their utterances. The Anglican Church has been known for this outspokenness, but the Church itself is not a good example in matters of social justice.

Muslim leaders too raise issues of social justice, arguing that they have been marginalised both politically and economically by a largely Christian leadership. In 1992 an

Islamic Party of Kenya was formed, led by Sheikh Khalid Balala. Like other opposition political activists Balala raised issues against the government and the ruling party, such as the massive corruption in the country especially in Mombasa. Although Balala attracted a lot of attention from young Muslims who felt like him that the government leaders had done more harm to the people than good, the party was not registered. In response to the IPK, President Moi warned the Muslim community to 'shun Islamic fundamentalism'. SUPKEM dissociated itself from the activities of Balala and pledged its loyalty to the President and the ruling party KANU. For those who had seen IPK as a body that would speak for them, the government's refusal to register it reinforced their sense of being marginalised in society by the largely Christian leadership in the government.

When Muslim people protest at their marginalisation, they are frequently branded 'fundamentalists'. Questions of survival in a difficult situation create tension and suspicion between the two communities, especially in areas where Muslims are in the majority such as Coast and North-Eastern Provinces.

Christians have formed organisations that co-ordinate their approach to the Christian-Muslim relationship. These are bodies such the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations (PROCMURA) which is Protestant, and the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) which is Roman Catholic. As well as these there are other organisations such as People of God (POG), Sheepfold and Open Way. The approaches, aims and objectives of these bodies vary. Some of them carry out their work through workshops for Christians to sensitize them about Islam: this makes them suspect to the Muslim community, leading to occasional confrontations through the press.

3. The challenge of Islam?

The Anglican Church does not have a desk or organisation that deals specifically with issues arising from the relationship with Islam: like other mainline Protestant Churches it expresses its views (if any) through NCCK. In May 1998, NCCK held a seminar to discuss the challenge which Islam poses to Christianity in Kenya. The speakers at this seminar talked about ways in which they thought Islam was a threat to Christianity. These discussions appeared in one of the local papers, and Mustafa M. Issa responded by saying that 'Islam was not a challenge to Christianity in Kenya, but Christians in Kenya had been brought into the global demonisation of Islam by the most powerful nations in the world. Collectively' he said 'the world seemed to have conspired to fight Islam.' According to him the challenge to Christianity in Kenya was not Islam, as the speakers in the NCCK seminar argued, but 'secularised Christianity and Africanised Christianity' (*Peoples* May 1998: IV June 1998:6).

This is a claim that needs to be analysed in the light of the many facets of Christianity in Kenya. Who is saying that Islam is a challenge, and why? Christians and Muslims have great mutual ignorance of each other's theological views that breeds prejudice and false fears. Popular Muslim street preachers attack basic Christian beliefs and claim to show that Islam is superior to Christianity. Christians on the other hand are preoccupied with anti-Islamic vigilance. Meanwhile a multiplicity of Christian groups each claims to teach the right Christian doctrine and discredits the others, which does not help the cause of Christianity. The easiest thing to start in Kenya today is a church, so long as you can attract a following and show how you are better than the others. Christian groups multiply while the situation of the country is deteriorating fast, with corruption and other social ills eating into the core of society. In fact, poverty and secularism are the big challenges facing not only the Christians but the Muslims as well. Demonising one religion over against the other is denying the real challenges to Christianity.

4. Responding to the real challenge

It is important that Christians and Muslims live at peace with each other and that they both work for the good of the community. If Christians have to counter Islamic teaching there is need for the Christian churches to teach members their faith so that they are not threatened by Islamic teaching. Christian churches should teach Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the Sonship of Jesus in a way that is meaningful to the believers and at the same time intelligible to Muslims. Christians should also be helped to understand the weaknesses and contradictions of Islam, such as the legalistic nature of the Qur'an and the *shari'ah* as contrasted with the liberty of the children of God who are set free by the Spirit.

As the Church teaches the Christian faith to its believers it at the same time emphasises *evangelism*, *indigenisation*, issues of *justice and peace*, and *dialogue*. In teaching the Christian faith it is important to show the common ground of shared values and beliefs between Christianity and Islam. It is also important for those who are teaching or preaching the Christian faith to speak with respect of the religious rites and practices of each religion.

Evangelism: The church is involved with evangelism, and this is an ongoing process in a community where Christians live so that the transforming power of the gospel is seen in people's lives and relationships. The implication is that educational institutions should be not only places of professional excellence, but also places where gospel values are assimilated, lived and witnessed. Clergy should be trained to become evangelisers in their daily work and in turn to train the laity as responsible, gospel-rooted people.

Justice and peace: In recent years the Church has become more involved in denouncing abuses and injustices. Many of the current issues such as poverty, and the role of young people and women affect everybody, and they offer opportunities to work with people of good will, including Muslims. The Church has an opportunity to defend the rights of all people, especially Muslims who are a minority. This involves a refusal to brand every protest that Muslims raise as 'Islamic fundamentalism'.

