

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN INDONESIA MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DISCOURSE

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Hamburg, 08 June 2005

Zainul Fuad

SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

Consonants:

| | | | |
|---|----|-----|----|
| أ | ʾ | ط | t |
| ب | b | ظ | ẓ |
| ت | t | ع | ʿ |
| ث | th | غ | gh |
| ج | j | ف | f |
| ح | ḥ | ق | q |
| خ | kh | ك | k |
| د | d | ل | l |
| ذ | dh | م | m |
| ر | r | ن | n |
| ز | z | و | w |
| س | s | ه | h |
| ش | sh | ي | y |
| ص | ṣ | ة | a |
| ض | ḍ | ة.. | at |

Long vowels:

| | |
|---|---|
| ا | ā |
| و | ū |
| ي | ī |

Short vowels:

| | |
|----|---|
| ـَ | a |
| ـُ | u |
| ـِ | i |

Diphtongs:

| | |
|----|----|
| او | aw |
| اي | ay |

Doubled:

| | |
|-----|--------------------|
| يَّ | iyy (final form ī) |
| وَّ | uww (final form ū) |

Assimilation of the definite articles:

| | |
|------|-------|
| الـ | al- |
| الشـ | al-sh |
| والـ | wa'l- |

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of This Study

Indonesia is a very pluralistic society in which people from various backgrounds of tribe, race, and religion live together. In terms of religion, there exist in this country the great world religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. According to the 1990 census, the percentage of the adherents of the religions is as follows: Islam (87.21%), Protestantism (6.04%), Catholicism (3.58%), Hinduism (1.83%), Buddhism (1.03%) and animism (0.31%).¹ Given this religious diversity, relations between the religious groups fluctuate. Sometimes the complexity of religious identities can bring harmony, but it can also lead to conflicts. In fact, in the past Indonesia with its diverse character was known as a model of a tolerant country in which people of

¹ See *Penduduk Indonesia: Hasil Sensus Penduduk Indonesia 1990 [Population of Indonesia: Result of the 1990 Census]* (Jakarta, Biro Pusat Statistik, 1992), p. 24.

different religious backgrounds could live together harmoniously.² However, with the appearance of a number of conflicts between religious groups since the last decade, Indonesia is now more known for its history of conflict.

In the pluralistic Indonesian society, religious tolerance is certainly of paramount importance. In this plural society, one certainly has to have a positive vision towards differences. Religious difference should not become an obstacle in the social relations. This is, however, not the case nowadays in Indonesia, where some aspects of social life are now formed and defined in term of religious difference. The appearance of long lasting conflicts in the last decade, has apparently contributed to creating this social condition, at least in the conflicting areas. As far as Muslim-Christian relations are considered, history has proven that the relations between the two groups in the country were often coloured by mutual suspicion and antagonism. This was caused partly by their ignorance of each other, an ignorance fostered by the Dutch colonial

² An acknowledgement of this fact of harmony has been asserted, for example, by a Western scholar in his statement, "Probably in no other Moslem country does one find the high degree of religious tolerance, lack of bigotry, and openness to new ideas that one finds in most of Indonesia." See, G. McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1963), p. 45.

policy that kept the two faith communities separated. In addition, there have also been negative attitudes on both sides rooted in the history that grew out of early conflicts culminating in long lasting crusades.

The Indonesian government has in fact made many efforts in developing religious tolerance. Religious tolerance has even become an important government program of development. In the Broad Outlines of State Policy (GBHN), it is mentioned that one of the national development's objectives in the field of religion is to create harmonious life of religious communities with the atmosphere of mutual respect and the spirit of pluralism."³ It is often argued, that religious harmony is instrumental for the maintenance of the unity of the pluralistic nation. The government's appeal for religious tolerance is principally

³ *Kompilasi Peraturan Perundang-Undangan Kerukunan Hidup Umat Beragama*, sixth edition (Jakarta, Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama, 1997/1998), pp. 8-9. It is important to note that the term religious tolerance in the official usage is often expressed as '*kerukunan beragama*' (religious harmony) or more precisely '*kerukunan hidup umat beragama*' (harmonious life of religious communities). The word '*kerukunan*' derives from Arabic '*rukn*' (pl. *arkān*), which means 'pillar' or 'essential principle', such as in the expressions *arkān al-Islam* (pillars of Islam), *arkān al-imān* (pillars of faith), etc. In Indonesian language, the word '*rukun*', besides signifying 'essential principle', is also applied for the adjective form signifying 'peaceful', 'harmonious', and 'undisputed'. See Drs. Peter Salim and Yenny Salim, *Kamus Bahasa Indonesia Kontemporer* (Jakarta: Modern English Press, 1991), p. 1288.

based rather on the consideration of security and stability in the country. Thus, its objective seems rather pragmatic.

However, the government approach of religious tolerance was quite problematic when it introduced the so-called policy of SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Inter-group Relations). With this policy, the government banned any discussion on SARA issues since they were regarded as potential to conflict. In other words, people were not allowed to talk about differences, for sake of harmony. This policy resulted in the appearance of close attitude, fear, and unhealthy rivalry among different groups. Many see that this kind of harmony was artificial.

In the lack of moral or religious basis for tolerance, many suggest the necessity to develop the idea religious pluralism of tolerance from the religious perspective. However, in my view this approach is not yet promising in building mutual understanding. In Indonesia, many religious scholars have indeed discussed the idea religious tolerance and the issues of interreligious relations by highlighting norms as mentioned the religious texts. However, their ideas often do not reflect

the real idea of tolerance. This is true in particular in dealing with the problem of religious understandings, which is rigidly tended to in the matter of interreligious relations. In this context, it can be said that the problem of religious tolerance is not only the problem of how to handle religious diversity in reality, but also how to deal with religious texts and traditions, which seem to support exclusivism.

Nowadays, many Muslims as well as Christian scholars realize the importance of developing the discussion of religious pluralism and tolerance in a rather constructive way. This phenomenon was marked, among others, by the appearance of a number of publications on pluralism and interreligious dialogues.

One of the publications on this issue is entitled "*Passing Over: Melintas Batas Agama*" (Passing Over: Crossing Religious Borders) which was published in 1998 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in cooperation with the Paramadina Foundation. Edited by the prominent young intellectuals, Komaruddin Hidayat and Ahmad Gaus AF, this book contained various articles written by prominent Indonesian religious leaders and theologians from various religious backgrounds.

It is interesting that the title of the book uses the term 'passing over', a phrase introduced by John Dunne as one of the methods of learning from another religious tradition. According to Dunne, 'passing over' means going over to the standpoint of another culture, another way of life or another religion and it is followed by an equal and opposite process of 'coming back' with new insight to one's own culture, one's own way of life, one's own religion."⁴

Another publication was "*Meretas Jalan Teologi Agama-Agama di Indonesia: Theologia Religionum*" which was published in 2000 by the Research Team of the Alliance of Indonesian Churches (PGI). It is not necessary to mention all publications in this matter. Most of the religious scholars in these publications in deed suggested different perspectives about religious pluralism and interreligious relations in Indonesia.

In the following study, I will discuss how these scholars in particular Muslims and Christians deal with religious plurality and

⁴ See, John S. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. ix.

interreligious relations in Indonesia. By focusing only on the Muslim and Christian scholars, this does not necessarily mean to undermine the role of other religious scholars. There are in deed other scholars from Hinduism and Buddhism, whose ideas are quite constructive in building interreligious harmony in Indonesia. By studying the ideas of Muslim and Christian scholars, I mean to see how these scholars deal with the issues in Muslim-Christian relations and to see how far their ideas are relevant in building Muslim-Christian understanding. In the light of this objective, the main questions of this study can be formulated as follows: How these Muslim and Christian scholars deal with religious plurality in Indonesia and how far their ideas are relevant in establishing a mutual understanding between religious groups in particular between Muslims and Christians in the country.

To the best of my knowledge, there has not been any study on Muslim-Christian relations in Indonesia, which specifically focus on this matter. Many studies that appeared were mostly concentrated on the history of their tensions and conflicts. One of the studies, for instance, was written by a German scholar Wandelin Wawer in his

doctoral dissertation entitled *“Muslime und Christen in der Republik Indonesia”* which was published in 1974. In his study, the author observed the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia from the independence period to the early years of the establishment of the New Order government. These were the periods where Muslims and Christians were much involved in the political debates in particular concerning the state ideology.

Another study was made by Alwi Shihab in his PhD dissertation entitled *“The Muhammadiyah Movement and Its Controversy with Christian Mission in Indonesia”*. In this study, Shihab discussed elaborately about the role of Muhammadiyah in countering the problem of Christianization in Indonesia. In 1998, this work was published in Indonesian language under the title *“Membendung Arus: Respon Gerakan Muhammadiyah Terhadap Penetrasi Misi Kristen di Indonesia”*. Mention should also be made of the study by Ismatu Ropi under the title *“Depicting the Other Faith: A Bibliographical Survey of Indonesian Muslim Polemics on Christianity”* which appeared in the Indonesian

journal *Studia Islamika*.⁵ In this work, the author mentions theological aspects in the tensions between Muslim and Christian in Indonesia.

Indeed, there are works that attempted to discuss the idea of pluralism and tolerance in Indonesia but most of them only focus one religious perspective. This is true, for example, of the master thesis by Stanley Rambitan under the title *“Islamic Tolerance in the Context of Indonesia* (1995). A prolific Dutch scholar Karel Steenbrink, who is quite competent on this subject, has published his writings on various journals on the theme of religious pluralism and interreligious dialogues in Indonesia. However, his writings are concentrated more on the role and the policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in managing interreligious relations.⁶ Thus, as these works are still partial and concentrated more Islamic perspective, I find it necessary to

⁵ Ismatu Ropi, “Depicting the Other Faith: A Bibliographical Survey of Indonesian Muslim Polemics on Christianity” in *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1989), pp. 77-120.

⁶ Steenbrink’s works on this issue are, among others, “Muslim-Christian Relations in the *Pancasila* State of Indonesia” in *The Muslim Word*, Vol. LXXXVIII No. 3 (July-October 1998), pp. 320-350; “Patterns of Dialogue in Indonesia 1965-1998”, in Jacques Waardenburg (ed.) *Muslim-Christian Perceptions of Dialogue Today: Experiences and Expectations* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), pp; “Indonesian Politics and A Muslim Theology of Religions: 1965-1990” in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 4, No 2. (1993), pp. 223-246.

develop the discussion by taking into account the contribution of Christian scholars to the subject concerned.

B. Objective of This Study

The aim of this study is to explore and analyse the ideas of Muslim and Christian scholars concerning religious pluralism and interreligious relations in Indonesia and to see the implications of their thoughts for the development of mutual understanding between religious groups in particular between Muslims and Christians.

C. Scope of This Study

As mentioned above, this study will explore and examine the ideas of religious pluralism and tolerance as developed by Muslim and Christian theologian and religious scholars in Indonesia. By 'religious pluralism', I mean simply the idea of religious plurality. It does not necessarily mean to indicate the liberal theory of John Hick, which regards all religions as having equal value. By 'religious tolerance', I mean the attitude of respect towards other religions and beliefs.

However, I do not mean in the sense of accepting them as true. As this is also the implication in 'religious pluralism', the term is sometimes interchangeable with the latter.

In this study, I will focus only to those prominent scholars who frequently appear in the recent publications and whose ideas are much referred to by many in dealing with the idea of religious pluralism and the problems in interreligious relations in Indonesia. Thus from Islamic group, I select Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Quraish Shihab, whereas from the Christian group J.B. Banawiratma (Catholic), Franz Magnis-Suseno (Catholic) and Eka Darmaputera (Protestant).

D. Outline of this Study

This study consists of six main chapters. The first is introductory to this study. The second chapter contains a brief historical overview about Muslim-Christian conflicts in Indonesia from the early period until the recent time. It starts with a discussion on their relations during the period of colonization, the period that marked the beginning of Muslim-Christian encounters in Indonesia. Here, I will depict the

character of their encounters that were initially negative by nature. Further, I will explore some important events of the conflict and the tension between the two groups in the subsequent periods encompassing the period of independence, New Order era and the era of Reformation.

In the third chapter, I will particularly discuss the programs and the approaches of the government as well as non-government in dealing with interreligious relations in Indonesia. The discussion on these matters will be divided into the following sub-chapter: first, the policy of the government in developing interreligious harmony; second, the Council of Indonesian '*Ulamā*' and interreligious relations; and third, Non-Government Initiatives of Interreligious Dialogues.

The fourth chapter, which constitutes the main part of this study, deals with the discourse of religious pluralism and interreligious relations in Indonesia from the Muslim and Christian perspectives. The chapter consists of two main parts. In the first part, I will elaborate on the ideas of pluralism and tolerance from Muslim perspectives, which include the selected writings of the prominent scholars, Nurcholish

Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Quraish Shihab. In the second part, I will discuss the same theme from the Christian perspectives that include the selected writing of the prominent Christian theologians, J.B. Banawiratma (Catholic), Franz Magnis-Suseno (Catholic), Eka Darmaputera (Protestant).

Discussions and analysis on the aspects of their ideas will be presented in the fifth chapter. In this chapter I will analyse whether the ideas and attitudes of the above-mentioned theologians and religious scholars concerning religious pluralism and interreligious relations would be relevant in building mutual understanding between religious groups in particular between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia.

In the last chapter, I will make a conclusion of this study by drawing on important points that would be the solution to the problems concerned in this study.

Chapter Two

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN CONFLICTS IN INDONESIA: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

A. Muslim-Christian Relations at Early Contacts

The first encounters between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia could be dated to the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was marked by the expansion of European powers followed by the introduction of Christianity to the archipelago.⁷ First, the Portuguese came in 1511 in

⁷ According to some Christian scholars, Christians had been present in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago long before the colonization era. They came for the first time during the early period of the early Christian Fathers. Kurt Koch, for example, argues that it is possible that the Apostle Thomas, who worked in India during such a period, crossed over to the archipelago with the Indian traders. Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia* (Michigan: Kregel Publication, 1972, p. 13. A Dutch scholar, Van den End, has also the same conclusion arguing that in a work written approximately in 1050, which included data concerning the early Churches in Asia, there was mention of the existence of some Churches in the region called *Fansur*.⁷ He assumes that the name was probably Barus, which was located in the western coast of North Sumatera. Also gaining information from the old Arabic source, Müller Krüger, a German scholar, dates the coming of the Christians in this area in the second half of the 7th century. See T. Muller Kruger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK, 1959), p. 7. Regardless of the possibility of the presence of Christians in this early period, there was, as is generally acknowledged, no significant influence of their existence in the archipelago. There is no historical evidence about their contact to other communities in that area. The presence and influence of the Christians in the Indonesian archipelago were felt only from the sixteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese.

Maluku. This colonial power came not only to exploit the country's natural resources for their own economic welfare and to subjugate the political influence of Islam, but also to disseminate Catholicism among the population. The Portuguese missionaries brought a mandate from Pope Alexander VI to propagate the Gospel and to civilize the indigenous people. Religious settlements were then established in Maluku, Minahasa, Halmahere, Solar, Flores and Timor. In 1596, the Dutch colonialists came and subsequently replaced the Portuguese. The Dutch power, like the Portuguese, also came with religious interests in addition to political and economics ones. They introduced Reformed Protestantism and abolished the Roman Catholic Church, which was their rival at that time.

Since these early contacts, the relation between the two communities has been coloured by mutual suspicion and antagonism. On one side, there have been negative attitudes on both sides rooted in the history. Each community has held on to deep prejudice inherited from old-attitudes of Muslims and Christians in the West and Middle East that grew out of early conflicts culminating in long lasting

crusades. This was apparently brought along when both came to Indonesia. In the Christian circles, for example, the perceived view on Muslims was as detestable heretics, that was developed mainly among the Dutch travellers and missionaries who were strongly influenced by the development of Christian theology in the Netherlands.⁸ The same was true in Muslim circles; Christians were depicted and as infidels (*kāfir*), who corrupted the Holy Scriptures, a supposition that still exists to this day.

On another side, the antagonism was the result of colonization. The appearance of the colonial powers, which were followed by the Christian missionary activities in the archipelago, obviously posed a great challenge to the Muslims, who were experiencing a significant development at that time. Islam had come to the area in the twelfth century and its influence in the sixteenth century was quite clear-cut.⁹

⁸ Karel Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam: Contact and Conflict 1596-1950*, translated by Jan Steenbrink and Henry Jansen (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1993) pp. 23-24.

⁹ There have been many theories concerning the coming and the early development of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. For the assessment of the theories, see Azyumadi Azra, *The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Network of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian "Ulamā" in the Seventeenth and*

In this situation, Muslim's oppositions towards the colonial government were certainly of logical consequence. In reality though, Muslims felt compelled to fight against the colonialists who came to subjugate them. The penetration of Christianity along with the process of colonization experienced a firm resistance from Muslims. The Muslims often considered the missions as colonial tools, which were aimed to convert the native population to Christianity.

Initially, the Dutch colonial government was principally neutral in the matter of religion. For example, Christian missionaries were allowed to come but their work was generally limited to areas where indigenous religion, rather than Islam or Hinduism, was dominant. Experience had proven that missions to Muslims areas often created tensions. The colonial government did not give necessary supports for the missionary activities for fear of antagonizing the Muslims and thus

Eighteenth Centuries. Ph.D Dissertation (Columbia: University Microfilm International, 1992), particularly pp. 27-52. This work has been translated into Indonesian under the title: *Jaringan 'Ulamā' Timur Tengah dan Nusantara Abad ke-17 and 18 Masehi*; See also Syed Farid Alatas, "Notes on Various Theories Regarding the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago", *The Muslim Word* (1987), 162-175. See also Reuven Kahane, "Notes on the Unique Patterns of Indonesian Islam", Raphael Israeli and Anthony H. Johns, *Islam in Asia* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984), 166-172.

jeopardizing its economic interest.¹⁰ With this “neutral policy”, the colonial government allowed Muslims freedom to practice their religion as long as they posed no threat to the colonial government.

In a later development, however, the Dutch government became more favourably disposed towards Christianity. As an example, the government supplied, either directly or indirectly, large amounts of money to Christian religious foundations and allowed them to carry out extensive evangelization. The Christians were also allowed to establish schools, hospitals, and other institutions in some parts of the archipelago. Towards Muslims, the colonial government introduced strict policies, which tended to discriminate against them.¹¹

Given this fact, feelings of mutual distrust and hostility between the two communities grew. The government control of the Muslims, however, prevented the hostilities from erupting into open conflict and social turbulence. Despite this, mutual distrust and hostility remained.

¹⁰ R.W. Hefner, *Conversion to Christianity: historical and anthropological perspective on a great transformation* (Berkeley C.A: University California Press), p. 99.

¹¹ Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) pp. 165-175.

There emerged within Muslim circles unfavourable views with regard to the Christians, for example, that the Christians belonged to “the other side”, the side of the colonial powers. They were also called names that would picture their linkage with the Dutch such as “followers of Dutch prophet”, “trying to be Dutch”, a follower of Dutch religion” and “a Dutchman.”¹²

With the intensification of missionary activity particularly from the mid nineteenth century through the first quarter of the twentieth century, the competition between Muslims and Christians became more obvious. In some “Muslim areas” that were previously closed to missionary work, the government lifted the ban on evangelization, and this consequently led to the increase of Muslim consciousness in response to Christianization. Some Muslim leaders felt it necessary to intensify Islamic *da'wa* by establishing Islamic organizations in order to counter the cultural and religious invasion of the colonial power. One of these organizations, for example, was Muhammadiyah, established

¹² In the case of Javanese Christians, as Hoesoo notes, they were ridiculed as *londo wurung jowo tanggung* (try to be Dutch and cannot make it, and mediocre as Javanese) and also as *toewan gendjah* (a not yet ripened master). See W. Hoesoo, MNZG (1877), p. 127.

in Yogyakarta in 1912, which played a considerable role in blocking the flow of Christianization in the course of time. The founder of this organization, Ahmad Dahlan, on some occasions indirectly talked about the dangers of Christianization facing the Muslim community.

Contributing to the tensions was the appearance of publications by missionaries stating critical and harsh judgments on Islam. This was clear, for example, in the works of Hendrik Kraemer and J.J. Ten Berge, which contained negative views on Islam. In one of his works, Kraemer mentioned, "Islam in its constituent elements and apprehensions must be called a superficial religion. ...Islam might be called as religion that has almost no questions and no answers."¹³ Elsewhere, he contended, "Muhammad did not have a clear claim to major religious status but really had only instituted a small religious sect."¹⁴

In the work of Ten Berge, negative attitude was even more serious – which was known then as Ten Berger's affair – when he said:

¹³ Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (Michigan: Kregel Publication, 1963), p. 216.

¹⁴ Kraemer, *Agama Islam* (Jakarta: BPK, 1952), p. 41.

“One can see that according to Mohammed Christians conceive of a father and a mother and a son in sexual sense. How would it have been possible for him, the anthropomorphist, the ignorant Arab, the sensualist, who was in the habit of sleeping with women, to conceive of a different and more elevated conception of Fatherhood?”¹⁵

The publication of those books aroused considerable anger amongst Muslims. For them, the publications were regarded as an insult and humiliation to Islam. As a response to the publications, a series of protest campaigns emerged in big cities and some rebuttals by urban Muslims appeared in Islamic journals and magazines.

In his response to Kraemer's works, a prominent Muslim leader, A. D. Haanie, published a book entitled *Islam against Kraemer*. Another Muslim leader, Muhammad Natsir, wrote an article *Islam, Catholicism and the Colonial Government*, which contained criticism of Ten Berge's treatment of the prophet Muhammad and called on Muslims to defend their religion against slander. He also wrote other articles that appeared in various magazines and journals, which intended to defend Islam from the Christian missionary's offensive.

¹⁵ Cited in Karel Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam*. p. 118.

In the case of Ten Berge, Natsir criticized government policy for exercising double standards. Indonesian Muslims were quickly punished for “articles which spread hatred”, whereas it was impossible to bring Ten Berge formally to trial.¹⁶ The government had banned his publication, but this affair continued to be stirred up, when another similar case of slander appeared.

B. Muslim-Christian Conflicts during the Independence Period (1945-1965)

The long period of colonization of Indonesia ended with the proclamation of independence on August 17, 1945. During the struggling for Indonesian independence, Muslim-Christian relations principally appeared to be in harmony. Since they mutually fought for the achievement of Indonesian freedom, both had a feeling of unity. The Christians in this respect were no longer regarded as on the side of Dutch colonial power, some of them even held prominent positions in

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

the newly proclaimed republic. At this time, Muslims and Christians respected each other as fellow-citizens.

Not long after independence, however, the tension began to reappear. Both were deeply involved in a discussion concerning the nature of the state, which appeared firstly in the so-called Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence. The main question was concerning whether Indonesia should become an Islamic state or a secular state separating state affairs from religious ones. Muslim nationalists advocated the establishment of an Islamic state, contending that Islam, given the religion of the majority of the population, should become an official religion of the state and that the president should be a Muslim. However, secular nationalists, who consisted of some prominent Christians and nominal Muslims, strongly opposed such an idea. The Christians threatened to establish a separate state, when the Muslims declared an Islamic one.

In his effort to seek a compromise, Sukarno, proposed a so-called doctrine of *Pancasila* (Five Principles) as the foundation of the state. According to him, *Pancasila*, which contains common spiritual values

(faith in one God, humanism, nationalism, democracy, and social justice), could be agreed upon, because by accepting it Indonesia would be neither an Islamic state nor a secular state. This compromise, however, did not conclude the matter, as the debate intensified later between those who advocated Islamic principles and those who endorsed *Pancasila*. Finally, a group of nine members of the committee succeeded in agreeing upon a document, which was to be the preamble to the Indonesian Constitution. In the preamble, better known as the *Piagam Jakarta* (Jakarta Charter), it was stated, among others, that the “Indonesian state is based on the belief in the One God with the obligation for the adherents of Islam to implement the *Shari’a*” (Islamic Law).

However, the above phrase “with the obligation for the adherents of Islam to implement the *Shari’a*, known as the “seven words of the preamble”, did not satisfy the Christians. As the draft of National Constitution including the Jakarta Charter was proposed for ratification on August 18, 1945 – one day after the proclamation of Indonesian independence, the Christians showed their disagreement towards the

draft. Just a few moments before the draft was legalized, a Japanese officer sent by Christian leaders from Eastern Indonesia, met Muhammad Hatta, the Vice President, to raise their objections to the draft of the national constitution, particularly to the seven words in the preamble and the prerequisite for the Indonesian President to be Muslim. The Christians contended that the national constitution should not give preferential treatment to any religious groups. They even threatened to withdraw support for the Indonesian state.

Facing this situation, Hatta consulted the Muslim leaders in the committee in order to find an immediate solution to the problem. As a figure trusted for his personal commitment to Islam, although from a nationalist group, Hatta persuaded the Muslim leaders that acceptance of the Christian aspiration would maintain national integrity and unity among the adherents of different religions in Indonesia. A solution was finally achieved with the Muslim agreement for the removal of the above-mentioned “seven words”. The “seven words” was then changed to “*Yang Maha Esa*” (The Absolute One). The Muslim leaders also agreed to delete the written requirement for the Indonesian

president and vice-president to be a Muslim. The agreement was signed on August 18, 1945, when the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 was declared.

In addition to the above debate on state ideology, another question evoked heated debates between Muslims and Christians. This was concerning the Muslims' aspiration to establish a Ministry of Religious Affairs, which was proposed at the meeting of the Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence on August 19, 1945. According to Muslims, this Ministry was necessary to facilitate and control the implementation of Islamic laws particularly related to the family laws. The Christians strongly rejected the establishment of the ministry. They considered the formation of the Ministry as an effort to promote Islam as the state religion and to realize Muslims' aspiration to establish an Islamic state. According to them, this was contrary to the state ideology of *Pancasila*, which contains the principle of neutrality with regard to religion. Sidjabat, one of the prominent Christian leaders, said:

“...the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs conditions the majority of the people in Indonesia to a way of life in which Islam is

considered to be the religion of the state, even if it is not specifically mentioned in the Constitution. Further, everything that is less than the concept of an Islamic State in Indonesia will not satisfy the Muslims, as they are more and more conditioned to an atmosphere in which Islam is playing a bigger role in the society".¹⁷

Initially, the creation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs was rejected and this increased discontent amongst Muslims who had already been disappointed by the decision concerning the basis of the state, namely *Pancasila*, and not Islam or the Jakarta Charter. However, due to the intensity of pressure particularly from traditional '*ulamā*', the formation of such an institution was finally approved on January 3, 1946.¹⁸ Despite the Ministry having been established, as Boland notes, some Muslim groups continued the struggle for an Islamic state, in the hope that the general elections would bring a change in the position.

¹⁷ Sidjabat, *Religious Tolerance*, 61. According to one account, initially there had been some discussions on whether the Ministry would be a "Ministry for Islam" (*Kementrian Agama Islam*) or a "Ministry of Religion" (*Kementrian Agama*). It became a Ministry of Religion or more commonly Religious Affairs, first with three and afterwards with four sections: for the Muslims, the Protestants, the Catholics and the Hindu-Buddhists. See, B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 106.

¹⁸ Deliar Noer, *Administration of Islam* (Ithaca: Modern Indonesia Project, 1978), 14. According many observers, the formation of this Ministry was an attempt to have compromise between the secular concept of the separation of religion and the state and the Muslim theory of the alliance of both.

But the elections of 1955 showed that the political struggle of Islam in Indonesia for that moment had reached stalemate.¹⁹ In the forums of the Constituent Assembly of 1956-1959, there were also efforts by Muslims to stir up the issue of the Jakarta Charter, but this led in the issue a Presidential Decree on July 5, 1959, which proclaimed, among others, a return to the Constitution of 1945.

C. Muslim-Christian Conflicts during the New Order Era (1967-1998)

On September 30, 1965 the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) attempted coup d'état in the country, but it was then abrupt and quickly stamped out by the Armed Forces under Major General Suharto, the Chief of the Army's Strategic Command. This failure of the communist coup resulted in the coming to power of Suharto, who replaced President Sukarno in March 1966. He ruled the country until the mid of 1998.

At the beginning of Suharto era, commonly known New Order era, relationships between Muslims and Christians were still very much

¹⁹ Boland, *The Struggle of Islam*, 107.

influenced by the response to the above event of September 30, 1965. As the government outlawed the Communist Party and eradicated all communist influences in Indonesia, it encouraged all Indonesians to have a religion. A failure to do this would brand you as a communist and therefore you had to face the risk of being imprisoned or even sentenced to death. The only way to avoid this charge was to adhere to one of the five state-recognized religions, that is, Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism or Buddhism. In this situation, the Churches offered protection to those who had been suspected of involvement in communist activities. As a result, a large number of ex-members and sympathizers of the Communist Party thronged to convert to the Christian religion. It was reported that within five years after the event of September 1965 the number of the Christians increased tremendously by more than 2.5 million in Indonesia ²⁰.

²⁰ See John Roxborough, "Context and Continuity: Regional Patterns in the History of Southeast Asian Christianity," in *Asian Journal of Theology* 9, no. 1 (1995), p. 41. See also M.C. Ricklefs, "Six Centuries of Islamization in Java," Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1979), p. 124.

The Muslim reaction to these numerous conversions was very strong. They considered the protection by the churches like “fishing in the troubled water” as the churches would allegedly take advantage from the socio-political turbulence at that time. The Christians, however, denied this allegation, saying that the mass conversion was a logical consequence of the government’s policy to encourage every single citizen to adhere to a religion.

In this context of development, the issue of Christianization in fact became one of the main problems bothering the relationship between Muslims and Christians. Already in 1963 there had been pamphlets circulating among Muslims in Java warning them about a plan to Christianize Java within 25 years and all Indonesia in the period of 50 years.²¹ In order to achieve this aim, these pamphlets described measures such as the building of churches in places where a majority of the inhabitants were Muslims as well as the building of Christian clinics, hospitals and orphanages, while promising Muslim employees

²¹ This pamphlet was allegedly resulted from an anonymous paper from a conference by Protestants and Catholics in East Java. However, many questioned the validity of the pamphlet since the conference itself had never been held. B.J. Boland, p. 227.

promotion on condition that they would comply with requests from Christians. Other measures included the translation of the Bible into Arabic, the increasing of the number of Christian schools, and also suggesting to Christian females to marry Muslim males and convert them to Christianity.²²

The issues of Christianization, as one could expect, caused anxiety in the Muslim circles. As a result, a number of apologetic and polemic publications from Muslims appeared and most of them served in response to the missionaries' arguments in the justification of the Christian doctrine. It is not necessary to discuss the contents of these publications. Just as those Christian publications on Islam before 1945, which represented the religion negatively, many Muslim publications on Christian in this case also had the same character. Christianity as it was portrayed in these publications was sometimes almost unrecognizable to Christians. The authors of such works sometimes cited all sorts of Christian publications without realizing to what extent

²² Umar Hasyim, *Toleransi dan Kemerdekaan Beragama Dalam Islam Sebagai Dasar Menuju Dialog dan Kerukunan Antar Agama: Sejarah Toleransi dan Intoleransi Agama dan Kepercayaan sejak Jaman Yunani* (Surabaya: PT. Bina Ilmu, 1991), pp. 270-71.

the books quoted could be considered representative of Christianity.²³ In short, it could be said that such publications were not but to give a negative impression of the religion treated. None of those books was written to contribute to the understanding of the other religion. It is not surprising therefore that the appearance of such apologetic and polemic works added to the tension between Christians and Muslims.

