

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RELIGIOUS HARMONY

**STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY SUNAN KALIJAGA
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YOGYAKARTA, SEPTEMBER 27, 2004

RELIGIOUS HARMONY IN RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

THE CASE OF INDONESIA

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INTRODUCTION

The question of how to build lasting harmony between religious communities in culturally and religiously plural countries is certainly one of the highest urgency. Indonesia is a good example for this. On the one hand is Indonesia an outstanding example for such harmony, on the other hand any idealization would be misleading. Not only have there been periods of extreme tensions between religious communities, not so long we had a cruel civil war between Christians and Muslim in two parts of Eastern Indonesia. Therefore I believe that Indonesia is a good example for reviewing the issues, challenges and chances for religious harmony in religious diversity.

But first, what would be meant by religious harmony? There are different degrees of harmony. Its most basic meaning is absence of open conflict between religious communities. But the absence of war is not yet real harmony. In order to speak of harmony, two more conditions should prevail. First, these communities and their members should *habitually* live peacefully together, having normal transactions as citizens of the same state and the same local communities, cooperating as a matter of course in all kind of activities of civil society: in their respective professions, in community endeavors, in politics, in economic activities, a. s. o. Thus they live together without exceptional tensions, easily communicating among each other without being hampered by their different religious affiliations. Secondly, there should exist well established channels of communication, formal or informal, between the different religious communities, thus they have regular meetings, both at the center and at grass root level, where they are used to exchange views and, in case, take common positions in face of national questions or questions regarding their relations among themselves.

There seem to be three main factors that will prevent such harmony between different religious communities living within one state and one society. The first is *dogmatic intolerance*. The second factor would be a very common situation which, basically, is not outright bad, but far from satisfying where different religious communities live together without open conflicts, but where there exist frictions, incidental and

longstanding, long established prejudices and mutual distrust, now often aggravated by direct religious, but also economic and political competition, a situation which can lead to inter-religious violence. The third situation are *communal tensions*. Of course, these three "factor" are, in reality, often mixed up.

Plain dogmatic intolerance has been the case for long periods of history and still exists in certain places. Classical examples are the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain after the *Reconquista* (1492) and a century of warfare between Catholics and Protestants in many parts of Europe. A contemporary example is Saudi Arabia where it is not even allowed to bring a bible for private use into the country and the idea of building a single church for the hundreds of thousand Philippino foreign workers is out of question. Instances of communal conflict between religious communities abound in the 20th century: In India between Hindus and Muslims, in Nigeria between Christians and Muslims, in Pakistan between Sunni and Shia Muslims, and in other places. Tensions of the third kind, a mix of prejudices, distrust, intolerance and competition simmer in many countries.

In the first part of this paper I shall try to give a relatively detailed description of the relations between different religious communities in Indonesia. That I mostly concentrate on Christian – Muslim relations is, besides that I know them better, not only because Muslim and Christians comprise about 95% of all Indonesians, but because they are, in a certain

sense, the most critical ones in Indonesia. In the second part I try to draw some lessons for the future.

I. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RELIGIONS IN INDONESIA

In this section, I (1) explain the fundamental decision of Indonesia to become a state of and for all religions without discrimination, then (2) describe worrying developments since 1990 and finally (3) show that there have been, at the same time, positive developments which bode well for the future of relations between religions in Indonesia.

1. Pancasila and religious openness

On August 18, 1945, one day after Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesia's independence under the nose of the Japanese occupiers (that just had surrendered to the allied forces), its constitutional assembly (PPKI) adopted a constitution (the "Constitution of 1945") where Indonesia was declared based on five fundamental principles (called Pancasila since Sukarno first formulated them on June 1, 1945) whose first was "Belief in One God" (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*) and where § 29 proclaimed liberty of religion and worship. Beside firmly confirming religious freedom, these fundamental decisions also meant that there was to be in Indonesia no discrimination on religious grounds.

How remarkable and extraordinary this philosophical and constitutional base was and is for Indonesia will be obvious if

we look at the religious map of Indonesia. More than 85% of all Indonesians are (Sunni) Muslim. Almost 10% are Christians, 2/3 of them belonging to Protestant Churches, 1/3 being Catholics. 1,5% are Hindu, most of them the original inhabitants of Bali. The others are indigenous religions, Confucians, the Buddhist community and some smaller communities. This means nothing else than that Indonesia was then, and still is, the nation with the biggest number of Muslims on earth. But at the beginning of the existence of the free Republic of Indonesia, her representatives unanimously decided to build a nation without religious discrimination and without giving Islam, the religion of the vast majority, any special constitutional or legal status. This decision was made with full awareness of its implications since it was preceded by intensive deliberations and bargaining about whether, first, Indonesia should become an "Islamic state" or not (the decision was "not"), and, second, whether, at least, the Islamic *shariah* should be declared binding on Muslims (this stipulation was unanimously dropped on August 18, 1945). I am of the opinion that only the willingness of the Islamist representatives not to insist on any special status for Islam made possible the continuance of Indonesia as one state up to this day.

