

Jutta Sperber
Christians and Muslims

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Jutta Sperber

Christians and Muslims

The Dialogue Activities of the World Council
of Churches and their Theological Foundation



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Foreword

It is superfluous to emphasize the importance of inter-religious dialogue in today's world. Less superfluous is the affirmation that Christian-Muslim dialogue invites greater and more concentrated efforts, as it raises a number of thorny issues that have not yet been adequately addressed.

For more than three decades, the World Council of Churches has initiated, facilitated or encouraged Christian-Muslim dialogue. In recent years, it has attempted to include on the dialogue agenda the divisive and conflictive issues. This could only take place after a series of friendly conversations aiming at building trust, enhancing mutual discoveries and dispelling misperceptions. In its efforts, it has tried to go beyond the organized forms of dialogue. Dialogue of ideas had to be drawn nearer to the dialogue of life. Global issues had to be approached in local context. Notwithstanding the many changes in attitudes and relations, Christian-Muslim dialogue continues to be an object of reservation, if not antagonism, in some Christian circles. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is met, with skepticism, or even suspicion, in some Muslim quarters.

However, it is widely accepted that much has been achieved by way of concerted efforts in scholarship and dialogue. But current developments, political and otherwise, may be threatening to build up attitudes of distrust and hostility. This imposes a new urgency in our consideration of Christian-Muslim relations and of the priorities in dialogue and cooperation. Such response should build on what Christians and Muslims have learned, together, in the last decades.

The experience of dialogue remains first and foremost, an open process where partners are willing to question their own self-understanding and recognize others on their own terms. Also, it reminds us constantly of the primacy of the encounter of commitments.

As reflected in the Christian-Muslim activities of the World Council of Churches in last 25 years, such an experience is unfolded skillfully in the enquiry of Jutta Sperber. She has patiently looked in the material, published and archival, of 150 meetings, consultations and colloquia.

We are offered a well-thought overview ordered both chronologically and thematically. This book strives to be exhaustive, while it sheds light on some of the most timely and ground-breaking discussions.

This research work is not about Islam, Christian-Muslim dialogue or the World Council of Churches. It is about meetings and texts that need

to be assessed in their context in order to contribute meaningfully to a broader history of ideas in the realm of Christian-Muslim Relations.

For years, this work will be indispensable for those who are interested in Christian-Muslim dialogue and the ecumenical movement. It offers invaluable tools, and stimuli, for further investigation.

Tarek Mitri,
Executive Secretary, World Council of Churches,
Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue

Acknowledgements

“Nobody reads acknowledgements” according to my doctoral supervisor, Prof. em. Dr. Herwig Wagner. But I hope that he and some others will read these because I want to say thank you to them. To tell all the good (and bad!) stories of what happened to me while writing this book, getting it translated into English and published, would require another book. So all I can do here will constitute only the tip of the iceberg.

First and foremost, I wish to express my thanks to my supervisor or “doctoral father”. No father could have devoted more attention to my work and its outcome than he did. It was good to know he was there in the background, always ready to give advice and to help me in the struggle, especially for the English translation and the publication.

Another “thank you” goes to Prof. em. Dr. Wanis Semaan, formerly at Neuendettelsau and now in Beirut, for forcing me out of my academic ivory tower at the end and at least getting me to try and say what could or should happen in the future.

I must also say “thank you very much” to Dr. Tarek Mitri of the WCC’s Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue. It was certainly not easy for somebody actually involved in Christian-Muslim dialogues to cope with “that German girl” who wanted to write a dissertation on those dialogues; he therefore had to deal with demands that are much more academic than the work of an international organisation like the WCC. Despite all his other work, he did a lot to provide me with the necessary information and recommendations. I feel deeply honoured by the fact that he contributed a foreword to my book.

Among the people I met during my stay in Geneva I have to mention Prof. Jacques Waardenburg. Translating and publishing my dissertation has taken so much time that for him I have almost become a “mythological figure” in the meanwhile. Nevertheless, I owe much to his advice and his advocacy. It was good to know he was really interested in my work.

All these acknowledgements would be worthless without the work of Margaret A. Pater who did the translation into English. I cannot thank her more than by saying that I sometimes thought her English version was better than my original German. Of course, on close examination it is still evident here and there that I started writing for a German public and only later discovered that the outcome of my research would, in fact, be of interest for a much broader, world wide readership. Changing the lan-

guage meant having to revise a lot of quotations – a difficult job that was only possible with help from colleagues and library staff in Neuendettelsau, Bayreuth, Münster, Munich, Geneva, Birmingham and Rome. I cannot mention all of them by name, but my special thanks go to Dr. Wolfgang-Friedrich Krämer in Neuendettelsau and to Prof. Dr. Adel-Theodor Khoury in Münster.

Every book has both a technical and a financial side. Here my thanks go to the publishing house and its staff and collaborators and to quite a number of institutions that have helped to pay for the translation and publishing: World Council of Churches, Programme Unit I – Unity and Renewal, Ecumenical Theological Education; Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Missionswissenschaft; Evangelisch-Lutherischer Zentralverband für Äußere Mission; Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland; Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern. At the beginning it seemed almost impossible to find donors, especially to finance the translation, but sometimes even the impossible comes true.

Last but not least, my thoughts go to my family and friends. At times I had the impression they were more nervous about the outcome of my work than I was myself – especially my mother. It would not make sense to apologise for doing something voluntarily and out of personal conviction, but I am glad that, despite the fact that for years I have (almost) only found time when there was some kind of connection with Christian-Muslim dialogue, some old friends remain and quite a number of new ones have joined them. Let me conclude with a deeply felt *alhamdulillah* – thanks to God.

Jutta Sperber

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I. Introduction

1. Personal Introductory Remarks

Why should a theologian want to write a dissertation on the Christian/Muslim dialogue? I was confronted with this question in February 1993 when I was not only looking for material in the archives of the World Council of Churches but also asking to talk to those who were and are responsible for the Christian/Muslim dialogue. I was not aware at that time that the main emphasis in this dialogue had been laid so much on practical, above all legal and political problems, and that therefore the question was certainly justified. Although I in fact knew about theological dialogue between Christians and Muslims only on the level of theological and church history, and I had only experienced the practical or political level of this dialogue myself, I had not expected to find that my own experiences with the problems of Turkish workers in Germany or with the politics of the Near East could be generalised to such an extent. For Christian theology, so strong a concentration on practice and, in that context, particularly on politics is certainly unusual, and the emphasis on legal questions in religion, which can be perceived here, can even be objectionable, especially for Protestant theology.

I personally found it relatively easy to work my way into the thinking of Islam which is strongly marked by religious law, and also to see it as definitely theological, because I had done a lot of work on Judaism during my student days and, in this context, on the Talmud in particular. Since this took place *inter alia* among Jewish fellow students in Jerusalem, I was all too familiar with the progression from holy scriptures to religious law, the practice of everyday life and finally to concrete political problems. The close encounter with the problems of the Near East in Jerusalem, but also in Nicosia, Cairo, Amman and Beirut in the second half of the eighties, led me to learn Arabic and finally provided the personal motivation for this dissertation. That it was not possible, as I had originally planned, to limit it to the Christian/Muslim dialogue, is a consequence of the demands of Christian theology referred to above. Although there was little room for it in the dialogue itself, Christians have at least been reflecting among themselves on the theological standing of followers of other faiths and on the theological meaning of dialogue with these people. A separate but shorter section of my work (IV 2) has been devoted to

these considerations and was included after the experiences in Geneva which I have already mentioned.

2. Research Situation

It is obvious to anyone who opens a newspaper or turns on a radio or television set that Islam and conversations between Christians and Muslims are important subjects. There has been the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia, and there are the difficult negotiations for peace in the Middle East, and Islamic regimes and fundamentalist groups which do not correspond to Western views of human rights when attempting to achieve their religiously motivated aims. And all of this is happening not on some distant continent but on our own doorstep – in France. This causes many Germans to raise the question what the Turkish workers in Germany believe, how they intend to live according to their faith, and whether this is reconcilable with our Western traditions. There is a demand for information about Islam, Muslims and coexistence and dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

In addition to this situation today, there is the fact that the Christian/Muslim dialogue of the World Council of Churches began concretely at the end of the sixties with the Six-Day War providing the final impetus. In the meantime, more than a quarter of a century has passed and, despite many difficulties, the Christian/Muslim dialogue has succeeded in gaining a firm foothold, both in the World Council of Churches and among the Muslims. Even the second Gulf War was not able to change this. The pioneer generation of the dialogue has advanced in years; there have been changes in the group of those responsible, as well as among the participants, although some names have remained unchanged. In general, this seems a good opportunity for looking back: what has happened in the past 25 or more years? Where did the emphases lie and what questions were dealt with? Were there any results and, if so, which? These questions do not only apply specifically to the Christian/Muslim dialogue but also to the dialogue with people of other living faiths and to relationships between Christians and others in general.

As far as the Christian/Muslim dialogue of the WCC is concerned, it is too soon for us to be able to follow up some study already undertaken. The World Council of Churches itself has merely published two collections of the documents from this dialogue, namely after 10 years and after 20 years of dialogue. The first volume (*Christians Meeting Muslims, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue*) appeared in 1977 and comprises, on the one hand, the internal Christian reflection on the Christian/Muslim dialogue (from Broumana 1966 to Chiang Mai 1977) and, on the other, in its second part, the memoranda and results of the actual dialogues

from Cartigny 1969 to Cartigny 1976. The second collection (Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches) was published in 1989 by Stuart E. Brown who was responsible at that time for the Christian/Muslim dialogue. It contains the results of the dialogues from Cartigny 1969 to New Windsor 1988 and divides the dialogue into three phases (beginnings, joint planning and regionalisation). I also have adopted this division for the chronology of the Christian/Muslim dialogue in my account.