In a further development, serious conflicts between the two communities flared up in many regions. On 1 October 1967, an incident appeared in Makasar, where Muslim youths caused damaged to furniture in various churches. One of the causes of this incident was allegedly the provocative activities of the Christian community in that area. It was said that a Christian Church was built opposite the Great Mosque of Makasar, although there were no Christians living in that quarter. The most serious one was said to be a discussion at the home

²³ One of the examples of these works is Djarnawi Hadikusumo's *Disekitar Perdjanjian Lama dan Perdjanjian Baru (on the Old and New Testaments)*. In this work, the author gave a rather different perspective from that understood by the mainstream Christian concerning the origin and the authors of the Bible. He referred to one of the publications of the Jehovah's Witnesses. For the discussion of these Muslim polemical works on the Christianity in Indonesia, see Ismatu Ropi, "Depicting the Other Faith: A Bibliographical Survey of Indonesian Muslim Polemics on Christianity" in *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1989), pp. 77-120.

of a Christian teacher of religion who had insulted Islam by saying that Muhammad was only married to nine of his wives and lived in adultery with the others.²⁴

Facing these conditions the government took the initiative and held a meeting between various religious leaders in Jakarta on November 30, 1967 with the aim of improving relations between different religious communities. In this meeting, however, the problem of the missions evoked heated debates particularly between Muslims and Christians. From the Muslim party, objections were posed as to the improper methods of Christian propaganda, which could irritate relations between religious communities. One of the Muslim participants, Professor Rasjidi, spoke about his own personal experience, in which two Christian proselytizers once visited him at home to try to convert him to Christianity.²⁵ Also, Muhammad Natsir, another Muslim participant, appealed to the Christians not to

²⁴ *Pandji Masjarakat*, no 19, October 1967.

²⁵ H. M. Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku Tetap Memeluk Agama Islam* (Djakarta, Hudaya, 1968), p. 15.

propagate their religion to Muslims and urged them to respect the Muslim identity.

The Minister of Religious Affairs at the meeting proposed that religions should declare that they would not take the believers of other universal religions as the target of their missionary activities. Christian missions or Islamic *da'wa* should be directed only at deepening the faith of each religion respectively. Muslim participants agreed to subscribe to such a declaration, but the Christians rejected the declaration against missions, as they regarded mission as part of their religion. The forum failed to solve the inter-religious conflicts and ended in unpleasant atmosphere. The scanty result was an agreement to set up a so-called *Wadah Musyawarah Antar Umat Beragama* (the Forum for Inter-Religious Consultation), which would assist the government in solving religious problems.²⁶

The failure of the meeting subsequently resulted in the appearance of an image in the Muslim circles that Christians appeared to be intolerant, as they refused to accept the formula that one religious

²⁶ B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam...* p. 236.

community should not address its propaganda to adherents of another religious community. For their part, Christians explained that they disagreed with various improper methods of mission, but on the other hand, simply had to be obedient to their religious call to preach the Gospel to all people. Thus, they asked their Muslim counterparts to respect their Church identity to carry out the missions. To some extents, they considered Muslims intolerant, because they obstructed their right to spread the message.²⁷

Another case of attack on church occurred in April 1969 in Jakarta, where some 500 Muslim youths desecrated a recently built Protestant Church in the Slipi region of western Jakarta. Muslims alleged that no permission had been given by the Government to build the church, that Muslims outnumbered Christians nearly seventy to one in the area, and that there were five churches in Slipi already. Hence, the building of an additional church was seen as provocative.²⁸

²⁷ “Dapatkah Kristen-Muslim Hidup Rukun” (Can Christians and Muslim Live Harmoniously) *Sinar Harapan*, 31 May 1969.

²⁸ Van der Kroef, Justus M, *Indonesia Since Soekarno* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1971), 236-237.

On September 13, 1969, the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs issued a joint ministerial decree stipulating that a house of worship could only be built with the approval of a regional administrator, such as a governor. Religious services at homes were only allowed if the local religious leaders approved. This position was based on the assumption that using a home for a house of worship could incite social disturbance.

In 1978, the Minister of Religious Affairs issued other decisions related to the problem of missionary work. These were the Decision No. 70, which contained the guidelines for the propagation of religion, and the Decision No. 77, which dealt with overseas aid to religious institutions in Indonesia. In the first directive, it was mentioned that religious propaganda could not be aimed at a person of another religion, especially through social services, literature distribution, or personal visitation. The second decree concerned the relationships between religious groups and their connection to the government in respect to foreign money and personnel being used in religious activity.

It specified that religious aid of any kind originating outside Indonesia must be channelled through the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Theoretically, these regulations were actually applied for all religions in Indonesia. However, due to other special harassment of Christian missionaries, this was felt by Christians to be particularly aimed at them. The Indonesian Council of Churches and the Indonesia Council of Catholic Bishops issued a joint letter asking the government to revoke the regulations. Their primary reason was that the decisions were contrary to Article 29 of the Constitution, which guarantees religious freedom. Walter Bonar Sidjabat, a Christian leader, described these directives as an act, which “tarnished some noble principles that were put forward by the founding fathers of the Republic of Indonesia in the *Pancasila*”.

In 1973, another matter had also exacerbated the relations between Muslims and Christians. This concerned the legislation of the National Marriage Law. Previously, the law of marriage using Dutch colonial arrangement was applied differently to different groups: the marriage of Muslims was subjected to *Shari'a* law whereas for the Christians and

foreign residents it was handled within the Dutch civil law code. The government then felt it necessary to issue a law, which would be applied uniformly to all Indonesians. In the proposed legislation it was said that difference of nation, ethnic, country of origin, place of origin, religion, faith and ascendant do not constitute as a hindrance to getting married. For Muslims, difference of religion is an obstacle to getting married; a Muslim woman is prevented from marrying a non-Muslim man. Not surprisingly, the Muslims refused to accept the above Marriage Law, as they saw it as being contradictory to Islamic law. Many saw the introduction of Law as an effort to secularize and some regarded it as a new attempt to Christianize Indonesia. The Christians were indeed among those groups who gave strong support to the proposed law.

In response to the problem, a contentious debate appeared in the Christian press and a lot of pressure was used to stop the introduction of Muslim family law for the Muslims. The core of the matter was that religion must not be allowed to play a decisive role in the socio-political life of the people. An editorial in a Catholic newspaper "*Kompas*" wrote

that the application of religious law in marriages would open the possibility for further application of religious law in many other fields. The same expression was also found in all Christian press. The Christians used every opportunity to apply secular law, which would not discriminate the citizen in terms of religious differences. Facing such fierce reactions from Islamic organizations, the government, accepting Muslim aspiration, agreed to revise some chapters of the Law. The revised draft of the Law was finally legalized in 1974 to the displeasure of the Christian circles.

In 1989, Muslims and Christians were involved in a debate on Law no. 2/1989 concerning the National Education System. Under this Law, the government stipulated that religious education would be a subsystem of the national education system and therefore it became a compulsory subject to be taught at all public schools and universities. The crucial point, however, was concerning the clarification of the article stating that a teacher of religious instruction should teach the religion in accordance with what he or she embraces and with what his or her students possess. The Christians objected to the rule as it had the

consequence, among others, that Christian schools should prepare Muslim teachers for their Muslim students. In reality, many Christian schools not only did not employ Muslim teachers to teach their Muslim students an Islamic teaching, but also required them to study Christianity. It could be understood that in the context of Muslims fear of Christianization in which those Muslim students allegedly had a great opportunity to be Christianized, this became a problem for Muslims. It was this reason why Muslims so strongly endeavoured to legalize the Law.²⁹

Also in the same year, the tension between the two groups appeared in a debate on Law No. 7/1989 concerning religious (Islamic) judiciary. Generally, Muslims argued that such a Law was needed due to the uncertainty of the position of the religious judiciary. Based on the

²⁹ Viewing this situation, the Tenth Commission of the People's Consultative Assembly carried out a meeting in 1990 with the Minister of Education and Culture to discuss about the duty of the school and the right of students to obtain the religious education. In the meeting there were differences of opinion concerning the article 16 of the Government Rule No. 28/1990 – as the clarification of the above-mentioned substantial Law No. 2/1989, which assert “the students have the right to obtain a religious instruction in accordance with the religion they embrace”. The Minister, however, explained that religious oriented schools were not obligatory to perform a religious education other than their own religious orientation. For Muslims, this was regarded as contradictory to the legalized substantial Law.

Government Rule No. 14/1970, the government in fact recognized the existence of religious judiciary among other judiciaries with their different tasks respectively. The main task of religious judiciary was to handle matters of family, divorce and inheritance of Muslims. In order to get a legal enforcement the legal decision produced by this court should nevertheless be ratified by the civil court. With this condition, the religious court was seen as subordinate to the civil court. Under the new law religious court acquired its independence and equality with the civil court.

According to the Christians, the Law was contrary to *Pancasila*, the Basic Law of 1945 and the concept of unity of Indonesia reflected in *Wawasan Nusantara*. Furthermore, they regarded the Law as a stepping-stone to the formation of Islamic state. In the discussions it appeared that the issues of “Jakarta Charter” and “Islamic State” were raised against Muslims. In response, one of the Catholic Jesuits, F. S. Wijoyo, published an article entitled “*Tiada Toleransi untuk Piagam Jakarta*” (No Tolerance for the Jakarta Charter) warning of the possibility of re-emergence of the spirit of Jakarta Charter in the process of legalization

of Law 7/1989. Furthermore, he condemned the Law as “something imported from outside”. He asked why the customary law, which originated from our own homeland, would not be taken as an option. “Would we all behave ourselves with the foreign custom covered by religion?”

Muslim reactions in this case were noteworthy. Muhammad Natsir whose name has been mentioned earlier, wrote a response headed “*Tanpa Toleransi Tak-kan Ada Kerukunan*” (No Harmony without Tolerance). He sharply criticized Wijoyo, charging him of pretending not to understand why the customary law would not be used. Whereas the latter regarded the 1989 Law as foreign in origin, Natsir, on the contrary, replied, “Does the religion he embraces really derive from Indonesian origin?” Natsir denounced those critics who often simply related issues with the Jakarta Charter, even when the context was irrelevant. In short, he said, both Catholics and Protestants were actually mobilizing funds and forces to annul such an effort of legalizing the Law.

In the above cases of Marriage Law and Religious Judiciary Law, it is clear that the Christians are quite intense in countering every effort to realize any law based on religion. Their argument is obvious: Indonesia is a “*Pancasila* state”, not a religious one. Every effort to realize religious law in the state would be regarded as opposing against *Pancasila*. Their fears of an emergence of the Muslims’ will to re-actualize the idea of Jakarta Charter is understandable, as they believe the charter is aimed for the interest of Muslim groups rather than for all citizens.

In mid-October 1990, another event had sensationally caused a commotion particularly in the Muslim community. A popular weekly tabloid, *Monitor*, published in its edition of 15 October 1990 the results of the readers’ survey of most favoured public figures. Surprisingly enough, the prophet Muhammad was placed at eleventh below a number of singers and politicians and even a level lower than the editor himself, Arswendo Atmowiloto, who was at tenth. Many Muslims were considerably irritated at the publication of such a poll, which was regarded as an insult against the prophet of Muhammad by comparing

him to the worldly figures. The outrage was heightened by the fact that *Monitor* was part of the Catholic-owned publishing group. As a result, a number of demonstrations appeared. These demonstrations insisted on the banning of the publication and even condemned the editor to the death sentence. Some demonstrators had roughly destroyed the *Monitor* office.³⁰

This incident was a cause for concern to many of the foremost religious leaders and theologians. The late Lukman Harun, who was at that time leader of Muhammadiyah, criticized the editor, saying that his guilt was even greater than that of Salman Rushdie. Muhammad Natsir, furthermore, considered the case as having destroyed the harmony among religious communities. Nurcholish Madjid, a prominent Muslim theologian, commented that such a publication reflected arrogance and insensibility towards Muslims. Abdurrahman Wahid gave a rather soft critic saying that if Muslims felt insulted, they should simply boycott the tabloid. He did not agree to the banning of the tabloid, as such would infringe on fundamental rights and the

³⁰ *Tempo*, No. 36, XX - 3 Nopember 1990, p. 32.

freedom of speech. He signaled that certain Islamic groups and individuals exaggerated the issue and used the editor as a scapegoat to promote their political agenda, which emphasized exaggerating fears of Christianization. As the government banned the tabloid, he criticized this attitude, saying that this was an over reaction and immature.

The change of the Muslims' role in the Indonesian political arena in 1990s had also a certain impact in the relationship between Muslims and Christians. This development was marked by the closeness of President Suharto towards Islam and Muslims. He began to change his oppressive policy on the Muslims and Islam in general by showing them greater favour. The strategic post in the military was handed over to the generals who were closer to the Muslims. Suharto formed a foundation "*Yayasan Amal Bhakti Pancasila*" which became actively involved in funding many Muslim activities and the building of many mosques all over Indonesia. Suharto also sponsored the formation of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI, *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*)³¹, which was headed by Habibie, former

Minister of Research and Technology who was at that time Suharto's vice president.

One important point to note here is concerning the establishment of ICMI.³² Many Muslims in deed consider the establishment of ICMI as an attempt to create an Islamic society, rather than an Islamic state. However, this idea of Islamic society itself invited much criticism from non-Muslims. According to Darmaputera, the idea of an Islamic society where "government policy, programs, and law are imbued with Islamic values would inevitably endanger national unity." He argued that in such an Islamic society pluralism would not be recognized and respected, but rather would be suppressed and destroyed.³³ The

³¹ This organization is a collection of government officials and leading modernist Islamic intellectuals (mostly from Muhammadiyah, including "followers of the late Mohammad Natsir, the former Prime Minister and leader of *Masyumi*, the modernist Islamic party dissolved by Sukarno in the early 1960s and not revived under the New Order. Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia*, p. 76.

³² It should be noted in this relation that the establishment ICMI, as William Liddle says, is, among others, a tool to court certain Islamic groups to Suharto's side prior to the general elections of 1992 and the presidential election of 1993. See R. William Liddle, "Media Dakwah Scripturalism: One Form of Islamic Political Thought and Action in New Order Indonesia," in *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics* (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 283.

³³ Darmaputera, "'Prinsip-Prinsip Hubungan Agama-Negara [the Principles of Religion-State relationships]." In Trisno S. Sutanto et.al (eds.) *Pergulatan*

prominent Catholic theologian, Magnis-Suseno in commenting the idea of Islamic society has said:

“Should every religion have its own concept in the life of state, economics, and society (namely, the concept of a Catholic state, the concept of a Protestant Christian economics, the concept of an Islamic society, the concept of Hindu nationalism, etc.) that must be accomplished by its intellectual association? Where is the unity if each has its own platform? By adopting *Pancasila* as the only basis in the social, national and state life, are we intended to avoid such a confessionalization of politics?³⁴

It is important to note, some Muslim scholars also disagreed with the idea of Islamic society. Abdurrahman Wahid, for example, was one of those who rejected the notion of Islamic society. He suspected that the idea would lead to the creation of an Islamic state. In his opinion, an Islamic society in Indonesia is treason against the Constitution because it would make non-Muslims second-class citizens.³⁵ In an interview with Douglas E. Ramage, Wahid pointed out, “ICMI will alienate non-Muslims and nominal Muslims, and thereby aggravate the already

Kehadiran Kristen Di Indonesia: Teks- Teks Terpilih Eka Darmaputera, (Jakarta: EPIC Gunung Mulia, 2001. p. 363

³⁴ Franz Magnis-Suseno, “ICMI, PIKI, Dan Lain-Lain”, in *Mencari Makna Kebangsaan* (Yogyakarta: 1988), p. 41.

³⁵ Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 64.

strong divisions and misunderstandings in our society between religious, ethnic and cultural groups”.³⁶ In short, Wahid’s rejection of ICMI was due to ICMI’s attempts to legitimize Islamic exclusivism and erode social tolerance for non-Muslim Indonesians.

By the second half of the 1990s, a series of unrest and communal violence erupted in various areas, some of which necessarily reflected the tension between Muslims and Christians. These incidents include the conflicts in East Timor and Purwakarta (November 1995), Pekalongan (November 1995 and April 1997), Tasikmalaya (September 1996), Situbondo (October 1996), Rengasdengklok (January 1997), Temanggung and Jepara (April 1997), Pontianak (April 1997), Banjarmasin (Mei 1997), Sampang and Bangkalan (Mai 1997), Medan (April 1996), Tanah Abang (August 1997), Mataram (September 1997), Ende and Subang (August 1997). It can be assumed that these incidents were preliminary due to the more intense scale-riots that occurred in Mai 1998 in various cities – Jakarta, Medan, Tangerang, Bekasi,

³⁶ Douglas E. Ramage, “Democratisation, Religious Tolerance and *Pancasila*: The Political Thought of Abdurrahman Wahid” in Greg Feal and Greg Barton, *Nahdatul ‘Ulamā’ , Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia* (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1996), p. 246.

Bandung, Palembang, Padang, Surakarta, which were followed by the fall of Suharto's New Order regime on May 21, 1998. Strikingly, most of the incidents were marked by the destruction of places of worship such as mosques, temples, and most commonly churches. According to one report, there were 105 churches burned or destroyed from 1995 to 1997.³⁷

It is not easy to find the cause of these spreading conflicts. Most of the conflicts, as many suggest, have in fact complex factors. In its study concerning six cases of the conflicts between 1995 and 1997, the Research Center for Rural and Regional Development (*Pusat Penelitian Pembangunan Pedesaan dan Kawasan*) of the Yogyakarta's Gadjah Mada University in cooperation with the Department of Religious Affairs, concluded that the conflicts and the collective violence are generally part of the political conflicts in the society. Many conflicts allegedly derived from the level of state and social structure controlled by the state apparatus and the owners of the big business companies. Economic development, which is considered to have created social gap

³⁷ Paul Tahalele and Thomas Santoso, *Beginikah Kemerdekaan Kita?* (Surabaya: Forum Kristiani Indonesia, 1997), 207.

between rich and poor, is also very conducive for the emergence of conflicts. The report also listed a number of other factors as follows: ³⁸

1. The unreliability of people toward the government
2. The unfinished process of integration and the feeling of internal colonialism (the case of East Timor)
3. The socialization of religious teaching which supported militant actions
4. The negative impact of the propagation of religion among isolated tribes involving
5. The crisis of authority within certain groups as well as between social groups
6. The phenomenon of correlation between race and religion (ethnic Chinese and fundamentalist Christians were associated)
7. The misleading strategy of multi-culturalism

The report formulated some proposals further in order to prevent riots and violence for the future. There should be a strategy of power

³⁸ Pusat Penelitian Pembangunan Pedasaan dan Kawasan, *Perilaku Kekerasan Kolektif: Kondisi dan Pemicu* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University, 1997), 8; Cf. Tarmizi Taher, *Apiring The Middle Path*, 44-45.

sharing by a combination of pluralism and autonomy. A system of representation should guarantee the participation of all groups. The participation of every citizen should be guaranteed and the basis of local power should be protected. Autonomy should be given not out of material competence, but out of the need to preserve local cultural identity. The transmigration program, mostly moving Javanese Muslim peasants to poor non-Islamic areas in the outer islands, should also initiate progress for the local community. The socialization and propagation of religion must develop tolerance and avoid the feeling of colonizing the local religion. The religious leaders should be aware of political intervention into the institutional affairs of religion.³⁹

Many believed that the growing of the conflicts was inseparable from the impact of some policies of New Order government in handling inter-religious and inter-ethnic issues, which tended to create certain difficulties for both religious communities as well as for ethnic groups. One significant point in this case concerned the so-called policy on SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Inter-group Relations), which

³⁹ *Ibid.*

was introduced for the first time in 1978. With this policy, the government banned discussions on issues of SARA, for they might lead to conflicts and destabilize the unity of the nation. Due to people's fear to talk about SARA, closed attitudes developed and this in turn nurtured prejudices, fear, and unhealthy rivalry among different groups. This became more complicated if the issues were mixed up with social jealousy, economic and political interest.

According to the prominent theologian, Mudji Sutrisno SJ, the policy of SARA actually appeared as socio-psychological mechanism that was reluctant to face and solve the conflicts openly.⁴⁰ Another theologian, Sumarthana, even strongly rejected the policy in his following remark:

"The discourse on SARA developed by the New Order regime should be rejected as it has misleading paradigm in understanding Indonesian society. It is necessary to develop a new paradigm on SARA, which is more realistic and appreciative towards SARA itself. Indonesian society is in deed born of SARA. How could SARA be regarded taboo and thus to be concealed? The ban of SARA maintained by the New Order government should be wiped out and changed with a more open policy of SARA. The New Order policy of SARA is not different from that of colonial one, which cultivates the suspiciousness among ethnic and religions. The consequence of this policy is social disintegration,

⁴⁰ "Dialog antar Agama dalam Pigura Humanisasi" *Jurnal Ulumul Qur'an* 4 Vol. IV 193) p.

discrimination, prejudices among groups, which are phenomenal in the society”.

D. Muslim-Christian Conflicts in the Post New Order Era (from 1998 up to now)

On May 21 1998, Suharto resigned after a wave of protests forced him to step down from the presidency following the deepening economic crisis in 1997. He was replaced by a transitional government, led by Vice-President B.J. Habibie. With this replacement, the New Order regime ended and since then the so-called Reformation Era began. In this political transition, a number of questions still obstructed the relationship between religious groups. As the freedom of speech began to be realized, many people became more and more concerned in political affairs. A number of new political parties appeared, but many unfortunately have exclusively religious tendencies. These tendencies were clear not only in the Muslim groups, but also in the Christian ones. Some Christian activists and leaders formed parties and entered the political arena. However, due to the sheer numbers of the Muslim majority and the volatility of the subject of “political” Islam, it was the

politicization of Islam that dominated the public discourse. In this situation religious issues began to fill political discourses.

One of the most crucial issues which attracted public debate concerned the *Shari'a*. During the New Order regime, the issue *Shari'a* issue in deed no more constituted a significant question, since the government did not give any concession towards any religious groups who want to change Pancasila with religious ideologies. This was more obvious with the issuance by the government of the No. 8 Law of 1985 that stipulates that all parties and social organizations must adopt Pancasila as their sole principle.

However, with the fall of New Order regime, the situation altered. The breakdown of state control following reformation campaign allowed Muslim to revitalize their influence in the political sphere. With the abolishment of the Pancasila requirement in 1998, Islamic groups, both political parties and community organizations openly took Islam as the principle. Parties such as PPP (the United Development Party) and PBB (the Crescent Moon and Star Party) made public their intention to insert the Jakarta Charter into *Pancasila*. This

sparked a heated discussion and although the Parliament rejected the insertion of the Jakarta Charter into *Pancasila* but it had opened up a public debate on the issue.

The demand for the implementation of *Shari'a* was particularly strong among the so called "hardliner groups" such as Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) *Laskar Jihad*, *Laskar Mujahidin*, and *Hizbut Tahrir*. The most crucial thing was that in the effort to implement *Shari'a* some of the groups exerted violent actions. The FPI, for example, launched violent attacks on nightclubs, discotheques, billiard clubs and other entertainment establishments, in the name of religion, to eradicate all sorts of religiously prohibited practices such gambling, consumption of alcohol, and prostitution.

Whereas the issue of the Jakarta Charter at the national level had already been clarified with the Parliament decision not to amend Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, it remained problematic with the growing aspirations for the implementation of *Shari'a* at the regional level. These aspirations came forth after the government launched a new policy of regional autonomy, which gave a greater authority for

the local government to run the governmental administration. The most important momentum was when the central government gave authority to Aceh province to adopt the *Shari'a*, as part of its special status as a Muslim province. Since then, other regions with Muslim majority also demand to adopt *Shari'a* in their areas.⁴¹

It might be expected, non-Muslim groups worried about these growing aspirations for the implementation of Islamic *Shari'a* in Indonesia. Christians were very concerned that the implementation of *Shari'a* by the state would lead to discrimination of non-Muslim groups. They even expressed that the cultural developments that accompany the call for implementation of *Shari'a* were more dangerous than the possible insertion of a reference to *Shari'a* in the constitutional level.

⁴¹ It should be noted here that religious affairs actually do not include in the policy of regional autonomy (the case of Aceh is an exception, due to its special status). However, those regions calling for implementation of *Shari'a* have attempted to pass these by using the so called *Peraturan Daerah* (regional by-laws). In the West Sumatra, for example, the local legislature has proposed a regulation on the prohibition and the eradication of immoral deeds (*ma'siat*). The rule specifies, among others, the banning of women to be outside her home between the hours of 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. unless accompanied by a close relative. The reason for the banning is to hinder all activities violating God's law. The bill has evoked many criticisms from local and human rights activists. This regulation was considered a denial of women's rights, and was criticized for unfairly placing the blame on women for an apparent rise in immoral acts in the city of Padang.

In the grassroots level, the development in interreligious relations in this era deteriorated drastically. There appeared in this period conflicts in the form of physical war incomparable to the previous period. One of the most terrible conflicts was Muslim-Christian fighting in Maluku province, which went on for almost four years. This caused the loss of at least 5,000 people and the displacement of close to 700,000 others – almost one-third of the population of 2.1 million!⁴² the worst tragedy in the history of Muslim-Christian relations in the country.

Starting for the first time in Ambon on the occasion of the Muslim feast of *'Id al-Fitri* on January 19 1999, this clash was actually sparked by a dispute between a public transport driver, who was a Christian, and his passenger, who was a Muslim. The incident surprisingly turned into a massive fight between Christians and Muslims, even spread to neighbouring islands in the Maluku province, destroying a long tradition in the region of mutual tolerance between the two

⁴² For more information about the conflicts in Ambon, see ICG Asia Report, "Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Chaos in Maluku," December 19 2000; "The Search for Peace in Maluku," February 8 2002; Also see Human Rights Watch/Asia, "The Violence in Ambon," *A Human Rights Watch Report*, vol. 11, no. 1 March 1999 (www.crisisweb.org)

communities. According to some Ambones, the traditionally good relations between Muslims and Christians became tense due to the coming of less integrated Muslim newcomers from other parts of Indonesia, who threatened to upset the ethnic balance of the province.⁴³ Economic competition between the two communities also appeared to play a role in the violence.

The conflict in Maluku was exacerbated by the intervention of the so-called *Laskar Jihad* ("holy war brigade"), a Muslim paramilitary group that was established in Yogyakarta on 30 January 2000 in response to what they considered as a deliberate prosecution of Muslims in Maluku. Seeing that the Muslim side was getting worse, *Laskar Jihad* sent thousands of men, recruited mostly from Java to assist their co-believers in facing confrontations with Ambones Christians. The arrival of this militant group in Ambon resulted in renewed

⁴³ In the Ambonese communities, there was an old tradition called *Pela Gandong* signifying a custom mutual friendship used to manage inter-group relations among them. *Pela* means "blood" and *Gandong* means "relative". The "blood relative tradition" means that each person, regardless of their faith, has to go back to their bloodline and relatives and re-establish that relationship. This cultural tradition has been carried out in some areas in South East Maluku and it has been proven successful in ending the conflict and bringing the communities back together.

fighting and a sharp increase in casualties, in particular among Christians.⁴⁴

Also about the same time, Muslims-Christian fighting erupted in Poso region, Central Sulawesi, after an incident in the town of Poso where a young Protestant on December 24 1998 stabbed a Muslim in the arm.⁴⁵ As is the case in Maluku, the violence in this area was also engendered by the presence and activity of armed militant Muslims from outside the province. Some Muslim leaders contended the intervention of *Laskar Jihad* was in part because local Muslim

⁴⁴ For more on *Laskar Jihad* see Michael Davis, "Laskar Jihad and the Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 24, No.1 (April 2002), pp. 12-32.

⁴⁵ The conflict in this region was always described in terms of phases: December 1998 was the outbreak of the conflict; 16 April to 3 May 2000 was intensification of Muslim attacks; 23 May to July 2000 was counterattacks by Christian communities; June to December 2001 was displacement and destruction; and January 2002 to the present was peace process and its sometimes violent aftermath. See. "1,000 people killed and 100,000 displaced in inter-religious violence in Central Sulawesi (1998-2001)," Global IDP, Human Rights Watch (HRW), accessible at www.idpproject.org; For more on this conflict see Lorraine V. Aragon, "Communal Violence in Poso, Central Sulawesi: Where People Eat Fish and Fish Eat People," *Indonesia* 72 (October 2001), pp 45-78; David Rohde, "Indonesia Unravelling?" *Foreign Affairs* July - August 2001; "Breakdown: Four Years of Communal Conflicts in Central Sulawesi", 4 December 2002, accessible at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/AllDocsByUNID/211f3d32d11506b449256c850007f50>

communities had lost all confidence in the security forces and therefore *Laskar Jihad's* presence was instrumental to their security.

In both Maluku and Central Sulawesi conflicts, the government, in addition to dispatching thousands of soldiers and police officers to the areas, has actually made reconciliation efforts between the two communities. Some of the initiatives, however, faced failure. In December 2001, for instance, the government invited the Muslim and Christian communities to negotiate to put an end to the hostility in Central Sulawesi. Their discussions, at Malino, resulted in the agreement called Malino Declaration, which was signed on December 20, 2001. However, the effect of the agreement, however, only persisted for some days, since not long after the declaration three churches were bombed in the Central Sulawesi capital of Palu.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The failure of Malino Declaration is allegedly due to the fact the declaration is elitist, relied on quantitative measures of success, and is laden with opportunities for profitable projects. Another factor is that the treaty does not give comprehensive solutions with regard to social rehabilitation, reconstruction of facilities and security. For example, facilities are constructed without regard for the prevailing security situation and social rehabilitation is not supported by affirmative policies. Syamsul Alam Agus, "Peace for Poso; Highlighting the state's role may help stop the Poso conflict", Inside Indonesia Oct - Dec 2002, accessible at <http://www.serve.com/~inside/edit72/Politics%20Alam.htm>

There has been a significant increase in the number of attack on churches in the recent conflicts. From the period of January 1999 to April 2001, Christian groups recorded 327 attacks on church, varying from minor damage to total destruction. Most of the attacks and destruction occurred in Maluku and Poso. Surveying the cases of attack on churches, we could see the increase in the following statistic:

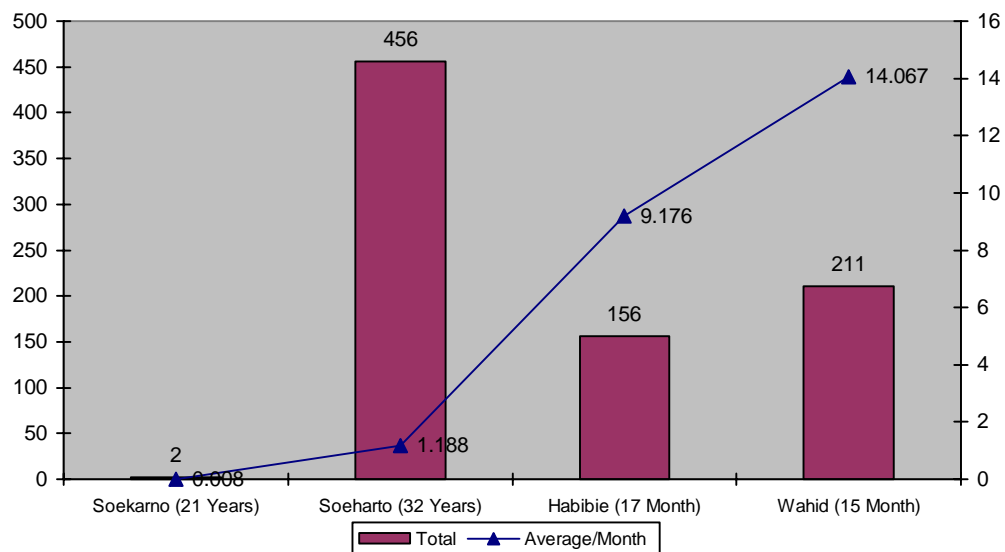


Fig.: The total of Church's closed, destroyed, and or burnt down during Soekarno, Suharto, Habibie, and Abdurrahman Wahid Presidency since Period 1945-2001. Source: "The Church and Human Rights in Indonesia" in *Indonesia Actual News*, SCCF-ICCF Documentation, Surabaya, January 31, 2001.