Indigenisation: Islam claims to be more rooted in African soil than Christianity, because Christianity still manifests itself as a western religion. The Church is challenged to meet this criticism in the local context, and to discover ways of moving indigenisation beyond theory to influencing daily lives.

Dialogue: In Kenya, it is not strange to have Christians, Muslims and traditionalists living in harmony with one another in the same family. But this harmony is at times threatened by a few extremist groups of either Christians and Muslims. Dialogue needs to be placed beside tolerance as another form of living with each other. Dialogue is not just tolerance; it is frank exploration and self-criticism in a joint forum. It is also an attempt to give respect by listening carefully to the views of the neighbour regardless of the tensions that might arise. At present, 'Christian-Muslim dialogue' often turns out to mean Christians talking among themselves about Islam. There is a need to include real dialogue in our ministerial training institutions so that we can foster personal links and help remove mutual distrust. When and how will church organisations that are dealing with the Christian-Muslim relationship move to dialogue?

The challenge of Islam in East Africa

Samson M. Mwaluda

1. The recent Islamic revival in East Africa

For a long time, various factors reduced the impact of Islam in East Africa. These included the Muslim rejection of western education offered during colonial era, which resulted in them being left behind in education; and divisions within Islam, which gave a picture of a divided house. Terrorist acts by Islamic extremists resulted in prejudice against Islam, because of the negative images

disseminated by western media. However in recent years we have seen a strategized, aggressive and successful effort by Muslims to spread their religion in the region. To do this, the Muslims have tried to make Islam attractive by:

- *Underlining a sense of identity* Islamic communities are organised to be as welcoming and caring for their members as possible. This is supported by the international brotherhood of Islam: through the *ummah*, members have a sense of international belonging.
- *Material benefits and personal advantages* Wherever Muslims exert influence they establish foundations to provide scholarships, health services and relief food to Muslims. They also offer considerable amounts of cash to converts; they offer opportunities in business and education and they subsidise the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. It is common knowledge in Tanzania that one can gain a reward of 25,000 Tanzanian Shillings for winning a Christian over to become a Muslim: this increases to Tshs. 100,000 if you succeed in converting a pastor or priest.
- *Presentation of Islam* Islam is presented as a very simple, practical religion with little demand on the convert for a changed life. Islam is claimed to be highly adaptable to African cultural practices such as polygamy and traditional healing.
- *Attractive buildings* Muslims put up attractive mosques almost everywhere along the main roads, in townships and in villages, even where there are no Muslims at the moment.
- *Institutions of learning* Muslims are investing heavily in Muslim primary and secondary schools, and they are now working hard for Islamic teacher training colleges and universities. They subsidise the fees of those who attend and are willing to become Muslims.
- *Other strategies* include extensive use of open-air preaching and public debate, in which the speakers challenge Christian life, the Bible and Christian doctrines. Muslims also encourage their sons and daughters to marry Christians on condition that they convert to Islam. They distribute Islamic literature throughout East Africa through Islamic networks such as the Muslim Alert Network.

Islamic nations back East African Muslims not only morally but also financially, using oil money.

Muslims in East Africa have been loud in their demand for political, social and economic rights for Muslims. Since the advent of multiparty political systems, Muslims have been campaigning for Islamic parties in East Africa. In Kenya, Muslims have been pressing for the registration of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK). In Tanzania, BALUKUTA (National Koran Reading Society of Tanzania) attempted to influence the country's political and economic arena under the rule of President Hassan Ali Mwinyi.

Such campaigns receive the backing of pan-African and international Muslim bodies. The Islam in Africa Organisation (IAO) was founded by representatives of 24 African states at Abuja, Nigeria, in November 1989 with the purpose of uniting Muslims throughout Africa. It has given Muslims in Africa a specific agenda: To reinstate a strong and united *ummah* with the purpose of fulfilling the commands of Allah. It aims to ensure the appointment of Muslims to strategic national and international posts, to ensure that only Muslims are elected to all political posts in member nations . . . and to ensure the ultimate replacement of all western legal and judicial systems with *shari'ah* in all member nations before the next Islam in Africa conference.

2. The Muslim-Christian relationship

The recent Muslim-Christian relationship is a mixture of three observable categories:

(i) Visible solidarity and a close working relationship.

(ii) A suspicious and competitive relationship and

(iii) Open confrontation and a violent relationship.