Referring to inter-religious dialogue in general, this study follows on from the dissertation by Gérard Vallée, *Mouvement oecuménique et religions non-chrétiennes, Un débat oecuménique sur la rencontre interreligieuse*, which was published in 1975 in Tournai and Montreal and describes how the World Council of Churches or its forerunner organisation came into this dialogue. Vallée concentrates his analysis particularly on the theology of religions, starting with the second World Mission Conference in Jerusalem in 1928, and the detailed section ends with the fourth Assembly of the WCC at Uppsala in 1968. The chronological background continued to January 1971 when the Central Committee of the WCC in Addis Ababa decided to set up its own sub-unit for dialogue with people of other living faiths and ideologies. The supplementary part of my account which deals with inter-religious dialogue starts with the first real multi-religious dialogue of Ajaltoun in 1970 and its evaluation in 1971 at Zurich. It does not generally concentrate on chronology as much as Vallée, but tries rather to enable the reader to obtain an overall impression of the lively and unsystematic fluctuations of the dialogue by providing chapters on specific issues. The subject for one separate chapter (IV 2.E) is relationships with the Vatican which were especially intensive in the field of inter-religious dialogue. But it was not possible to cover the dialogues organised by the Roman Catholic Church or by other institutions without going far beyond the scope of this study.

The closing chapter offers a summary of the developments in both areas, outlining the progress or lack of progress again in condensed form without describing the events of the individual conferences as in the chapters on issues. It is an attempt to look back on the work of about 25 years and its results as a whole. The last section of that chapter is devoted to a personal evaluation of the present situation which also endeavours to look to the future. Suggestions, or the evident lack of such, are not intended as supercilious criticism but as an attempt to go beyond mere analysis, if not to action, then at least to a proposal for action. Although it is true that dialogue repeatedly needs breaks for reflection, reflection should not be an aim in itself but lead again to new, improved dialogue.

Special mention must also be made of the difficulties about the sources. I had access to unpublished sources in the archives of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey and, above all, the archives of the World Council of

Churches in Geneva. The staff of the Office for Inter-religious Relations were kind enough to make the most recent material available to me in the form of copies, computer discs and by facsimile. Despite this assistance it was not always possible to discover the exact dates of conferences. During my stay in Geneva, I also had extensive access to published dialogue material which forms part of the so-called 'grey literature' and as such is otherwise hard to obtain. The bibliography and chronology also offer a review of multiple publications by various organs of the WCC, by Muslim partners and also by the Roman Catholic Church which is not available in this form anywhere else. To a limited extent account has also been taken of translations. These documentary efforts came up against their limits with regard to regional publications scattered around the world. But this should not diminish the value of the bibliographical review provided.

3. Aids for the Reader

A presentation of the Christian/Muslim dialogues organised by the WCC has to take many details into account. In order not to tire or confuse the reader too much, historical events have been presented only in the form of a chronology indicating as precisely as possible the date, place, nature and organiser of conferences and the like, with very brief information about the content and, finally, the publications about the event where available or the collections, periodicals or archive boxes of the WCC in which the material can be found. This information is clearly separate from the bibliography used for the main part of the text and also less detailed: publishers have normally not been named and page references are only included in exceptional cases. Since it proved impossible to verify all of Vallée's references again, I have had, to a very limited extent, to assume their reliability for the early chronology of the dialogue. Material from the archives of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey has been named as such; all other references relate to the archives of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. The abbreviations used are explained in the list of abbreviations at the end; the numbers relate to the various archive boxes. Unpublished, non-archive material is mentioned as such.

In order to make the content section still less weighty, the specific information about Islam is contained in a separate chapter, immediately before the chapter on issues in the Christian/Muslim dialogue. It seemed appropriate to provide some guidance to help readers find their way through the discussion of certain specific questions. The individual expressions of Islamic law, in particular, to which reference is frequently made, are an extremely complicated matter which, strictly speaking, would require a traditional study of Islamic law and, irrespective of their

central importance for Muslims, they are usually unfamiliar even to those who are otherwise quite well versed in the Islamic religion.

For the transcription of Arabic terms the rules of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam I* (1960) have been followed. The only deviation from these rules is the adaptation of the article in order to enable readers who do not know Arabic to pronounce the terms correctly.

The chapters on issues are self-contained so that their content and the details (footnote section) can be read independently and in a random order depending on one's interests. But, since the issues are inter-related, the price for this kind of presentation was that occasional repetition could not be avoided. The issue chapters (wherever an issue in the dialogue to date had been dealt with sufficiently to justify a separate chapter) are closely based on the WCC material. Anything more than the WCC material had to be omitted, as already mentioned, in order to make it possible to deal with the issue.

Because of my proximity to the sources, I have adopted my own system for quotations to keep the number of footnotes per chapter to a manageable amount: the 'collective footnote'. Notes for a section have been collected and then grouped. Literal quotations are naturally listed first, the various works by one author have also been put together, and otherwise the sequence in which they are mentioned in the text is the basis for the order, while sometimes further aids to orientation have been included. Indirect speech, as the next step following literal quotation, indicates a greater nearness to the sources quoted than summaries in the indicative. Multiple publications of the same source can be identified in the bibliography by the lack of an empty line between the titles and a departure from alphabetical order. The spelling of names in the bibliography follows that in the first publication listed.

Abbreviations of periodicals or series have been taken from the list of abbreviations compiled by Siegfried M. Schwertner in the *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, 2nd edition, Berlin/New York 1994. The only other abbreviation used is the familiar "dtv" for the Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.

A problem of the content is that the characteristic fluctuations of the dialogue without any marked objective progress could naturally also not be ignored in a thematic discussion. Here, the intermediate headings should provide some guidance, distinguishing between the individual phases or sub-areas and indicating what the main concern was or what really came out of a discussion.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the use of the terms Orthodox church(es), Orthodoxy or Orthodox is not quite uniform. The reference is to the ancient churches of the East or to their theological characteristics, and here the distinction between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches *de facto* played no part in the dialogues. Where the reference is

to uniformity in the attitude of the Orthodox churches, the singular has been used. When it is more a matter of internal differences and unclarities, use has been made of the plural.

II. Chronology of the Dialogue

I. Inter-Religious Dialogue in General

A. The Prehistory (up to 1966)

24.3. – 8.4.1928, *Jerusalem*

World Mission Conference (International Missionary Council)

The main concern of this conference was the world-wide growth of secularism. This offered points of contact with other religions. The overall tendency (there were bitter disagreements) was to admit that other religions had spiritual values but not salvation, in order to be able to maintain the uniqueness of Christ.

International Missionary Council (ed.), *Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the IMC, March 24th – April 8th 1928, London 1928* (8 volumes); in addition, the archive documents are accessible on microfiches for I.M.C. Box 261.001 – 261.010.

12 – 29.12.1938, *Tambaram/Madras (India)*

World Mission Conference (International Missionary Council)

The basic issue of spiritual values in other religions, on the one hand, and the uniqueness of Christ, on the other, still remained, but the context had changed, inwardly under the influence of the theology of Karl Barth and outwardly because of the totalitarian regimes on the eve of the Second World War. There was no way of bridging the differences at the conference. The dominant opinion was that of the Barth scholar, Hendrik Kraemer, who saw other religions as human creations and in contradiction to God's revelation.

International Missionary Council (ed.), *Tambaram-Madras Series, IMC Meeting at Tambaram, Madras, Dec. 12th to 29th 1938, Oxford/London 1938* (7 volumes) and *The World Mission of the Church, Findings and Recommendations of the Meeting of the IMC, Tambaram, Madras, India, Dec.12-29 1938, New York/London 1939*; by way of preparation there was the study by H[endrik] Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, London 1938.

21 – 25.7.1955, Davos (Switzerland)

Consultation 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions'

After the enforced break during the Second World War, this consultation took up the Tambaram discussion again. There was agreement to the point of that there is a general revelation, but that it indirectly contributes mostly to the worship of idols. The conference launched a WCC study on 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men' (1955-).

The Relation of Christianity to the Non-Christian Religions, BDSWCC 1,2 (1955), p. 22-25.

14 – 24.5.1959, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)

First Assembly of the East Asia Christian Conference

The participants demanded a complete change of approach compared with Tambaram because the churches in Asia did not want to form a ghetto.

Than, U Kyaw (ed.), Witness together, Being the Official Report of the Inaugural Assembly of the EACC, Held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, May 14 – 24 1959, Rangoon 1959; Christian Encounter with Men of Other Religions, BDSWCC 7,1 (1961), p.5.

11 – 15.3.1961, Nagpur (India)

Meeting of Directors of Study Centres, WCC Division of Studies

Stocktaking of the study 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men' (intended, *inter alia*, for the third Assembly of the WCC): solidarity for the sake of common human existence; otherwise what is needed is a new definition of the relation between the gospel and other religions and of the task of Christian witness.

Intermediate report: The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Man, Religion and Society 8,4 (1961), p. 43-51, and Christian Encounter with Men of Other Faiths, BDSWCC 7,1 (1961), p. 5-10.

8.11. – 5.12.1961 New Delhi (India)

Third Assembly of the WCC

The initiatives of the churches in the 'Third World' and of the study centres concerning dialogue did not meet with the desired response.

Visser 't Hooft, W[illem] A[dolf] (ed.), The New Delhi Report, The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961, London 1962.

8 – 19.12.1963 Mexico City (Mexico)

Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism

Dialogue with followers of other religions was described expressly as part of mission. For the study 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men'

there was hope that the study centres and actual dialogues would be able to go beyond the stalemate of Tambaram.

Orchard, Ronald K[enneth] (ed.), *Witness in Six Continents, Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held in Mexico City December 8th to 19th 1963, London 1964; Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Mexico City, s.l.s.a.*

B. The Way to the Sub-Unit on Dialogue (1967-1971)

27.2. – 6.3.1967, *Kandy (Sri Lanka)*

Consultation 'Christian Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths'

Depending on their context, the participants again represented different attitudes to other religions. Agreement on a statement was reached with difficulty and, above all, on a study programme to continue the WCC study 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men'. Again it was stated that only more experience of dialogue would bring clarity to the old question of the position of other religions in God's plan for salvation.

Addresses and documents published in: *Study Encounter* 3,2 (1967).

4 – 9.8.1969, *Canterbury (Great Britain)*

Department on Studies in Mission and Evangelism Committee

In a preparatory paper, Stanley J. Samartha insisted that, at future consultations on the WCC study 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men', representatives of other religions should also be included for some of the time.

Samartha, S[tanley] J., *Word of God Studies*, DFI Box VI.