The figure shows that from the establishment of the republic until the end of January 2001, a total of 825 Christian churches had either been completely destroyed or damaged by acts of violence or

prohibited and closed by the authorities. The rate of increase in the destruction is considerably significant. Whereas only 2 churches were destroyed during 21 years of President Soekarno (0,008 per month), 456 churches in the 32 years under President Suharto (1,2 per month), 156 within 17 months under President Habibie (9,2 per month) and 211 in the 15 months under President Abdurrahman Wahid. This figure includes the destruction resulting from the conflicts in the Moluccas and the Poso region of Central Sulawesi. Observers point out that, if these conflict areas are ignored, the number of churches destroyed has actually dropped in recent years. Whereas 8.3 churches were destroyed per month during President Suharto's last year in office (1997/98), the adjusted figure under Habibie fell to 6.6 per month and under Abdurrahman Wahid to 4.3.⁴⁷ It should be noted, however, that during the conflicts in these areas, a total number of 254 mosques, according to report of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, had also been destroyed or damaged.

⁴⁷ Theopilus Bela, "The Future of Inter-religious Relations in Indonesia: Assessments from a Non-Muslim Viewpoint", accessible at <http://www.proconcil.org/document/Bela%202.htm>

It is noteworthy that many attacks on churches, with the exception of attacks in the context of wide-scale violence, necessarily reflected Muslims discontent about the building or the activities of churches in predominantly Muslim areas. It was often alleged that the existence of the churches disturbs the peace in the community or that the construction of churches was supposedly without permit. According to the government rule, to build a house of worship in one area, there should be an agreement obtained from local residents living near the site as well as a license from the regional office of the Ministry of Religion. Some Christians complained that community agreement was difficult to acquire and alleged that in some areas, Muslim authorities were systematically trying to prevent them from building churches.

Chapter Three

MANAGING INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS IN INDONESIA; INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

A. The Policy of Government in Building Interreligious Harmony

Religious tolerance constitutes of one of the most important dimensions emphasized by the government in the development of the religious sector. In the Broad Outlines of State Policy (GBHN), it is mentioned that one of the national development's objectives in the field of religion is to create harmonious life of religious communities in a atmosphere of mutual respect and the spirit of pluralism.⁴⁸ It is often argued, that religious harmony is instrumental for the maintenance of the unity of the pluralistic nation. In order to establish interreligious harmony the government has conducted various programs encompassing interreligious dialogues, conference, and seminars attended by the leaders from various religious backgrounds. In

⁴⁸ Kompilasi Peraturan Perundang-Undangan Kerukunan Hidup Umat Beragama, sixth edition (Jakarta, Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama, 1997/1998), pp. 8-9.

addition, the government also intensifies surveys and researches on interreligious relations in various areas of the country. These plans are carried out under the auspices of the Minister of Religious Affairs.

One of the government efforts in cultivating harmonious life among interreligious groups is conducting interreligious dialogue. Initially this activity did not run well as can be seen in the failure of 30 November 1967 meeting; interreligious dialogue at that time changed to be the arena of unhealthy debate that resulted in an unpleasant atmosphere. However, in the later periods, particularly in the ministerial period of Mukti Ali (1971-1978) interreligious dialogues began to show their impetus. Ali realized the significance of interreligious dialogues for building mutual respect among religious communities. His emphasis on interreligious dialogue was based on his understanding that dialogue is a bridge to achieve the current human need for self-recognition, trust and respect for each other. According to him, dialogue is a process in which individuals and groups learn to wipe out fear and distrust of each other and attempt to develop relationships based upon respect and trust for each other. He said that

dialogue is dynamic contact between life and life which directed towards building a new world together".⁴⁹

It could be said that Mukti Ali was the first pioneer of inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia. He was in deed an expert in the Comparative Religion. He has studied at McGill Institute of Islamic Studies in Montreal, Canada, where he had Wilfred Cantwell Smith, as his supervisor, a very prominent scholar in the study of religion. Ali's approach of religions was indeed very much influenced by Smith. During his position as Minister, Mukti Ali, he intensified interreligious dialogues, which involved various religious leaders. The main goal of inter-religious dialogue policy, as Ali said, is "how the government institutes a well functioning forum to bring the adherents of religions in Indonesia to respect, to understand each other and to make them feel that they are living together under the canopy of one nation".⁵⁰ In the first year of his office, Ali introduced in the Ministry a special post

⁴⁹ Mukti Ali, "Dialogue between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia" in Mukti Ali (ed.), *Dialog Antar Agama* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Nida, 1971) p. 37.

⁵⁰ Mukti Ali, "Peranan Lembaga Keagamaan Dalam Modernisasi," in Bahrin, Agama dan Pembangunan di Indonesia (Jakarta: Departemen Agama, 1973), 145.

called *Proyek Pembinaan Kerukunan Hidup Antar Ummat Beragama* (Project for the Improvement of the Harmony of Interreligious Life), which was particularly designed to manage interreligious dialogues, seminars, researches, surveys and publications in the frame of fostering interreligious harmony.⁵¹

During the period of Alamsjah Ratu Perwiranegara (1978-1983), inter-religious dialogues were continuously carried out, but were not regarded as the great issue. The crucial and controversial issues raised during the leadership of Alamsjah were his formal and legal policies produced in order to control and organize religion and religious activities. The policies produced by the Minister were mostly rather reactionary against cases, which had already occurred. In other words, policies and activities run under Alamsyah were mostly responsive and casuistic, and were for the sake of political expediency. Alamsjah understood that religious harmony was one of the main conditions needed for the maintenance of national stability. This stability was

⁵¹ Karel Steenbrink, "Patterns of Dialogue in Indonesia 1965-1998", p. 86.

required for the application of the development program of the state.⁵² His emphasis on the political aspect of religion is understandable since he was not an academically religious scholar but an army general. He stressed his policies on maintaining national stability by promoting law and order concerning religious activities.

Alamsjah's most important policies were the publishing of The Decrees of the Minister of Religious Affairs Nos. 70 and 77, in 1978. The first decree regulated that the propagation of religion should not be addressed to those already having a religion and should not be carried out through gifts, food and drink, medications as well as through the distribution of pamphlets, bulletin, books etc. The other decree contained strict conditions in the matter of foreign aid in finances and personnel to Indonesian religious bodies. It was mentioned that foreign missionaries might not receive work permit if they came to spread their religion and foreign workers in other field were no longer allowed to be active in religious fields except in some particular cases. The issuance of these regulations was considered to avoid interreligious tension in

⁵² Alamsjah Ratu Perwiranegara, "Rukun untuk Tinggal Landas", in *Panji Masyarakat* No. 572, 11-20 April, 1988, pp. 234-237.

particular concerning missionary activities. Christian circles, however, regarded the regulations as opposing the freedom of religion in Indonesia. Muslim community, in deed, supported the rules, since they viewed them as the implementation of the 1967 interreligious meeting.⁵³

On 30 June 1980, Alamsjah set up the so-called *Wadah Musyawarah Antar Umat Beragama*⁵⁴ (the Forum for Interreligious Consultation). It consisted of five religious bodies representing their own communities, namely, the Council of Indonesian 'Ulamā' (MUI) for the Muslims; the Alliance of Indonesian Churches (PGI) for the Protestants; the Conference of Indonesian Bishops (KWI) for the Catholics; the Masters of Indonesian Buddhists (Walubi); and the Association of Indonesian Hindu-Dharma. It was in this forum formal interreligious dialogues between religious leaders were carried out. The forum however did not

⁵³ There is a supposition that the decrees were a warning against the efforts of some of the fundamentalist and oppositional Muslim groups to receive support in finance, weapons and ideological tools from Libya's Colonel Ghaddafi. See Karel Steenbrink, "Patterns of Dialogue in Indonesia 1965-1998", p. 93.

⁵⁴ The idea to form this body was in fact proposed for the first time in the 30 November 1967 interreligious meeting, but its realization encountered some difficulties, one of which was the impact of the failure of such first interreligious forum.

discuss about theological or doctrinal questions, but rather more about social and developmental issues. Theological or doctrinal issues were not paid much attention.

In spite the intensity of interreligious dialogue in this *Wadah Musyawarah Antar Umat Beragama*, many see some weaknesses in such activities. According to Azyumardi Azra, such interreligious dialogues have yet to show their progress in terms of quality since they were often carried out in partial and *ad hoc* manner, especially in their relation to certain political developments.⁵⁵ Karel Steenbrink, a Dutch observer, criticized the lack of follow-up of the activity. Owing to the centralized initiative of the Jakarta ministry, he remarks, the meetings could very well be single occasions without much further result.⁵⁶ The lack of theological discourses was apparently one of the most important sides of the weakness in such government sponsored interreligious dialogues. Since the problems discussed concerned more social and

⁵⁵ Azyumardi Azra, "Kerukunan dan Dialog Islam-Krsiten di Indonesia; Kajian Historis-Sosiologis", in Mursyid Ali, *Dinamika Kerukunan Hidup Beragama menurut Perspektif Agama-Agama* (Jakarta: Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama, 1999), p. 21.

⁵⁶ Karel Steenbrink, "Patterns of Dialogue in Indonesia 1965-1998", pp. 90-91.

developmental issues, this lead to the suspicion that the government's policy of interreligious dialogues was aimed rather to obtain support from the religious leaders for the government's programs of development.⁵⁷

In the period of 1983-1988 and 1988-1993 Munawir Sjadzali successively held the position of Minister. Under his leadership as the Minister, the program of interreligious dialogues remained to continue, but it was not given high priority. In his programs, Sjadzali rather gave stress on the modernization of Islam in Indonesia through the improvement of religious courts and the developing of Islamic high schools. He improved Islamic courts by organizing upgrading courses for Islamic judges, strengthening the legal basis of this institution. To advance the quality of Islamic high schools, he sent a large number of young Muslim lectures for Islamic studies to Western countries and intensified the cooperation with some Western universities. In fact, Sjadzali was well known with his ideas of "contextualization" of Islam in Indonesia, which emphasize the significance *ijtihad*. He often stated

⁵⁷ Sunardi, "The Dead End of Religious Dialogue in Indonesia", in *Interface*, vol. 4, No. 1 (May 2001), 56-57.

that not all the rules of the Qur'an were valid for all times. Some rules that had been applied in the time of the Prophet could be changed in accordance with the development of time.

In spite of his renewal ideas, Syadzali, in terms of interreligious relations, did not make a good impression on the non-Muslim communities. During his period of office as minister, he issued a regulation concerning mixed marriages, which became stricter. Until the early 1980s Muslim women could still marry non-Muslim men, by applying to the civil registration. The 1974 Marriage Law in fact did not give clear rules for mixed marriages and only stated that marriages should be contracted according to the religion of the couple. Islamic law does not allow the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim husband. Since 1987 in most areas of Indonesia, such marriage has become impossible. Karel Steenbrink remarks that the policy of Munawir Syadzali in this case was a return to a stricter Islamic rule.⁵⁸

In 1993, the above-mentioned Department of Comparative Religion of Yogyakarta State Institute of Islamic Studies organized a

⁵⁸ Steenbrink, "Patterns of Dialogue in Indonesia 1965-1998", p. 93.

first National Congress on Religions in Indonesia, in connection with the 100 years commemoration of the World's Parliament of Religions. Sponsored by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this seminar led to the inauguration of the Indonesian Institution for the Study of Inter-religious Harmony (*Lembaga Pengkajian Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, LPKUB) which was centralized in Yogyakarta. As a new institution that was established in the ministerial period of Tarmizi Taher, the LPKUB is more a study rather than a dialogue forum. The aims of the institution, as Taher notes, are twofold: firstly, to study and develop religious thought on the harmonious relationship between members of different religions and secondly, to contribute to religious thinking to the government on this issue.⁵⁹ In April 1995 this institution organized an opening Conference and started an international journal entitled *Religiosa, Indonesian Journal on Religious Harmony*, which was published in English. In 1996, the LPKUB has extended its body through establishing two agencies; one in Ambon, the capital of the eastern

⁵⁹ Tarmizi Taher, *Aspiring for the Middle Path; Religious Harmony in Indonesia* (Jakarta: CENSIS, 1997), p. 19.

province of Maluku, and another in Medan, the capital of North Sumatera in the western part of the country.

It is worth noting that the formal interreligious dialogues sponsored by the Minister of Religious Affairs in this period began to lack in significance. The *Wadah Musyawarah*, which had been established before apparently, did not play an important role in solving interreligious conflicts that broke out in the 1990s. It seemed, the government was quite careful in facing such conflicts, which involved various complex factors. Instead of dialogue meetings the Minister seemed to give more attention on wider-scale projects. Thus on 7-9 August 1997 the Minister organized a great *International Conference on Muslim-Christian Relations: Past, Presence and Future*, which was held in the prestigious Jakarta Horison Hotel. As the first international conference on Muslim-Christian relations, this event was also sponsored by Hartford Theological Seminary and Temple University Department of Religion, both of which had played a leading role in Muslim-Christian relations and dialogue. In this occasion a number of prominent religious scholars from the country but also from foreign

countries had in deed contributed to the development of Muslim-Christian understanding. Some topics discussed were such as the theology of dialogue, history of Muslim-Christian relations, the religious situation in post Independence Indonesia, and the role of religion in the contemporary cultural and political landscape of the Indonesian nation. Also in the same year the Minister conducted an international seminar on *Religious Plurality and Nationalism in Indonesia* in Leiden on 26-27 November 1997.

Between 1995 and 1997, the Minister Tarmizi Taher had to visit some foreign countries to deliver speeches related to interreligious relations in Indonesia. This was conducted partly to avoid negative image in the Western public on the country following the outbreak of conflict between interreligious groups in those periods. In the United States of America, for instance, a conservative Christian group attempted to eradicate Indonesia from the list of most privileged trade partners of the USA, because of its violation of freedom of religion, in connection with the burning and destruction of churches in some areas

of the country.⁶⁰ In his address in public lecture at Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, USA, on 6 March 1997, Tarmizi Taher said among others:

“Religious conflicts when they do occur have never had the character of national coercion. Indonesia has a history of sound religious tolerance and harmony among its people. There is no conflict when Muslim goes to mosque on Fridays and Christians to churches on Sundays. Thing proceeds peacefully insofar as religious worship and rituals are concerned. In Ambon, for instance, Muslims and Christians assist each other in village reconstruction and even in building or rehabilitating mosques and churches. In quite a number of large cities in Indonesia, churches and mosques stand side by side in peaceful coexistence. Thus religious tolerance has become a social tradition in Indonesia for a long period of time”.⁶¹

Taher acknowledged that in the context national development there were four threats that block the effort of promotion of religious harmony. These include: (1) the aggressiveness of religious believers; (2) religious organizations that tend to lay stress on increasing the number of members rather than on a qualitative improvement of the faith of their members; (3) politics encroaching on the religious domain, and; (4) economic disparity that creates social jealousy between believers of different faiths.⁶²

⁶⁰ Karel Steenbrink, “Patterns of Dialogue in Indonesia 1965-1998”, p. 102.

⁶¹ Tarmizi Taher, *Aspiring for the Middle Path*, p. 14.

In 1997, Tarmizi published his international addressees in a book entitled *Aspiring for the Middle Path: Religious Harmony in Indonesia*. 'The middle path' he means derives from the Qur'anic phrase *umma wasā'atā* (people of the middle path) as mentioned in the verse: "*Thus we have appointed you a middle nation that ye may witness against you*". Taher asserts that Muslims are an *umma*, which avoids all excess or extreme and follows the median path in whatever it does. 'That is the way of Islam and that is the way of success', he says.⁶³ He further points out that the establishment of the *umma wasā'atā* has been the paradigm adopted to establish a new image of Islam and the Muslim world. This trend on searching for a moderate and quality oriented *umma* has been implemented and developed by South Asian Muslims for decades particularly in Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Taher optimistically says that Indonesia could become a leader for developing countries in the common success of material and spiritual development.⁶⁴

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

In order to reduce interreligious conflict, Taher also found it necessary to intensify publications, which promoted interreligious tolerance. One of such publications was entitled "*Bingkai Teologi Kerukunan Hidup Umat Beragama di Indonesia*" (*The Theological Frame of Harmonious Life of Religious Communities in Indonesia*), which was written in cooperation with all religious council Indonesia. Published also in Arabic and English edition, the book consists of guidelines of interreligious harmony from the theological perspectives of the respective religions. The term 'theological frame' in this book is not necessarily meant to denote a new theology or religious teachings offered by the government or to set a boundary enclosing the existing theology or religious teachings. The usage of the phrase is rather 'more stressed on the meaning of a set of compilations deduced from the theology of each religion intended as a guidance about harmony among the followers of religions in the light of their own religious faith'. However most of the explanations still revolve around the concept of 'three harmonies' as has been introduced since 1980 by the Minister Alamsjah.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

B. The Council of Indonesian '*Ulamā*' and Interreligious Relations

In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Council of Indonesian '*Ulamā*' (MUI) also plays a significant role in managing interreligious relations in Indonesia. This Council is an Islamic institution, whose members consists of Muslim religious scholars and serves particularly for Muslims. Established by the Minister of Religious Affair in 1975,⁶⁵ the Council was expected to be a partner of the government in the effort to develop the country. In addition, it was also expected to be a channel between the government and Muslim community, so that the government policy in the development could be socialized effectively. The functions of the MUI can be mentioned as follows:

- a. Giving *fatwās* and advices to the government as well as to the Muslim community concerning religious affairs.

⁶⁵ According to J. Haba, there were two important factors affecting the establishment of the MUI: first, Islamic teaching in particular *Shari'a* which obliges Muslim to have a legal institution covering the issuing of *fatwā* and advising Muslims, and second, encouragement from the government. He mentions that the government's reason for encouraging Muslims or even taking the initiative was fairly pragmatic. The establishment of the MUI, he says, was necessary for Indonesia '*Ulamā*' in order to unite them and to enhance their role in nation building. J. Haba, *Sejarah Pembentukan Organisasi-Organisasi Keagamaan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Lektas-LIPI, 1985), p. 21.

- b. Strengthening Islamic brotherhood and enhancing interreligious harmony in the frame of maintaining national unity and integrity.
- c. Being a delegate of the Muslim community in the Interreligious Consultative Forum.
- d. Being a liaison between '*Ulamā*' and the government, and acting as an interpreter and conveyor of ideas and advice of the government concerning the development of the society.⁶⁶

In his effort to maintain interreligious harmony, the MUI also runs various programs, even though these are not as intensive as the Ministry for Religious Affairs. In this respect, it has a special committee called the Committee of Interreligious Harmony. This committee has the task of conducting research and study in particular concerning the relations between Muslims and other religious communities. However, as the Council is more concerned with the application of the *Shari'a*, its approach in dealing with the matters of interreligious relations is rather legalistic in nature. Thus, the Council is concerned more with the *fatwās* in solving the problems. In terms of interreligious relations, there are a

⁶⁶ *Majlis Ulama Indonesia* (Jakarta: MUI, 1976), p. 6.

number of *fatwās* that have been issued by the MUI. Some of the most important *fatwās* are concerning the prohibition of Muslims' marriage with non-Muslim and concerning the prohibition of Muslims' attendance at Christmas celebrations.

As for the first *fatwā* – issued on 1 June 1980, this was issued by the MUI in response to the growing practices of interreligious marriages. As has been mentioned, interreligious marriage became a major issue in 1974, when the government attempted to legalise a National Marriage Law, which would be applied for all religions. Muslim groups rejected interreligious marriage for they hold on an Islamic rule that forbids Muslims to marry non-Muslim. Due to Muslim pressure, it was finally agreed that a marriage would be legitimate if it had been performed according to the religions and beliefs of the parties concerned. It means that a marriage should be based firstly on religion or belief of the marrying parties before it acquires a legal recognition by the government. In the practice, many interreligious couples encountered problems in registering their marriage, since the Civil Registration Office refused to validate interreligious marriages between Muslims

and non-Muslims. Many interreligious couples attempted to sneak past this law by pretending to profess their partner's religion in order to register. Some others were forced to maintain de-facto relationship or to marry overseas.

The appearance the MUI *fatwā*, seems to reaffirm the prohibition of interreligious marriage for Muslim. Strangely enough, the *fatwā* maintains a rather strict prohibition concerning interreligious marriage. It is asserted, "a Muslim woman was forbidden (*harām*) to marry a non-Muslim man", "and Muslim man was forbidden to marry a non-Muslim woman".⁶⁷ It is clear that this rule is different from the principle of the Qur'an and the classical *fiqh* texts, which explicitly allows the marriage between a Muslim man and a woman of the *ahl al-kitāb*. The main reason of the banning of interreligious marriage for Muslim was to maintain the *maslaha* (interest) of Muslim community, since interreligious marriages could allegedly lead more to harm (*mafsada*) rather than virtue (*maslaha*). There is a supposition

⁶⁷ M. Atho Mudzhar, *Fatwās of the Council of Indonesian 'Ulamā'*, p. 179.

that the real issue addressed by the *fatwa* on inter-religious marriages is the prevention of Muslims from converting to Christianity.⁶⁸

The strictness of above regulations concerning interreligious marriage has been recently subjected to criticism. Many attempt to legalise interreligious marriages by raising the issue of human right. Among them is the so-called Consortium for the Formulation of Civil Registration Bill. According to the consortium's coordinator, Soelistyowati Soegondo, who is currently a member of the National Human Rights Commission, marriage constitutes a basic human right and is free from the matters of religion. She asserts that the Civil Registration Office should only be empowered to administer the registration of marriages, not to rule on matters of religion. Although this call for interreligious marriages does not bring to immediate change of the law, the consortium is planning to strengthen further the permissibility interreligious marriages by conducting studies in some cities that have the potential for interreligious marriages.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁶⁹ *Tempo*, 6-12, 2001

Not only right activists, some Muslim scholars also support interreligious marriages. The Liberal Islam Network, for example, is a Muslim group who campaign for the recognition of interreligious marriage. Their proponents are such as Ulil Abshar Abdalla, Zainun Kamal and Kautsar Azhari Nur. Ulil Abshar Abdalla, the coordinator of the network, believes that the Qur'an never explicitly prohibits interreligious marriage even between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man, since, according to him, the Qur'an considers all humans equal, irrespective of differences of religion. He also suggests that all legal products of classical Islam, which discriminate between Muslims and non-Muslims, should be amended on the basis of universal principle of human equality.⁷⁰

Zainun Kamal, agrees on the legalisation of interreligious marriages. In an interview broadcasted by a private radio in Jakarta in June 20 and 27, 2002, which was conducted as part of the regularly programs the *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (Liberal Islam Network), he stated

⁷⁰ See Ulil Abshar Abdalla, "Freshening Up Our Understanding of Islam", accessible at <http://www.islamlib.com>.

the Qur'an principally admits Muslim to marry non-Muslim women. According to him, there is no Qur'anic text, which explicitly prohibits it. The prohibition was only based on the opinion of the majority of '*ulamā*'.⁷¹

According to Kautsar Azhari Noer, the prophet had indeed suggested that, in choosing a partner for marriage, one should take religion as a priority. However, the meaning of religion in this context, according him, refers to the substantial meaning of Islam, which also includes all religions that believe in God.⁷²

All this constitutes a challenge for the *fatwā* of the MUI.

As for the second *fatwā* (concerning prohibition for Muslims to attend Christmas celebrations), this was issued – on 7 March 1981 – by the MUI in response to the general tendency in Indonesia where formal celebrations of Christmas were attended by Muslims on invitation. As noted by Atho Mudzhar, many Muslim compared Christmas celebrations to the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad

⁷¹ For further discussion see, Zainun Kamal, "*Nikah Beda Agama*", accessible at <http://www.islamlib.com/wawancara/zainun%20kawin.htm>

⁷² *Gatra*, 23 January 2004, accessible <http://www.gatra.com/2004-01-23/majalah/beli.php?pil=23&id=34729>

(*mawlid al-nabī*), which has no ritual value. Some Muslims were even involved in organizing the celebration. The Christians were pleased to extend invitations to Muslims to attend the celebration under the pretext of religious tolerance. Many Muslims were reluctant to decline such invitations for fear of being accused of intolerance. In their confusion, they asked the MUI for the clarification about the legal status of the practice.⁷³

It was also reported that the background of the *fatwā* was the appearance of complain about practice of Muslim pupils in celebrating the Christmas in their Christian schools, where they were urged to appear in pageants and to act as Joseph or Mary or as an angel in Christmas plays. Some complained that they had to sing Christmas songs at school or at Christmas office meetings. To people who complained, some Christians had answered that the harmony of religions would be endangered if they should refuse participation.

⁷³ Muhammad Atho Mudzhar, "The Council of Indonesia 'Ulamā' on Muslims' Attendance at Christmas Celebration", in Muhammad Khalid Mas'ud (ed.), *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwās* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 233; Also see, *Fatwās of the Council of Indonesian 'Ulamā': A Study of Islamic Legal Thought in Indonesia, 1975-1988* (Michigan: UMI Dissertation Service, 1990), p. 213.

Many school pupils dared not complain, for fear of repercussions during their examinations.⁷⁴

In this *fatwā*, the MUI asserted that attending Christmas celebrations was forbidden (*harām*) for Muslims. The main reason of the prohibition was that the practice could jeopardize Islamic creed (*‘aqidā*). It was asserted that although the aim of Christmas celebration could be considered to pay respect to the Prophet ‘Isa, the practice was inseparable from the Christian ritual issues. The prohibition was also aimed to keep Muslims from falling into *shubhāt* (confused things) and forbidden categories.⁷⁵ Thus the *fatwā* was issued as a kind of defensive or protective action for Muslims to prevent them from committing forbidden acts.

However, not long after its issuance, there was a widespread controversy about the *fatwā*. A strong reaction to the *fatwā* came from

⁷⁴ Karel Steenbrink, “Indonesian Politics and A Muslim Theology of Religions: 1965-1990” in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 4, No 2. (1993), p. 236.

⁷⁵ In his writing in *Panji Masyarakat*, Hamka, the chairperson of the MUI, mentioned three things particularly forbidden for Muslims when they attend Christmas meetings: to light a candle, to eat the bread that is considered to be the body of Christ and to drink the wine that is considered to be the blood of Christ. See *Panji Masyarakat*, No. 324, (1981) p. 7.

the government. The *fatwā* was regarded by the government as blow towards its effort in developing interreligious harmony. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Alamsjah Ratu Perwiranegara, warned that Indonesia consists of various religions. Therefore, attending ceremonies of another religion is necessary to pay respect to other religious adherents who have extended invitations. Such a practice, according to him, could strengthen national unity and integrity, as well as harmony among religious communities.⁷⁶

For the government, there was nothing wrong in Muslim's involving in Christmas celebrations as long as they did not participate in their ritual components. Therefore, the government asked the MUI to revoke the *fatwā*. As a result of the consultation with the Minister of Religious Affairs, the MUI, on 30 April 1981, decided to withdraw the *fatwā*. The withdrawal was directly signed by Hamka, the general chairman of the MUI, not by the head of *fatwā* committee, which issued the prohibition. However, this withdrawal led him to make another

⁷⁶ Tempo, 30 May 1981, pp 13-14.

decision, that is, to resign from the leadership of the MUI. Hamka resigned on 19 May 1981.⁷⁷

For Hamka, although the *fatwā* was taken out of circulation, its content remained valid. He was sure the *fatwā* was in accordance with the Islamic teaching. For this reason, he showed in many occasions his personal commitment to the *fatwā*. For instance, on 7 May 1981, he wrote a letter in his magazine *Panji Masyarakat* stating that the *fatwā* should not be considered to be a wrong and invalid one. The withdrawal of the *fatwā* did not diminish its value, since it was founded on the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet.⁷⁸ On one occasion of

⁷⁷ Hamka's resignation brought about various comments and became a major issue among Indonesian Muslims. Most Muslims in fact supported Hamka's decision. A prominent Muslim leader, M. Natsir, for example, saw that Hamka's resignation was simply to maintain the truth. Adnan Buyung Nasution, claimed that Hamka's courageous stand was seen as a sign of successful person handling the most delicate issues in his lifetime. Hamka himself said, "When I was appointed as chairman of the MUI I received no written appreciation and or respect from the *umma*. On the contrary, after my resignation, I received hundreds of letters and telegrams with their best wishes and support". See Farchad Poeradisastra, "Memang Kebenaran Mesti Tetap Disampaikan", in Nasir Tamara, Buntaran Sanusi and Vincent Jauhari (eds.) *Hamka di Mata Hati Ummat* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1993). P. 159.

⁷⁸ Hamka in this writing emotionally commented the case in his statement: "Religious scholars are indeed the heirs of the Prophets: from these they inherit the obligation to call for the good and to warn against evil. From these too they inherit the slander and contempt that they received. [...] Are religious scholars only teachers that can be ordered or dismissed arbitrarily? And if a meeting must be

Friday sermon at the Azhar mosque, he, again, affirmed the prohibition of Muslims' attendance at Christmas celebrations.⁷⁹ It is interesting that on 21 December 1993, Muslim leaders that consisted of the chairperson of the MUI, the leader of *Nahdatul 'Ulamā'*, the leader of Muhammadiyah and the leader of the Board of Islamic *Da'wa* issued a letter to Muslims appealing to them to observe this *fatwā*.⁸⁰ This support obviously added the validity value of the *fatwā*.

The Christian circles in Indonesia were displeased about the issuance of the fatwa. A Group of Christians who joined in the MAWI responded to the fatwa by discussing the ritual and ceremonial aspects of religious celebrations, together with the groups of other religions. The discussion brought about the decision, which later became the circular of the Minister of Religious Affairs No MA /438/1981. Having been published in *Panji Masyarakat*, it prompted reaction from *Kompas*, a Catholic daily newspaper. In its editorial on 23 September 1981,

closed may one be summoned: 'Hey, nice man, just a prayer!' Cited in Karel Steenbrink, "Indonesian Politics and A Muslim Theology of Religions", p. 36.

⁷⁹ M. Atho Mudzhar, "The Council of Indonesian 'Ulamā'", p. 237.

⁸⁰ *Tempo*, No. 44. XXIII, 1994, p. 35.

Kompas rejected the circular, for it violated the President's remark on 25 May 1981 which declared that the state would not interfere in the religious law and religious services. This is obviously an indirect reaction to the fatwa.

It is important to note that insofar as doctrinal aspects are concerned, the issuance of the *fatwā* is understandable. In deed, it is important in order to keep Muslim *'aqīda* from being corrupted. However, since the *fatwā* did not specify any aspect of the prohibition in attending Christmas celebrations, it becomes problematic. If only the MUI issued the *fatwā* simply concerning certain aspects in the practice, the reaction would have probably been different. There is a general impression that for Muslims even to say congratulatory expression such as "Merry Christmas" is not allowed. It is not clear whether this is also the "official product" of the MUI, since in the *fatwā*, this matter is not mentioned. If such is the case, then the MUI is really strict in the matter concerned. Expressing "Merry Christmas" has in fact more social dimension rather than theological one. It is simply aimed to show solidarity in the human relations.

C. Private Initiatives of Interreligious Dialogues

After exploring the above government policy in building interreligious harmony, it is important to elaborate here a number of initiatives of interreligious meeting, which are conducted by private organizations commonly referred to as non-governmental organizations. These organization are mainly pioneered by young intellectuals who are concerned about interreligious relations.