Visible solidarity and a close working relationship has been witnessed in a common inter-religious stand on social issues related to justice, public morality and constitutional review processes. As an example, in Kenya both Christians and Muslims protested against unacceptable literature which the government was introducing into schools. The Kenyan nation was treated to the sight of the Catholic Cardinal and the Muslim leader holding one burning torch as together they set fire to the books they condemned. There has also been a lot of working together on issues regarding constitutional review in Kenya. In such forums common beliefs are emphasized: these include monotheism, a high regard for the Word of God (the Bible and the Qur'an), jointly-recognised prophets (Abraham, Moses, Lot, David, Solomon, Noah, John the Baptist, Enoch) and the Messiahship of Jesus.

Closeness and solidarity can also be seen at a personal and individual level. The weekend before I travelled to the Consultation in Jos I went to lay a foundation stone for the Anglican Church at Mata in my diocese. I found there a woman and her husband who had worked very hard for the project. The husband had donated all the stones for the foundation and donated a lot of money for the construction of the church. It was a great surprise to learn at the end of the function that the man was a Muslim who had married this Christian woman as a second wife. He had not only allowed her to continue as a Christian but had also allowed her children by him to be baptised in the church.

However, a *suspicious relationship* is the most dominant. The loud and aggressive nature of many Muslim activities gives them a share of public attention disproportionate to the number of persons involved. Most of the methods referred to above which Muslims employ to win converts raise the suspicion that they are out to destroy Christianity. The financial support which East African Muslims receive from Islamic nations for the purpose of promoting Islam is not matched by similar support from so-called Christian nations to their fellow Christians in East Africa. This provokes some envy among Christians. Muslims in business and in positions of political influence in the East African nations visibly make maximum use of opportunities to promote the Islamic cause, whereas the many Christians in similar positions are more conspicuous for enriching themselves than for promoting the Christian cause. This creates frustration in church leaders.

Sudanese refugees warn people in East Africa that . . . they will be next

The attitude of suspicion has been encouraged by a series of recent events. The bomb blasts in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam on 7th August 1998 which resulted in the deaths of over 250 people were associated with Islamic extremists. Again, the atrocities committed by the Islamic government of neighbouring Sudan against southern peoples in the Sudan have been reported first hand by Sudanese refugees in Kenya. These refugees warn people in East Africa that should the Sudanese southerners give in, they would be the next target of Islamic aggression. The utterances of church leaders reported in the press have also increased suspicion of Muslims. The Kenyan Catholic leader, Cardinal Otunga, addressed a Christian gathering in November 1993: the press reported him as urging Christians to stand and fight the spread of Islam. In the same year the former Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya, Manasses Kuria, was quoted as saying that Christianity and Islam are similar because the Prophet Muhammad was a Christian before defecting to found Islam. These utterances irked Muslims and strained the relationship between Christians and Muslims.

There has also been outright and occasionally *violent confrontation*. There have been violent scenes in Kenyan schools over Muslims demands that their girls wear an Islamic veil (*hijah*) even when the school is Christian. Muslims have of late demanded the construction of mosques in Christian-founded schools. They have recently managed to put a mosque in Shanzu Teachers College, which was founded by Christians; and Lenana School which is sponsored by the Anglican Church of Kenya. Muslims also demand parents' influence in schools founded by churches. While they do this eagerly, they do not allow Christian churches or chapels in Islamic-founded institutions. These controversies have provoked an open outcry and legal confrontation with Christian churches.

Incidents of violence have occurred. Tribal clashes in Kenya have included the burning of churches in lower Mombasa. There have been violent confrontations at open air religious preaching in Kisumu and Kitale, with representatives of each faith accusing one another of religious abuses. Two months ago in my diocese members of the Full Gospel Church were attacked, their cars were stoned and equipment damaged when they tried to preach in a Muslim village.

3. Christian response to Islamic challenge

The Church in East Africa has been involved in various activities to respond to the Muslim challenge. In Kenya:

Nationally, the Church organises workshops focussing on the challenge of Islam. In these, participants are made aware of the challenge, helped to understand what Islam is all about and encouraged to discuss strategies in Kenya. The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) through its theology unit has been very helpful in this.

Individual churches have their own strategies. In my Anglican Diocese of Taita Taveta, we have encouraged the formation of *Jumuiya* (local Anglican fellowships) which facilitate the gathering of Anglican Christian neighbours into Bible studies and caring communities. This fulfils a role similar to the *ummah* in Islam.

The Church is involved in fundraising for scholarships for poor bright children. The Church takes advantage of the national motto of 'Harambee' (pooling our effort together for a particular need) and encourages Christians to fundraise to enable bright children to continue with their education. This saves impoverished students from turning to Muslim organisations for help.

In my diocese we are encouraging small-sized churches to build structures so that each local community has a church close by, rather than building one huge church which can be filled only when people travel from long distances. In addition to this we encourage a multipurpose use of these churches so that where possible the same building can be used for a nursery school and skills training. This strengthens our community focus to cater for the needs of worshippers and to provide a foundation for Christian education.