10 – 12.8.1969, *Canterbury (Great Britain)*

WCC Executive Committee

The link with non-Christians was considered an important issue for the WCC. Therefore, in time for the meeting of the Central Committee in Addis Ababa in 1971, guidelines on the subject were to be drawn up and appropriate consideration given to the structural consequences for the WCC.

Material: DFI Box VI and Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the WCC, Canterbury, 1969.

12 – 22.8.1969, *Canterbury (Great Britain)*

WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee supported the DSME emphases in the studies (cf. Nagpur 1961) and authorised a consultation on "Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths" for March 1970 in Beirut.

Material: ER 21 (1969); Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Third Meeting, University of Kent at Canterbury, Canterbury, Great Britain, August 12th -22nd 1969, Geneva 1969.

16 – 25.3.1970, *Ajaltoun (Lebanon)*

International Multi-Religious Dialogue

This dialogue was the first of its kind to be organised by the WCC. It took place on the subject 'Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths' and was originally only supposed to investigate the possibility of such a dialogue. But finally the actual experience of dialogue proved more important.

Samartha, S[tanley] J. (ed.), *Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths, Papers Presented at a Consultation held at Ajaltoun, Lebanon, March 1970*, 2nd ed., Geneva 1971.

20 – 23.5.1970, *Zurich (Switzerland)*

Reflection Conference on the Ajaltoun Dialogue of 1970

This conference was attended only by members of Christian denominations. They tried to engage in a theological evaluation of the multi-religious dialogue at Ajaltoun which created different degrees of difficulty depending on the denomination. At the end an 'aide-mémoire' was drawn up which served as the basis for dialogue guidelines in the future.

Material: DFI Box V, papers and documents published in IRM 59 (1970), aide-mémoire as 'Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths' also in: Samartha S[tanley] J. (ed.), *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva 1971, and in *Christians Meeting Muslims*, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977.

31.8. – 4.9.1970, *Arnoldshain (FRG)*

WCC Executive Committee

A revised version of the Zurich document (in which formulations and proposals were generalised and rather weaker) should, it was decided, be submitted to the WCC Central Committee when it met in Addis Ababa in January 1971.

Material: DFI Box V.

10 – 21.1.1971, *Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)*

WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee devoted serious attention to the question of inter-religious dialogue. Whereas the address by Stanley J. Samartha concentrated more on the historical development of this dialogue, the paper by Georges Khodr dealt with the basic theological issues and thus became the focus of the discussion. Finally, the Central Committee adopted an interim policy statement and guidelines for dialogue with people of other

religions and ideologies and resolved to restructure the World Council of Churches so that, within its Programme Unit I 'Faith and Witness', a Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI) was established.

The World Council of Churches and Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, An Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines, in: Christians Meeting Muslims, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977, and in: Samartha, S[tanley] J. (ed.), Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement, Geneva 1971, p. 47-54; other publications there and in ER 23 (1971).

1 – 5.6.1971, Jongny (Switzerland)

ad hoc Working Group 'Dialogue with Men of Living Faiths and Ideologies' (as Part of the Department on Studies in Mission and Evangelism Working Committee)

On the occasion of this meeting the responsibility for inter-religious dialogue was transferred to the DFI, further reflection took place and the first concrete plans for the dialogue were made.

Material: DFI Box VI.

C. Struggles in the Early Years (1972-1975)

23 – 27.5.1972, Pendeli, Athens (Greece)

Preparatory Conference for World Mission Conference 1972/73

The inter-Orthodox preparatory conference for the World Mission Conference at Bangkok showed that the theological attitude to other religions, even on the Orthodox side, was not so positively uniform as one might have assumed from Khodr's address at Addis Ababa in 1971. This gave an impression of the difficulties the inter-religious dialogue was going to have to face.

Salvation in Orthodox Theology, IRM 61 (1972), p. 401-408.

29.12.1972 – 12.1.1973, Bangkok (Thailand)

World Mission Conference

In the context of mission, inter-religious dialogue proved acceptable, but more on the practical level than by clarifying issues in the field of a theology of religions.

Material: DFI Box 16; Risk 9,3 (1979); IRM 246 (1973).

19 – 24.3.1973, Pendeli, Athens (Greece)

DFI Working Group

In Pendeli the goals and plans for the newly established sub-unit were further determined. They included the DFI's organising a section on

'Dialogue' at the next Assembly, and being responsible for the guests from other religions who were to be invited for the first time. In addition, it had the task not only of conducting but also expressly of defending inter-religious dialogues.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Group, Pendeli near Athens, March 1973, Geneva 1973.

18 – 19.6.1973, *Cartigny (Switzerland)*

Multi-Religious Planning Meeting

This meeting, attended not only by Christians but also by one representative of each world religion (this time including the Jews), prepared to continue the Ajaltoun dialogue of 1970 at Colombo in 1974.

Material: DFI Box 15.

22 – 29.8.1973, *Geneva (Switzerland)*

WCC Central Committee

Again there was a detailed discussion of the question of inter-religious dialogue, especially in regard to the next Assembly. However, no new considerations were raised.

Publications on this in ER 25 (1973) and in ÖR.B 24.

17 – 26.4.1974, *Colombo (Sri Lanka)*

International Multi-Religious Dialogue

Formally, this dialogue was a continuation of the Ajaltoun dialogue of 1970, although Jews also participated, as well as more participants from other religions in general. The content comprised diverse aspects of world community: 'Towards World Community – Resources and Responsibilities for Living together'. A memorandum was adopted with amazing unanimity, but it should be noted that the main concentration was very much on the practical level with many references to local dialogue, and that no definition of 'community' was provided.

Samartha, S[tanley] J. (ed.), *Towards World Community, The Colombo Papers*, Geneva 1975.

7 – 8.6.1974, *Geneva (Switzerland)*

Reflection Conference on the Colombo 1974 Dialogue

In addition to evaluating the Colombo dialogue, it was mainly a matter of determining concrete issues for future studies.

Material: DFI Box 15.

11 – 18.8.1974, *West Berlin*

WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee had to move the forthcoming Assembly of the

WCC from Jakarta to Nairobi. The question of inter-religious dialogue, and especially the theology of religions (issue of truth) and the relationship to mission, was discussed on the basis of the most recent dialogues, and it became clear that this would also be an important subject at the Assembly.

Material: DFI Box 14 and 16; publications in ER 26 (1974) and ÖR 23 (1974).

15 – 24.9.1974, New Delhi (India)

DFI Working Group

The Working Group mainly made plans for the contacts with followers of other religions during the WCC Assembly at Nairobi. It considered that they should also share in the preparations, so that this Assembly on the issue of 'community' would not in fact be given less significance than an inter-religious dialogue. Otherwise, it had no definite theological views to offer, and evaluated the dialogues less according to their memoranda and real experiences than on the basis of their effects on others. Whatever happened, it did not want to be forced into the defensive over the question of inter-religious dialogue.

Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Working Group, New Delhi, September 1974, Geneva 1974.

19.11. – 10.12.1975, Nairobi (Kenya)

Fifth Assembly of the WCC

For the first time in the history of the World Council of Churches, there were guests from other religions at an Assembly. Some participants felt this to be disturbing and an annoyance. It was not possible to discuss the questions that had been prepared beforehand and no final guidelines for dialogue were adopted. Insurmountable differences arose between those who suspected inter-religious dialogue of syncretism and saw it as opposed to the missionary command of the Church, and those who quoted their positive practical experiences of dialogue in Asia or Africa. It proved difficult even to write a report on the discussion that would be acceptable to all. Inter-religious dialogue was nevertheless to be continued in any case and a Core Group for the sub-unit was also appointed.

Material: DFI Box 16 and 25; publications in ER 28 (1976), ÖR 25 (1976) and Section III: Seeking Community: the Common Search of People of Various Faiths, Cultures and Ideologies, in: Christians Meeting Muslims, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977, p. 43-58; Samartha, S[tanley] J. (ed.), *Courage for Dialogue: an Interpretation of the Nairobi Debate*, in: *idem* (ed.), *Courage for Dialogue, Ecumenical Issues in Inter-Religious Relationships*, Geneva 1981, p. 49-62.

*D. Period of Consolidation (1976-1983)**17 – 20.5.1976, Chambésy (Switzerland)**DFI Core Group*

As far as the DFI was concerned, the issue of 'community', originally intended for the Assembly, was to be a main emphasis in its future work. An internal Christian conference on this subject was to evaluate the Nairobi Assembly and further spell out the dialogue guidelines.

Where Are We after Nairobi? Where Do We Go from Nairobi? Report of Core Group Meeting, Chambésy, Switzerland, May 17 – 20 1976; Report of Core Group Meeting, Glion, Switzerland, January 24 – 28 1977, Geneva 1977.

*10 – 18.8.1976, Geneva (Switzerland)**WCC Central Committee*

The Committee approved the plans of the DFI to hold a large conference in 1977 on 'Dialogue in Community'.

Reports and resolutions in ER 28 (1976).

*24 – 28.1.1977, Glion (Switzerland)**DFI Core Group*

The meeting was also attended by a representative of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians. The high expectations concerning the intra-Christian conference planned for Chiang Mai became obvious: it was to solve all the old problems about dialogue.

Where Are We after Nairobi? Where Do We Go from Nairobi? Report of Core Group Meeting Chambésy, Switzerland, May 17 – 20, 1976, Report of Core Group Meeting Glion, Switzerland, January 24 – 28, 1977, Geneva 1977.

*18 – 27.4.1977, Chiang Mai (Thailand)**Reflection Conference on Inter-Religious Dialogue*

The subject of this intra-Christian conference was 'Dialogue in Community', i.e. to clarify the basis on the Christian side. There were bible studies, fundamental theological addresses, group discussion and a joint declaration at the end. The old attitude predominated – that changes in the world situation made it necessary to work for inter-religious dialogue and world community, and hence the emphasis was again on practice and practical questions. Overall, the conference provided hardly any theological clarification, but nevertheless encouragement for the inter-religious dialogue.

Risk 13,3 (1977); Samartha S[tanley] J. (ed.), Faith in the midst of Faiths, Reflections on Dialogue in Community, Geneva 1977; Dialogue in

Community, Statement and Reports of a Theological Consultation, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 18 – 27 April 1977, Geneva 1977.