One of the most well known private interreligious forums was INTERFIDEI (Institute for Inter-Faith Dialogue in Indonesia), which was set up in 1992 by the leading Protestant thinker Th. Sumarthana. The founder deliberately chose the word 'faith' (*imān*; Indonesian version of the forum was DIAN, *Dialog Antar Iman*) instead of 'religion', to show his concern towards inter-personal relationship, which was far more profound than merely inter-institutional relations were. The purpose of this institute is 'to create a society which is dynamic, harmonious, and peaceful; and also, establish cooperation between people from different religions in order to improve common welfare'. Much of its programs have taken the form of courses and thematic

dialogues (e.g., on history, ethics, human rights, religion and state) which have partly been documented in publications. Since 1998, after the outbreak of communal violence in many areas in Indonesia, Interfidei has been reaching out for the conflicted areas by visits, peace campaigns and conflict resolution workshops. Their local conflict resolution workshops have both an interfaith and an interethnic perspective. In the beginning, mostly activists and students came to the workshops, but since 2000, Interfidei has also more actively been trying to involve farmers, representatives of the military, local politicians etc.

Another institution for interreligious dialogue was MADIA (*Masyarakat Dialog Antar Agama*, Society for Interreligious Dialogue), which was founded in 1996 by a number of dialogue activists from various religious backgrounds. Based in Jakarta and with networks in four other cities or areas (Surabaya, Manado, Bandung, South Sulawesi), Madia has initiated a number dialogue projects, aimed either at religious leaders or youth. Their programs are generally conducted on issue basis.

In addition, there was also ICRP (the Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace) which had been started since the early 1970s by the late Lukman Harun, a prominent Muslim leader from Muhammadiyah. This forum, in fact, constitutes the national chapter of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP), which is also liaised to the World Conference on Religion and Peace. On July 2002 the ICRP had hosted the sixth Assembly of Asian Conference on Religion and Peace in the cultural town of Yogyakarta, which were visited by more than 400 guests representing 23 Asian countries and 17 world religions.

There is actually another version of ICRP, namely the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace, which was established in 2000 by the well-known scholar Djohan Efendi. The appearance of this same institution was due to the internal conflict within ICRP. However, many saw the conflict as a sign of the tension between an inherited New Order approach to dialogue focused on the formalized co-operation between state recognized religions, and a more open approach based on a fundamental acceptance of pluralism.

Besides above forums, mention should also be made of *Paramadina* and *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (The Liberal Islam Network). Although not particularly called forums for interreligious dialogue, both, as a matter of fact, have played important role in promoting pluralism and inter-faith dialogues. Paramadina was founded in 1986 by the prominent Muslim intellectual, Nurcholish Madjid, a figure who is known as the motor of modernization of Islam in Indonesia. He introduces a liberal and modern interpretation of Islam, including the issue of Islam as one faith among other belief-systems. Paramadina regularly conducts discussions on interreligious issues and often invites experts from various religious affiliations.

The Liberal Islam Network was established in 1998 by a group of young intellectuals as a response to counter the growing influence and activism of militant and radical Islam in Indonesia. The “official” description of the network is “a community which is studying and bringing forth a discourse on Islamic vision that is tolerant, open and supportive for the strengthening of Indonesian democratization.”

Since its inception, the Liberal Islam Network has conducted many activities concerning public education. The group produces publications and radio talk shows and organizes discussion groups at the universities to promote pluralism and an inclusive understanding of religion. The group has addressed sensitive human rights issues such as interreligious marriages and the difficulties that Christians encounter when wanting to build new churches.

It is interesting to note that the discourses of interreligious dialogue in this later development begin to touch theological questions. Both in the Muslim and the Christian circle there more and more grow inclusivism insights in the matter of interreligious relations. For example, the term salvation has begun to acquire a broader meaning that is applied not only to certain religious group but also to the adherents of other religions. Undoubtedly, in the context of the plurality of Indonesian society, the discourse of this theme is considerably important and in deed, it has attracted many people who want to approach religion differently. In the following chapter, I will discuss such theological discourse in the frame of searching a common

platform between Muslim and Christian leaders and intellectuals in Indonesia.

Chapter Four

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DISCOURSE ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND TOLERANCE IN INDONESIA

A. The Meaning of Religious Pluralism and Tolerance

Before focusing our attention on Muslim-Christian discourse of religious pluralism and tolerance in Indonesia, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by the terms “religious pluralism and tolerance” mentioned in the subject. “Religious Pluralism” is often described as religious diversity. But the term actually refers to the idea about religious plurality. By the term pluralism, it is, as Diana Eck puts it, “not the sheer fact of plurality alone, but is active engagement with plurality”.⁸¹ Religious pluralism is, thus, not a simple recognition of the fact that there are different religions and faiths in a society or in a country, but an appreciation that the fact of the religious plurality has a positive value.

⁸¹ Diana L. Eck., “The Challenge of Pluralism”, The Pluralism Project, Harvard University, accessible at <http://www.pluralism.org/>

Philosophically, “religious pluralism” is a theory that is developed by the Protestant liberal thinker, John Hick that views all religions as variant conception and perception of, and response to, the Divine Reality.⁸² It is a concept that attempts to provide a basis in Christian theology for tolerance of non-Christian religions. In this idea, all religions are regarded equally valid as ways to God. Religious pluralism here is described by Hick as a doctrine of salvation, which is contrasted with the two other Christian views, termed by Hick as “exclusivism” and “inclusivism”. Exclusivism maintains that Jesus (and by implication Christianity) is the only true way of salvation. All other religions are either imperfect, false or works of the devil and therefore have no salvific value at all. People of other religious traditions are eternally lost unless and until they convert to Christianity. Inclusivism views Jesus and Christianity as representing the whole truth but goes on to admit that in a mysterious way this truth can be found in other religions although without the knowledge of the adherents of these

⁸² John Hick, “Religious Pluralism”, in Mircea Eliade (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 12 (NewYork: Macmilla Publishing Compnay, 1987), p. 331.

traditions. This is what Karl Rahner refers to as 'anonymous Christianity'.

The term "religious tolerance" here means simply the attitude of respect towards other religions and beliefs. Principally this attitude is also the implication in "religious pluralism". Originally, the word 'tolerance' stems from the Latin verb *tolerare*, which means 'to bear or endure' and carries the further meaning 'to nourish, sustain, or preserve'. In its general meaning it signifies indulgence or forbearance in judging the opinions, customs, or acts of others; freedom from bigotry or from racial or religious prejudice.⁸³

The proponents of "religious pluralism" (in its philosophical sense) understand religious tolerance in a more liberal sense, that is, respecting another's religious beliefs as being of equal value to all other truth claims. They attempt to wipe out religious difference in terms of relativism. This idea, in fact, acquires much criticism since it diminishes religious principles that are considered fundamental. To tolerate other religions or beliefs, one, indeed, does not need to eliminate the

⁸³ See Funk & Wagnalls, *Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, International Edition (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1966), art. 'tolerance'

differences between religions, since the substance of tolerance itself lies in the ability in dealing with the differences.

According to David Little religious tolerance “is a response to a set of beliefs, practices or attributes, initially regarded as deviant or objectionable, with disapproval, but without using force or coercion.”⁸⁴ This means that tolerance is only possible in the context of disagreement. Thus, if all religions are considered the same in value, or their differences are not to be taken seriously, then there is no significance of tolerance. To tolerate other religions or belief is actually to respects the right of others to free will to choose what to believe. In this sense, one is regarded tolerant when one respects the rights of others to hold different religious beliefs. He might regard the other beliefs false, but he is still regarded tolerant if he acknowledges that others have the right to follow freely their faith’s beliefs and practices.

⁸⁴ David Little, “Rethinking Religious Tolerance: A Human Right Approach,” in *Religion & Human Rights: Toward an Understanding of Tolerance and Reconciliation*, ed. David Little and David Chidester, *Emory Humanities Lectures No. 3* (Atlanta: The Academic Exchange, Emory University, 2001), p. 9.

The idea of religious tolerance firstly became an important issue in the Enlightenment of the 18th century Europe. This idea appeared against the background of the growing religious dissent particularly between Catholics and Protestants in many European countries in the 16th and 17th century. These periods, which were considered to be the most intolerant period in Christian history, were marked by the so-called “religious wars” between Catholics and Protestants in many European countries notably in Germany and France. The spirit of tolerance echoed in the Enlightenment could be referred to the dictum “I disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it”, which was attributed to the prominent French thinker Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire.⁸⁵ This is the seed and the principle of the idea of religious tolerance, which is developed now by the Western scholars.

B. Muslim Perspective of Religious Pluralism and Tolerance

⁸⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr, “Tolerance”, *Collier's Encyclopedia*.

Speaking about religious pluralism and tolerance, most of Muslim scholars in Indonesia believe that Islam is a religion that has principles of religious pluralism and underlines the significance tolerance towards other religions. They believe that the Qur'anic verses and the traditional practices of the Prophet Muhammad are basic guidance for treating and solving problems and issues of interreligious relations. In dealing with these issue, they often refer to these basic sources of Islam and some try to contextualize their teaching in accordance to the real situation. However, before discussing their reflection on this subject, it is necessary to discuss at a glance about the idea of religious pluralism and tolerance in Islam.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the idea of “religious pluralism” and tolerance in Islam had been existed long before the idea appeared in the Enlightenment of the 18th century Europe. Already since the earlier period of Islam, Muslim communities had dealt with the problem of religious diversity. This can be seen, for example, in the various Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Prophet, which deal with status of the People of Book (*ahl al-kitāb*), i.e. the Jews, the

Christians and the Sabeans, which also existed in the early period of Islam. Many Qur'anic verses speak positively about them, recognise their existence and even accept them as having equal status as Muslims before God. It is said, *"Those who believe [Muslims] the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians – whosoever believe in God and the Last Day, and do good deeds, they shall have their reward from their Lord, shall have nothing to fear, nor shall they come to grief" (Q. 5:69).*⁸⁶

While showing this inclusive attitude, the Qur'an even criticizes the Jewish and the Christian exclusivism directed against each other during Muhammad's preaching of Islam. This is evident in the following verse: *"The Jews say 'the Christians have nothing to stand on', and the Christians say 'the Jews have nothing to stand on', while both recite the same Book" (Q. 2: 113); "They say, 'no one shall enter the Paradise except those who are Jews, or Christians – these are the wishful thoughts (Q. 2: 111).*

In the Qur'an, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are but three forms of one religion, which, in its original purity, was the religion of Abraham: *al-Islam*, which means submission to God. Therefore, in

⁸⁶ cf. 2:62

dealing with this plurality, the Qur'an calls them to agree in a common ground that is to surrender to God. It is asserted, *"Say: O People of the Book! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for Lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him)"* (Q. 111:64).

Despite the Qur'an appreciation of the People Book, it does not necessarily accept the forms and teachings in their practice. The Qur'an in fact mentions some criticisms, particularly against the practice of syncretism and associating anything or anyone to God. For example, the Qur'an asserts, *Say: "Will ye worship, besides Allah, something which hath no power either to harm or benefit you? But Allah, He it is that heareth and knoweth all things". Say: "O People of the Book! exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the even Way"* (Q. 5: 76-77). However, it is not their existence that is criticised, but their teachings, which are seen by the Qur'an as having been wrongly understood and practised.

Islam accepts not only the existence of other religions but also those who do not believe in God. Various verses account for this, in particular in the context of the prohibition of forcing others to embrace Islam. The Prophet is restrained from the thought of compelling others by a rather clear reminder that he is not appointed as a keeper or guardian over people who do not heed him (Q. 42: 48).

In the Qur'an, Muslims are commanded to treat other groups in a just manner. *"O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do"* (Q. 5: 8). *"And have patience with what they say, and leave them with noble."* (Q. 73:10). Here, the Qur'an teaches Muslims not only to be just but also to be patient, meaning tolerant.

These and other Qur'anic principles, in fact, became the basis of Muhammad's understanding of pluralism and tolerance. Muhammad himself has exemplified and commanded Muslims to practise tolerance by acting morally right and being just to everyone and everything. Muhammad was not only tolerant in the early period of Islam, before

he gained power; but also in the period after he had become the leader and had socio-political power. This was reflected in the policies he made in organizing the relations between different religious groups at his time. For example, we can see this in the so-called “Constitution of Madina” (*Misqāq al-Madīna*), which was made by Muhammad in managing the relation between Muslims and other religious communities in particular the Jews in Madina. In this covenant, Muhammad fully accepted the existence of other religious groups, gave protection to them and guaranteed the freedom of faith and worship. To get a clear idea of this document, a summary of important articles of the Covenant would be presented as follows:

- The *Muhājirīn* community (the Muslim migrants from Mecca city) and the *Ansār* community (the Madina’s Muslim resident) constitute one *Umma* (a single united community).
- The Jews who join the Muslim community shall have the equal rights and support; they shall not be injured nor shall any enemy be aided against them.

- The cost for protecting Madina is to be jointly carried out by both the Jews and Muslims. Both Muslims and Jews must work to tight against the enemy who want to attack the Madina city.
- The Jews are one *Umma* with the Muslims. The Jews shall maintain their own religion and the Muslims theirs. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. The close friends of the Jews are as themselves.
- Whenever the Jew or Muslim community is attacked by enemy, both shall help together.
- All parties will get the guarantee of safety in their life, except for the men who committed sins and cruelty.

Another example of the tolerant policy of the Prophet can be seen in a Charter he made for Christians. In this Charter the Prophet mentioned:

Verily, I, the servants and helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by Allah! I hold out against any thing that displeases them.

No compulsion is to be on them.

Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs, nor their monks from their Monasteries.

No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry any thing from it to the Muslim's houses.

Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His prophet. Verily they are my allies and have my secure charter against all they hate.

No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them.

If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray.

Their churches are to be respected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants.

No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world).⁸⁷

This is evidence of the great tolerance of Islam towards other religion. As one scholar argues, the historical record of Muslims' treatment of Christians and Jews is quite good especially compared with the history of relations between different religions and religious denominations in the West.⁸⁸ It should be noted, however, that in later development, Muslim communities in particular when they were dominant in power, began to treat non-Muslim discriminatively. Their treatments of other religions were far different from what had been practiced by the earlier Muslim community of the Prophet.

⁸⁷ Cited from Syed Hashim Ali, "Islam and Pluralism", accessible at www.ispi-usa.org/currentarticles/pluralismHashimAli.html

⁸⁸ Hasan Turabi, "The Islamic State," in John Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 250.

Now we see how Indonesian Muslim scholars deal with the issue of religious pluralism and tolerance in Indonesian context. The examination of the subject concerned will include selected writings from its prominent intellectuals namely Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Quraish Shihab. These figures are in fact among Muslim scholars who have much discussed about the ideas of pluralism and religious tolerance in the contemporary Indonesia.

1. Nurcholish Madjid

Nurcholish Madjid is one of the most prominent Indonesian Muslim intellectuals who have comprehensively discussed the concept pluralism and religious tolerance. Commonly known Cak Nur, he was born on March 17, 1939 in Jombang, East Java. He was educated in traditional Islamic school (*pesantren*) affiliated with NU and Pondok Modern Gontor, a famous *pesantren* affiliated with modernist Islam. In 1961 Madjid continued his study at, and completed his *doctorandus* degree in 1968 with a thesis entitled “*Al-Qur’an Sebagai Buku Berbahasa Arab dan Hubungannya dengan Kemanusiaan Kandungannya*” (The Qur’an

viewed as an Arabic Book and its Relationship to its Human Environment). During his study he once became the chairman of the Islamic Student Association (HMI), the largest Islamic student organization in Indonesia, for two periods (1966-1969 and 1969-1971). He once also became the President of the South East Asian Islamic Student Association and the Assistant General Secretary of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO). In 1978, Madjid started his Ph.D research at the University of Chicago, under the supervision of Fazlur Rahman. He completed his study and graduated in 1984, with a dissertation entitled *"Ibn Taimiya on Kalam and Falsafah: Problem on Reason and Revelation on Islam"*. After finishing his study, he returned to Indonesia and taught at IAIN, in addition to being a researcher at Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI), Indonesian Institute for Sciences. In 1986, he established *Yayasan Paramadina* (Paramadina Foundation), Paramadina Foundation, an Islamic educational organization directed towards the further inculcation of Islamic values and principles.⁸⁹

As a prolific scholar, Madjid has published a number of books and writings. His publications range from many subjects encompassing religious, social, cultural, and political issues. Many parties, either domestic or international have always been attentive and often made his various views as references. Some of his works can be mentioned such as: *Khazanah Intelektual Islam* (1984), *Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (1987), *Islam, Doktrin dan Peradaban* (1992), *Islam, Kerakyatan dan Keindonesiaan* (1993), *Pintu-Pintu Tuhan* (1994), *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan: Membangun Tradisi dan Visi Baru Islam Indonesia* (1995), *Masyarakat Religious* (1996), *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan* (1997), *Kaki Langit Peradaban* (1997). He has also written

⁸⁹ Most of the programs of Paramadina are indeed oriented towards disseminating comprehensive religious understandings with the spirit of openness. As Madjid mentions, Paramadina's programs give emphasis on:

- (1) understanding Islamic sources related to social, political, economic, and cultural aspect;
- (2) creating awareness of contextualization of thought, that is, dialectical relations between Islamic teachings and civilizations throughout the history of Muslims;
- (3) appreciating the treasure of Islamic cultures and civilizations as well as Muslim people;
- (4) implanting the spirit of non -sectarianism and developing a dynamic and creative Islamic brotherhood; (advocating the comparative study of Islamic school of thought and trends comprehensively to avoid anarchical and exclusive tendencies; and
- (5) developing tolerant and appreciative attitudes towards other religious groups to create a peaceful society as taught by Islam.

See Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, 614.

articles in books edited by other people, such as “The Issue of Modernization among Muslims in Indonesia” in Gloria Davis, *What is Modern Indonesia* (1979) reprinted in Ahmad Ibrahim et al., *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia* (1985).

Madjid is a Muslim scholar who is known because of his views to innovate Islamic thought and of his opinions regarding social and political matters developing in Indonesia. He is known to be the first Indonesian Muslim who outspokenly introduces the idea of modernization of Islam with the usage of the terms such as liberalization and secularization. In the Islamic discourse in Indonesia, many of his ideas are indeed controversial. Before discussing his reflection on pluralism and tolerance, I will discuss at a glance his ideas on these matters.

According to Madjid, modernization is identical with rationalization. Rationalization is a transformation in the way of thinking from irrational to rational. The significance of modernization to him is that it maximizes the results of every area of human knowledge and activity. This modernization is not only needed by

humans in their life, but is also a necessity, as an implementation of God's will, in that man should maintain and manage the world. He says, "Modernization means thinking and working along with God's Law (*sunnatullah*), which he understands as the natural law."⁹⁰

Madjid sees a close relationship between the natural law and sciences and the scientific way of thinking. In connection with this, he states, that to be modern means to be scientific, and so to be rational, and that means a progressive and dynamic attitude that is not absolutely stuck in the status quo. It is then necessary "to carry out a massive alteration against traditions which are unscientific and irrational and to develop values which contain the truth". However, Madjid emphasizes that modernity is not absolute but relative, since it is always related to certain places and times. For him, the always-absolute modernity is the One and Only God, the Creator of the universe.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1987), pp. 172-173.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173-174.

Madjid believes that the process of modernization should be initiated by the attempts of freeing oneself from traditional values and searching for values, which are orientated towards the future. In these attempts, the process of liberalization is necessary and this process is applied to the present Islamic teachings and perspectives. It is clear that Madjid accepts liberalization as a process but not as an application of liberal ideology. This acceptance is, in fact, based on his terminological understanding for what he actually means by liberalization is not the application of liberalism in the same way as Western countries do, the consequences of individualism, capitalism,--communism and secularism. By liberalization, he means freeing and liberating people from traditional-conservative ways of thinking. Thus, according to Madjid, liberalization is a process of applying new ways of thinking or new methodology in an effort to understand religion.⁹²

Madjid furthermore states secularization is the continuation of liberalization and modernization. According to him, secularization is one factor in the liberating process, or “a sort of liberating

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 206.

development” He bases these perceptions on his understanding of the term “secularization”. According to him, the word secularization comes from the word “secular”, meaning “everything living in the present world”. Everything that is living and existing, which can be observed, heard, felt, and analyzed logically and rationally can be called secular. When the word secular becomes secularization, it means a process. By secularization he, does not mean secularism, but “a dynamic and active process of secularizing values, norms and practices which are originally secular in nature and form and which protect Muslims from their tendency to regard the mundane as the transcendent.”⁹³ Madjid opposes secularism, since this is an atheistic system of thought, which is obviously alien to the Islamic *Weltanschauung*. Quoting Harvey Cox in his popular work, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*, Madjid writes:

Secularization is not intended as the application of secularism, because “secularism is the name for an ideology, a new closed world view which functions very much like a new religion.” In this case, what is meant here is every form of “liberating development.” Thus, secularization does not

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

mean the implementation of secularism and the transformation of Muslims into secularists.⁹⁴

It is important to note that Madjid's concept of secularization derives from his thorough understanding of the two central Islamic doctrines *Tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism) and man as God's vicegerent (*khalifa Allah*). As a logical consequence of *Tawhīd*, Muslims, according to him, have to recognize that nothing owns absolute divinity except for God Himself, and He, not man, has made things sacred. Muslims therefore should distinguish the divine from the merely human in Islamic tradition, and reject all forms of idolatry, including traditional orthodox religious idolatry regarded as 'sacred'. Madjid says:

Absolute transcendence towards God should actually give rise to an outlook of desacralization towards everything other than God, that is, the world, its problems, and all the values attached. For sacralizing something other than God is, in principle, *syirik*, the opposite of *Tawhīd*. Thus, secularization now gains its concrete meaning, that is, desacralization towards everything other than those that constitute transcendental values, in other words the world.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* This quotation is from Cox. See Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1969), p. 18.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

With this idea of secularization, Madjid suggests the importance to privatize, deinstitutionalize and deorganize Islam. For him, religion should be regarded as spirituality, and not as an institution. As spirituality, religion is a private matter. Here, Madjid seems to consider formalism as not really an essential element in people's religious life. That is why he introduced the phrase "Islam Yes, Islamic Party, No"⁹⁶

Madjid's Idea of Pluralism

Now we see Madjid's reflection on religious pluralism. In his numerous writings as well in public speeches, Madjid always emphasizes the need for a positive attitude towards pluralism. He states that pluralism is substantially not merely recognition of the plural nature of a society, but it is to be followed by sincere accepting it as a positive value and as God's mercy for human being, because it can enhance the cultural growth through dynamic interaction and

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

exchange of various cultures.⁹⁷ Pluralism, he asserts, should not only be understood as a “negative good”, that is merely seen from its utility to keep fanaticism at bay, but it should be appreciated as genuine engagement of diversities within the bonds of civilities. Madjid even contends that pluralism is a requirement for the salvation of human beings, being its consequence as check and balance mechanism.⁹⁸ It is mentioned in the Qur’an that God makes check and balance mechanism among fellow men in order to preserve the stability of the earth and this constitutes one of God’s profuse generosities for the people (Q., 2:251).⁹⁹

According to Madjid, Islam considerably appreciates and advocates religious pluralism. To justify this supposition, he refers to various Qur’anic verses that read:

⁹⁷ Nurcholish Madjid, *Cendikiawan dan Religiuitas Masyarakat* (Jakarta: Tabloid Tekad and Paramadina Press, 1999), p. 62.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁹⁹ The text reads, “If God did not check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief. But God is full of Bounty to the world.”

"To each is a goal to which God turns him; then strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good. Wheresoever ye are, God will bring you together. For God hath power over all things." (Q., 2:148)

"To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute" (Q., 5: 48)."¹⁰⁰

Madjid regards these verses as the justification of religious pluralism in Islam. The verses recognize the fact that human beings are different; they consist of various groups, which have different purpose in life. Every community, he suggests, must accept the diversity by giving the freedom and opportunities for each other to conduct in accordance with its belief respectively. They must subsequently compete in a healthy and correct way. Madjid believes that the difference in religions is merely difference in ways and all these ways are mutually aimed to the truth. Every religious community thus is

¹⁰⁰ In line with this is also the verse 2: 148, which is often referred to by Madjid. He considers that the verses connect directly with the prohibition of to form a homogenous society, because such contradict the nature of human diversity. See "Meninggalkan Kemutlakan: Jalan Menuju Perdamaian" in Andito (ed.) *Atas Nama Agama*, p. 160.

allowed to take his own way but must abide by its own line respectively.¹⁰¹

Madjid also refers to the Qur'anic verse:

"Mankind was but one nation, but differed (later). Had it not been for a word that went forth before from thy Lord, their differences would have been settled between them";

and the verse (Q., 2:213):

"Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace Guided the believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guided whom He will to a path that is straight".

From these verses Madjid, elaborates what he says as universal truth. He mentions, universal truth is single in itself, although there might be many different manifestations about it. Human beings were originally one single community as they hold on to that single truth. However, they then clashed one another, even after the clarification of

¹⁰¹ Madjid, "Kebebasan Beragama dan Pluralisme dalam Islam", in Komaruddin Hidayat and Ahmad Gaus AF (eds.) *Passing Over* (Jakarta: Gramedia and Paramadina, 2001), p. 173.

the truth had come. They attempted to understand the truth in accordance with their capability but also with their limitations. As a result, there appeared differences of opinions concerning the truth and this would be complicated when there emerged vested interests resulting from the desire to win the competition.¹⁰²

Madjid contends that the basis of universal truth is the belief in the One and Only God (*Tawhīd*), which has the consequence of the teaching on the total submissive attitude only to God. The attitude of submission is called *Islam* in its generic sense and this constitutes the core of all true religions. It is asserted in the Holy Book that the duty of God's Prophet and Messengers was but to deliver the doctrine of *Tawhīd* and to order men to submit only to Him (Q., 21:25). It is in this context, as Madjid asserts, one should understand the Qur'anic affirmation stating that any religion other than Islam or that, which is not followed by the total submission to God, is not true and thus rejected. Even though one sociologically or formally confesses "Islam" or regards himself as a

¹⁰² Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), p. 179.

“Muslim”, but there is no in himself such a submissive attitude, he or she cannot be regarded as pure Muslim, hence rejected.¹⁰³

Submission to God in this respect does not mean to surrender to any particular religion. Any one who surrenders to God could also be considered *Muslim*. Madjid explains that the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), “the father of monotheism” and “the first patriarch”, is mentioned in the Qur’an as a man who is not committed to a certain form of “organized religion”, but as man who seeks the truth honestly and purely (*hanif*), and a man who wished to submits himself to the Truth, namely to God.¹⁰⁴ Madjid also confirms this idea with the Qur’anic verses 2:62:¹⁰⁵

“Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabeans and the Christians, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness,- on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve”;

According to Madjid, these verses confirms that Muslim, Jews, Christians, and the Sabeans, provided they believe in Allah, the One

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 181-182.

¹⁰⁴ Madjid, “Kehidupan Keagamaan untuk Generasi Mendatang”, in *Ulumul Qur’an* 1 Vol. IV (1993), p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. the verse. 5:69.

and Only God, and in the Hereafter and conduct good deeds, “go to paradise” and “are free from Hell”.

Madjid further acknowledges that this inclusive and positive perception of religions is actually derived from Ibn Taimiyya’s concept of *al-din al jami’* (universal religion). Madjid himself in this respect says:

“The inclusive viewpoints, as they are formulated by Ibn Taimiyya, are extremely relevant for modern times, a period of globalization, thanks to the technology of information and transportation, that makes human society live in a global village”. In this global village human contact is more easily and closely and we can know each other much more deeply, but at the same time we are also more easily taken towards direct confrontation”.

With this idea in mind, Madjid often emphasizes the necessity of seeking a common platform upon which different people can meet. He refers to the Qur’anic verse 3:64:

“Say: O followers of earlier revelations! Come into the tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God”.¹⁰⁶

From this verse, Madjid suggests that there is a common platform for all religions to meet that is “Islam” – not as a proper name but as

¹⁰⁶ Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), p. 184.

spirituality, a mental and spiritual attitude of submission to the One and Only God. Madjid is sure that since the principle of all true religions is the same, that is, submission to God, all the religions, either due to their internal dynamics or due to their contact towards each other, could gradually find their original truth, so that all meet in such a common platform.¹⁰⁷

Many commentators of the Qur'an (*mufasssir*) are of the opinion that term *Ahl al-kitāb* (the People of Book) mentioned in the Qur'an refers to Jews and Christians, and some include the Sabeans and the Zoroastrians. Madjid, however, refers to modern commentators such as Rasyid Ridha and 'Abd al-Hamid Hakim¹⁰⁸ who extend the term also to some current religious communities comprising Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, and Shinto. Despite the disagreement of many Muslims, Madjid considers that the idea is possible since it is in line with the Qur'anic account stating that God has sent the prophets to every community, some of them were informed to Muhammad, whereas

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ in his work *Al-Mu'in al-Mubin* (Bukittinggi: Nusantara, 1955), vol 4. p. 48.

some other not. All these prophets have a common task, that is, to deliver the teaching of monotheism.

Madjid further says that the Qur'an calls on Muslims to pay respect towards all followers of *Ahl al-Kitāb*. The Qur'an warns them not to make generalization as to their particular attitudes. As is the case in the Muslim community, there are those who are sincere in their religion. The Qur'an mentions the Christians as the nearest in love to the believers because among them are priests and monks who are humble.¹⁰⁹ Madjid also refers to verse that says that among the *Ahl al-Kitāb*, there are those who are sincere and consistent towards their religion; they recite the verse of God during the hours of the night, prostrating themselves in prayer, they believe in God and the Last Day, enjoin the virtue (*al-ma'ruf*) and forbid the evil (*al-munkar*), hasten in good works and they are among the righteous (3:113-114). Towards these sincere people, the believers are not allowed to dispute unless it is in a better way (29:46). In this relation, Madjid mentions one example of

¹⁰⁹ "If only they had believed in Allah, in the Messenger, and in what hath been revealed to him, never would they have taken them for friends and protectors, but most of them are rebellious wrong-doers" (Q., 5:82).

the pleasant attitude of the Prophet who allowed a delegation of Christians to worship in his mosque.

With the above principles of pluralism, tolerance, according to Madjid, is subsequently of a substantial meaning. It is not just as a matter of good relationship among different communities, but rather a matter of doctrine and a duty that must be done. If tolerance results in the existence of good association among various communities, this must be understood, he says, as wisdom or a product of implementation of the true doctrine. That wisdom is secondary in value, whilst the primary value is the true doctrine itself. Being a primary value, tolerance must be applied in a society, although its implementation for a certain body or even a community may not result in “pleasantness”.¹¹⁰

Madjid argues that in the earlier periods Muslims have in fact showed their inclusiveness and tolerance towards other religious communities. He even claims the Muslims to be the first among the religious communities to recognize the rights of the adherents of other

¹¹⁰ Madjid, *Cendekiawan and Religiuitas*, p. 57.

religions to participate fully in the public activities of the state. To strengthen this position, he refers to the “Madina Charter”, a political document made by the Prophet Muhammad to govern relations between Muslims and non-Muslims communities in Medina. In this charter, according to him, Muslims and non-Muslims were united within a bond of civility. This constitution included principles concerning religious freedom, the right for each group to govern the life in accordance with his belief, the freedom in economic and political relations between the groups, the obligation to participate in the defence against the enemies and the like.

Madjid also shows the tolerance of the early Muslim community in the agreement called “Aelia Charter”, which was made by Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab at the time when he ruled Jerusalem. This agreement mentioned, among others, the prohibition of destroying churches and their surroundings including crosses and the allowance for the Christians to perform their worships. Madjid relates the case of tolerance by ‘Umar as follows:

“Just after ‘Umar had signed an agreement at a Church, he would like to pray God. He said to Saverius: “Where could I pray?” “Pray inside the

church!" 'Umar refused it, and then prayed on stairs of the outer part of the church. After praying 'Umar explained, "Now we are still at war". If I prayed inside, the soldiers would have regarded the church as having turned to a mosque. So, you would loss this church. Umar suggested, if Muslims would build a mosque as a memorial at this place, it should be small and might not be higher than the church. There might not be a prayer call (*azan*) as such could disturb the church".¹¹¹

Another instance of tolerance of earlier Muslims Madjid refers to is the case of Islamic Spain, which is also often respected by many historians. He always cites Max I. Dimont, one of the prominent scholars on the history of the Jewish people, who considerably appreciated the case of Islamic Spain as three religions and "one bedroom", in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews shared the same brilliant civilization. To give a more obvious illustration as to the openness of these earlier Muslims, Madjid cites at length the same author when he says:

"When the Jews confront the open society of the Islamic world, they are 2,500 years old as people...