We have had to strengthen our doctrinal teaching in our Sunday schools, Baptism and Confirmation classes. These now focus on those doctrines such as the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ which are particularly challenged by Islamic preachers.

The Church has been greatly helped by para-church organisations such as Islamic Network (ISNET) and Life Challenge Africa (LCA) which have started in East Africa to equip the Church to face the challenge of Islam. In August 1989, 26 representatives from 17 such organisations based in East Africa met in Nairobi. The focus of these different organisations includes friendship, community work, correspondence courses, public debate, dialogue, literature production and distribution, discipleship training, seminars, field research and networking. The Scripture Mission ministry has its centre and studio in Voi, in my diocese. The centre has helped us produce radio programmes, literature and training focussed on witness to Muslims.

The challenge of Islam is a big one. It requires not only local church and interchurch initiatives but also pan-African and international effort. It requires the financial help of the whole international community of Christians. It is a pity that whereas we have had Islamic nations meeting as nations to strategize on how to Islamize the world, we have not heard of any Christian nations meeting as nations to strategize on how to spread Christianity in the world!

The challenge also calls for us to revisit our theology, and the African Church's stand on pastoral issues that arise around the practice of polygamy. I referred above to the case of a friendly Muslim who allowed his Christian second wife to continue in her faith and even to be in the front line in supporting her church project. It was quite a challenge for me as a bishop: my dilemma was, should I take advantage of this Muslim husband's attitude to try and win him to Christianity through this polygamous relationship, thus risking the church teaching on monogamous marriage; or should I uphold disciplinary action on this woman who not only agreed to be married to a Muslim but was also a second wife! T

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Discussion after the papers

What do Kenyan Muslims seek – internal Islamisation, the conversion of Christians, or resistance to Christian evangelism?

[SM] All three.

A key element in the Christian response to Islam is to strengthen the Church in areas where it is vulnerable to the Muslim challenge.

Where Christians and Muslims are in competition, we can ask for evenhandedness from the government. In Nigeria, it was noticed that the government regularly paid for prominent Muslims to make the hajj. Consequently when the last Lambeth Conference was held, Nigeria's Anglican bishops asked to be funded for their trip to England. The government agreed!

More generally, Christianity must challenge government corruption. The Church must resist government restrictions on preaching in unevangelized areas. It is folly to give away church land for the building of mosques.

Are the institutions where mosques have been built owned by Christians?

[SM] No. These schools were funded by Christians, who are still the co-sponsors: but the institutions now belong to the government. However, Christians say that if the school is known to be Christian, then Muslims should accept the stance of the school as a condition of admission.

I am intrigued by this area of conflict – over the building of mosques in church schools, and the refusal of chapels in Muslim schools. There seems to be a very territorial view of religion here.

The issue of principle is complicated by an issue of communication. We might think that on grounds of justice we should give Muslims a mosque in a church school, yet we might find the gesture misinterpreted by Muslims. Christians in power would not think it right to favour Christians; but Muslims in power do think it right to favour Muslims. Should the danger of mis-

interpretation mean that we do not do what we think is right?

There is suspicion between Christians and Muslims: can't members of the two faiths sit together to discuss and clear these suspicions out? Can't we have Muslims in a future meeting?

Can church and mosque unite against secularism? Is there common ground on issues of morality?

[SM] Yes – it has already happened in Kenya. Christians and Muslims joined hands to resist a secular-based syllabus in religious, personal and social education.

[EM] Both communities have an interest in attacking the spread of AIDS, and have shared platforms with one another. But co-operation between leaders and co-operation in the villages are two different things.

[SM] Christian and Muslim leaders have worked together to bring unity to Kenya's squabbling political parties.

Similarly in Nigeria, Bishop Emmanuel Gbonigi and the Chief Imam of Akure worked together to oppose the excesses of General Abacha: it was in everyone's interests to resist evil.

Christians often fail to be the light of the world. With Christ in us we should show his light to those around us. All human beings have moral qualities in them, but this is not the same as the Spirit's light in us. The morality of Islam is not enough.

John 1 refers to 'the true light that enlightens every man'. There is common grace as well as saving grace.

If we emphasise common grace, we will marginalise religious involvement in public life. We must keep hold of the uniqueness of Christ and the light he brings.

On another matter, do African and Asian Muslims in Kenya get on well? And do Muslims in Kenya adopt 'indigenized' customs?

[EM] Asian Muslims form a separate community and have little contact with African Muslims. Many Kenyan African Muslims follow an 'indigenized' kind of Islam – but it is regarded as a corruption by 'pure' Muslims.

[SM] The annoyance which such 'pure' Muslims feel about folk Islam is understandable. We can compare it to our own feelings when we see Christian leaders, business and political, worship on Sundays but fail to carry Christian values into the weekday world.