28.7. – 6.8.1977, Geneva (Switzerland)
WCC Central Committee

At the Central Committee it was noted that the Chiang Mai declaration had resolved the misunderstandings about world community; the declaration was adopted and recommended to the member churches for study and response. On the basis of these comments the DFI was to draw up guidelines for dialogue for the next meeting of the Committee.

Material: DFI Box 33; Minutes of the Central Committee, Geneva, Switzerland, July 28th – August 6th 1977.

November 1977, Glion (Switzerland)
WCC World Consultation

The subject of this meeting with 61 participants from 38 countries was 'Ecumenical Sharing of Resources', especially of the churches and missionary societies in relation to the 'Third World'. New forms with greater mutuality were considered but mission and diaconal service were not fundamentally questioned.

Statement published in: WCC.E 1,1 (1979), p. 6-10.

May 1978, Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago)
DFI Working Group

New guidelines for inter-religious dialogue were approved, two thirds of which were taken from the Chiang Mai declaration. In addition, a plan for savings had to be drawn up because no more financial assistance was going to be provided by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism from 1980. A dialogue on the new guidelines was still to take place and perhaps also one on the subject of religion, humankind and nature.

Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Working Group, Trinidad, May 1978, Geneva 1978.

18 – 22.9.1978, Helsinki (Finland)
WCC Executive Committee

The new dialogue guidelines were received and forwarded to the member churches, although it was evident that they had made no progress on the issue of a theology of religions beyond the stage reached a quarter of a century earlier.

Material: DFI Box 43; ER 31 (1979).

1 – 11.1.1979, Kingston (Jamaica)

WCC Central Committee

With a few, mainly minor changes, the new dialogue guidelines were adopted by the Central Committee.

Material: DFI Box 31 and 43; Samartha, Stanley J., *Guidelines on Dialogue*, ER 31 (1979), p. 155-162, and BSNC 41/42 (1979), p. 130-138; the guidelines themselves were repeatedly re-published: *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies*, 1st. ed., Geneva 1979 (5th ed., Geneva 1993).

14 – 18.5.1979, Glion (Switzerland)

DFI Core Group

The discussion on issues of development aid led to the proposal of an international consultation of developing countries in which the appropriate WCC bodies were also to take part.

Material: DFI Box 43; WCC Exchange 1,1 (1979).

18 – 23.2.1980, Marseilles (France)

Joint Working Group Meeting

The cooperation between the sub-unit on dialogue with people of other living faiths and ideologies and the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians was considered insufficient and was to be expanded despite the difficulties. Plans were made for a joint conference on the basic theological issues and for an annual meeting for information and coordination.

Material: Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, April 9 – 16, 1980, Matrafüred/Hungary, Geneva 1980, p. 46-49.

12 – 25.5.1980, Melbourne (Australia)

World Mission Conference

It was emphasised that dialogue was part of mission but not the end of it. However, in practical life among people of other faiths dialogue was simply indispensable.

Material: ZMiss 6 (1980).

9 – 16.4.1980, Matrafüred (Hungary)

DFI Working Group

This meeting marked almost ten years of the existence of the DFI and the departure of its first director, Stanley J. Samartha. In his evaluation, the outgoing director underlined that the dialogue had progressed from the intellectual level to community and neighbourliness. He considered that the future tasks were to be seen in the shortcomings of the past, i.e. above all in the relation between dialogue, mission and unity, and in the ques-

tion of spirituality in a pluralist society. However, the concrete plans were determined more by the limited finances.

Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, April 9 – 16, 1980, Matrafűred/Hungary, Geneva 1980.

27 – 29.1.1981, Geneva (Switzerland)

Annual Meeting of DFI and Secretariat for Non-Christians

At the first of these yearly meetings it was decided to cooperate in a theological study on mission and dialogue.

Material: DFI Box 92.

1 – 8.7.1981, Salford (Great Britain)

Multi-Religious Dialogue

The dialogue was organised by the DFI in cooperation with the WCC sub-unit on education and the Centre for the Study of Religion and Education in the Inner City on the subject of 'Christian Participation in Education in a Multifaith Environment'. The participants came from various WCC member churches and from the various faith communities that are found in Great Britain. The programme consisted of addresses, discussion and contacts with different congregations, faith communities and multi-religious educational institutions on the spot. Since this was the first dialogue on this subject, there was no official statement by the participants. The publication on the meeting was only to serve as a contribution to reflection and discussion, but not to have the status of guidelines on Christian education and other religions.

Christians and Education in a Multi-Faith World, Considerations on Christian Participation in Education in a Multi-Faith Environment, Geneva/Salford 1982.

28.12.1981 – 4.1.1982, Dhyana Pura (Indonesia)

DFI Working Group

This was the last meeting of the DFI Working Group with that particular membership. It prepared the dialogue programme for the WCC Assembly in Vancouver. Otherwise it concentrated mainly on basis considerations: in addition to cooperation and witness, dialogue was seen as the third basis of the World Council of Churches. However, the influence of dialogue needed to be increased within the WCC and in the member churches. In the next phase, namely following the Assembly, the problem of theological reflection on dialogue, which had been on the agenda from the beginning, was to be taken up.

Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, Dec. 28 – Jan. 4, 1981-82, Bali/Indonesia, Geneva 1982.

25.1. – 3.2.1983, *Grand Baie (Mauritius)*

Multi-Religious Preparatory Dialogue for Vancouver 1983

The participants in this dialogue were mainly representatives of other religions who had been invited to the WCC Assembly in Vancouver as guests. They draw up a statement to the participants at the Assembly.

Publications in ER 35 (1983), and “The Meaning of Life”, A Multifaith Consultation, Mauritius, 25 January – 3 February 1983, Geneva *s.a.*

13 – 14.3.1983, *Bossey (Switzerland)*

Annual Meeting of DFI and Secretariat for Non-Christians

The cooperation planned concentrated on the relation between mission and dialogue. In addition, the DFI director, John B. Taylor, took advantage of the opportunity to appreciate the work of the sub-unit.

Material: DFI Box 92; BSNC 52 (1983).

24.7. – 10.8.1983, *Vancouver (Canada)*

Sixth Assembly of the WCC

The issue of dialogue was not so central as at the Assembly in 1975, but again there were similar major disagreements over the subject of mission and dialogue. It was thus confirmed that clarifying the theological questions concerning inter-religious dialogue was the most urgent task for the DFI. Following the Assembly, S. Wesley Ariarajah took over the leadership of the sub-unit.

Material: ER 35 (1983); ÖR 33 (1984); ÖR.B 48.

E. Endeavours Related to a Theology of Religions (1984-1991)

11 – 15.3.1985, *Swanwick (Great Britain)*

DF Working Group

In accordance with a decision of the Central Committee in July 1984, the Working Group abandoned responsibility for the dialogue with people of other ideologies because this fell within the competence of the WCC as a whole. However, there was also an interest in making dialogue a concern that affected all the areas of the WCC. For practical reasons, it was necessary to limit the activities to three projects: the study on the theological significance of people of other faiths, a conference on theological education and dialogue, and a study on mission and dialogue to be conducted jointly with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. A Catholic observer noted a theological rapprochement to attitudes of Vatican II which would have been unthinkable only twelve years earlier.

Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Working Group, Swanwick/U.K., March 1985, Geneva 1985.

19 – 25.6.1985, *Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)*

Consultation of DF and Programme on Theological Education

The subject of the consultation was 'Implications of Interfaith Dialogue for Theological Education today'. The consultation, which had initially been intended as a pilot project limited to Asia, merely revealed a total lack of relationships on the spot between theological education along Western lines and the local multi-religious situation.

Material: DF Box 81; One World 112 (1986).

2 – 6 .9.1985, *Les Avants (Switzerland)*

Workshop on Theology of Religions Study

The workshop prepared the study guide 'My Neighbour's Faith – and Mine, Theological Discoveries through Interfaith Dialogue', which was to appear at the beginning of 1986. It was to comprise subjects like creation, salvation, the understanding of Christ and ethics, and to be the basis for work in about 50 Christian or multi-religious groups for at least half a year. The results were to be fed into an international, ecumenical consultation in 1989, together with contributions from other groups, individuals and an international conference of systematic theologians and dialogue specialists. In February 1986, another similar preparatory workshop was held at Bossey (Switzerland).

Material: DF Box 82; Study of Interfaith Theological Discoveries Getting under Way, EPS 85.09.74; The Challenge of Dialogue, Papers from the Meeting of the Dialogue Working Group, Casablanca/Morocco, June 1989, Geneva s.a.; My Neighbour's Faith – and Mine, Theological Discoveries through Interfaith Dialogue, Geneva 1986.

10 – 12.4.1986, *Rome (Italy)*

Annual Meeting of DF and Secretariat for Non-Christians

Both bodies exchanged information about their plans and noted that, because of the burden of work, the cooperation planned had hardly begun. The participants of the meeting were received by Pope John Paul II in a private audience. The Pope took advantage of this occasion to underline his support for inter-religious dialogue.

Material: DF Box 92, BSNC 62 (1986).

13 – 20.7.1986, *Potsdam (G.D.R.)*

Meeting of Sub-Units of WCC Programme Unit I

This meeting was particularly intended to reinforce the future cooperation between the sub-units of 'Faith and Witness'. The Working Group on Dialogue met with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, with which it was already planning a joint conference on dialogue and mission anyway, and with the Working Group on 'Church and Society'.

A consultation on spirituality was being prepared with the sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life. But other areas of the WCC, such as the world consultation on Interchurch Aid, Refugee and World Service, had also increasingly been inviting guests from other religions. However, the main attention for the next few years was to be the study project on the theological significance of people of other faiths which was to enter its practical phase in September that year.

Material: DF Box 82; Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, July 13 -20, 1986, Potsdam, German Democratic Republic, Geneva 1986.

16 – 24.1.1987, *Geneva (Switzerland)*

WCC Central Committee

The sub-unit on dialogue submitted an account of its activities to the Central Committee with the main emphasis on the study of the theological significance of people of other faiths.

Material: DF Box 101; ÖR 36 (1987).