Nothing could civilization that rose out of the desert dust in the seventh century. Yet nothing could have been more the same. Though it represented a new civilization, a new religion, and a new social milieu built on economic foundations, it resembled the packaged "intellectual pleasure principle" presented to the doors of Hellenistic society to them. Now Islamic society opened the doors of its mosques, its schools, and its bedrooms for conversion, education, and assimilation. The challenge for

¹¹¹ Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, pp. 191.

the Jews was how to swim in this scented civilization without drowning, or in the language of modern sociology, how to enjoy the somatic, intellectual, and spiritual comforts offered by the dominant majority without disappearing as a marginal minority.

The Jews did what came naturally. They fired the old scriptwriters and hired a new set of specialists. Instead of rejecting the Muslim civilization, they accepted it. Instead of keeping themselves apart, they integrated. Instead of becoming parochialized fossils, they joined the new swinging society as sustaining members. Arabic became their mother tongue; wine, women, and secular songs their part-time avocations; philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, diplomacy, medicine, and literature, their full-time vocations. The Jews never had it so good.”¹¹²

It is important to note that from the ideas of the Madina Charter, Madjid often relates his discussion with the concept of civil society. For him, the Madina Charter is an important basis for the creation of civil society in Indonesia. In this respect, he would rather use the term ‘*Masyarakat Madani*’ rather than the term “*masyarakat sipil*”, the Indonesian translation of “civil society”. Madjid explains that the word *madina* is related to the words *madaniyya* and *tamaddun* meaning “civilization”. There is also another word related to it, that is, *hādāra* that means something related to the settled mode of life. This is the opposite of “*badawa*” meaning “rural areas”, “countryside”, “desert” or

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

“nomadism”. Madjid says that the civilization is closely related to a settled mode of life, implying that another mode of life, that is, particularly the nomadism of the Arabs, is either crude or simply “uncivilized”. It is for this reason, he says, that the Prophet often emphasized the superiority of the first mode of life to second one, saying, “*He who dwells in the desert (al-badiya) becomes rough in disposition*”. The Qur’an even asserts that the nomadic mode of life does not go very well with Islamic ideals of civilized life based on the true faith in God. Therefore, a Qur’anic says that the Arabs of the desert are the worst in unbelief and hypocrisy, and most fitted to be in ignorance of the command which God had sent down to His Messenger.¹¹³

As mentioned before, in his idea of pluralism Madjid emphasizes the necessity of seeking a common platform between religions. In Indonesian context this common platform, according to him, is reflected in *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution. Madjid argues that the first Principle of *Pancasila* i.e. “Belief in the One and Only God” is a reflection of the Islamic concept of monotheism and serves to be the

¹¹³ Madjid, “Urbanism in Islam and Indigenous Entrepreneurship”, in *Mizan*, Vol. III No. 2 (1990), p. 54.

common platform (*kalimat sawa'*) among different religions in Indonesia. Madjid remarks that Muslims in Indonesia can accept *Pancasila* at least with two considerations: firstly, the *Pancasila* values are in accordance with Islam; and secondly, they function as a point of agreement among various groups and serve to create a political unity. Madjid compares the acceptance of *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution can be compared to Muslims' recognition on the Constitution of Medina under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad.¹¹⁴

According to Madjid, the values of *Pancasila* are actually the values of Islam itself. Thus, he asks Muslims to understand their religion correctly and to implement it sincerely in order to realize *Pancasila*. In his words, "Muslims can implement *Pancasila* only if they understand and practice their religion correctly". To realize Islamic norms is not merely a right in the scheme of implementation of *Pancasila*, but rather an obligation. In other words, the obligation to carry out the religious

¹¹⁴ Madjid, *Cita-Cita Politik Islam Era Reformasi*, p. 57.

ideals sincerely and correctly, for Muslims, is not only an Islamic obligation, but also a “*Pancasila*” obligation.¹¹⁵

2. Abdurrahman Wahid

Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur, as he is popularly known, is leading figure whose ideas are quite influential but also controversial in Indonesia. He is one of the leaders of Nahdatul ‘*Ulamā*’, Indonesia’s largest and most influential Muslim organization. Wahid was born in East Java 1940, in a family of prominent Muslim intellectuals. His grandfathers, K.H. Hasyim Asy’ari and K.H. Bisri Syamsuri, were the founding fathers of the Nahdatul ‘*Ulamā*’, and his father K.H. Wahid Hasyim, was a former minister of Religious Affairs at the beginning of 1950s. Wahid attended elementary school in Jombang, and received his secondary education in Jakarta and Yogyakarta. In 1963, he left for Egypt to study. After studying in Cairo for two and half years, he continued his study at Baghdad University until 1970. During his stay in the Middle East, Wahid chaired the Association of Indonesian

¹¹⁵ Madjid, *Cita-Cita Politik Islam...*, p. 78-79

Students in the Middle East from 1964 to 1970. Before going back to Indonesia, he visited the Netherlands for six months, Germany for four months and French for two months. After returning, he was active in the educational life in the pesantren. Since 1984, he has held the position of General Chairman of the Executive Board of the Nahdatul 'Ulamā'. In 1991, Wahid, together with leading figures of different religious backgrounds, set up a forum called *Forum Demokrasi*, which struggle for greater political freedom and democracy. Wahid has served, as the highest position of his careers, as the President of Indonesia.

A religious and political thinker, Wahid has exerted a great influence not only on the Muslim community but also on the other communities. Because of his sensational character and attitude, Wahid and his ideas have often raised controversy. For instance, he once wrote an article in which he argued that Islam should only be considered a complementary factor in social and political life, and that *Pancasila* should be regarded as the sole basis of Indonesia. He also once suggested that the Arabic greeting, *asalamual'aikum*, could be changed

to the Indonesian words, *selamat pagi* or *selamat malam* (good morning or good evening) as part of his idea about the enculturation of Islam into Indonesian culture.

Wahid has a particular interest in interreligious relations. He is a figure who is known for his struggle for pluralism and religious tolerance in Indonesia. Due to his effort, he earned a Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1993 (Asia's equivalent of a Noble Prize) for his success in guiding Southeast Asia's largest Muslim organization as a force for religious tolerance, fair economic development and democracy. At the present, he is one of the members of the Presidential Board of the prestigious World Council on Religion and Peace, the position he has served since 1994.

Wahid always shows his positive attitude towards non-Muslim. He has, in fact, close ties with non-Muslims. He has suggested that a non-Muslim could be acceptable as President of Indonesia, a proposal that has brought about many critics from Muslims. During the most recent riots that helped topple President Suharto, Wahid spoke out strongly against the widespread anti-Chinese violence, saying that the

community was essential to the country's economic welfare. In his address at the occasion of Christmas celebration in 1999, he asked his fellow believers to welcome Christmas and rejoice with their Christian neighbours, because Jesus has a very important place in Islam. He said, "If we want to follow our religion in full obedience, we should also celebrate Christmas, as much as we celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad".¹¹⁶

Wahid's Ideas of Pluralism

In dealing with pluralism, Wahid depart from the context of democracy. According to him, democracy is meant to equalizing the rights and status of every citizen before the law, regardless of his ethnic origin, religion, sex, and native language.¹¹⁷ For him, the most essential

¹¹⁶ Cited in Stephen Suleeman, "Christianity and Islam in Indonesia", accessible at <http://www.pcusa.org/global/suleeman.htm>.

¹¹⁷ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Agama dan Demokrasi", in Th. Sumartana, et.al., (eds.), *Spiritualitas Baru: Agama dan Aspirasi Rakyat* (Yogyakarta: Dian Interfidei, 1994), 272.

meaning of democracy is to protect and to defend the rights of the minority groups.¹¹⁸

Being concerned with democracy, Wahid highlights basic values related to it such humanity, equality and justice. He has said that there are three functions of power in state and society. The first is to support humanity or human inter relationship. According to Wahid, human relationship is essential, since it supports for humanity whose character is to know and help one another. Wahid refers this idea to the Qur'anic verse stating, *"Indeed, I have created human kind differently in order that they may recognize one another"* (Q. 29:13). He also refers to another verse that says that Muhammad was just a person who brought the eternal relationship among all humankind (Q. 21:107).

The second function is to support equality, particularly, in economic shares or economic democracy. Wahid did not mention the words "majority" or "minority" because every human has equal status and rights. In other words, to achieve democracy in economy and social justice, every person should be treated equally, regardless of whether

¹¹⁸ "Demokrasi Wahid" Panji Masyarakat No. 682, 1-10 May 1991, pp. 24-26.

he belongs to the majority ethnic, racial and religious groups or the minority.

The third is to support justice. Wahid in this respect refers to the Qur'anic verse that says, *"O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, witness for Allah, even though it be against yourself or (your) parents or (your) kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for Allah is nearer unto both (than ye are). So follow not passion lest ye lapse (from truth) and if ye lapse or fall away, then lo ! Allah is eve Informed of what ye do"* (Q. 4: 135). According to Wahid, supporting justice is very important in social and political life. This effort needs a controlling system among people, particularly between people and the Government. As he said, "Justice cannot be realized if people cannot control the Government properly; and this control cannot be effective if people do not have equal status before the constitution". Thus, here, according to Wahid, equality of all people before the constitution was a main factor of the realization of justice. It is clear here that talking about justice, human rights, democracy and equality, Wahid's consideration goes beyond religious-dogmatic boundaries towards humanism.

In another occasion, Wahid maintains that religion should serve its transformative function for the democratization of social life. In this respect, religion, according to him, has to reformulate its conception of human dignity, equal status of humankind before law, and true solidarity among human beings. Every religion should integrate with other faiths in the form of achieving a number of universal basic values, which would bring interreligious relations in the phase, in which religion serves society in the most concrete forms, such as overcoming poverty, upholding sovereignty of law and guarantying the freedom of expression.¹¹⁹

In this relation, Wahid has expressed his criticisms against the general tendencies that are now visible in contemporary Indonesian society, and which are creating problems for freedom of thought and expression, democracy and sectarianism. He said that democracy as administered by the Government did not really give people freedom to express their thoughts. In addition, he even regretted that the government was letting sectarianism develop by permitting the

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

establishment of unions based on religious identity and that the government itself was supporting sectarianism by “taking sides” with the majority group, namely Muslims.¹²⁰ As has been mentioned earlier, Wahid indeed was very concerned about the formation of ICMI, which, as he claimed has an exclusive tendency and promotes undemocratic vision of Indonesia.

Being concerned with democracy, Wahid attempts to implement Islamic teachings inclusively in the frame of pluralism and democracy. In one of his writings, he proposes the changing of Islamic laws, which he considers irrelevant to the fundamental concept of democracy. For example, he suggests the reformulation of the Islamic law on apostasy (*murtad*). Islamic law on this matter stipulates that a Muslim who renounces Islam could be sentenced to death. Wahid comments, “if we let the law be put into practice as it is, we have to execute more than 25 million people who have converted to Christianity and others.” He says, “It is impossible to do so”. Therefore, Islamic law on this issue,

¹²⁰ Panji Masyarakat, No. 682, 1-10 May 1991, pp. 24-26.

which has prevailed for many centuries, should be changed, for it is not relevant any more to our necessity.¹²¹

Explaining Islamic values of tolerance, Wahid states that Islam is both a religion of compassion and tolerance and of justice and fairness. It is also an egalitarian faith, a faith that does not promote class, ethnic, racial, gender or other divisions in society. For him, Islam is the faith that acknowledges that, in the eyes of God, all human beings are of equal worth. Wahid explains all these Islamic values in the light of universalism of Islam.

According to Wahid, there are five principles that bring forth the universalism and Islam, that is the physical safety for all citizens from arbitrate treatment beyond law, the freedom to embrace a religion without any coercion to change religion, the protection of family and descendants, the protection of property and personal rights and the protection of profession.¹²² These five basic guaranties necessarily

¹²¹ Abdurrahman Wahid, lecture delivered at a discussion with Indonesian community in the Netherlands, Den Haag, 21 February 1999.

¹²² Abdurrahman Wahid, "Universalisme Islam dan Kosmopolitanisme Peradaban Islam" in *Kontekstualisasi Doktrin Islam dalam Sejarah* (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1994), p. 545-52.

provide a theoretical and moral frame, which cannot function properly if they are not supported with the cosmopolitanism of Islamic civilization. Such a cosmopolitanism of Islamic civilization, according Wahid, can be shown in number of elements such as the disappearance of ethnic boundaries, the strengthening of the cultural plurality and the political heterogeneity and the flexibility in religious attitude. Wahid argues that this cosmopolitanism of Islamic civilization will be reached when there is equilibrium between the normative inclination of the Muslims and the freedom of thinking for all citizens.¹²³

Wahid regrets that such creative nature of Islamic cosmopolitanism now begins to fade. He suggests therefore the necessity to make a kind of new agenda, which can overcome the problems of the Muslim community now. According to him, Muslims have currently become a narrow-minded group and so exclusive, that they can no longer take part in the human civilization in the post-industry era. Wahid suggests Muslims are not to be tricked by the idealisms proposing “Islam as an alternative”, for these, as is the case of

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 549-50.

formalization of Islam, only result in the exclusive and narrow-minded construction of Islam.¹²⁴ Thus in the context of the Indonesian society which is plural, the ideals to make Islam as the solely contributor should be avoid. In such a plural reality, Islam, according Wahid, should be positioned as a complementary factor, and it may not dominate the life of the society.¹²⁵ Instead of introducing formal Islam, he emphasizes the significance of spirituality, which could develop the solidarity in the reality of pluralism. His explanation in this matter can be seen as follows:

The awareness of the necessity for a positive attitude towards plurality of culture and belief has given great encouragement to people for living in the context of solidarity with other people in the world, which is getting more sophisticated and is full of new challenges... Perhaps, in this spirituality, taking an example from the Prophet Muhammad will no longer be figurative. However, he remains as the Messenger who brings truth, who is the centre of a Muslim's life, and who brings spiritual inspiration needed by a Muslim to live in this world. The statement of Syaikh Ali Abdel Raziq, that Islam is equality, democracy and justice, indicates an awareness of spirituality that a great concern towards the co-operation of all ideologies, religions and ideas to face and solve the world crisis today. ¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 551.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Quoted from Stanley Rambitan, p. 115. The original text, as he notes, is found in "Spiritualitas Islam dalam Masyarakat Modern", Wahid's paper delivered

In terms of interreligious relations, Wahid says that one of the problems that affect the relationship between religious groups is the appearance of negative attitude that regards one's own religion as only the truest, by blaming other religions. Wahid, in deed, justifies that one should believe in the trueness of his own religion, but he criticizes the attitude of accusing other religion. This attitude, according to him, is regarded as arrogance and indicates the lowness of one's faith quality. He points out, "it is only God who is the most correct".¹²⁷

Elsewhere, Wahid shows a general presumption among Muslims that Jews and Christians dislike Islam, a supposition which is generally taken from the Qur'anic verse (2: 120): "Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion". According to Wahid, this verse should be understood in a relative way. First, this verse was actually revealed in the context where Muhammad in Medina faced the Jewish and Christian groups, whose

at the Seminar of Religions, Department of Research and Development, The Council of Churches in Indonesia), Bogor 23 Sept 1989, pp. 6-7.

¹²⁷ Abdurrahman Wahid. "Bagimu Agamamu, Bagiku Agamaku", in Badjuri (ed.), *Dalam Pelita Hati*, p. 187.

attitude was quite militant. They did not accept Muslim superiority over them, being more established than the newly arrived Muslims are. In Wahid's opinion, this is a question of political competition. The Prophet's move against them was actually not motivated by belief or religion, but by political considerations. Thus, the verse is not an absolute injunction, which is unchangeable.¹²⁸

Wahid also argues that the attitude of Christians and Jews should not be generalized. He says that many of them view Islam from the perspective of the Crusades and of the Arab-Israel conflicts. Some others recognize Islam as a world religion, which has the same rights as other religions. Thus, Wahid concludes that not all non-Muslims have a bad view on Islam.¹²⁹

Like Madjid, Wahid also emphasizes the significance of *Pancasila* as a principle that should be maintained in interreligious relations. According to him, the acceptance of *Pancasila* ensures that all citizens

¹²⁸ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Menetapkan Pangkalan-Pangkalan Pendaratan Menuju Indonesia yang Dicita-citakan", in Imam Waluyo and Kons Kleden (eds.) *Dialog: Indonesia Kini dan Esok* (Jakarta: Lappenas, 1980, p. 109.

¹²⁹ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Ketidakrelaan Orang Yahudi dan Kristen" p. 227-228.

enjoy equal status before the Constitution, regardless of their ethnic, religious, or cultural origins. *Pancasila* in this respect should be treated as a rule of game, which relates all religions and faiths in the life of society. However, he contends that *Pancasila* cannot be compared wholly with religion. *Pancasila*, according to him, functions as the constitutional and ideological base and it should accommodate aspirations of all religions and support its position functionally. On the contrary, religion constitutes the basis of faith and it becomes a motivating element that gives the spiritual colour in their activities.

Wahid says:

“In the very basic aspect, *Pancasila* functions to organize our life as collectivity called a nation, whereas religions provide it with social purpose... Religion even unites such absolutely important elements of life in a completely ethical frame. Thus between religion and *Pancasila* there is a symbiotic relation. It is this symbiotic relation, which makes *Pancasila* as the way of life for the state and it is not just a formal ideology of the state”.¹³⁰

It is important that Wahid’s commitment of *Pancasila* is not based on accommodative, compromistic and opportunistic considerations, but on his Islamic theological understandings. To Wahid, the acceptance of

¹³⁰ Abdurrahman Wahid, <http://www.rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/name.htm>

Pancasila is the consequence of the relationship between Islam and the State based on Islamic considerations. Islamic teaching recognizes the existence of society and state as certain and confirmed. The consequence is that, all people are obliged to recognize the rules made by the State. It is therefore obligatory for the Muslim to obey laws applied in the state, in this case the recognition of *Pancasila*, without trying to replace it with any alternative.

Wahid, however, points out that the *Pancasila* is accepted only for the basis of social and political life in Indonesia, not for the basis of Muslim religious life. This is because the acceptance of *Pancasila* is not a religious requirement. Islamic law only gives approval to the acceptance of *Pancasila* as a Government regulation. Therefore, it is not proper for Muslims to accept *Pancasila* as the basis for their religious beliefs and practices. *Pancasila* is accepted, not to replace Islamic teachings, nor as an alternative source beside the Qur'an and Sunna, but as the basis for social and political life in society. This implies that Wahid implicitly accepts a separation between political and religious affairs.

3. M. Quraish Shihab

Shihab is a prominent religious scholar who is also known as one of the leading Qur'anic commentators in contemporary Indonesia. He was the former rector of the State Institute of Islam Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and served as the Minister of Religious Affairs during the last period of Suharto Government. Born on 16 February 1944 in Rappang, South Sulawesi, Shihab received his education mostly from Al-Azhar University of Cairo. He took his Master and Ph.D degree from the same university with the major study on the Qur'anic Interpretation (*Tafsir*). As a prolific scholars, he has written many books and articles concerning religious matters and also active in giving Islamic advices and legal opinions, which are posed to him in some Indonesian newspapers. Together with other scholars from various religious backgrounds, he has also published some writings, which are related to interreligious relations.

Shihab's Ideas of Pluralism

In dealing with religious pluralism, Shihab starts from the idea of religious freedom. He asserts that Islam fundamentally promotes the freedom of religion. To argue with, he cites various Qur'anic verses such as: *"There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path"* (Q. 2: 256); *"And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you then compel mankind, until they become believers"* (Q. 10: 99); *"And say, the truth is from your Lord. Then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve"* (Q. 18: 29).

In his explanation of the concept of religious freedom, Shihab mentions two main aspects, internal and external. The internal aspect, as he says, concerns the notion that a religion is one "one package". If one in this respect has chosen a certain religion, he is no longer free to select and implement only certain parts of the "package", ignoring other parts of it. The rejection of parts of it might lead to the refusal of the religion.¹³¹

¹³¹ M. Quraish Shihab, "Wawasan al-Qur'an tentang Kebebasan Beragama" [Islamic Concepts of Religious Freedom], in *Passing Over*, 190.

According to Shihab Islam guarantees the freedom of religion in a broad sense including the freedom to change religion. There is in deed a certain view suggesting that an apostate might be sentenced to death, but such a rule, as Shihab argues, actually relates to the social condition of the community. In the Qur'an, he says, there is no mention of such a regulation. The rule in deed mentioned in a number of prophetic traditions, but its application was formerly due to the expediency of the Prophet in organizing his community. According to Shihab, this rule of the Prophet should be viewed in the context of his position as a leader of his community, whose policy was changeable due to the change of social condition.¹³²

As regards the external aspect, Shihab focuses its discussion on the matter of religious tolerance. Like many Muslim scholars, he also begins with the affirmation that religious distinctions actually constitute the rule of God as mentioned in the verse 5: 48. He, therefore, asks Muslims to be tolerant towards the various religious views either within the Muslim community or between interreligious groups. The

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

difference among between Muslims may not lead to division, since all Muslims are brothers. Besides, Muslims must also bind the brotherhood with other religious communities and they must avoid matters that can cause conflict and hostility, since the Qur'an asserts, *"To you be your religion, and to me my religion"* (Q. 109: 6), and *"For us our deeds and for you your deeds. There is no dispute between us and you. God will assemble us (all), and to Him is the final return"* (Q. 42: 15).

Like, Madjid, Shihab also stresses the significance of the seeking of common platform among religious groups as reflected in the Qur'anic expression *kalimat sawā'*. He says that if the common platform could not be achieved, every group should recognize the existence of the other and not blame one another. In this situation, the Qur'an gives guidance with the following statement: *"We or you are rightly guided or in a plain error. Say, "You will not be asked about our sins, nor shall we be asked of what you do". Say, "Our Lord will assemble us all together, then He will judge between us with truth". And He is the (Most Trustworthy) All-Knowing Judge"*. (Q. 34: 24-26). In this case, dialogue, according to him, is very urgent. The dialogue suggested is not to see who will be the winner,

but to understand the other according to the belief he adheres. No party in the dialogue might claim as the truest side since each has the potential both to be true and to be wrong. The decision, he says, will be known in the Hereafter.¹³³

Shihab asserts that theological differences between Muslims and non-Muslims may not necessary hinder the social relations. The Qur'an by any means does not prohibit Muslims of conducting good deeds to the non-Muslims as far as they respect the rights of the Muslims. "*God does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes*" (Q. 60: 8).

In addition, Shihab refuses some Muslim understandings concerning *ahl al-kitāb* mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith, which have unsympathetic connotations. He says that many verses of the Qur'an speaking about them were actually revealed in the context of social condition, where certain groups of the *ahl al-kitāb*, due to the economic rivalry with the Muslim, took hostile attitudes against the Muslims.

¹³³ M. Quraish Shihab, "Reaktualisasi dan Dialog Antar Agam-Agama" in *Meretas Jalan Teologi Agama-Agama di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), p. 140.

Therefore, he contends, those verses might not be generalized for all *ahl al-Kitāb* in all time and places. Most of the criticisms against *ahl al-Kitāb* in the Qur'an are in fact more directed to the Jews than to the Christians for the former antagonistic attitude were stronger than that of the latter (Q. 3: 199).

One the factors of the Jews' hatred to the Muslims was, as he refers to Qur'anic verse 2:109 was their jealousy towards the Prophet Muhammad, who did not derive from their community. He says, the coming of this Prophet led to the decrease of the Jews' influence in Medina and even to disappearance of their political as well as economic interests. Thus, the main factor of the conflict was not the religious doctrine but the economic and political interest covered with the religious motives. Shihab contends, the Qur'anic verses asking Muslims not to take the Jews and Christians as their leader, should be viewed from this context.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ For some interpreter like Baydāwī and Zamakhsharī, those verses indicate an absolute prohibition to take the Jews and the Christians as friend. See M. Quraish Shihab, *Wasawan Al-Qur'an: Tafsīr Mawdū'ī atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996) p. 86.

With regard to the term *ahl al-kitāb*, however, Shihab, unlike other Muslim scholars who tend to extend its meaning to other non-Muslim groups in addition to the Christians and the Jews, limit it only to the Christians and the Jews. This, he says, according to the application of the Qur'an itself which is restricted only to both groups. The Qur'an states: "*The Book was sent down to two peoples before us, and four our part, We remained unacquainted with all they learned by assiduous study.*" Nevertheless, towards other religious communities like non-Arab paganism Shihab refers to a Hadith which states that their legal status can be compared with *ahl al-kitāb*.¹³⁵

In Islam, discussion on interreligious relation cannot be separated from the dimension of *Shari'a* (in the narrow context, Islamic law). It is for this reason, Shihab, who is expert in this knowledge, also deals with this issue of law when discussing on this issue. In one of his works, he has discussed at length about the problem of interreligious marriage and the problem of Muslim's participation at Christmas celebrations. His reflections on these issues seem to respond the cases that appeared.

¹³⁵ Quraish Shibab, "*Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Bab Pernikahan*", accessible at <http://amirfauzi.tripod.com/WawasanNikah01.htm>

As mentioned, in 1980 the Council of Indonesian 'Ulamā' issued a *fatwā* that prohibited interreligious marriage for Muslims and in 1981 the Council also issued *fatwā* that banned Muslims to attend Christmas celebrations.

Shihab's position on these matters is noteworthy. As for the problem of Muslim participation at Christmas celebrations his attitude is quite flexible. In his essay "*Selamat Natal Menurut Al-Qur'an*", he discusses in a rather detail about the legality for Muslims to say "Merry Christmas" to their Christian fellows. According to Shihab, there are in fact two conflicting opinions on this matter. The first opinion maintains the permissibility of the practice and this is based on the fact that in the Qur'an there is also expression of the salutation to Jesus.¹³⁶ There was a *hādīth* that stated that the Prophet Muhammad had celebrated the release of Musa from the intrigue of Pharaoh by fasting on the tenth of *Muharram* (the first month of Islamic calendar). These arguments

¹³⁶ "So Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)" (Q. 19:33).

principally support the permissibility for Muslims to congratulate and attend the Christmas celebration.¹³⁷

The second opinion prohibits Muslim from being involved in Christmas celebrations. This opinion rests on the fact that Christmas is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Jesus, who is regarded by Christians as the son of God, a view that is rejected in Islam. Extending a congratulatory “Merry Christmas” to Christian fellows or attending Christmas celebrations could endanger the *‘aqīda* (creed) of Muslims who lack religious knowledge. Such a practice can also be perceived as recognition of the divinity of Jesus, which absolutely contradicts the Islamic creed. For this reason, extending congratulations, attending celebrations and taking part in any other activity related to Christmas are not allowed for Muslims.¹³⁸

Of these two opinions, Shihab takes a middle way. He agrees to prohibit Muslims from expressing the Christmas greetings as well as celebrating it to the extent if the practices could harm the faith. This

¹³⁷ M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), pp. 370-71.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

prohibition is particularly aimed for the people who have weak and low level of religious understanding. Nevertheless, if this is not the case, that is, one expresses it in accordance with the spirit of the Qur'an, then the practice, according to Shihab, is allowed. In order to preserve the harmonious relation, Muslims are allowed to express congratulatory expression of the Christmas, which is in accordance with the Islamic belief, even though for a non-Muslim such is understood differently.¹³⁹ Undoubtedly, this view of Shihab is positive in maintaining harmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia. This idea is indeed different from the Council of Indonesia '*Ulamā*', which maintains absolutely the prohibition of the practice concerned.

However, if in the above case Shihab shows his flexibility, in the second case, that interreligious marriage, his position seems to be strict. Shihab prohibits interreligious marriage for Muslims. According to him, this prohibition is aimed to realize the harmony (*sakīna*) in a family. For him, a harmony could be achieved when there is conformity

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

in the way of life between the couples. The verse 5: 5 in deed allows Muslim men to marry the women of *ahl al-kitab*, but according to him, such permissibility. Shihab further says, the prohibition of marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man is due to the fear that the woman would be under the authority of her husband who has different faith.

B. Christian Perspective of Pluralism and Tolerance

The discourse on pluralism and tolerance have long become the focus of attention of Christian theologians and religious leaders in Indonesia and it is in deed one of the most important subjects which appear not only in many publications but also in public speeches. Given the fact that Christians are a minority group in the country where they constitute approximately 10% of the 210 million total populations, the significance of the theme is obvious. Since the establishment of the country, many Christian leaders continually appeal for tolerance and demand equality of right as co citizens regardless of their religious differences.

During the independent period, the discourses on this matter appeared simultaneously with the debates on the formulation of the form and state ideology, where, as has been discussed earlier, Christians opposed some Muslim groups who attempted to establish an Islamic state. In spite of this socio-political background, the discourses on this issue in the Christian circles are inseparable from the global development of theological thinking in the Christian world itself in

particular after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the Kandy 1968 Consultation of the World Council of Churches. In fact, these events are always considered as early development for the openness of the Churches towards other faiths and religions. Due to the significance and influence of these meetings for the growth of ideas of pluralism in the Christian circles, it would be relevant to discuss them, before going further to see this discourse in the context of Indonesia.

First, I would remark that the Second Vatican Council could be considered as an important beginning for the changing of Catholic attitude toward other religions. Inaugurated officially by Pope John XXIII on October 11, 1962, the meeting was the starting point where the Catholic Churches began to see other religions as entities that should be respected. Before due, the attitude of the Catholic Churches towards other religions was rather exclusive for they strongly held their traditional dogma, which believed that there was no salvation outside the Church (*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*). However, in the Vatican Council, under the influence of innovative theologians such as Karl Rahner and Hans Küng, this exclusive position was changed to be

inclusive. The Church began to acknowledge the existence of salvation outside the Church.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic churches paid much attention towards interreligious relations and emphasized the significance of dialogue in order to establish good relations with people of other faiths. For that reason the Vatican authorities, for example, established a special office called Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions with the task of initiating dialogue with followers of other religions. Prior to that council, the Church had not felt a need to set up a similar foundation to organize its relations with other religions. The Secretariat produced some publications and developed some guidelines to prepare its members to enter into dialogue with others. These publications explained the objectives of interreligious dialogue, among others, to improve and promote friendly relations between the adherents of different religions by breaking down hostilities and prejudices through personal meetings. One of the most significant

common points emphasized in the dialogue is the common humanity.¹⁴⁰

In the Protestant Churches, the same development could be seen in the Kandy 1967 consultation of the World Council of Churches. In this forum, which was focused on the theme "Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths", the participants agreed to revise their traditional missionary doctrine "outside Christianity, no salvation", which was the equivalent of the Catholic axiom *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*. Like the Second Vatican Council, the Kandy consultation also lays down principles of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian. For instance, it speaks about the possibility of salvation for those who belong to other faiths. It states, "God's love and purpose of salvation extend to all mankind, of every century and creed. He saves the world in and through Jesus Christ. Through the Spirit, Christ is at work in every man's heart, though as yet His Kingdom remains a hidden

¹⁴⁰ For more information about the development of Roman Catholic teaching on Interreligious dialogue, see Jean L. Jadot, "The Growth in the Roman Catholic Commitment to Interreligious Dialogue Since Vatican II", *JES*, 20/3 (1983), 365-378; Michael Fitzgerald, "25 Years of Dialogue: The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue", *Islamochristiana*, 15 (1989), 109-120; Aylward Shorter, "The Secretariat For Non-Christians", in Hastings (ed.), *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After* (London: SPCK, 1991), 185-187.

rule".¹⁴¹ This statement highlights that God's plan of salvation extends to all people through the universal activity of the Spirit.