26 – 27.3.1987, *Geneva (Switzerland)*

Annual Meeting of DF and Secretariat for Non-Christians

In addition to the usual activities reports, the discussion dealt above all with the question of selecting partners for dialogue and the issue of dialogue and mission.

Material: DF Box 92; BSNC 66 (1987).

22 – 28.11.1987, *New Delhi (India)*

Multi-Religious Dialogue

The subject of the dialogue conference was changed on the spot from 'Religious Identity in a Multi-Faith Society' to 'Religious Identities in a Multi-Religious World'. Although various regional situations were discussed in the course of the meeting, the main emphasis was on India. The conference became a group experience at the end of which it was possible to adopt guidelines and recommendations unanimously.

Cracknell, Kenneth (ed.), *Religious Identities in a Multi-Faith World*, Report of a Multi-Faith Dialogue Organized by the Dialogue Sub-Unit of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, November 1988 (*sic!*), *s.l.s.a.*

1 – 5.12.1987, *Kyoto (Japan)*

Consultation of DF and Renewal and Congregational Life

Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic Christians with experience of the spirituality of other religions discussed the issue of 'Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue'. The consultation was part of a project on new forms of spirituality and not specifically related to inter-religious dialogue. A very

short statement was published which predominantly described the spiritual development of the individual participants.

Arai, Tosh/Ariarajah, S. Wesley (eds.), *Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue*, Geneva 1989.

7 – 11.11.1987, Dorset (*Great Britain*)

Multi-Religious Dialogue

This dialogue on questions of creation and nature was convened by the DF and the Programme Unit on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). It was organised by the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture. A brief statement was adopted which was taken up by the larger JPIC conference on the Integrity of Creation at Granvollen/Norway (25.2. – 3.3.1988).

Material: DF Box 101; Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group, Baar, Switzerland, May 1988, Geneva 1988.

23 – 26.1.1988, *Tamparam/Madras (India)*

50th Anniversary of the Tamparam Mission Conference

The festive sermon at the large anniversary celebration was preached by a former bishop of South India, Lesslie Newbigin. The historical addresses at the celebration mainly dealt with the contrary development since that time and most were particularly critical of Hendrik Kraemer's attitude to the theology of religions.

Sermon and addresses published in: IRM 78 (*sic!*) (1988).

26 – 30.1.1988, *Mahabalipuram (India)*

Consultation of DF and Commission on World Mission and Evangelism

In connection with the 50th anniversary of the World Mission Conference at Tamparam, these WCC sub-units jointly organised a consultation on mission and dialogue. The individual subjects and discussions caused controversy but nevertheless the questions related to the issue were defined jointly.

Addresses and report published in: IRM 78 (*sic!*) (1988).

23 – 29.5.1988, *Baar (Switzerland)*

DF Working Group

The meeting of the Working Group had originally been planned for Khartoum, Sudan, but then had to be moved at short notice. The reviews of the work particularly emphasised that inter-religious dialogue had also been taken up by other areas within the WCC so that, for the first time, reflection from other religious traditions had appeared in a non-dialogue document of the WCC (JPIC 1988 in Granvollen/Norway). Otherwise, attention was concentrated on the issue of mission and dialogue, both in

retrospect and with a view to the next World Mission Conference and the next Assembly. The project on the theological significance of people of other faiths had come under pressure of time for lack of responses received and was to be speeded up.

Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group, Baar, Switzerland, May 1988, Geneva 1988.

5 – 11.6.1988, Toronto (Canada)

Multi-Religious Dialogue of Women

This dialogue was not only the first of its kind but also completely different from the previous dialogues in its conduct, ways of communicating and results. This also meant that there were less documents and the attempt was not even made to formulate resolutions or statements.

Material: DFI Box 89; One World 139 (1988).

22.5. – 1.6.1989, San Antonio (USA)

World Mission Conference

Contrary to the expectations aroused ahead of the event, although this World Mission Conference took up concerns that had also been pursued in the inter-religious dialogue, the word 'dialogue' itself occurred only once in the message of the conference.

Material: Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group, Baar, Switzerland, May 1988, Geneva 1988; Wilson, Frederick A. (ed.), *The San Antonio Report, Your Will Be Done: Mission in Christ's Way*, Geneva 1990.

19 – 28.6.1989, Casablanca (Morocco)

DF Working Group

The meeting in Morocco was the last meeting of the Working Group before the next Assembly and this provided the occasion for a general review. It was considered that inter-religious dialogue had been accepted in general and, since the Assembly in Vancouver, work had also been done on the unanswered question of a theology of religions. Apart from the provocative theological work by individuals such as Kenneth Cracknell and S. Wesley Ariarajah, this was a reference to the study 'My Neighbour's Faith – and Mine, Theological Discoveries through Interfaith Dialogue'. It had proved too difficult for the congregations involved, but the decision was taken to hold an evaluation conference on the theology of religions, as well as a multi-religious dialogue to prepare for the Assembly. Because of the lack of staff in the sub-unit, any further involvement should be only indirect.

The Challenge of Dialogue, Papers from the Meeting of the Dialogue Working Group, Casablanca/Morocco, June 1989, Geneva *s.a.*

16 – 26.7.1989, Moscow (*Soviet Union*)

WCC Central Committee

A committee was given the task of drawing up proposals and plans for re-structuring the World Council of Churches. According to the plan for reducing the 16 sub-units to seven areas, the missiological/theological parts of the dialogue work were to be assigned to a department on 'Faith and Witness'. In addition, a secretariat for inter-religious relationships was to be newly established and to form part of the general secretariat. But for the time being no staff changes were envisaged.

Material: DF Box 103; ER 41 (1989)

9 – 15.1.1990, Baar (*Switzerland*)

Evaluation Conference on 'Theology of Religions'

The outcome of the study on the theological significance of people of other faiths was extremely meagre, so the conference in Baar was intended more to be a brain-storming session on the subject. A declaration had been prepared and, despite controversy in the discussion, its positive theological attitude was supported.

Material: DF Box 100; Current Dialogue 19 (1991).

12 – 20.5.1990, Kuala Lumpur (*Malaysia*)

Multi-Religious Preparatory Conference for Canberra 1991

The participants at this conference drew up a message to the participants in the Assembly; it dealt particularly with the theme of Section I of the Assembly (Giver of Life – Sustain Your Creation).

Message in: ÖR.B 63.

12 – 18.8.1990, Hong Kong

Multi-Religious Preparatory Dialogue for Canberra 1991

The participants in this dialogue were most of the 15 guests from other religions who had been invited to the WCC Assembly. The main emphases in the dialogue were on the worldwide community of all people and the practical questions connected with this. At the end, a message to the participants at the Assembly was drawn up which also reflected the theological approach of the Baar conference.

Material: DF Box 104; Current Dialogue 20 (1991).

7 – 20.2.1991, Canberra (*Australia*)

Seventh Assembly of the WCC

The theme of the Assembly was the Holy Spirit. Logically, the official statement on the inter-religious dialogue again followed the lines of the Baar conference, although there was some objection to this. A Muslim

guest presented greetings. The Assembly also provided the opportunity concretely to discuss the future activities of the sub-unit. It was considered urgent to hold another reflection conference in the style of Chiang Mai to examine all the theological issues in the realm of dialogue.

Material: DF Box 105; ER 43 (1991); Kinnamon, Michael (ed.), World Council of Churches, Signs of the SPIRIT, Official Report Seventh Assembly, Geneva/Grand Rapids 1991; ÖR.B 68.

F. New Structures (1991 –)

20 – 27.9.1991, Geneva (Switzerland)

WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee resolved to re-structure the World Council of Churches, although initially only for a three year trial period. Within the general secretariat an office for inter-religious relations was established, whereas all the theological questions of dialogue were assigned to Unit II on 'Mission, Education and Witness'.

Material: OIR Box 113; Current Dialogue 21 (1991); Central Committee Approves New Programmatic Structure for the WCC, EPS 91.09.56.

29 – 30.3.1992

OIR and Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue

The annual meetings with the Secretariat for Non-Christians, which had been renamed in 1989, were continued. It was decided to do joint pastoral work on inter-religious worship and inter-religious marriage. The number of such marriages had grown and they constituted not least a legal problem as well.

Material: OIR Box 113; WCC – RC Meeting Explores Inter-Religious Marriages, EPS 92.04.03.

9 – 16.5.1992, Evian (France)

Meeting of WCC Commissions and Advisory Groups

The position of the previous dialogue working group had been taken by an advisory group which was to assist with and critically accompany the work of the new office. The term 'dialogue' was replaced generally by 'relationship'. But nothing changed in practice. The pastoral projects planned were confirmed and plans laid for a reflection conference on a theology of religions along the lines of Chiang Mai. The worries in the new situation related only to the finances: there might not be sufficient contributions received to fund the often unspectacular work on relations.

Material: OIR Box 113.

20 – 28.1.1994, Johannesburg (South Africa)

WCC Central Committee

The transition phase following the re-structuring of the WCC could now be considered completed.

Material: ER 46 (1994).

2. The Christian/Muslim Dialogue

A. *The Beginnings (1960-1975)*

22 – 26.7.1960, Jerusalem

Consultation on 'The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men'

This consultation in the framework of the study on the Word of God also took up the issue of Christian/Muslim dialogue. The final report underlined the responsibility of Christians for meeting Muslims in a constructive way.

Material: WCC archives (cf. Vallée)

16 – 23.6.1966, Broumana (Lebanon)

Consultation on 'Christian-Muslim Encounter'

Protestants, Orthodox and Roman Catholics met with the aim of promoting and expanding the Christian/Muslim dialogue. There was a concrete desire for a concrete dialogue; it was possible to agree how things should look from a practical point of view, but no agreement was reached on any theological questions.

Addresses and statements published in: IRM 55 (1966).

27 – 28.1.1968, Birmingham/Selly Oak (Great Britain)

Christian/Muslim Dialogue

A group of ten Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic students of Islamic studies met with a group of Muslims in the Selly Oak Colleges. All the participants had already been active in the field of Christian/Muslim relations. The meeting took place under the auspices of the WCC and comprised two phases: firstly, the Christians discussed specifically Christian questions in the presence of the Muslims, and then they discussed questions of the Christian/Muslim dialogue with them. There was a high degree of agreement on and interest in a future dialogue on many issues.