The Kandy forum also explained the basis of entering into dialogue in about a similar way as *Nostra Aetate*. Dialogue means a positive effort to attain a deeper understanding of the truth through mutual awareness of one another's convictions and witness. It involves an expectation of something new happening. Dialogue implies a readiness to be changed as well as to influence others. Good dialogue develops when one partner speaks in such a way that the other feels drawn to listen, and likewise when one listens so that the other is drawn to speak. The outcome of the dialogue is the work of the Spirit.¹⁴²

According to Hendrik Pranger, the Kandy meeting is considerably important for the development of dialogue between Christianity and non-Christian religions because of the following reasons: The first is its changing attitude towards the relationship between mission,

¹⁴¹ The Kandy Report, "Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths", *Religion and Society*, 14/2 (1967), 64.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 65-66.

proclamation, and dialogue. Mission and witness were no longer regarded as a one-way communication, and dialogue was considered as the principal Christian form of relationship with people of other faiths. The second is its search for a new theological frame to determine the relation of Christians with non-Christians. The third is the acceptance of dialogue as a basis for a solution of questions concerning non-Christian religions.¹⁴³ The Kandy consultation, in short, can be regarded as an epoch-making breakthrough in the Protestant churches' relation with people of other faiths just as the Second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church.

After the Kandy consultation, interest in dialogues with people of other faiths in the WCC more and more increased. In the Fourth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, which was held in 1968, in Uppsala, Sweden, interreligious dialogue was also discussed, although not as a separate issue. This was the first assembly that tried to connect inter religious dialogue with the general

¹⁴³ Hendrik Pranger, *Dialogue in Discussion, The World Council of Churches and The Challenge of Religious Plurality Between 1967 and 1979* (Utrecht: Interuniversitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica, 1994), p. 66.

theological outlook of the World Council of Churches.¹⁴⁴ The WCC concern in interreligious dialogue was concretely realized, for the first time, by the conducting of the inter religious dialogue meeting at Ajaltoun, Lebanon, in 1970.¹⁴⁵ In this meeting, Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhist came together. The aim was to experience bilateral dialogue between Christians and other religions and to discuss the problems as well as the successes that such dialogue would bring. In fact, this meeting could be regarded as an event of major historical significance in the history of the Ecumenical Movement because of its being the first dialogue conference together with In order to undertake dialogue activities, the WCC subsequently established an official post called Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴⁵ "Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths; The Ajaltoun Memorandum" in Stanley J. Samartha (ed.), *Living Faith and the Ecumenical Movement*, (Geneva: WCC, 1971), 15-32.

In 1979, this office promulgated a set of guidelines for dialogue entitled *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies*.

The guidelines entail:

- a. Dialogue becomes possible when people from different faiths meet with each other.
- b. Dialogue should be established on the practical issues of living, not on belief systems.
- c. Dialogue should be based on common humanity.
- d. Mutual understanding is necessary between dialogue partners.
- e. Dialogue partners should trust each other's sincerity.
- f. In the dialogue process, equal opportunities should be given each partner to express and describe his/her faith in his/her own terms.
- g. Dialogue participants should cooperate with each other to work for a better human community.
- h. Dialogue partners should listen to their dialogue partners while they are speaking.

- i. Dialogue partners should open themselves to others in order to learn from them.

With the promulgation of these guidelines, the DFI gained its official policy for its dialogue activities and related issues with people of other faiths, as did the Catholic Church with its document *Nostra Aetate*.

In addition to these institutional developments, many individual Christian thinkers had in deed contributed to development understanding of Christian and non-Christian relations and some had gone further beyond the official teachings of their Churches. The figures like Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, Raimundo Panikkar, Stanley Samartha, Paul Knitter, Kenneth Cragg, John Hicks, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and William Montgomery Watt are among those whose ideas have influenced the growth of the ideas of pluralism in the Christian world. Karl Rahner was one of the most influential Catholic leaders who broke down the traditional exclusive outlooks of the Catholic Church prior to the Second Vatican Council. It was he who exercised enormous influence on the final shape of many conciliar documents

during the Second Vatican Council. He introduced the concept of “anonymous Christians” which implies, that good and devout people of other faiths could attain salvation outside of explicitly constituted Christianity. In this respect, he argued that non-Christian religions “not only contain elements of natural knowledge of God but also supernatural instances of the grace which God presents to man because of Christ.”¹⁴⁶

Other thinkers such as John Hicks, Paul Knitter even adopted a more liberal concept by recognizing that salvation was available in all religions through the particularities of those religions. This means that people of other faiths attain salvation through their own religious traditions. According to Knitter, the Christianity teaches Christians the universality of God’s love and presence, but this does not necessarily

¹⁴⁶ In another writing Rahner remarks, “let us say, a Buddhist monk... who, because he follows his conscience, attains salvation and lives in the grace of God; of him I must say that he is an anonymous Christian; if not, I would have to presuppose that there is a genuine path to salvation that really attains that goal, but that simply has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. But I cannot do that. And so, if I hold if everyone depends upon Jesus Christ for salvation, and if at the same time I hold that many live in the world have not expressly recognized Jesus Christ, then there remains in my opinion nothing else but to take up this postulate of an anonymous Christianity.” See Hubert Biallowons et.al (eds.), *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1986), p.135.

imply that God's love and presence are limited to Jesus, since other religions can also teach the same thing.¹⁴⁷ Although some aspects of these pluralistic ideas are criticized by other scholars, their insights have in fact a significant impact in the development of interreligious relations.

In Indonesia, the impact of these developments seems obvious. Many Christian theologians and leaders nowadays also realize the importance to develop ideas of pluralism and interreligious dialogues, and this is not only due to the actual challenges of the growing interreligious conflicts, but also due to the growing awareness to develop theological deliberations relevant to the context of religious plurality.

Now we will see how Indonesian Christian intellectual dealing with religious pluralism and tolerance.

1. J. B. Banawiratma

¹⁴⁷ Paul Knitter, "Christian Salvation: Its Nature and Uniqueness-Interreligious Proposal", *New Theology Review*, 7/4 (1994), p. 40-41.

Johannes Baptista Banawitama is a prominent Catholic theologian whose ideas are quite influential in the Catholic discourse in Indonesia. Born in 1946 in Yogyakarta, he entered the Jesuit order in 1966. He studied philosophy at the Driyarkara School of Philosophy and completed his *doktorandus* degree in entitled "*Kebebasan dan Tanggung Jawab Menurut Jean Paul Sartre*" (Freedom and Responsibility According to Jean Paul Sartre). He continued his study in theology at Sanata Dharma Teacher's Training College (IKIP, now Sanata Dharma University) of Yogyakarta and completed his another *doktorandus* degree with a thesis entitled "*Pengalaman Hubungan Manusia dengan Allah dalam Konteks Hubungan Murid dengan Guru dari Masyarakat Jawa dan dari Injil Yohannes: Refleksi dalam Pertemuan Dialogal*" (The Experiential Relationship between God and Man within the Context of Teacher-Pupil Relation from the Perspective of Javanese Society and John Gospel: A Reflection in Dialogue Meeting). This thesis was later published in 1977 with the title "*Yesus Sang Guru: Pertemuan Kejawaen dengan Injil*" (Jesus the Guru: The Encounter of Javanese and the Gospel). In 1975 he was ordained and after one year of pastoral

ministry, he continued his graduate studies at Innsbruck University, Austria, and obtained PhD in theology with a dissertation entitled “*Der heilige Geist in der Theologie von Heribert Mühlen: Versuch einer Darstellung and Würdigung*”. He joined the Faculty of Theology, at the Roman Catholics’ Sanata Dharma University with a special interest in contextual theology for more than 20 years. A prolific writer, Banawiratma wrote numerous articles in both Indonesia and English in various journals anthologies, magazines, and newspapers in the country as well as overseas. His works include *Contextual Theology: An Indonesian Model* (co-author with J. Müller, 1999), *Aspek-Aspek Teology Sosial* (1988), *Gereja dan Masyarakat* (1994) and *Teology Kemerdekaan*.¹⁴⁸

Banawiratma’s Ideas

As a prominent theologian, Banawiratma has in fact given much contribution in the development of theological understanding relevant in the context of plural society of Indonesia. He is one of the Catholic theologians who has much discussed the ideas of dialogue and

¹⁴⁸ J.B. Banawiratma, *Struggling in Hope: Bergumul dengan Harapan* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999), p. 877.

attempted to contextualize them to reality of social life. Banawiratma always emphasizes the significance of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council as the basic foundation for the openness of Catholic attitude in relating with other religions.

According to Banawiratma, the vision of the Second Vatican Council concerning religious life of non-Christians could be found in the various documents of the Council. These include *Lumen Gentium*, the dogmatic constitution of the Church; *Nostra Aetate*, the declaration on the relationship of the church to non-Christian religions; *Ad Gentes*, the decree on the missionary work of the Church; *Gaudium et Spes*, the pastoral constitution of the church in the modern world. He writes:¹⁴⁹

"Lumen Gentium repeats the traditional teaching about salvation outside the Church. It is stated for example that: "The divine providence would not deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life." (LG 16)

"Nostra Aetate states: "The Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in other religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though

¹⁴⁹ "Open Integrity: Theological Basis for the Catholic Church Concerning Interreligious and Interfaith Communication", in *The Theological Frame of Harmonious Life of Religious Communities in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Department of Religious Affairs of Indonesia/Office of Religious Research and Development, 1997), pp.120-124. The English translation is quoted from the text.

differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. The Council hopes that: "through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of the other religions, carried out with prudence and love in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men." (NA 2)¹⁵⁰

"*Ad Gentes* reconfirms the vision of *Lumen Gentium*. The document says that God's plan to save men is not brought about secretly in the heart of human being, not solely in the efforts, including religious efforts by which they, through various ways, seek for God by touching and finding Him, even though, He is not far from us. *Ad Gentes* recognizes the presence of the grace of God among nations and call every Christian to know well their traditions and gladly and with respect find the seed of the Word hidden in those traditions."

Gaudium et Spes speaks about God's plan of salvation for all people, and exhorts believers that with joy and respect recognize and find the seed of the Word, the presence of the grace of God in the religious traditions of the nations. The presence of the seed of the Word, the presence of the grace of God, in *Gaudium et Spes* is called as the work of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is present and working in the real situation of their practices of their religious life (GS 22).

In his work entitled "*Mengembangkan Teologi Agama-Agama*" ("Developing Theology of Religions"), Banawiratma attempts further to develop his ideas on religious pluralism. In it, he proposes what he calls as *dialogical critical contextual approach*. He takes this approach as to differentiate from other approaches, which are common in the

¹⁵⁰ The document cites further at length the *Nostra Aetate*. See p. 125.

Christian tradition, that is, *ecclesio-centric approach*, *Christo-centric approach*, *theo-centric approach*, *basileio-centric approach* and *multi-centric indifferent approach* or *indifferent pluralism*.¹⁵¹ According to Banawiratma, *dialogical critical contextual approach* is the most appropriate approach in comparison with above-mentioned approaches. It seems, he attempts to integrate such various approaches by stressing the significance of the Christian faith as the basic principle in the theological deliberation. For him the Christian theological reasoning would be possible only on the bases of its special relation with Jesus Christ. He asserts, “the integrity of Christian faith is always characterized by *Christology* and *basileio-logy* (because at the same time it aims at the Reign of God); and it also adopts anthropological and cosmological concerns by assigning a

¹⁵¹ The *ecclesio-centric approach* regards the salvation only existing in the Church; outside the Church there is no salvation. The *Christo-centric approach* focuses on Christ as the savior; thus outside Jesus, there is no salvation. *Theo-centric approach* views that the decision is in the hands of God himself, who saves human life in different ways. The *basileio-centric approach* centers on the Reign of God. The Reign of God is understood as events and circumstances that create the Reign of God, such justice, truth, love, peace etc. The *multi-centric indifferent approach* or *indifferent pluralism* accepts religious pluralism. In this approach all religious differences are accounted for as individual free options. In other words, all are equal. See J.B. Banawiratma, “Mengembangkan Theology Agama-Agama”, in Tim Balitbang PGI, *Meretas Jalan Teologi Agama-Agama di Indonesia: Theologia Religionum* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 42-43.

proper role to the community of Christian believers (*ecclesio-logy*) and of other believers (*pluralism*)."¹⁵²

According to Banawiratma, the Christian tradition and truth are neither inclusive nor exclusive of all other religious traditions and truth, but they are related to all of them. He denies inclusivism since this can ignore the identity of other traditions by covering or assimilating them in one's own tradition. He also refuses relativism, as this regards all religions the same. By contrast, he does not want to ignore Jesus as the revelation of God. Ignoring the fact, he quotes the Biblical statement, would mean 'cutting branches from the vine from which we grow and bear fruit' (John 15: 1-11). Thus, the proper attitude in religious pluralism is to recognize and accept the uniqueness and meaning of every religion by realizing that each can learn from the other.¹⁵³

Banawiratma remarks the significance of interreligious dialogue. For him this activity should not only be understood as a discussion

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁵³ J.B. Banawiratma, "Contextual Christology and Christian Praxis An Indonesia Reflection", accessible at <http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr00/bono.htm>

concerning interreligious matters. Interreligious dialogue also encompasses interaction of religious communities in the reality of life. Thus, he refers in this case to the *Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*,¹⁵⁴ which has designed four levels of dialogue, namely dialogue of life, dialogue of religious experience, theological dialogue and dialogue of action. However, Banawiratma finds it necessary to develop another level of dialogue, which he calls “contextual analysis and reflection”. In this level, he emphasizes the importance of common analysis by religious communities towards their social situation in order to share common social options and actions. According to him, the more common is their analysis the greater their chance to find a

¹⁵⁴ The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is the central office of the Catholic Church for the promotion of interreligious dialogue in accordance with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the declaration “*Nostra Aetate*”. Initially this institution was called the Secretariat for Non Christians which was created in 1964 by Pope Paul VI. In 1989, it was renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. The tasks of this Council are (1) to promote mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between Catholics and the followers of others religious traditions; (2) to encourage the study of religions; and (3) to promote the formation of persons dedicated to dialogue. See “The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue”, accessible at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_pro_20051996_en.html

proper solution to the problems. Banawiratma further delineates the process of all these dialogues as follows:

In the dialogue of life people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. This level of inter-religious dialogue takes place in small groups who know each other, in daily life where men and women of different faiths experience together a common situation, with its ups and downs, anxieties and hopes, and thus common concerns emerge. They are concerned about the need for clean water, healthy housing, adequate education, field of work etc.

Contextual analysis and reflection explain the conditions of life and offer ethical orientation for a common well being (political ethics). People of different religions construct a common analysis of their social situation with the purpose to share common social options and action.

Based on their respective traditions, people share their religious experience and spiritual riches and enrich one another through the dialogue of religious experience. The believers live in open integrity, knowing where they stand and opening themselves to other religious traditions. They share their experience of faith, their prayer and contemplation, their ways of searching and following God or the Ultimate. Without this kind of dialogue, our witness could move in an aggressive and manipulative manner, motivated by individual or communal egoism and not directed by the Truth.

Theologians or specialist can perform the dialogue of theological exchange on the scientific level, seeking to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritage, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values. Theological exchange should take the historical process of every religion into account. This is open honesty at the theological level. ...

Through dialogue of action, Christian sisters and brothers of other faiths work for the integral liberation of people. At this level of dialogue,

people of various religions and beliefs transform society to become more just, free and human as well as more eco-friendly.¹⁵⁵

According to Banawiratma, all these levels of dialogues would bring religious groups to the state of genuine harmony and reject artificial harmony.

In the context theological dialogue between Islam and Christianity, Banawiratma gives an example of how a common ground could be achieved between the two religions through what he calls as the paradigm of mediation. He says:

“We need to find another point of entrance to have sharing of faith with our Moslem sisters and brothers. We need to learn from our Moslem sisters and brothers how they engage in communication with God. We might be able to use the paradigm of mediation or point of encounter between God and human beings. The encounter between God and human beings is only possible if there is mediation that has a divine and human quality at the same time.”

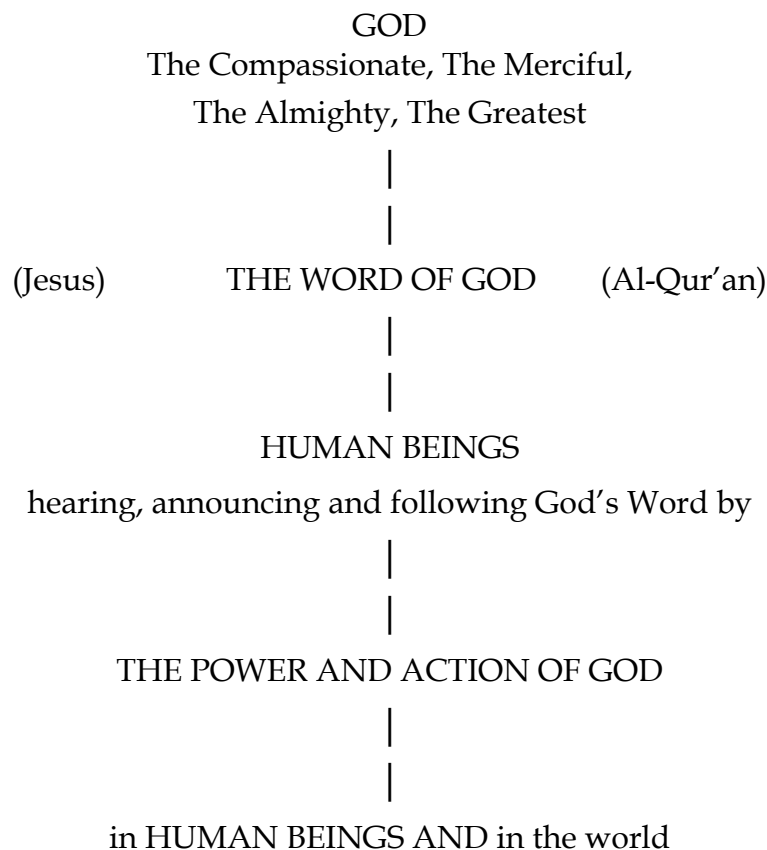
“God is the Creator, the greatest and compassionate God, the almighty and merciful One, who creates, sustains and takes care of the whole creation. We, Christians, address the same God as Abba, the motherly Father of Jesus and our motherly Father.”

“In Al-Qur’an Jesus is not called the Word of God [*Kalimat Allah*]. Moslem sisters and brothers accept and live out AlQur’an as the Word of God. The Word of God is divine; and yet human beings can hear and recite it. When they pray the divine verses, their prayer is human prayer,

¹⁵⁵ J.B. Banawiratma, “Dinamika Kerukunan”, 92. Cf. J.B. Banawiratma, “The Fragile Harmony of Religions in Indonesia” in *Exchange* Vol. 27, 4 (October 1998), pp. 368-369;

human words. Here, AlQur'an mediates between God and human beings. In the Christian faith the mediator between God and human beings is Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God, and at the same time, he is a human being. Therefore, he can mediate between God and human beings. We can draw the parallel between Jesus and AlQur'an. Both mediate the communication between God and human beings. The meeting point is the *Kalam Allah* (the Word of God) rather than *Kitab Allah* (the Scriptures)."¹⁵⁶

Banawiratma illustrates this process of mediation in the following scheme:



¹⁵⁶ J.B. Banawiratma, "Contextual Christology and Christian Praxis An Indonesia Reflection", accessible at <http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr00/bono.htm>

2. Franz Magnis-Suseno

Franz Magnis-Suseno is a leading Catholic theologian and also known as the most eminent Catholic political ethicist in Indonesia. A German origin, he was born on 26 May 1936 Eckershof, Germany, as Franz Graf von Magnis. In 1955 he entered the Jesuit order and studied theology, philosophy, and political science in Germany. In 1961, he came to Indonesia and learned philosophy and theology from the perspective of Indonesian Catholics at the Institute of Philosophical Theology and completed his studies in 1968. He continued his graduate studies in Munich, Germany, and obtained PhD with a dissertation entitled "*Normative Voraussetzungen im Denken des jungen Marx* (moral presuppositions in the thoughts of the young Karl Marx). In 1977 he became an Indonesian citizen and added Suseno to his German name. Since 1969, Magnis-Suseno has been a professor for social philosophy at ethics at the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies of the University of Indonesia. Due to his influential thinking, especially dealing with Indonesian socio-political problems, Magnis-Suseno is often asked to write articles in newspapers and magazines and invited

as a speaker at cultural meetings and talk-shows on television, not only for Catholics but also for Muslims.¹⁵⁷

Magnis Suseno's Ideas

A prominent theologian, Magnis-Suseno is very much interested in interreligious relations. He has written many writings dealing with the problems of interreligious relations in Indonesia. During the outbreak of the conflicts between religious groups followed by the destruction of a large number of places of worship in the last few years, he had expressed his concern about the accident, saying that Indonesia has become "a world champion in damaging and burning places of worship."¹⁵⁸ His disappointment to such a reality is certainly understandable. He is indeed one of the theologians who always

¹⁵⁷ "Potret Pelayanan Pastor Indonesianis, *Ensiklopedia Tokoh Indonesia*, accessible at <http://www.tokohindonesia.com/ensiklopedi/f/franz-magnis-suseno/index.shtml>. "Jejak Orang Jerman di Indonesia: Magnis-Suseno", accessible at <http://www.dwelle.de/indonesia/panorama/324467.html>; Karel Steenbrink, "Five Catholic Theologians of Indonesia in Search for an International or Local Identity, in *Exchange*, Vol. 29 No. 1 (2000): pp. 7-10.

¹⁵⁸ Magnis-Suseno, *Hidup* magazine, 1997.

attempt to bridge differences and build mutual understanding between religious groups in Indonesia.

In dealing with religious diversity, Magnis-Suseno, like Banawiratma, also suggests inclusive attitude. As a Catholic theologian, he also believes that the Second Vatican Council constitutes a proof of the openness of the Catholic attitude towards other religions. He often emphasizes the significance of dialogue in order to build mutual understanding between religious groups. He asserts that dialogue with other religions must be an integral part of living according to Gospel, since the Gospel invites the followers of Jesus to enter into dialogue, to learn from the experiences of other religious communities, to respect and love each other and to work together in building a more humane, just, peaceful and prosperous society. He rightly remarks that to be religious is to be interreligious.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Franz Magnis-Suseno, "Underlying Factors of Conflicts between Ethnic and Religious Groups in Indonesia: Prevention and Resolution" in Chaider S. Bamualim et.al. (eds.) *Communal Conflicts in Contemporary Indonesia* (Jakarta: The Center for Languages and Cultures of the IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah in cooperation with The Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2002), p. 198.

However, in dealing with the problem of plurality and interreligious relations in Indonesia, Magnis-Suseno does not much discuss theological principles outlined by the Second Vatican Council, but rather highlights ethical issues related interreligious relations. It seems his ethical approach is quite dominant in his theological thinking. This approach seems quite important in the discourse of religious tolerance, since it touch more directly the practical aspects in human relations. Since Magnis-Suseno has a deep concern in this field, it is interesting, before discussing further his concepts of religious tolerance, to see his ideas on ethics.

Magnis-Suseno's works on ethics can be found in his numerous books such as *Etika Umum: Masalah-Masalah Pokok Filsafat Moral* [The Basic Question of Moral Philosophy] (published in 1975); *Javanische Weisheit und Ethik, Studien zu einer östlichen Moral* (1981); and *Etika Jawa Sebuah Analisa Falsafi tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa* [Javanese Ethics: A Philosophical Analysis of the Javanese Way of Life] (1984). In these works, he not only discusses the ideas on ethics but also attempt to put

them in the comparative perspective. In his works, he has attempted to make comparative analysis between Western ethic and Javanese ethics.

Magnis-Suseno sees ethics not as an autonomous philosophical system, but a concrete philosophy of life or, even, more common practical wisdoms embedded in a specific culture. For him ethics should have a direct connection with a daily life and even with the common political life. It is for this reason he sees Western ethics not only as the great thoughts of Aristotle and Immanuel Kant but also as a concrete way of life. For him Western ethics can be defined as “a form of moral consciousness” into which he grew personally by entering life and society within a certain western environment. Like other ethics in other part of the world, this particular moral consciousness, as he says, has “considerable moral dignity and plausibility.”¹⁶⁰

One of the main aspects Magnis-Suseno discusses in this field concerns the concept of ‘natural law’. Referring to philosophical thought of Thomas Aquinas, Magnis-Suseno says that there are three

¹⁶⁰ Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Javanese Ethics and World View: The Javanese Idea of the Good Life*, translated by Jon Scott and Michael Saunders (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1997) p. 221.

kinds of law namely, eternal law (*lex aeterna*), natural law (*lex naturalis*), and human law (*lex humana*). By defining eternal law as divine wisdom or the divine plan to create the universe, following Aquinas, Magnis-Suseno states that all actions and movements of the universe are governed and directed by this law.¹⁶¹ As a divine creation, men have their own nature and this nature is the same in all men. Magnis-Suseno believes that by using their reason, men can decide the ends necessarily demanded by their nature. When men have discovered their ends, it is incumbent upon them to direct themselves in accordance with the ends. Men's natural inclination to understand the divine plan and to seek their proper ends based on their nature by divine act of creation is what Aquinas called natural law. Natural law is a basic moral law, which reveals divine wisdom.¹⁶² It could be simply put, as Magnis-Suseno remarks, as "put yourselves in tune with your nature or act according to reason."¹⁶³ Since natural law is

¹⁶¹ Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Politik: Prinsip-Prinsip Moral Dasar Kenegaraan Modern* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1994), p. 87.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

established in the essence of man, it should be known by all, providing a moral basis regardless of man's faith and belief.

According to Magnis-Suseno, natural law opens the possibility to understand that those who do not believe in God, an atheist, for instance, could also have a good life and a pleasant life before God. Although he does not know God, he can recognize his nature. If he lives in accordance with his nature and follows the voice of his heart, *de facto* speaking, he will live in accordance with God's will. It is for this reason that we often meet atheists holier and more responsible than those who call themselves religious people.¹⁶⁴ Natural law thus is the area where Christians and non-Christians can find a common ground or points of contacts for cooperation in ethical and moral action.

Magnis-Suseno's ethical views on the issue of interreligious relations can be seen, for example, his writing entitled "Harmony in the Indonesian Context", which was published in 1975. In this essay, he discusses some basic principles such as 'truth', 'peace' and 'justice'.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Magnis-Suseno argues that 'truth' and 'peace' are two fundamental social values. They are fundamental in the sense that, the survival of both society and its individual members principally depends on the realization of these two values. Magnis-Suseno sees 'truth' in this sense as the understanding of reality. According to him, man, as creature of nature, lives from nature and puts nature to work. As a social creature, he can only live and develop in unity with the society in which he is born. Thus, he is dependent on both. Communication between human beings should be based on this reality. For him, harmony not based on truth is not real and will not last.¹⁶⁵

Magnis-Suseno further describes 'peace' as the condition which guarantees that one is not threatened by force, violation and death. He says, "Peace means that we can live without fear, and because fear stifles the life of man. Peace is a prerequisite of life with human quality." The opposite of it, says Magnis-Suseno, is conflict."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁶⁶ Magnis, Suseno, "Conflict and Harmony: from Indonesian Perspective", in *Prisma, The Indonesian Indicator*, No. 36. (1986), p. 70.

It is interesting to see Magnis-Suseno understanding about conflict. In this respect, he makes distinction between “conflict” and “situations which can lead to conflicts”. According to him, the existence of emotional tensions, interests that are objectively opposed, or opposing opinions, cannot be considered as conflict. They are merely factors that can lead to conflict. For him, conflict appears when a collision occurs between people or between groups or people. Such a collision can be physical, mental and social in various dimensions. It is important that the essence of conflict is, according to Magnis-Suseno, not to be found in differences or in the appearance of alternatives or interests, but in attempts to get rid of the situation by force.

“Conflict is always an attempt to achieve something by subjugating, forcing or killing the other party, an attempt in which the value, the status, the rights of the other party do not count, in which commonsense, responsibility, moral considerations and all those things which raise man above the animals, are not used.”¹⁶⁷

Concerning ‘justice’, Magnis-Suseno maintains that it is the normative criteria of the legitimacy of social order. Because justice means that the rights of men This is because of the fact that justice

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

guarantee of their rights, and place them in appropriate place so that the real harmony could be found. The idea of justice, Magnis-Suseno remarks, is at the opposite pole, from coercion and oppression in determining social order. The struggle for justice must recognize the universality of demands for justice, and thus from the beginning an opponent is put into the domain of those justly.¹⁶⁸

In another writing Magnis-Suseno mentions two basic attitudes which are important in human relation, namely: 'tolerance' and 'fairness'. He firstly remarks that 'tolerance' is sometime regarded rather negatively as an attitude of just leaving others alone, of letting people have their ways, not due to respect or sympathy. According to him, tolerance should include mutual respect. It is more than just not interfering or just letting people believe what ever they want as long as they do not interfere with one's own way of life or break the law. However, tolerance means that one feels easy and relaxed living together with people of different cultural and religious orientations. In this respect, Magnis refers to Erving Goffman who invented the term

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

“civil inattention” which is considered as a fundamental “virtue” of modern societies. It concerns people existence at the same place at the same time, for example, in a super market or at the underground railways station, but having nothing to do with each other. Magnis-Suseno remarks,

“The psychological capability of “ignoring” neighbour – of course under the condition that he or she not in emergency – of not feeling disturbed in the least by the idea that he or she is may be an atheist or has strange beliefs, is a most important positive social asset”. This inattention leaves everybody free to be his or her own self. It is “civil” because one behaves, generally, in a polite and civilized way toward each other. It gives all the other the signal that they need not be afraid o one merely by being themselves. Modern pluralistic society succeeded in the measure of tolerance in the sense that civil inattention has become routine. Thus, education to learn this attitude of positive and relaxed tolerance is crucial.¹⁶⁹

As to ‘fairness’, this means, as Magnis-Suseno notes, a gallant attitude towards one’s adversary. He gives an example of this attitude in sport or business, in which one judges others according to the same criteria one uses to measure oneself. Fairness, according to Magnis-Suseno, means “the willingness to judge other in a just way even if he

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

or she does not belong to our side". This is an extremely important virtue for citizens in modern democratic societies.¹⁷⁰

In order to establish harmony among religious groups, Magnis Suseno, further asks all religious groups go back to their respective roots to find the "normative foundations" of tolerance. They have to be convinced that religious tolerance is demanded by their own religion. He acknowledges that there are many exclusive as well as inclusive elements in religious teaching and it is very often, for psychological reasons, that exclusive elements are more popular than inclusive ones. According to him, such exclusive elements, when seen from a deeper theological point of view, can usually be interpreted in the light of the inclusive ones.

Magnis-Suseno also proposes moral suggestions concerning practical issues in interreligious life. He is concerned for example about the appearance of attitude in the society which view interreligious relations in term of majority-minority position. Therefore he advises that religious communities make it their policy that where they are the

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

majority, they feel responsible for the safety, the freedom and the happiness of the minority religion living in their midst. Minorities, on the other hand, should be aware of and sensitive to the customs, the religious feeling and the anxieties of the majority. They should avoid imposing of boisterous behaviour. He mentions an example of Christian building of expensive, luxurious churches in the midst of poor Muslim neighbourhoods.

Other concrete suggestions of Magnis-Suseno can be mentioned in the following quotation:

“First is that one should not make negative allusions to other religions. All kinds of hate messages have to stop. Teachers or religious leaders should always speak respectfully about other religious beliefs, practices and other religious communities. If he or she has to criticize something, this too should be done in a respectful and balanced way, pointing out the way the criticism may be seen from the point of view of the religion concerned.

Instead of forbidding children of one’s own religion to have contact with children of other religions, such contact should be encouraged. Children should be encouraged to congratulate each other on the occasion of their great feast days, and to participate in their joy.

Children of different religions should be involved together in social and cultural activities. According to respective age and educational levels, they should be guided to discuss problems of social and political ethics like narcotics, AIDS, democracy, human rights, problem of ethnic, tribal and religious minorities and their rights, social justice and solidarity with poorer co-citizens together.

At high school and university level, student should obtain at least a rudimentary knowledge about the beliefs and religious practices of the other main religions of their country from a competent, sympathetic and

inclusive teacher. They should learn not to bully or despise children of minority groups, but on the contrary, to develop a tolerant and responsible attitude towards them. They should be explicitly introduced to the fact that modern societies, including their own, are pluralistic, and how to cope positively with cultural and religious pluralism. They should not be made narrow minded and fanatical, but open minded and tolerant. They should be guided to be able to experience general values of humankind such as the graces of God, and in particular, just and civilized humanism. They should be helped to feel positive about their own religious beliefs, not in an exclusivist way in which they despise others, but in an inclusive manner, becoming able to see what is positive in other religious beliefs.

Very important, of course, is education that is sensitive and attentive to people suffering who are suppressed, cannot defend themselves, or are being exploited or abused, and this needs to occur without distinguishing whether they are from one's own religious community or not.

And finally, religious education "has to include" guidance to a commitment to principled renunciation of violence in the pursuit for even noble goals, thus to a principled non-violent position"¹⁷¹

Magnis-Suseno has remarked about religious freedom. He defines religious freedom as "the right of a person to decide by himself/herself whether and how he/she has religion or not, to live according to his/her own religious belief, to apply and communicate his/her religion to others who want to receive it, to choose his/her religion that he/she confesses, to leave his/her previous religion and accept another religion that he/she professes; and to be freed from any discrimination due to

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

his/her religion or belief". For him, the rights of religious freedom include also freedom not to be religious. "Forcing people to believe in God whereas they actually do not admit the existence of God is useless", he says. People cannot be compelled to profess the existence of God.¹⁷²

Like other Christian theologians, Magnis-Suseno also emphasizes the significance of *Pancasila* in dealing with plurality of Indonesian society. For him, the ultimate core value of *Pancasila* is actually religious, ethnic, and regional tolerance. Magnis-Suseno believes that the viability of *Pancasila* is due to its identical principle with the values of human dignity. His recognition of *Pancasila* is also based on the religious consideration. The values of *Pancasila*, as Magnis-Suseno mentions, not only do not oppose the Christian faith, but are also in accordance with it. They contain noble values of human dignity that are highly honoured by Church teaching. Therefore, he advises Catholics to accept *Pancasila* with honesty, sincerity and without

¹⁷² Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Politik: Prinsip-Prinsip Moral Dasar Kenegaraan Modern* [The Basic Moral Principles of Modern State] (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1994), p. 151.

doubts, or any tactical and strategic consideration, since *Pancasila* is in accordance with the Christian faith.¹⁷³

Like other Christian thinkers, Magnis-Suseno also speaks of *Pancasila* as the best option in dealing with the conflicting ideas between secular state versus religious state. By admitting *Pancasila*, he denies both secular and religious state. His refutation of the secular state is because this state disregards the significance of religion. For him, it is necessary for the state to accommodate people's beliefs, since otherwise the state would be weak and fragile. According to Magnis-Suseno, the negative assumption of secular thinking that religions would be bad for democracy is nothing other than subjective perception of the secularist view. Magnis-Suseno considers religions, like other moral values, as the contribution from people's beliefs for the social welfare.¹⁷⁴ Thus, the secular state, for Magnis-Suseno, is not feasible.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

Magnis-Suseno's denial of the religious state is because the state is based only on one particular religion. By focusing only on one particular religion, it would, he claims, inevitably marginalize other religions, and thus, violate the principle of justice, which is essential for creating social order. Magnis-Suseno's rejection of the religious state also lies in his belief that such a state would erode the sincerity of the state-religion followers, and thus, produce hypocrites. All religions, according to him, oblige their followers to hold their beliefs consciously and wholeheartedly. This attitude, however, would be obscured if the religious demands were supported by sanctions of civil law. In this sense, people would perform their religious duties not due to the sincerity of their hearts as their obedience to God but with fear of civil punishment.¹⁷⁵

Thus, according to Magnis-Suseno, neither the secular state nor the religious state is the best choice with respect to the state's primary duty to promote the common good of all citizens. The Pancasila-based state, according to Magnis-Suseno, is the best option for Indonesia. He

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 357-58.

views Pancasila as the only viable alternative in solving the conflicting ideas as to whether Indonesia should be religious or secular in character.

4. Eka Darmaputera

Eka Darmaputera is one of the most prominent Christian theologians in Indonesia and a very vocal pastor whose ideas are much respected in the Christian circles. Born in the Central Java town of Magelang on 16 November 1942, he earned his first degree from at The Jakarta Theological Seminary (STT) in 1966 and obtained PhD from Boston College, USA, in 1982, with the dissertation entitled *Pancasila and the Search for Identity and Modernity in Indonesian Society: A Cultural and Ethical Analysis*. In 1967 he was ordained a pastor for the Indonesian Christian Church of West Java (GKI Jabar). He served as the one of the chairpersons of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) and was also active in the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 1997, He was honoured with a Distinguished Leadership Award for Outstanding Contributions to Ecumenism and National Unity by the

American Biographical Institute, and in 1999, obtained the Third Annual Abraham Kuyper Award from Princeton Theological Seminary for Excellence in Reformed Theology and Public Life. Darmaputera was also quite active in interreligious dialogue in Indonesia. He is in fact one of the founders of the well-known Institute for Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia (DIAN/Interfidei).

As a professional Protestant theologian in Indonesia, Darmaputera in fact has a certain characteristic in his theological thinking. Some scholars regard him as theologian who has been less influenced by Western theology. Focusing more on *theologia in loco*, Darmaputera states that theology should be done in a contextual way. In his own words, “theology should be done *hic et nunc* (here and now) and never be *ef ha pax* (once and for all)”. He defines theology as an attempt to formulate and reformulate what is universal and eternal truth in response to “particular question” within “a particular time and place”¹⁷⁶. It is for this reason that he

¹⁷⁶ Eka Darmaputera, “Inter-Relationship among Religious Groups in Indonesia: Peaceful Co-Existence or Creative Pro-Existence”, in Ferdy Suleman and

rejects any such thing “universal theology”. He says, “Once we put theology in a vacuum, it would never be functional. If it is not functional, it cannot be regarded as theology after all”. While revelation is timeless and universal, theology, according to him, is always temporal and conditional. The failure to distinguish these two entities, he says, would fall into the most serious sin, that is, to absolutize the relatives and hence to relativized the absolutes.¹⁷⁷

Darmaputera’s Ideas

In terms interreligious relations, Darmaputera attempt to give their contextual meaning through what he says as functional approach. In this approach, he sees religions more from their functions rather than their formalities. According to him, the function of religion is actually “the God’s intended well-being of all humanity”. From this perspective, all religions, despite their particular differences, have a common and a same function. “If in the institutional approach, differences between

Ioanes Rakhmat (eds.), *Masihkah Benih Tersimpan?: Kumpulan Karangan dalam Rangka 50 Tahun GKI Jawa Barat* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1990), p. 26.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 25-26.

religious groups are primary, in the functional approach the unity and oneness of all religion are more essential than their differences, he says.”¹⁷⁸ For Darmaputera, since the function of a religion is to achieve that end, the right to exist of any religion depends upon whether or not it succeeds to fulfil its function. Thus, a non-functional religion does not have the right to live. It is dead, he says. Darmaputera quotes the Biblical verse: “If the salt has lost its taste, how its saltiness shall be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men” (Matthew 5:13).¹⁷⁹

From this approach, it is clear that Darmaputera respect religious plurality. He hopes that people from different religious associations not only live in peaceful coexistence, but also live and work together in a creative pro-existence towards another. Despite their differences and particular identities, they should be interrelated in the one and same humanness, carrying out a common task in mutual togetherness, to reach the common goal, namely, the well-being of all and for all. The

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

interrelationship between different religious groups, in Darmaputera's view should no longer be understood institutionally but functionally and this need a radical change both their in their self-understanding and their attitude towards the other.¹⁸⁰

Explaining the ideal of pluralism, Darmaputera says that what he means by pluralism is "a certain mental-set and attitude in dealing with the reality of plurality, namely, one of earnest and sincere openness to realize and to recognize the differences between individual and between groups".¹⁸¹ According to him, religious difference is not only something inevitable on the practical level but something meaningful and significant on the theological level as well. Besides as a social reality, the existence of people of other faiths should be understood as a theological phenomenon and therefore should be dealt with theologically.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Giving his theological argument, Darmaputera departs from the exposition on the reality of incarnation. Quoting the Biblical verse "*And the word became flesh and dwelt among us*" (John 1: 14), he asserts:

"In and through Jesus, God accepts and identifies Himself fully with human reality. He enters into human history". The idea is not so much the divinization of human as the humanization of divine. In the old exclusivistic theological understanding, human reality and human history, i.e. humanness, are seen as entirely evil, so evil that people of faith have to separate and to isolate themselves from them. "Faith" and "faithfulness" are thus, in this understanding, viewed as separation and isolation from "others". But, in the incarnational event, God showed a radically different attitude. He entered into and identified Himself fully with that "evil" human reality".

According to Darmaputera, this understanding of God's attitude toward human reality demands a new attitude from the part of human beings. Quoting John 4:21-23 where Jesus said "*...The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor Jerusalem will you worship the Father in spirit and truth*", Darmaputera explains that God, whom Jesus introduced, is not God of a particular religion, and whom can be worshipped exclusively through particular rite and at particular place. Jesus has relativized any absolute and exclusive religious claim. "He spoke, thus, not of a 'true Religion', but of 'true worshippers'", said Darmaputera. Darmaputera also bases his argument on a verse in

Matthew 7:22-23, in which Jesus declared: *“On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?”* And then will I declare to them, *“I never knew you; depart from me, evildoers.”* *“What important is not one’s own religious association, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven”*.¹⁸³

Darmaputera in deed acknowledges the absoluteness of the claim of Jesus as the Way to the Father. However, he remarks that this way is never identified with a particular religion. *“Jesus is the Way, not religion,”* he says. He emphasizes, basing himself on the statement of John, that the salvific plan of God will culminate in the creation of *“a new heaven and a new earth”* for all, not the establishment of *“a particular religion”* for a particular people (Revelation 21:1).¹⁸⁴

With this understanding, Darmaputera also feels it necessary to reconsider the doctrine of mission, which is derived from the Biblical verse of Matthew 28:19, which says, *“Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 32.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Spirit". Darmaputera says that it is wrong to treat this verse as the only commandment from Jesus. If he had said something about "the great and first commandment", it was "the love commandment" (Matthew 23:34-40), which was meant. Darmaputera states that the verse Matthew 23:18 should be understood within the larger context, that is, in the light of the entire mission of Jesus.¹⁸⁵

According to Darmaputera, the verse "*Go and make disciples of all nations,*" means that one we must go out of our exclusive particularism. The command of baptism cannot be understood as primarily to bring all people into the Christian exclusive community. On the contrary, it means that one has to go out from our exclusiveness and to meet them in their own places and situations, to embrace them in an inclusive fellowship in Christ. Thus, as Darmaputera puts it, it is "Christ"-ization, rather than "Christian"-ization. Christ in this sense is the subject, not the Christians. "Our task and mandate is simply to be the witness of Christ and not of our religion". In other words Darmaputera

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

says, “Evangelization is to make Christ known, not to make our religion bigger.”¹⁸⁶

With this idea in mind, Darmaputera suggests how evangelization should be carried out in the context of religious plurality. He says that missionary task should be done not in monological way but in a dialogical way, that is, in the form of mutual sharing. He says,

“We share with others what we believe as good and precious. We are doing it simply because we are commanded to do so, but because we existentially eager to share the best with others. Others are not “target” but our fellow-subject. Evangelization is not a method or an obligation we have to carry out, but a joy of sharing”.

Realizing pluralism in the context of Indonesia, Darmaputera emphasizes the significance of *Pancasila* as the basis that should be maintained in managing the plurality of Indonesian society. To him the choice towards *Pancasila* is not merely based on the historical and political consideration, but also due to his theological reflection. To him the commitment towards *Pancasila* should even be done in the frame of obedience to God.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Darmaputera argues that *Pancasila* constitutes the expression of a unifying nationalist identity. According to him, *Pancasila* should be realized not only in the state life, but also in the societal life. He was concerned about attempts to implement *Pancasila* only in state life. If this happened, he asked, “So what would we have for our mutual platform in our social and national life? The answer is certain. Each society would go with its own platform. The Muslim society has Islam as its basis; likewise, the Christian society takes Christianity as its foundation. Thus disintegration, Darmaputera contends, would happen.

He acknowledges that theoretically *Pancasila* has indeed been established in particular since the promulgation of *asas tunggal* in 1985. However, in the practice, the nation, according to him, is moving away from the intention of *Pancasila*. He gives an example of the ICMI’s idea of Islamic society, which he considers contradictory to the values of *Pancasila*, since the idea, according to him, ignores the principles of inclusivity and non-discrimination.¹⁸⁷ Likewise, he considers the issuance of the Law No. 2/1989 concerning the national religious

¹⁸⁷ Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia*, p. 74.

educational system as well as the Law No. 7/1989 regarding the Islamic religious courts, both of which serve for the benefit to Muslim community, is not suitable with the principles of *Pancasila*.

Darmaputera also remarks about the effort of certain Muslim groups to establish Islamic state, which he considers contradictory to the principle of Pancasila. His strong objection lies in the inability to protect minority rights. If an Islamic state were to be created in Indonesia, then the problem of minorities would certainly arise. Citing Supomo, a prominent figure of the secular nationalist, he explains:

“To establish an Islamic State in Indonesia means to establish a state whose unity is based on the largest group, namely Islamic group. If an Islamic State is to be established in Indonesia, some “minority problems” will surely come up, i.e. the problems of small religious groups, the Christian groups, etc. And even though the Islamic State will try its best to guarantee and protect the well-being of the other groups, still those small groups definitively will not be able to conform themselves to the goal of the unites state which all of us are longing for”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Darmaputera, *Pancasila and the Search for Identity*, pp. 153-154.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the previous chapter, I have elaborated the ideas of Muslim and Christian concerning religious pluralism and the problem of interreligious relations in Indonesia. In the following chapter, I will discuss aspects of their ideas in order to see their relevance for building mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia.

A. Attitudes towards Religious Pluralism

Muslim and Christian scholars in this study have a common point on the significance to appreciate pluralism. For them, religious diversity is not only a social fact that is undeniable, but also a theological fact that should be appreciated. In justifying pluralism, they are indeed different in method and emphasis.

Nurcholish Madjid, from the Islamic side, emphasizes his discussion on the perspective of Islamic universalism. He understands Islam in this respect as a mental religious attitude or spirituality, which

is not limited only to organized Islam, but also exists in other religious observances. This goes along with his understanding of the Oneness of God who has the absolute truth and who can be approached through every religion. Here, the inclusivism of Madjid can be defined, that the absolute truth can be approached through every religion that teaches “*Islam*”. This idea is more or less comparable with the concept of “anonymous Christian” proposed by Karl Rahner. As has been mentioned, Karl Rahner believed that good and devout people of other faiths could attain salvation outside of explicitly constituted Christianity. Thus, comparing to this concept, one might probably call Madjid’s idea, as “anonymous Muslim”.

Wahid deals with the problem of pluralism from the real context. In dealing with pluralism, he does not elaborate much on his ideas from theological perspectives, but rather discusses the subject in the context of democracy. This is understandable, since he is deeply concerned with the issue of politics and democracy. However, his general approach is not so very different from that of Madjid. He uses an analytical and contextual approach to understand and implement Islam

in the Indonesian context. He understands Islam as no longer an absolute and exclusive ideology or religion that ought to be the only alternative for social and political ideology in Indonesia. Rather, he understands Islam within the frame of pluralism in which Islam is living side by side with other religions and ideologies. Wahid differs from Madjid in paying more attention to the implementation of the fundamental Islamic teachings in practical, social, political and religious life. Therefore, his discussions on the theory and interpretation of the basic teachings of Islam are rare.

Even though Wahid does not discuss the issue much from the theological perspective, his ideas are no less significant than Madjid's. In terms of their relevance to the factual situation, his ideas are even more feasible and concrete. His struggle for pluralism is clearly related directly to the need of the plural society. In the context of pluralistic society, it is inevitable that the democracy is an issue that should be dealt with. Despite his rather "secular approach", it does not mean that his concepts do not have a strong theological basis. His ideas are actually based on his deep understanding and reflection of Islamic

fundamental teachings. Wahid's struggle for pluralism and religious tolerance, in fact, has made him much appreciated in the non-Muslim circles.

Quraish Shihab deals with the issue of pluralism from theological perspective. Like Madjid, he uses various verses of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet in justifying pluralism. In many extents, Shihab's ideas are quite constructive. Even though his position is not like that of Madjid who is quite "liberal", Shihab shares many common points with Madjid in understanding the Qur'anic verses which justify pluralism. However, in the issue of *Shari'a* (Islamic law), precisely in the case interreligious marriage, he is quite strict, given his maintaining of the prohibition of interreligious marriage for Muslim. In the context religious pluralism in Indonesia, maintaining the strict prohibition of interreligious marriage for Muslim seems irrelevant since the Qur'an clearly mentions the permissibility of marriage between Muslim man and women of *ahl al-kitāb*.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ In order to see how Islam deals with this issue, I will discuss it in a rather detail. In fact, the Qur'an mentions the rule of interreligious marriage in the following verses:

"And give not [your daughters] in marriage to mushrikun (pagans, idolaters, polytheists and disbelievers in the Oneness of God) till they believe in God alone and verily a believing slave is better than a free mushrik even though he pleases you. Those mushrikun invite you to the fire but God invites you to the paradise and forgiveness by His leave, and makes His evidences clear to mankind that they may remember". This day are (all) things Good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them" (2: 221).

"(Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time, when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues. If any one rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)" (5: 5).

"O ye who Believe, when there come to you believing women refugees, examine (and test) them: God knows best as to their Faith: if ye ascertain that they are Believers, then send them not back to the Unbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the Unbelievers, nor are the (Unbelievers) lawful (husbands) for them..." (60: 10).

The above Qur'anic verses mention some aspects of interreligious marriage between Muslim and non-Muslims, precisely polytheists (*mushrik*) and the people of Book (*ahl al-kitāb*).

As to the marriage between Muslim and polytheists, the Qur'an expressly disallows it. Most of early Qur'anic commentators (*mufasssir*) basically agreed on the prohibition Muslim's marriage with polytheist. However there were differences of opinions concerning who could be attributed as '*mushrik*' meant in the verses. Some considered that the *mushrik* mentioned in such Qur'anic verses were pagans in Arab and other nations. Others maintained that the *mushrik* meant were only those Arabian pagans who did not possess Holy Book and worshipped idols. Some others considered the *mushrik* in the verses included all those who confessed polytheism in all of its form. This latter group even included in the term also Jews and Christians. Their argument was based, among others, on the statement of Ibn 'Umar, who, when asked concerning the marriage of a Muslim with a Christian or Jewish woman, said, "God has forbidden to marry polytheists. Never have I known any woman who professes a greater polytheism other than he who says her God is Jesus or other servant of God" (Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*. Vol. 6, pp. 208-209). However, most of the jurists and commentators of the Qur'an regard that this opinion was weak, since the Qur'an clearly mentions the allowance for Muslim to marry women of the *ahl kitāb*, which refers to Christians and Jews.

With regard to the marriage of Muslim with *ahl al-kitāb*, the Qur'an clearly mentions its allowance for Muslim men. Most of early jurists were in deed in agreement concerning the permissibility of marriage between Muslims and women from the people of the Book, even though some put certain restrictions. However, as to the marriage of Muslim women with the men of *al-kitāb*, the Qur'an does not mention it clearly. In deed, this silence is often interpreted as a disapproval of the

From the Christian side, we have seen the three representatives dealing with the issue of pluralism and interreligious relations. Eka Darmaputera, from the Protestant group, approaches the idea of pluralism directly from the core of the Christian teaching, that is, the

Qur'an to the matter concerned. However, this is a matter in which *ijtihad* could be applied.

In fact, there were some '*ulama*' who prohibited Muslim marriage with *ahl al-kitāb*. They argued among others that the Qur'anic rule in the verse (5: 5) which allows Muslims' marriage with the woman of the *ahl al-kitāb* has been abrogated (*nasakh*) by the verse 2: 221 as mentioned above. They also argued with the above-mentioned statement of Ibn 'Umar, who prohibited Muslims' marriage with the *ahl al-kitāb* since the latter were allegedly polytheists. This position seems not in line with the explicit statement of the Qur'an that allows the marriage of a Muslim man with a woman from the *ahl al-kitāb*. Besides, it also contradicts classical *fiqh* literatures that were in agreement concerning the permissibility of marriage between a Muslim man and a woman of the *ahl al-kitāb*.

The argument that the Qur'anic rule in the verse (5: 5) is abrogated by the verse 2: 221 is absurd, since, as was asserted by the prominent Muslim jurist Ibn Taymiyyah, the verse 2: 221 was revealed earlier than the verse 5: 5. The same holds true with the argument that compared *ahl al-kitāb* with polytheists, as mentioned by Ibn Umar above. It should be emphasized that a polytheist, according to the usage of the term "*mushrik*" in the Qur'an, is a person, who ascribes to a polytheistic belief, realizing that it is a polytheistic belief. In other words, a polytheist is a person, who clearly ascribes to polytheism, that is, who ascribes partners and equals to God. The Christians and the Jews, contrary to this usage of the term in the Qur'an, have never consciously ascribed partners to God. They may have assigned to certain beliefs, which, to Muslims, amount to polytheistic beliefs, however, even according to the Qur'an they have never been guilty of deliberately ascribing to polytheism. In the Qur'an there is, for instance, a verse stating that the *ahl al-kitāb* practiced polytheism as they took their priests, their anchorites and Jesus to be their lords in derogation of God (QS, 9: 31). Yet, the polytheism they attached to was different from that which believed by polytheists. They were expressed with the word *yushrikun* but not with the word *mushrikun*. In addition, there are some verses in the Qur'an which express *ahl al-kitāb* and *mushrikun* simultaneously. This concurrent articulation, in my opinion, clearly indicates that both are different entities.

idea of incarnation of Jesus. This is quite brave since in the Muslim-Christian dialogue, this is one of the most difficult themes, given the different attitudes between both teachings. However, by his method of interpretation, Darmaputera, it seems, has no difficulty in dealing with pluralism. This can be seen, for example, in his explanation about the “functional approach of religion”. He has argued that all religions principally have a common and same function, i.e. “the God’s intended well-being of all humanity”. He sees all religions not in terms of their formality but rather in terms of their function.

The Catholic theologian Banawiratma in his discussion about religious pluralism develops what he calls *dialogical critical contextual approach*. Principally, he develops further the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, which are inclusive by nature. For the Catholic theologians in Indonesia, the Second Vatican Council is indeed quite decisive in the issue of religious pluralism, since its teachings begin to develop inclusive attitude towards other religion. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church held exclusive position, which believed “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*” (no salvation outside the Church).

However, inclusive attitude for Banawiratma seems not sufficient. As he has said, inclusivism can ignore the identity of other traditions by covering or assimilating them in one's own tradition. Banawiratma does not adopt relativism, since this regards all religions the same.

For Magnis-Suseno, the Second Vatican Council also constitutes a vital foundation in the discourse of pluralism. However, in dealing with pluralism and interreligious relations in Indonesia, Magnis-Suseno is more concerned with moral values. For him, ethics should have a direct connection with a daily life and even with the common political life. Magnis-Suseno's ethical views in the matter of interreligious relations are of considerable importance for the solving of the questions of interreligious relation in Indonesia. His ideas are important to the extent that ethical concerns now seem to be considered trivial. In this respect, it should be emphasized both Islam and Christianity actually have a great concern in the questions of ethics. Both religions principally share many common points in the matter of the human relationship.

In the discourse of pluralism in Indonesia, Madjid's ideas of inclusivism are quite controversial. With his idea of "*Islam*", in which people of other religions can attain salvation without the label of Islam, he is often considered to introduce the idea of religious indifference. Quraish Shihab, in this respect, does not agree with Madjid to give the label of Islam to someone who does not perform praying, fasting etc. He indeed understands the meaning of '*Islam*' as surrender, but for him, the word has received a much more comprehensive meaning, which is not only a belief system, but also a *Shari'a*, a comprehensive set of guidances.¹⁹⁰ A rather sharp criticism was given by Daud Rasyid who regards Madjid as attempting to find a meeting point between religions by manipulating the meaning of the verses, misunderstanding the Hadith of the Prophet, and defiling the words of the ulama.¹⁹¹

It is important to note, that the conclusion that Madjid adopts, the idea of "equality of religion", is far from the substance of his theological

¹⁹⁰ See Karel Stenbrink, "Nurcholish Madjid and Inclusive Islamic Faith in Indonesia", in Gé Speelman, Jan van Lin and Dick Mulder (eds.), *Muslims and Christians in Europe Breaking New Ground* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok), pp. 38-39.

¹⁹¹ Siti Nadroh, *Wacana Keagamaan & Politik Nurcholish Madjid* (Jakarta, 1999), p. 50.

thinking. To give one simple example, when explaining the concept of Islam, he remarked, “the attitude of submission is called *Islam* in its generic sense and this constitutes the core of all true religions”. Instead of using the expression “all religions”, Madjid used the term “all true religion”. In this case, it is clear that the qualification of Islam is not applied for all religions but only true religions. The true religions, for Madjid, are clearly those that submit to the One and Only God. Madjid believed that since the principle of all true religions is the same, that is, submission to God, all religions, either due to their internal dynamics or due to their contact towards each other, could gradually find their original truth, so that all meet in a common platform. In my opinion, the Islamic tendency of Madjid’s ideas is quite strong. His ideas have in fact strong roots from his understanding of Islamic monotheism and its relationship with the universal truth.

It could be said that Madjid’s idea of inclusivism can lead one to the recognition of and respect for the existence of other religions. Indeed, his ideas are much respected by the Christian theologians. As Magnis-Suseno remarks, Madjid’s ideas, would lead people to see

pluralism and tolerance in a positive way. Magnis-Suseno sees the significance of Madjid's thoughts in connection to the religious understanding and implementation in human life, particularly in human relationships.¹⁹² Banawiratma considers the ideas of Madjid as a 'post-modernist reflection', as an open attitude towards pluralism and an effort to find a spiritual base for a more free, righteous and humane religious reorientation. He supposes that Madjid's concept of inclusivism is in line with the program of *deschooling society* of Ivan Illic, an attempt towards de-institutionalizing religion. Using the terminology of Erich Fromm, Banawiratma furthermore considers this approach as humanistic approach towards religion, which constitutes a correction towards authoritarian religion. The significance of this idea, according to him, is that it would put religion back to its proper place.¹⁹³

However, in terms of Islam-Christian dialogue, Madjid's approach, for the Christians, is not always positive. Magnis-Suseno indeed has

¹⁹² Magnis Suseno "Nurcholish Madjid: Islam dan Modernitas" in *Jurnal Ulumul Qur'an* Vol: IV/I, Jakarta, 1993, pp. 36-39.

¹⁹³ *Tempo*, 19 December 1992, p. 31

criticized him due to his comparative analysis on the question of tolerance in Islam and Christianity. He disagreed with Madjid on his way of referring to Christianity, which he considered unfair. Towards Islam, Madjid used normative-theological-ideal analysis, but towards Christianity, he applied historical-factual analysis. With this approach to Christianity, Madjid, according to Magnis-Suseno, often quoted disgraceful events committed by Christians or the Church in the past. By doing this, he produced a general statement that "Christianity is the most intolerant religion". Magnis-Suseno remarked that if Madjid had applied a normative approach to Christianity as he had done to Islam, he would have seen a different image of Christianity.¹⁹⁴

In his analysis concerning this issue, the Christian scholar, Stanley Rambitan, also sees the unfairness of Madjid in his analyzing the Christianity. Therefore, he criticizes the objectivity of Madjid approach, concluding that Madjid's main objective and attitude are scientifically unfair. However, he understands that Madjid's aim is not to discredit Christianity, but rather to encourage Muslims to have self-confidence

¹⁹⁴ Magnis-Suseno, "Nurcholish Madjid: Islam dan Modernitas", p. 41.

and to be more mature in religious understanding, since Madjid has said:

“Muslims are sensitive to matters that discredit religion, but perhaps not to values fought for by religion itself. However, we must understand it because it is part of Muslims growth all over the world. For a long time, we seem to have had a feeling of inferiority to Western or non-Muslim groups. This inferiority has made Muslims very sensitive. There is a kind of wary, threatened and disappointed feeling. To me, self-confidence must continuously be built up. We must believe that we are only inferior in material matters, technology and science, but as far as religious or spiritual matters are concerned, Muslims are certainly superior. By this self-confidence, our Islamic spirituality will be more relaxed, and we will not quickly get angry, since this inferiority is merely a state of mind that is sometimes unreal.”¹⁹⁵

However, for encouraging Muslims, Madjid seems to be unaware of the degree of objectivity of his method.

A more crucial point was Madjid’s discussion on Christianity and Jesus, which was delivered at a conference at the University Indonesia of Jakarta in 5-6 April 1995. In this speech, Madjid, quoting a book by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception, the Sensational Story behind the Religious Scandal of the Century* as well as their book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, told some features about Jesus. It was said that Jesus did not die. He was taken from the cross by

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in Stanley Rambitan, “Islamic Tolerance in the Context of Indonesia,” p. 100.

his disciples at the time the guards went for pray. He was married with Maria Magdalena and had four children. He was later divorced and moved to Rome, where he remarried another woman named Lydia. Jesus allegedly died in the age of 70.

Magnis-Suseno was quite annoyed about these stories of Jesus. What made him angry was not whether Jesus died or not, since he acknowledged that there is a clear difference between Islam and Christianity on issue. Magnis-Suseno was only critical of the features that Jesus was married, divorced etc. According to him, with these features, Jesus “has been put into the mud”. He said, “For the Christians, Jesus is not just a common man but God, the saviour”. Therefore, he protested against this speech to the Minister of Education, the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of the State Secretary, the Minister of Security, the Chairpersons of the Council of Indonesian ‘*Ulama* (MUI), the Alliance of Indonesian Churches (PGI) and the Conference of Indonesian Bishops (KWI). From this fact, it seems that Magnis-Suseno was quite serious in this matter. Madjid defended saying that he had bought widely known books written by respected

scholars in Western countries and wanted to start a debate on academic grounds. The debate between the two scholars was quickly spread through photocopies.

Discussions on crucial theological matters are in deed quite problematic. Earlier, I have mentioned some publications both from Muslims as well as from Christians, which contained theological discussions that tended to depict the other religions in a negative ways. They contained apologetic attitudes that only attempted to prove that only one's own religion is true and that the others are false. These attitudes are in deed not conducive in building interreligious harmony. The case of Madjid above certainly cannot be compared with these publications. Madjid, indeed, as he said, did not mean to disgrace the status of Jesus. He himself acknowledges that Jesus is highly appreciated in Islam, due to his status as the Messenger of God. Even, for Madjid, one who disgraces the status of Jesus can be considered unbeliever (*kāfir*).