Material: DFI Box III

2 – 6.3.1969, Cartigny (Switzerland)

Christian/Muslim Dialogue

The dialogue was planned by the secretariat on Faith and Order and concentrated on the possibilities and prospects for Christian/Muslim

dialogue in the context of both theological and secular starting points. The conference produced an official and an unofficial statement. The former dealt with the necessity, aims, context, nature and future tasks of Christian/Muslim dialogue and was published. The latter concentrated on the problem of Palestine and its significance for the Christian/Muslim dialogue which had been a major point of disagreement. This statement was intended only to be submitted to the WCC Executive Committee in order to make the problem clear to the latter, but it was nevertheless published in the Asian region.

Material: DFI Box VI; Christians Meeting Muslims, WCC Papers on Ten Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977; Brown, Stuart E. (ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations* Sponsored by the World Council of Churches, Geneva 1989; EMZ 27 (1970); EK 2 (1969); Bulletin of Christian Institutes of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad 3 (1970) (according to Al Montada Christian News Bulletin, Beirut (April 1969)).

4 – 9.8.1969, Canterbury (Great Britain)

Department on Studies in Mission and Evangelism Committee

Georges Khodr gave an address on Christian/Muslim dialogue in Lebanon and painted a positive picture of it. In addition, he praised the dialogue at Cartigny as the beginning of better relations between Christians and Muslims, and called for a 'trialogue' which would include the Jews as well. Plans were also made for a Christian/Jewish/Muslim section of the multi-religious dialogue in Ajaltoun.

Material: DFI Box VI.

12 – 22.8.1969, Canterbury (Great Britain)

WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee made a statement on the political situation in the Near East. In doing so, it tried to do justice to both Israel and the Palestinians, but adopted expressions used by Arabs at Cartigny almost word for word.

Material: DFI Box VI; ER 21 (1969); Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-Third Meeting, University of Kent at Canterbury, Great Britain, August 12th – 22nd, 1969, Geneva 1969.

28.9.- 4.10.1969, Nicosia (Cyprus)

Consultation on the Palestinian Refugee Problem

The pro-Palestinian approach of the WCC was very well received by the participants at this consultation.

Material: ER 22 (1970).

16 – 25.3.1970, *Ajaltoun (Lebanon)*

International Multi-Religious Dialogue

In the context of this multi-religious dialogue, accounts were given of Christian/Muslim dialogues in Birmingham and Indonesia indicating that the former had been much more positive than the latter.

Material: DFI Box III; Samartha, Stanley J. (ed.), *Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths*, Papers Presented at a Consultation held at Ajaltoun, Lebanon, March 1970, 2nd. ed., Geneva 1973.

20 – 23.5.1970, *Zurich (Switzerland)*

Reflective Conference on the Ajaltoun Dialogue of 1970

It was considered whether to give preference in the immediate future to dialogues with only one religion, but the idea was not pursued.

Material: DFI Box V; addresses and documents published in IRM 59 (1970); memorandum entitled 'Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths' also in: Samartha, S[tanley] J. (ed.), *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva 1971, and in: *Christians Meeting Muslims*, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977.

10 – 21.1.1971, *Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)*

WCC Central Committee

In the provisional guidelines for inter-religious dialogue adopted by the Central Committee, the emphasis was laid for the time being on bilateral dialogues.

The World Council of Churches and Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, An Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines, in: Samartha, S[tanley] J. (ed.), *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva 1971, p. 47-54, and in: *Christians Meeting Muslims*, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977.

1 – 5.6.1971, *Jongny (Switzerland)*

Ad hoc Working Group Dialogue with Men of Living Faiths and Ideologies (as Part of the Department on Studies in Mission and Evangelism Working Committee)

Plans were made for experts on Islam and on Arabian culture to join the newly established sub-unit on inter-religious dialogue the same year in order to win the trust of the Muslims. For the following year plans were laid for a Christian/Muslim dialogue.

Material: DFI Box VI.

1 – 2.12.1971, *Geneva (Switzerland)*

Christian-Muslim Planning Meeting

The meeting under the heading 'Mutual Understanding between Islam and Christianity and How to Promote it', in preparation for the Chris-

tian/Muslim dialogue planned for 1972, had been proposed by a Muslim. It dealt with questions of the place, theme, finances and participants in the dialogue, and the Muslims showed great interest in sharing in the financing and selection of participants. Addresses were given and a memorandum drawn up at the end: the dialogue was to take place from 12 – 18.7.1972 in Beirut, Alexandria, Istanbul or on Cyprus on the theme, 'The Quest for Human Understanding and Cooperation: Christian and Muslim Contributions'. The WCC was to be considered the sponsor of the conference but Muslims were to provide personal help with the organisation and the costs were to be shared, if possible. There were to be about 20 participants from each side, as far as possible people with dialogue experience who would simultaneously represent very different regions, attitudes and age groups.

Material: DFI Box X.

12 – 18.7.1972, Broumana (Lebanon)
International Christian/Muslim Dialogue

24 Christians and 22 Muslims met to discuss the agreed theme, 'The Quest for Human Understanding and Cooperation: Christian and Muslim Contributions', although both Africa and the Near East were under-represented. The WCC General Secretary, Eugene Carson Blake, underlined the significance of the largest bilateral dialogue meeting of the World Council of Churches to date by his presence. Despite the number of participants, there were hardly any new partners in the dialogue compared with the earlier meetings. A whole series of addresses was given and, although there was much disagreement at the beginning, the joint worship was well attended. There was also heated discussion on the problem of Palestine, but this was not reflected in the memorandum which was clearly not meant to be representative nor to commit anyone. The memorandum mainly reflected the pilot function which the participants in the dialogue felt they had. The main tendency continued to be towards the practical dimension of Christian/Muslim dialogue.

Material: DFI Box X; Samartha, S[tanley J.]/Taylor, J[ohn] B. (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Papers Presented at the Broumana Consultation, 12 – 18 July 1972*, Geneva 1973.

19 – 24.3.1973, Pendeli, Athens (Greece)
DFI Working Group

At the meeting of the working group, John B. Taylor was introduced as the new staff member of DFI who was to strengthen the area of Christian/Muslim dialogue from May onwards. In addition, the decision was taken to conduct another Christian/Muslim dialogue in Southeast Asia before the Assembly of the WCC that was planned for Jakarta.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Group, Pendeli near Athens, March 1973, Geneva 1973.

*23 – 26.11.1973, Singapore
Christian/Muslim Planning Meeting*

Christians and Muslims jointly planned a Christian/Muslim dialogue on the theme 'Muslims and Christians in Society: towards Good-Will, Consultation and Working together in Southeast Asia'. Half of the participants were to be Christians and half Muslims, and they were above all to have dialogue experience. The dialogue was to take place from 28.12.1974 – 2.1.1975 in Singapore or Malaysia, but was finally held from 4 – 10.1.1975 in Hong Kong.

Material: DFI Box 44; The Challenge of Dialogue, Papers from the Meeting of the Dialogue Working Group, Casablanca/Morocco, June 1989, Geneva *s.a.*, p. 159.

*17 – 26.4.1974, Colombo (Sri Lanka)
International Multi-Religious Dialogue*

Thanks to the presence of Jewish participants, the dialogue on the theme 'Towards World Community – Resources and Responsibilities for Living Together' provided the first opportunity for an Abrahamic 'trialogue'.

Samartha, S[tanley] J. (ed.), Towards World Community, The Colombo Papers, Geneva 1975.

*28 – 30.5.1974, Nicosia (Cyprus)
Founding Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches*

Various ceremonial events took place to mark the founding of the MECC after many years of planning. The founding members comprised Orthodox, Oriental, Anglican and Protestant churches. Christian/Muslim dialogue was included among the activities envisaged.

Mention in: ER 26 (1974).

*17 – 21.7.1974, Legon (Ghana)
Regional Christian/Muslim Dialogue*

DFI, the Department on Faith and Order, the Islam in Africa project of the African churches and the Department for Religious Knowledge of the University of Ghana organised a dialogue on the theme 'The Unity of God and the Community of Mankind: Cooperation between African Muslims and Christians in Work and Witness'. On the Christian side, and also in the common, mainly practical memorandum, special attention was paid to the African situation.

Material: DFI Box 14; Christians Meeting Muslims, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977; Brown, Stuart E.

(ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches*, Geneva 1989; Study Encounter 11,1,74 (1975).

11 – 18.8.1974, West Berlin

WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee made a statement on the situation in the Near East and the status of Jerusalem without saying anything substantially new. In reaction to threats from fundamentalist Islamic circles, the site of the WCC Assembly was shifted from Jakarta to Nairobi.

Material: ER 26 (1974); Schumann, Olaf, *Herausforderung der Kirchen durch den Islam: Beispiel Indonesien*, ÖR 30 (1981), pp. 55-70.

15 – 24.9.1974, New Delhi (India)

DFI Working Group

The working group observed that Christian/Muslim dialogue in South East Asia was important precisely at this time when the Assembly could not be held there. Consideration was again given to a Jewish/Christian/Muslim 'trialogue'.

Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Working Group, New Delhi, September 1974, Geneva 1974.

31.10.1974, Geneva (Switzerland)

Visit of a Saudi Arabian Delegation to the World Council of Churches

John B. Taylor gave an address on the theme 'The Concept of Man in the Revealed Religions and the Aspiration of Humanity for Peace'. The discussion with the guests from Saudi Arabia concerned mainly political questions such as human rights and the status of Jerusalem, and the attitude of the Saudi Arabian representatives showed little readiness to make concessions.

Material: DFI Box 44.

4 – 10.1.1975, Hong Kong

Regional Christian/Muslim Dialogue

The theme of this dialogue was 'Muslims and Christians in Society: towards Good-Will, Consultation and Working Together in Southeast Asia'. The addresses by the Muslims and the joint memorandum concentrated particularly on the situation in Southeast Asia. In the forefront of the very concrete proposals in the memorandum was the question how Christians and Muslims could build up states and societies together. Theology was very much in the background.

Material: DFI Box 44; Brown, Stuart E. (ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World*

Council of Churches, Geneva 1989; Christians Meeting Muslims, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977; Study Encounter 11,1,74 (1975).

24 – 28.10.1975, *Cartigny (Switzerland)*

Consultation on the Middle East

The consultation on the theme 'Universal Responsibility in Regard to the Middle East' coincided with a period of general optimism about the region. It considered the future dialogues of the WCC should serve to reduce prejudices against Islam and to create understanding between Jews and Muslims. The idea was that Jewish/Christian and Christian/Muslim dialogue would sometime merge in a 'trialogue'.

Material: DFI Box 45; The Church and the Jewish People 4 (1975).

19.11. – 10.12.1975 *Nairobi (Kenya)*

Fifth Assembly of the WCC

The Muslim guest like all the other guests from other religions had described in advance his religion's view of the theme of the Assembly – community and, in this particular case, especially world community. Otherwise, in the disagreement over dialogue and mission the only agreement reached was that each religion must be considered individually and the dialogue geared to this approach. There was a brief reference to the particular historical and theological relationships with Islam.

Material: DFI Box 25.

B. More Extensive Joint Planning (1976-1983)

17 – 20.5.1976, *Chambésy (Switzerland)*

DFI Core Group

The previous type of bilateral conferences – international participation and cooperation with regional councils of churches – was considered positive. The discussion dealt, on the one hand, with whether it was still necessary directly to promote Christian/Muslim dialogue by organising dialogues and, on the other, with three projects for Christian/Muslim dialogues in the coming three years, and whether more joint activities might not further strengthen the Christian/Muslim dialogue. Another issue was whether an evaluating body was needed for the Christian/Muslim dialogue such as already existed for the Christian/Jewish dialogue. Finally, it was suggested that a Christian/Muslim dialogue planning meeting should be held in October 1976. Again, a tri-lateral dialogue was seen as an aim, although the preparations should not attract too much attention.

Material: DFI Box X and 26; Where Are We after Nairobi? Where Do We Go from Nairobi? Report of Core Group Meeting, Chambésy, Swit-

zerland, May 17-20, 1976; Report of Core Group Meeting, Glion, Switzerland, January 24-28, 1977, Geneva 1977.

26 – 30.6.1976, *Chambésy (Switzerland)*
Christian/Muslim Dialogue

This dialogue was organised by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the International Review of Mission, the Islamic Foundation (Leicester) and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (Birmingham/Selly Oak). The theme was Christian and Muslim mission (*da'wa*). It became a dialogue in which profound theological differences were expressed that could not be bridged pragmatically. Therefore the aggression and accusations were stronger than in earlier dialogues, particularly from the Muslims against the Christians. A joint final statement was adopted, asking for further conferences of the WCC together with the Vatican and with international Islamic organisations, with the aim of mutual understanding and cooperation and of determining procedures for mission more precisely.

IRM 65 (1976); The Islamic Foundation/Quran House (eds.), *Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah, Proceedings of the Chambésy Dialogue Consultation, Leicester/Nairobi/Kano 1982.*

10 – 18.8.1976, *Geneva (Switzerland)*
WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee approved the recommendation from the DFI Core Group to hold a Christian/Muslim dialogue planning meeting in October 1976.

Material: DFI Box X.

19 – 22.10.1976, *Cartigny (Switzerland)*
Christian/Muslim Planning Meeting

In a background paper for the meeting, John B. Taylor pointed to the successes of the Christian/Muslim dialogues to date: improved mutual relationships, dialogues also sponsored by other bodies, good links between the regional and international levels as a result of the choice of themes, participants and sites. At Cartigny itself, Christians and Muslims worked on the dialogue programme for the next few years, as expressed in a joint declaration. In addition to basic rules and aims, it dealt above all with the nature of and issues for future dialogues. The tendency was towards regional dialogues on practical questions, and only in this context on theological matters as well. For example, it was suggested that Christian/Muslim delegations should visit areas of political crisis to analyse specific situations and convey hope for reconciliation.

Material: DFI Box X and 26; Study Encounter 12,4 (1976); Christians Meeting Muslims, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dia-

logue, Geneva 1977; Brown, Stuart E. (ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches*, Geneva 1989.

24 – 28.1.1977, *Glion (Switzerland)*

DFI Core Group

The meeting noted the growing significance of Christian/Muslim dialogue and approved the planned regional and local projects on both fundamental and practical questions and problems. However, it considered that balanced account should be taken of Muslim organisations and critical individuals, as well as of socio-political and religious/theological issues. Nor should one ignore the poor Muslims in Asia and Africa or the followers of some other religion who may be present in the region. Further work was done on the programme for a small Christian/Muslim conference on 'Faith, Science, Technology and the Future of Humanity' for the autumn of that year.

Where Are We after Nairobi? Where Do We Go from Nairobi? Report of Core Group Meeting, Chambésy, Switzerland, May 17-20, 1976; Report of Core Group Meeting, Glion, Switzerland, January 24-28, 1977, Geneva 1977.

18 – 27.4.1977, *Chiang Mai (Thailand)*

Reflective Meeting on Inter-Religious Dialogue

As far as the Christian/Muslim dialogue was concerned, concrete statements were made about common points and differences, the development of the relationship, the interests of the Muslims and the Christians' own approaches. The recommendations did not go beyond knowledge and (mutual) recognition.

Dialogue in Community, Statements and Reports of a Theological Consultation, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 18-27 April 1977, Geneva 1977.

14 – 18.11.1977, *Beirut (Lebanon)*

Christian/Muslim Specialists' Dialogue

The theme discussed by specialists from the realms of physics, chemistry, bio-chemistry, agricultural science, educational psychology and the history of religion was 'Faith, Science and Technology and the Future of Humanity', looking at the specific ethical/ecological, socio-political and theological aspects. But the discussion expanded to include fields such as education, the reason being given that natural science was a world view and not just a method. This was also reflected in the memorandum adopted, the practical emphasis of which was otherwise on the question of finding technologies appropriate to external necessities and to faith. Here, special hopes were pinned on the Koran with its traditions of social

justice, although past errors on both sides were admitted. It was hoped that the dialogue in this field could be continued.

Material: DFI Box 46; Brown, Stuart E. (ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches*, Geneva 1989; Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Working Group, Trinidad, May 1978, Geneva 1978.

May 1978, Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago)

DFI Working Group

John B. Taylor submitted a review of the Christian/Muslim activities of DFI and also of a whole series of dialogues at regional levels on the theme of 'Living in Dialogue'. He mentioned that there had been difficulties and problems in individual regions, but that Christian/Muslim dialogue as a whole was being taken increasingly seriously. Various projects for the future were considered but, because of the cessation of finance from the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, these were limited to the local and regional meetings on 'Christians and Muslims living together' and to an encounter between Christians from the Muslim world. A tri-lateral conference of Jews, Christians and Muslims was still considered necessary but not feasible for the time being.

Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Working Group, Trinidad, May 1978, Geneva 1978.

18 – 22.9.1978, Helsinki (Finland)

WCC Executive Committee

In the discussion it was observed that the will of the Muslims to get involved in dialogue had become weaker, still more in the Middle East than in Europe.

Material: DFI Box 43.

1 – 11.1.1979, Kingston (Jamaica)

WCC Central Committee

It was mentioned expressly that the new guidelines for dialogue, which were subsequently adopted by the Central Committee, had also taken account of the upsurge of Islam since 1975. Moreover, DFI reported that a second international Christian/Muslim dialogue was being prepared, namely on the both theological and socio-political theme 'Christians and Muslims living together'. Finally, the Central Committee envisaged joint activities with the Middle East Council of Churches in order to counteract the increasingly tense situation in the Middle East.

Material: DFI Box 43; Samartha, Stanley J., *Guidelines on Dialogue*, ER 31 (1979), p. 155-162 and BSNC 41/42 (1979), p. 130-138.

12 – 14.3.1979, *Chambésy (Switzerland)*

Christian/Muslim Evaluation and Planning Dialogue

In addition to representatives of the WCC, representatives of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians, of the Organisation of the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference, of the World Muslim League, as well as Muslim scholars, religious leaders and leaders of cultural organisations attended. In a joint report, foundations were laid for Christian/Muslim relationships. For example, dialogue could improve Christian/Muslim relations only if it were not exploited as a means of proselytism. Concrete plans were made for a dialogue in September 1981 on the theme 'Christians and Muslims living and working together, The Ethics and Practices of Humanitarian and Development Programmes', including internal preparatory meetings (1979) and joint planning meetings (1979-81). A number of issues were also to be tackled in the interim: a continuation of 'Faith, Science and Technology and the Future of Humanity', a youth dialogue on Faith and Spirituality Today, and also the Islamic State, religious education and family values, Christian and Muslim Arabs, Jerusalem, human rights, development and aid programmes and a new banking system.

Material: DFI Box X; Current Dialogue 1 (1980/81); ER 31 (1979); Brown, Stuart E. (ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches*, Geneva 1989; *Christian Presence and Witness in Relation to Muslim Neighbours*, A Conference Mombasa, Kenya, 1979, 2nd ed., Geneva 1982.

14 – 18.5.1979, *Glion (Switzerland)*

DFI Core Group

The results of the planning meeting at Chambésy were examined; the practical proposals were considered very good but the theological statements not new. The final report was received very positively as the basis for further work. However, it was emphasised that there could be no discussion about mission in principle, as the Muslims wished, but only about the forms of mission.

Material: DFI Box 43.

4 – 8.11.1979, *Nicosia (Cyprus)*

Consultation on Service to Palestinian Refugees

The consultation was organised by the WCC Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service and the Middle East Council of Churches in order to evaluate the past ten years' work and to plan further. Once again, all the church statements on the rights of the Palestinians were recalled and it was noted that too little had been achieved. There was a particularly positive reaction to churches which had recognised the PLO. But the prognosis for the future was mainly pessimistic,

a just solution seemed far away and, moreover, not all the exegetical questions concerning the state of Israel had yet been clarified.

Material: ER 38 (1980).