In his response to Magnis-Suseno, Madjid admitted that he was not sure and had not yet taken any conclusion whether Jesus was

married and had children or not, since, this, for him, was not an important subject in the Islamic creed. Muslims, he said, were not concerned about that. However, since more and more Christian scholars have the same view, as Madjid said, he found it interesting to see the relevance of the works in the framework of understanding the Qur'anic information concerning Jesus. One of the books he referred to, in deed, mentioned the closeness of their findings with the Qur'anic teachings. According to Madjid, his interest in referring those books was merely due to a scientific consideration. For him, his referring to the works was part of his argument of the necessity for realization of the Qur'anic teachings that suggests men to study history. Commenting the debate between the two scholars, Karel Steenbrink stated that the debate obviously "does not improve the poor quality of the theological debate when Christians refrain from scrutiny of Muslim sources and serious Muslims have problems in finding their way in the jungle of contemporary Christianity".¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Karel Steenbrink, "Patterns of Dialogue in Indonesia 1965-1998", p. 155.

B. Religious Pluralism and the Idea of Salvation

The issue of salvation is crucial in Islam-Christian dialogue, as it touches upon theological matters, which are often subject to disagreement. Indeed, there is a significant difference between Islam and Christianity on this issue. In Christianity, salvation is related to the doctrine of redemption of sin by Jesus. Salvation here is the divine forgiveness of sin; a forgiveness that with respect to the universal human participation in Adam's original sin is made possible only by Jesus' suffering and sacrifice on the cross. According to the Christian doctrine, in order to share in the redemption provided by Christ, one must personally respond by placing one's faith in that redemption in Protestantism, or by the sacrament of Baptism in Catholicism.¹⁹⁷ In Islam, on the contrary, original sin does not exist. Indeed, the Qur'an states that Adam and Eve sinned. However, according to Islamic belief, they had repented and were fully excused. Furthermore, their sin had no consequence for all human beings. In Islam, salvation is the reward and mercy of God that can be attained by doing duties or good deeds

¹⁹⁷ See *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 10, 15th ed., "Salvation",

that have been prescribed in His Laws. Thus, if in Christianity salvation is a matter of “belief”, in Islam, it is a matter of “practice”.

In the Qur'an, there is a positive idea about salvation. This concerns the verse 3: 36, which is also referred to by Madjid in his argument: *“Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabeans and the Christians, any who believe in Allāh and the Last Day, and work righteousness, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve”* (Q. 3:64). According to Madjid this verse guarantees that the Jews, Christians and Sabaeans will enter Paradise and will be protected from Hell provided that they believe in the One and Only God as well as in the Last Day and if they, on the basis of this belief, do good deeds. This understanding is obviously constructive, as in many explanations, this verse is often understood in a rather exclusive manner.

There is a general understanding in the Muslim circles, that the verse above speaks of non-Muslims (*ahl al-kitāb*) who existed before the coming of Islam, during which their beliefs were still ordained. For them, the verse means to indicate the *ahl al-kitāb* after the advent of Islam. They argue that if the verse was interpreted to include non-

Muslims during the period following the advent of Islam, it would conflict with the verse, “Whoever seeks any religion other than Islam never shall it be accepted from him, and in the next world he shall be among the losers” (Q. 3:85). However, in my opinion there is actually no conflict between the two verses, if indeed the latter is understood, as Madjid interprets it, as referring to Islam in a general sense of a total submission to God.

There is even a view that the former verse has been abrogated (*naskh*¹⁹⁸) by the latter.¹⁹⁹ Ibn Hazm, in his work *An-Nāsikh wal-Mansūkh*, considered the verse abrogated by the verse, “Slay the idolaters wherever you find them” (Q. 9:5)²⁰⁰. It is clear that this understanding has a negative implication. I agree with the opinion of Muslim scholars that to abrogate God’s own commands is unworthy of the character of God

¹⁹⁸ *Naskh* is the generic label for a range of theories advanced in the fields of *Tafsīr*, *Hadīth* and *Usul al-Fiqh* since a comparison of verse with verse, *Hadīth* with *Hadīth*, *Hadīth* with verse both Qur’an and *Hadīth* with the *Fiqh* suggested frequent, serious conflict. See, J. Burton “*Naskh*”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. VII (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1993), p. 1009.

¹⁹⁹ See M. Rafiqul-Haqq and P. Newton, “Tolerance in Islam”, accessible at <http://debate.domini.org/newton/tolerance.html>.

²⁰⁰ Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi, *An-Nāsikh wal-Mansūkh* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1986), p. 18.

Himself. To understand the meaning of those conflicting verses, one should certainly take into account their contexts. Shihab is right when he argues that the verse that contains hostile attitude towards the *ahl al-kitāb* should be understood from their context in which the Prophet Muhammad was facing severe antagonism. This means that the verses were *ad hoc* in their application. They could not be confronted with other verses, which support pluralism and tolerance of other religions. Shihab rightly argues that the above verse of 3:64 is indeed an argument for coexistence among various religions.

From the Catholic perspective, the idea of salvation can be seen in the various documents of the Second Vatican Council. Since the Council is quite decisive in the Catholic discourse in Indonesia, I will discuss how the concept of salvation is developed in these documents.

In the *Nostra Aetate* it is mentioned, “*His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men*”. This statement clearly indicates that the Church recognizes the universality of salvation. Salvation is not exclusively for Christians but for all men. This recognition obviously contradicts the old doctrine *extra ecclesiam*

nulla salus, which maintained that there is no salvation outside the Church. The *Nostra Aetate* also mentions, “*The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men.*” These statements seem to indicate that the Church also admits that other religions have their own ways to salvation. In this respect, it implies that the both moral and the religious aspects of any religion may be acceptable as means to reach salvation.

In the *Lumen Gentium*, it is asserted, “*At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right*”.²⁰¹ This seems to imply that right behaviour is enough to be acceptable to God and to attain salvation. After some passages of this expression, the Council mentions, “*Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to*

²⁰¹ *Lumen Gentium*: 9.

them through the dictates of conscience".²⁰² This implies that salvation can be attained by non-Catholics, but with three conditions: First, not intentionally declining to recognize the Gospel or to join in the Church; seeking God with a sincere heart and open mind; and carrying out God's intention, as they know it through their conscience. In other words, to attain salvation, according to the Catholic Church, one must not accept the Gospel message or convert to Catholicism. One must not reject the Gospel intentionally by saying that it is not true.

It is interesting that the Council in this document also mentions specifically the salvation for Muslims. It is said, "*The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslim, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind*".²⁰³ In the *Nostra Aetate*, the same expression can also be found such as, "*The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful,*

²⁰² *Lumen Gentium*: 16.

²⁰³ *Lumen Gentium*: 16.

the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men". These expressions obviously indicate the positive attitude of the Church towards Muslims. As seen in the statements, the Church considers Muslims as those who believe and worship God and who hold the faith of Abraham. This is certainly a positive development, as in the medieval ages, Muslims were often considered to worship Muhammad or other gods and even regarded idolaters.²⁰⁴ That the Church includes Muslims within God's plan of salvation can be regarded as one of the important contributions of the Council to the development of the Catholic Church's relations with Muslims.

It is important to note that, despite the Church's acceptance of the possibility of salvation for other religions, it does not necessarily mean that the Church admits the salvations of other religions through their particularities. As mentioned in *Lumen Gentium*, the Church is necessary for salvation and considered as the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation.²⁰⁵ Ruokanen in this respect explains that the

²⁰⁴ See Albert Hourani, *Europe and Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 9; R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 32

Council actually does not recognize the salvation of other religions in particular, but rather admits the general salvific presence of God's grace in all universes that God created.²⁰⁶ It seems, there is ambiguity in this attitude, because the Church admits the possibility of a salvation for other religions without being a member of the Church, but she still considers herself to be the necessary element for salvation and that it is only through the Catholic Church that the fullness of the means of salvation can be found. In his analysis on this attitude of the Catholic Church, Aydin remarks in his statement:

"Our examination of the conciliar statements about non-Christian religions show that the Council acknowledged the possibility of salvation of non-Christians by implicitly implying that non-Christian religions are independent ways of salvation for their followers. Although, on the one hand it acknowledges that "grace and truth" are available in those religions, on the other hand it argues that they are made available in them through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ. This seems to be a negative implication of the Council teaching, but within the broader theological context of the conciliar statements, it would be more appropriate to interpret the silence of the Council positively instead of negatively in order to appreciate its contribution on this issue."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ *Lumen Gentium*: 14.

²⁰⁶ Mikka Ruokanen, "Catholic Teaching on Non-Christian Religions at the Second Vatican Council", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1985), p. 57.

²⁰⁷ Aydin, *Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings*, accessible at <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/IIA-13/contents.htm>

In a certain aspect, the attitude of the Second Vatican Council in this relation was in deed problematic in particular when the Council urges the necessity of evangelization towards non-Christians. This is clearly expressed in the *Lumen Gentium* as follows: “Whatever good or truth is found among them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel”.²⁰⁸ In the *Ad Gentes* (decree on the missionary work of the Catholic Church) there are expressions of the need of proclamation, evangelization, and conversion of non-Christians to open their minds to hear the Gospel.²⁰⁹ One might question here what the relevance of evangelization is towards other religions if at the same time the Church recognizes the salvation in other religions and “rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions”. It seems there is contradiction between the appreciation of other religions and the call for evangelization.

Inclusive attitude is, indeed, not always relevant in dealing with religious plurality. As Banawiratma has put it, it can ignore the identity

²⁰⁸ *Lumen Gentium*: 17.

²⁰⁹ See for examples *Ad Gentes*: 40.

of other traditions by covering or assimilating them in one's own tradition. Banawiratma seems to realize this problem of inclusivism, therefore he says, "we need to remember that the Christian tradition and truth are neither inclusive nor exclusive of all other religious traditions and truth, but they are related to all of them". It is in this context that I see the significance of Banawiratma's *dialogical critical contextual approach*.

C. The Idea of Interreligious Dialogue

The term *dialogue* comes from the Greek word “*dia-logos*”. “*Dia*” means “through” or “with each other” and “*Logos*” means “the word”. As David Bohm points out, it suggests a “stream of meaning” flowing among, through and between us.²¹⁰ *Dialogue* basically means conversation. In the Western tradition, the term has been used to indicate “piece of written work cast in the form of conversation.” In the field of religion, the term dialogue became common in various religious traditions only in the second half of the twentieth century.²¹¹

Since the changing of Christian attitude towards other religions in the 1960s through the Second Vatican Council in Catholicism and the forums of the World Council of Church in the Protestantism, interreligious dialogues have become an important theme. Not only has there been much talk of interreligious dialogue but also meetings and activities aimed at promoting interreligious dialogue in particular have

²¹⁰ Cited in Jeanie Sharp “David Bohm on Dialogue”, accessible at: <http://www.soapboxorations.com/ddigest/bohm.htm>. David Bohm (1917-1992) was a distinguished physicist who is best known for his work on the fundamentals of quantum theory and relativity theory. He had also interests in the areas of communication and wrote many works on the concept of dialogue.

²¹¹ Eric J. Sharpe, “Dialogue of Religion” in Mircea Eliade, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol 4, (New York: Collier Macmillan publishers, 1987). 344.

become common phenomena. Aware of the significance of dialogue as a means for bridging religious differences, many Christian theologians and religious leaders have attempted to develop the concepts dialogue relevant in the context religious plurality.

As we have seen, the Catholic theologian Banawiratma has introduced five levels of dialogue, that is, (1) dialogue of life, (2) dialogue of religious experience, (3) theological dialogue, (4) dialogue of action and (5) contextual analysis and reflection. By categorizing dialogues as such, Banawiratma seems to realize the importance of interaction of religious groups in many aspects of life. Many perceive interreligious dialogue merely as formal interreligious gatherings or round-table discussions among scholars and theological experts of various faiths. In fact, dialogue is more than merely a series of conversation. From the various levels of dialogue above, we learn that dialogue is principally a way of living with other that involves interaction at the levels of *being* (dialogue of life), *doing* (cooperation on social issues), *thinking* (study, discussion of theological issues), and *reflecting* (sharing of religious experience).

In such a plural society like Indonesia, introducing these models of dialogue is obviously relevant. The fact of plurality in the society indeed necessitates people's consciousness of the importance of dialogue not only in terms of its formal sense, but also in its informal one. Interreligious dialogue, thus, should not be perceived as an exclusive activity that is conducted by religious elites only. Common people could conduct interreligious dialogue through their social interaction in their daily life such as in the neighbourhood, school, office, market etc. They should show themselves tolerant and accepting towards those of different religions and work to build peace and harmony among various groups in the society. They should be able to relate to each other and co-operate in dealing with their common problems regardless of religious differences.

Probably the most difficult one is theological dialogue. Some scholars in Indonesia are pessimistic of the possibility of theological dialogue. According to the late Victor Tanja, a well-known Christian theologian, it was impossible to conduct theological dialogue. The term interreligious dialogue, he said, did not refer to dialogue between faiths

but rather between people of religion or faith.²¹² “It is people who conduct dialogue, not religions”, he said. His comment on the impossibility of theological dialogue is certainly understood in the context that faith is a matter that could not be compromised. Indeed, the difficulty of theological dialogue is how to deal with the conflicting religious claims. It is not surprising that theological dialogues sometime appear in the form of debate with each trying to prove that it has the truth and that the other is in error.

However, it should be emphasized that theological dialogue does not necessarily mean to compromise religious differences, since it is impossible to negotiate the conflicting religious claims. Theological dialogue is principally learning to recognize the commonalities, but also the differences. In this process, as Leonard Swidler puts it, each partner listens to the other as openly and sympathetically as possible in an attempt to understand the other’s position as precisely and, as it were, as much from within as possible.²¹³

²¹² Victor Tanja, *Pluralism Agama dan Problema Sosial: Diskursus Teologi tentang Isu-Isu Kontemporer* (Jakarta: CIDESINDO, 1998), p. 39.

In my opinion, theological dialogue is, in fact, crucial. It is aimed to wipe out misunderstandings or negative constructions about other religions. Appropriate rules are certainly needed in order to avoid the difficulties in interreligious dialogue. Swidler, whose name has just been mentioned, has very well outlined the rules of dialogue as follows:

1. The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly. Minimally, the very fact that I learn that my dialogue partner believes “this” rather than “that” proportionally changes my attitude toward her; and a change in my attitude is a significant change in me.
2. Interreligious and interideological dialogue must be a two-sided project – within each religious or ideological community and between religious or ideological communities.
3. Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity. It should be made clear in what direction the major and minor thrusts of the tradition move, what the future shifts might be, and, if necessary, where the participant has difficulties with her own tradition. No false fronts have any place in dialogue.
4. In interreligious, interideological dialogue we must not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather our ideals with our partner's ideals, our practice with our partner's practice. Conversely, each participant must assume a similar complete honesty and sincerity in the other partners. Not only will the absence of sincerity prevent dialogue from happening, but the absence of the assumption of the partner's sincerity will do so as well. In brief: no trust, no dialogue.
5. Each participant must define himself or herself. Only the Jew, for example, can define what it means to be a Jew. The rest can only

²¹³ Leonard Swidler, “From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Global Dialogue” in Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes (eds.) *The Study of Religion in an Age of Global Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), p. 148.

describe what it looks like from the outside. Moreover, because dialogue is a dynamic medium, as each participant learns, he will change and hence continually deepen, expand, and modify his self-definition as a Jew – being careful to remain in constant dialogue with fellow Jews. Thus it is mandatory that each dialogue partner define what it means to be an authentic member of his own tradition.

6. Each participant must come to the dialogue without hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement lie. Rather, each partner should not only listen to the other partner with openness and sympathy but also attempt to agree with the dialogue partner as far as is possible while still maintaining integrity with his own tradition; where he absolutely can agree no further without violating his own integrity, precisely there is the real point of disagreement – which most often turns out to be different from the point of disagreement that was falsely assumed ahead of time.
7. Dialogue can take place only between equals. Both must come to learn from each other. Therefore, if, for example, the Muslim views Hinduism as inferior, or if the Hindu views Islam as inferior, there will be no dialogue. If authentic interreligious, interideological dialogue between Muslims and Hindus is to occur, then both the Muslim and the Hindu must come mainly to learn from each other; only then will it be "equal with equal," *par cum pari*. This rule also indicates that there can be no such thing as a one-way dialogue.
8. Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust. Although interreligious, interideological dialogue must occur with some kind of "corporate" dimension, that is, the participants must be involved as members of a religious or ideological community – for instance, as Marxists or Taoists – it is also fundamentally true that it is only persons who can enter into dialogue.
9. As we enter into interreligious and interideological dialogue, we must learn to be at least minimally self-critical of both our self and our own religious or ideological traditions.
10. Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology "from within"; for a religion or ideology is not merely something of the head, but also of the spirit, heart, and "whole being," individual and communal.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

In terms of Muslim-Christian dialogue, we have seen that Banawiratma in his approach of dialogue compares Jesus and the Qur'an; both are considered as mediation to God. Usually, one would assume that a comparison of between Islam and Christianity would consist of comparing sacred texts (Qur'an and Bible) and figures (Muhammad and Jesus). However, in the context of Muslim-Christian dialogue, the proponent of dialogue like Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Stephen Neil, Frithjof Schuon, Seyyed Hosein Nasr and others proposed another perspective of comparison, that is, the Qur'an is compared to Jesus.

The basis of the comparison is clear. In Islam, the Qur'an is the Word of God. In Christianity the Word of God is Jesus. Thus, both are the "Word God". According to Nasr, it is indeed possible to make comparison between Islam and Christianity by comparing the Prophet to Christ, the Qur'an to the New Testament, Gabriel to the Holy Spirit, the Arabic language to Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ, etc. In this way the sacred book on one religion would correspond the sacred book in the other religion, the central figure in one religion to the

central figure in the other religion and so on. He admits that this type of comparison would be meaningful and reveal useful knowledge of the structure of the two religions. But in order to understand what the Qur'an means to Muslims and why the Prophet is believed to be unlettered according to Islamic belief, it is more significant to consider this comparison from another point of view.²¹⁵ Thus, in this perspective, Nasr compares the Qur'an to Christ, the Prophet to Maria and the Prophet's illiteracy to Maria's virginity. Nasr says:

"The Word of God in Islam is the Qur'an; in Christianity it is Christ. The vehicle of the Divine Message in Christianity is the Virgin Mary; in Islam it is the soul of the Prophet. The Prophet must be unlettered for the same reason that the Virgin Mary must be virgin. The human vehicle of a Devine Message must be pure and untainted. The Divine Word can only be written on the pure and 'untouched tablet of human receptivity. If this World is in the form of flesh the purity is symbolized by the virginity of the mother who gives birth to the Word, and if it is in the form of a book this purity is symbolized by the unlettered nature of the person who is chosen to announce this Word among men. One could not with any logic reject the unlettered nature of the Prophet and in the same breath defend the virginity of Mary. Both symbolize a profound aspect of this mystery of revelation and once understood one cannot be accepted and the other rejected."

²¹⁵ Seyyed Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1966), p. 43.

Obviously, this new perspective of comparison has a positive implication in building dialogical relationship between Muslims and Christians, since the “old perspective” is often considered to create difficulty in Muslim-Christian relation. According to Smith, Muslims and Christians have been alienated partly by the fact that both have misunderstood each other’s faith by trying to fit it into their own patterns. The most usual error, he said, was to suppose (on both sides) that the roles of Jesus Christ in Christianity and of Muhammad in Islam were comparable.²¹⁶

The same idea was also proposed by Stephen Neil who views the difficulty in the case of comparison between the Qur’an and the Bible. According to Neil, the comparison between the Qur’an and Bible often leads to misunderstanding. For example, when comparing the Qur’an to Bible, the Christians would assume that the Qur’an, like the Bible, contain human elements beside divine elements. This notion is often rejected by Muslims, since they argue that the Qur’an is the word of God. Muslims, on the contrary, could not understand, despite modern

²¹⁶ . Wilfred C. Smith, *“Islam in Modern History”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 17-18.

Christian explanations, that the Bible is sacred text. Muslims always consider that the Bible is wholly man-produced, not the sayings of Jesus. It is only the expressions about him, with distorted elements. Neil, indeed, admits that it is impossible to avoid the comparison between the Qur'an the Bible. However, such a comparison often makes people confusing and irritated.²¹⁷

D. *Pancasila* as a Common Platform

Turning our discussion to socio-political aspect, we see that almost all figures in this study speak about *Pancasila* in their reflection on pluralism. They generally agree that *Pancasila* is the best alternative in dealing with the plurality of Indonesian society. Their acceptance of *Pancasila* is not only due to the neutral and inclusive principles of *Pancasila*, which can unite all differences of Indonesian society in terms of ethnics, race and religion, but also due to the fact that the principles of *Pancasila* are in accordance with religion.

²¹⁷ Stephen Neil, *Christian Faith and Other Faiths; The Christian Dialogue with Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 52-53. One of the examples of the comparative study between the Qur'an and the Bible, which do not satisfy Christians, is Maurice Bucaille's *La Bible le Coran et la Science*. Here, the Qur'an, which is considered the Word of God, is compared to the Bible that is viewed as man product.

As mentioned, Madjid believes that *Pancasila* constitutes a common point that can unite religions in Indonesia. The common point he means here is identical with the Qur'anic term *kalimat sawa'*, which is used by Qur'an to invite the people of Book to believe in the One and Only God. Madjid believes that the first principle of *Pancasila*, that is, the belief in the One and Only God, principally illustrate this point. Thus, for him, the principle of *Pancasila* is not but the principle of Islamic monotheism (*Tauhīd*) itself. This could be considered a kind of theologization of *Pancasila*, which is also common in the thought of many Muslim scholars in Indonesia.

However, in Muslim-Christian discourse, this theological identification of *Pancasila* with the Islamic concept of monotheism is not an simple matter. Some Christian scholars do not agree that the first principle of *Pancasila* is reconciled with the Islamic concept of monotheism. According to W. B. Sidjabat, for example, the first principle of *Pancasila* does not belong to or lean toward any specific concept of God, despite the fact that the formulation *Ketuhanan Yang*

Maha Esa resembles that of Islam.²¹⁸ Thus, instead of using the term “the One and Only God”, he prefers using the term “Divine Omnipotence” since the latter, according to him, is more neutral. Sidjabat believes that disparity between Islamic concept and *Pancasila* concept is due to the difference between Islamic “*Weltanschauung*” and *Pancasila* “*Weltanschauung*”. He says:

“What we discover in our study is that the difference in the nature of Islamic “*Weltanschauung*” and the “*Weltanschauung*” that is provided by the *Pancasila* cause some disagreements that manifest themselves in the relation between Islam and the state”. The disagreements have been chiefly engendered by the neutrality of the principle of Divine Omnipotence in the Constitution and the essential exclusive character of the Islamic faith. The Islamic assumption of the theory of the alliance of both the “church” and state has been primarily the main cause of the disagreements”.²¹⁹

As seen in his arguments, Sidjabat believes that the Islamic concept monotheism is exclusive by nature. For Madjid, however, this is clearly misleading. He says that Sidjabat is biased in his view particularly when using the term “Divine Omnipotence” instead “the One and Only God”. According to Madjid, this implies the Christian complexity in

²¹⁸ W.B. Sidjabat, *Religious Tolerance and the Christian Faith* (Djakarta: Badan Penerbit Kristen, 1965), p. 75.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

facing the tension between Islamic monotheism and Trinitarian monotheism.

In fact, it is impossible to translate the phrase *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* adequately. There are other versions of the English translation towards the phrase such as “The Oneness of God”, “The Being of Supreme Deity”, “All Embracing God” and “Belief in God”. It is noteworthy that these phrases literally do not imply the exact meaning of the *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*. The Indonesian expression of “*Ketuhanan*” is not a noun form meaning “God”. “God” in Indonesian language is “*Tuhan*”. The prefix *ke* and the suffix *an* to this word, makes the meaning different. It is like the word “*manusia*” and “*ke-manusia-an*” (human and humanity), the word *Ketuhanan* becomes an abstract noun. *Ketuhanan* is actually an abstract idea God. Thus, the proper translation would be “Godhead” or “Lordship”. It seems this is what is meant in the first principle of *Pancasila*. Even people who do not believe in a personal God, as many Buddhists do not, can accept it. This may appear to be a very vague concept, but it is all embracing. With the combination of the phrase *Yang Maha Esa* (“Who is the One”), this

apparently does not satisfy Christians. Some Christian theologians, therefore, simply use other terms such as “the Ideas of Lordship”, “the Absolute Lordship” or “Divine Omnipotence” mentioned by Sidjabat above. It is clear that the many versions of the expressions above are merely interpretations, not really translation. In this connection, it is important to mention that in the Muslim circles, there are those who do not accept the formulation *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* because of linguistic reason. They do not agree with the using of the word *Tuhan*, since Islamic expression of God is “Allāh”. This is obviously misunderstanding, since the word “Allāh” is an Arabic language to denote “God”, the equivalent of which can also be found in other languages, such as, Dieu in French etc.

In deed, the main problem concerning the first principle of *Pancasila* above lies more in the political aspect rather than theological one. Generally, there is no theological gap between Islam and Christianity in the acceptance of *Pancasila*, since its basic values are in accordance with teachings of both religions. That Madjid and other Muslim scholars attempt to identify the first principle of the *Pancasila* in

accordance with Islamic concept of monotheism should be understood in the context of the difficulty of Muslim acceptance of *Pancasila*.

The anxiousness of the Christians concerning the first principle of *Pancasila* is that it was formerly justified as the basis for the creation of religious state. As I have mentioned earlier, the phrase *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* was in the Jakarta Charter was added with the phrase “*dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi para pemeluknya*” (with the obligation for the adherents of Islam to implement the *Shari’a*). For some Muslims, this was considered to be the basis for the necessity of establishing an Islamic state. Even though these “seven words” have been removed, the Christians remain cautious towards any effort by Muslim to create an Islamic state. Thus, they attempt to preserve the neutrality of the first principle of *Pancasila*.

Madjid, in this respect indeed understands the problem of Islamic state versus *Pancasila*. He acknowledges that among Muslims in Indonesia there were ambitions to establish an Islamic state. However, he says that the emergence of ideas of Islamic state in Indonesia was essentially not due to the fundamental religious views. He understands

these phenomena as incidental events that emerged due to certain forms of the process in the governmental structure, being its condition in the formative stage. Thus, he argues that the movements like *Darul Islam* (DI), Kartosuwiryo, Daud Beureueh and Kahar Muzakkar were actually not the outcome of ideological contemplations based on Islam, but rather reaction caused by certain pragmatic political changes, which did not favour their existence. However, he opposed all these movements.²²⁰

As we have seen, the Christian group is quite vocal in maintaining *Pancasila*. They believe that it is only *Pancasila* that can guarantee their rights, as minority. They are sure that *Pancasila* will not favour the majority at the expense of minorities. Within the spirit of *Pancasila*, as Darmaputera notes, there is neither majority nor minority, since all would be treated equally in terms of rights and obligation.²²¹ One might question whether the Christian's calls for *Pancasila* are due to the pragmatic reason, given their position as

²²⁰ Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban* p. xci.

²²¹ Darmaputera, *Pancasila and the Search for Identity and Modernity*, p. 199.

minority in Indonesia. If we see the arguments proposed by the Christian group in this study, it is clear that their maintenance of *Pancasila* is due to its compatibility with their religion. As Magnis-Suseno comments, the values of *Pancasila* not only do not oppose the Christian faith, but are also in accordance with it. They contain noble values of human dignity that are highly honoured by Church teaching. Yet, this does not mean that these intellectuals are suggesting an identity between *Pancasila* and Christianity. In their view, religion and *Pancasila* are quite different in essence. It is for this reason that they do not attempt to theologize *Pancasila*.

However, the realization of *Pancasila* is not as easy as they idealize. For the Christians, there is a gap between hope and reality concerning the implementation of *Pancasila* in the state life. With the issuance by the government of the Laws No. 3/1985 and No. 8/1985, *Pancasila* has indeed been established as *asas tunggal* (the only basis) for the life of society and state. However, the Christians see that some policies of the government contrary to the principles of *Pancasila*. This is true, as Darmaputera has already mentioned, of the

Law No. 2/1989²²² concerning the national religious educational system and the Law No. 7/1989 regarding the Islamic religious courts. The Christians also criticize the joint decision of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Home Minister concerning the necessary requirements to build a house of worship, which make them difficult to build a church in the areas of Muslim majority.

It seems that the New Order purpose of implementing *Pancasila* as *asas tunggal* through the Laws No. 3/1985 and No. 8/1985 above was merely political and had nothing to do with the socio-cultural. With the issuances of these Laws, the government's main intention in fact was not to mobilize Indonesian citizens to stipulate *Pancasila* as the only basis in their life of society, nation and state. This was indicated by the fact that that fact that right after all political and social organizations adopted *Pancasila* as their only basis, the government, by contrast, adopted policies, which allowed the

²²² On 11 June 2003, the Indonesian parliament also passed a new Law on National Education System, which even revitalizes the 1989 Law. Musdah Mulia, a Muslim activist of interreligious dialogue who is also secretary general of the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), said that the bill defies the pluralism of religion, faith and culture of the Indonesian people.

process of “Islamization” in the political life of the state, which contravenes the non-discriminatory principle of Pancasila. This is true for example in the government support for establishment of ICMI, which is considered as a part of the political efforts to gain Muslim sympathy for Suharto for the 1992 election. Thus the policy of Pancasila was used by Suharto to strengthen his government.

Abdurrahman Wahid was one of some Muslims who criticized against this politicization. As I have mentioned, he was very critical of the establishment of ICMI, which he considered to legitimize Islamic exclusivism and to erode social tolerance for non-Muslim Indonesians. Wahid also criticised the issuance of the 1989 Law of Religious Education and this Law, according to him, would be used by *da'wa* groups to promote narrow “Muslim-only” concepts in the school system. He also viewed that the Law could give Muslim fundamentalists the opportunity to propagate Islam in a much more intensive and politically relevant fashion than others faith.²²³ Here, we see Wahid’s commitment of pluralism. He realizes that introducing

²²³ See Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia*, p. 86.

Islam as an alternative values system for the would be contrary to the non-discriminatory principle which is maintained in the Pancasila. He is consistent with his principle that Islam might not be imposed as an alternative value system for the pluralistic Indonesian society.

Chapter Six

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has shown how these scholars – Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, Quraish Shihab, J.B. Banawiratma, Eka Darmaputera and Franz Magnis Suseno – deal with the problem of religious pluralism and interreligious relations in Indonesia. It has shown various approaches and aspects of their ideas, which would be relevant in building mutual understanding between religious groups in particular between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia. Learning from the various approaches and aspects of the ideas of these scholars, I would like to remark some important points as follows.

In dealing with religious plurality, it is highly important that one preserves a tolerant attitude toward other religions and beliefs, not only due to socio-political consideration, but most importantly, due to religious consideration as well.

In the context of religious diversity, interreligious dialogue is obviously important, but also becomes a necessity. It is an effective

tool to wipe out misunderstandings or negative constructions about other religions. Dialogue should be based on mutual respect. It should not be used for a theological debate to prove religious truth at the expense of the other. With this perspective, genuine dialogue implies a recognition of, and respect for, differences. Dialogue is not restricted only in the form of conversation. Dialogue is a way of living out the faith commitment in relation to each other. Banawiratma's concept of dialogue needs to be reaffirmed.

In the context of religious difference, a common ground needs to be affirmed. Muslims and Christians could meet in what Madjid says "submission to God". This process could be realized through what Banawiratma calls "paradigm of mediation". For Christians, the mediator to God is Jesus, whereas for Muslims the Qur'an.

Muslims and Christians need to reconsider their respective religious teachings concerning inter-human relationship, which seem rigid, and attempt to contextualize them in accordance with the spirit of tolerance and humanity.

In the context of socio-political life, a common ground in Pancasila should be affirmed. It is only with such a basis that the conflict between religious groups can be eliminated. This is because of the neutral principle of Pancasila in the matter of religion. This principle should be preserved. Any attempt to impose a certain value system, which is contradictory to the neutral principle of Pancasila should be avoided.

With the principle of Pancasila, the State should guarantee the freedom of religion in a consistent way. Any intervention, restriction, and discrimination in the matter of religion have to be avoided.

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