1 – 7.12.1979, Mombasa (Kenya)

Reflective Conference on Christian/Muslim Encounters

Comparable to 1966 at Broumana, 13 years later a conference of Christians who were in touch with Muslims took place to reflect on these dialogues and encounters and possibly to draw up guidelines for Christian/Muslim dialogue. The countries of origin, confessions and theological standpoints of the participants comprised a wide spectrum. The theme of the consultation was 'Christian Presence and Witness in Relation to Muslim Neighbours'. The organisers, in addition to DFI, were the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, the Commission for Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service and the Programme for Theological Education. No dialogue guidelines were adopted at the end, but there was a concluding statement with recommendations to the churches. One of the most important experiences of the conference participants was that dialogue begins where people live side by side. For this reason, the proposal was made to replace the narrow term 'dialogue' by the more comprehensive term 'relationships'. Agreement was also reached on some rules of conduct for mission and diaconal service, in order to counteract earlier misunderstandings. Apart from this, on the one side there was an expression of support for equal civil rights for everyone in Muslim states and, on the other hand, sympathy was expressed for the Muslims' wish to have an Islamic state. This was considered an important issue for the future.

Christian Presence and Witness in Relation to Muslim Neighbours, A Conference Mombasa, Kenya, 1979, 2nd ed., Geneva 1982.

11 – 15.2.1980, Woerth (France)

WCC Executive Committee

The proposals from the Mombasa conference for guidelines on Christian/Muslim dialogue, for a statement by the Executive Committee and for future activities were submitted to the Executive Committee. The latter were approved, but the plans for a Joint Christian-Muslim Commission (to deal with complaints from either side) were not taken further.

Material: DFI Box 70.

18 – 23.2.1980, Marseilles (France)

Joint Working Group Meeting

Stanley J. Samartha suggested that, in the future, the WCC and the Vatican should devote greater attention to national and regional possibili-

ties in dialogues, because the situation varied very much from one country to another, especially with regard to Islam.

Material: Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, April 9 – 16, 1980, Matrafüred/Hungary, Geneva 1980, p. 46-49.

9 – 16.4.1980, Matrafüred (Hungary)

DFI Working Group

In his review as the outgoing DFI director, Stanley J. Samartha observed that it was practically impossible to draw a dividing line between theology and politics where Muslims and Jews are concerned. John B. Taylor underlined that minority problems, crises and refugee problems had made dialogue with Muslims more difficult but no less important. The Working Group approved all the documents from Mombasa and recommended their further transmission. For cooperation with the Vatican, a small meeting was suggested on the attitude to Muslims and the significance of Islam for Christians, as well as the dialogue planned for 1981 on 'Christians and Muslims Living together'. In addition, plans were made for the following dialogues: 22-30.6. – Youth dialogue at Bossey, two initiatives in the field of development, an inner-Christian dialogue on guidelines for Christian/Muslim dialogue, and a 'trialogue' on Jerusalem.

Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, April 9-16, 1980, Matrafüred/Hungary, Geneva 1980.

12 – 25.5.1980, Melbourne (Australia)

World Mission Conference

In the framework of the World Mission Conference, John B. Taylor stated with reference to DFI that the main aim of the Christian/Muslim dialogue was to build up community, whereas theological dialogue was too difficult for the majority and therefore less important. He painted a positive picture of the experiences of Christians from Islamic countries (in line with Mombasa) and praised the exemplary approach of Islamic mission.

Interview in: ZMiss 6 (1980).

22 – 28.6.1980, Bossey (Switzerland)

Christian/Muslim Youth Dialogue

Almost all of the 50 participants in the dialogue 'Living as Faithful People in a Changing Society' were between 20 and 35 years old. There were short addresses and discussions on various sub-themes and, finally, reports from the various groups. The emphasis was placed on the distinction between faith and religion in order to preserve the renewing force of religion. However, no confidence was expressed in a transforming force of the power structures within the church and *umma*. The young people also considered socio-political and economic problems important. The

proposals made by the participants were: renewal of personal faith, tolerance and an open, honest dialogue. The main obstacles for the latter, according to the young people, were ignorance, indifference and the large number of traditionalists.

Group reports published in: *Focus – Pastoral Notes* 1,6 (1981) and in: Brown, Stuart E. (ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations* Sponsored by the World Council of Churches, Geneva 1989.

14 – 22.8.1980, *Geneva (Switzerland)*

WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee revised the recommendations from the Mombasa conference and referred them to the churches with the other resolutions of the conference. The churches were to seek encounter and cooperation with Muslims and, to this end, firstly become familiar with the dialogues so far (e.g. collective volume: *Christians Meeting Muslims*, WCC Papers on 10 Years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Geneva 1977); but they should then also give more support to the study centres, plan dialogue conferences especially with young people and tackle the problems of mixed marriages. In addition, theological views and cultural experiences were to be collected for a second reflective conference and the themes suggested by Christian/Muslim study groups taken up. The Central Committee itself condemned the declaration of the whole of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel.

Material: ER 32 (1980); *Christian Presence and Witness in Relation to Muslim Neighbours*, A Conference, Mombasa, Kenya, 1979, 2nd. ed., Geneva 1982.

27 – 29.1.1981, *Geneva (Switzerland)*

Annual Meeting of DFI Secretariat and Secretariat for Non-Christians

At this first annual meeting it was confirmed that Roman Catholic observers would attend the Christian/Muslim dialogue of DFI in 1981 in Karachi on social problems and also the preparatory conference for this in Geneva (4-5.2.1981). It was also resolved to undertake a study on the theological evaluation of Islam which was to be examined jointly in 1982.

Material: DFI Box 92.

4 – 6.2.1981, *Geneva (Switzerland)*

Christian/Muslim Preparatory Dialogue for Karachi 1981

The preparatory dialogue was identical with the first visit of the General Secretary of the World Muslim Congress to the WCC. The dialogue itself was to take place at the end of September in Karachi, before the end of the first year of the new Islamic century. People responsible for and active

in humanitarian and development projects were to discuss their motivation and draw up joint pilot projects.

Material: ER 33 (1981).

28.12.1981 – 4.1.1982, *Dhyana Pura (Indonesia)*

DFI Working Group

John B. Taylor again emphasised the contemporary relevance of Christian/Muslim dialogue and the necessity of seriously considering the major differences within the Muslim world. The following immediate tasks were listed: guidelines for Christian/Muslim dialogue and the theological evaluation of the position of Islam (initial joint plans with the Secretariat for Non-Christians were to be available in January 1982). The dialogue, which had been postponed at the request of the World Muslim Congress as co-sponsor, in the run up to which the World Muslim League, the Commission for Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the Christian Medical Commission and the Programme on Churches' Participation in Development had also become involved, was to take place in March and not in Geneva but in Colombo.

Material: Current Dialogue 2 (1981); Minutes of the Working Group Meeting, Dec. 28 – Jan. 4, 1981-82, Bali, Indonesia, Geneva 1982.

30.3. – 1.4.1982, *Colombo (Sri Lanka)*

International Christian/Muslim Dialogue

The organisation of this dialogue was the – new – responsibility of the WCC and the World Muslim Congress, and the latter issued the official invitation to Colombo. The Secretariat for Non-Christians, the Organisation of the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference and UNESCO sent observers and greetings. Although the World Muslim Congress had expressed the hope that such meetings could be held every three years in future, people on the DFI side were also sceptical about co-sponsors. The World Council of Churches found itself in a new situation where it had less say on the planning and agenda and, above all, was not able to select the Muslim participants. This meant that finally the theme 'Christians and Muslims Living and Working Together: Ethics and Practices of Humanitarian and Development Programmes' was tackled by Christian practitioners, who wanted to solve the problems with joint activities, and Muslim theoreticians, who wanted to make their fundamental ethical and religious reservations about aid projects clear at last. The consequently difficult communication led to joint recommendations concerning refugees and minorities, and also to proposing a Joint Standing Committee in order to promote the dialogue and thus finally also mutual understanding.

Material: DFI Box 67; Minutes of the Working Group Meeting Dec.28 – Jan.4, 1981-82, Bali, Indonesia, Geneva 1982, p. 32; Current

Dialogue 3 (1982); BSNC 51 (1982); Brown, Stuart E. (ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches*, Geneva 1989; Abdullah, Muhammad Salim (ed.), *Gemeinsam in die Zukunft, Christlich-islamischer Dialog von Colombo*, Aktuelle Fragen 7, Altenberge 1982; Simatupang, Tahi Bonar, *Das Zusammenleben und -arbeiten von Christen und Muslimen*, in: Schumann, Olaf/Fischer, Heinz Joachim (eds.), *Gelebte Theologie in Indonesien, Zur gesellschaftlichen Verantwortung der Christen*, ThÖ 24, Göttingen 1992, p. 143-154.

3 – 5.4.1982, Colombo (Sri Lanka)

Reflective Conference on the Colombo 1982 Dialogue

The Christian participants met following the dialogue conference to evaluate the results and drew up recommendations for the World Council of Churches. They supported the recommendations of the conference to a large extent and particularly recommended work on the question of Islamic law, the importance of which had again been very much stressed by the Muslims.

Material: Current Dialogue 3 (1982); Brown, Stuart E. (ed.), *Meeting in Faith, Twenty Years of Christian-Muslim Conversations Sponsored by the World Council of Churches*, Geneva 1989.

19 – 28.7.1982, Geneva (Switzerland)

WCC Central Committee

The Central Committee demanded the withdrawal of all occupation forces, but especially the Israelis, from Lebanon, so that the latter could again become the old example of Christian/Muslim rapprochement. The UN resolutions on Israel and Lebanon were to be followed, but Israel should also be given border guarantees.

Material: ER 34 (1982).

13 – 14.3.1983, Bossey (Switzerland)

Annual Meeting of DFI and Secretariat for Non-Christians

John B. Taylor called it the only major shortcoming in the work of DFI that no Jewish/Christian/Muslim dialogue had yet come about although efforts had been made for this since 1976. In addition, each bilateral dialogue should have its own guidelines. The dialogue in Colombo was also discussed, and the Secretariat for Non-Christians indicated that it might participate, at least as an observer, in a regular exchange on general humanitarian concerns with world-wide Muslim organisations. With regard to reflection, a conference on the status of Islam could take place in 1985 or 1986.

Material: DFI Box 92; BSNC 52 (1983).