Since then, religious freedom and non-discrimination have, in spite of many frictions, petty discrimination and serious conflicts during the last 13 years – on which I shall come back to presently - been a reality. Christians, Hindus and Buddhists¹ are up to this day free to worship. Christianity

developed exceptionally well after Indonesian independence. The fact is that religious life of most of the Christian communities on Java, Sumatra, South-Sulawesi and in other Muslim regions of Indonesia goes on as usual without any hindrance. There is freedom of worship, freedom of religious instruction, freedom to baptize and of becoming a Christian (or a Muslim). Church bells are ringing out at liturgical hours every day in churches on Java. Although since long being a Christian is not an advantage if one wants to make a carrier in Government or as state employee, Christians are not systematically discriminated against and can be found in all layers and professions of Indonesian society, they are found among politicians, the military, university staff, in Indonesian cultural life and in the economy.

2. WORRYING DEVELOPMENTS

Thus, although there have always been tensions between religious communities and the principle of nondiscrimination sometimes tended to evaporate on the local level, the religious communities of Indonesia did live together peacefully and in close communication and cooperation. This situation took a decisive turn to the worse at about 1990. This was the time when Soeharto took his famous turn to Islam after having treated political Islam for 20 years as potential opposition to His regime and ideology. Muslim leaders – with the exception of Abdurrachman Wahid – regarded the change of attitude by Soeharto as long overdue. For them the 20 year long

shunning of political Islam by the "New Order" was an extraordinary discrimination in regard of the fact that Islam was the big majority in Indonesia. They also suspected Christian influences behind Soeharto's negative attitude. Thus they regarded Soeharto's late "conversion" as a question of finally giving justice to the Islamic community.

Christians, on the other hand, saw themselves increasingly excluded from public positions (one point in case being Ambon which was traditionally regarded as Christian Protestant turf in spite of the fact that about 50% of the population of the Province were Muslim; there almost the whole first and second echelon of provincial government was now taken over by Muslims), they now felt discriminated and a threatened minority. But what really frightened Christian was a growing number of violent attacks on Christian churches. More than 600 churches have been destroyed or violently closed during the last 14 years, not counting churches destroyed in connection with the civil wars in Eastern Indonesia. Really traumatic for Indonesian Christians were four completely unprovoked attacks in 1996 to 1997, beginning with an attack on 10 Christian churches in Surabaya in 1996 (where damage was slight), when, then, in three places, also on Java, were *all 48 churches* in these regions (except one in Tasik) were systematically burnt down by mobs (there were two further mob attacks, one in November 1998 in Jakarta, and one in January 2000 on the island of Lombok which, in my opinion, probably was organized from Jakarta with the aim of making that island

"Christian free"). Especially worrying for Christians was the fact that not a single case of vandalizing of churches has, to my knowledge, ever been brought to court ² (outstanding, in the opposite, was, in all cases, Abdurrachman Wahid, then the leader of Nadlatul Ulama, who loudly condemned these acts).³ Things like that had never happened under Soekarno or during the first 25 of the Soeharto government (with the exception of a wave of attacks on some churches in South Sulawesi in 1967). It should be noted that all the massive attacks, with the exception of the Lombok attacks, happened *before* civil war broke out in Eastern Indonesia. Christians were increasingly asking themselves whether their constitutionally guaranteed right of worship, even of existing openly as Christians in majority Muslim regions, can be violated with impunity.

Since 1999 there have been no more large scale devastations of churches. But attacks on single churches are going on although their number has decreased significantly.⁴ Thus, as Christians complain, it is - because of a Government decree from 1970 stipulating that religious buildings can only be erected if the local religious (majority) community does not object to - extremely difficult to build churches on Java and in other Muslim regions even when there clearly does exist a Christian community needing a church. When the community, then, hold their services in a school or a similar building, this will often be forbidden with the argument that they are not allowed to do worship outside a church. The argument that a

church should not be built in the midst of a Muslim community means in fact the end of religious tolerance since a minority by definition lives among a majority of an other religion. If they are not allowed to build churches where members of the majority community live, where, then, should they build them?⁵ It is, as I heard, also difficult for Balinese Hindu to get building permits for their *pura* or for Chinese to build a *klen-teng*. I do not have data whether similar complaints are voiced by Muslim communities in Christian regions.

Thus the years after 1990 show growing tensions in Indonesia between Muslims and Christians. During these years instances of inter-religious violence, destruction of religious buildings and other acts of religious intolerance had been steadily on the increase, climaxing in the civil war between Christians and Muslims in the Molukkas and around Poso from 1999 until into 2002 (on which presently). Especially terrifying were the bombings during Christmas night in the year of 2000 where 50 bombs were placed in or around Christian churches from North Sumatra to the island of Lombok, 30 of them exploding, resulting in 17 deaths and more than 100 wounded. For two years almost no arrests were made.⁶ Only after the perpetrators of the Kuta bombing were caught, it transpired, that they were also involved in the Christmas bombings two years before.

3. The civil wars in Eastern Indonesia

The climax of interreligious conflicts were two civil wars that for almost four years devastated parts of the Molukkas and Central Sulawesi. These wars raged from 1999 to 2002 and resulted in about 8.000 deaths and hundredths of thousands of refugees many of whom have not yet been able to return to their homes due to the uncertain security situation.⁷ But it is clear that in both regions the reasons behind the violence were highly complex, some of them reaching back into history and even local culture (people in the Molukkas have traditionally been warriors and fights between villages were quite common⁸), others being connected with ethnographic and economic change and, as many Indonesians believe, with politics, both local and in Jakarta. But to say, as some do, that these conflicts were, in fact, not religious in character, is wishful thinking. The fact is that for more than three years for many people the answer to the question "are you a Muslim or a Christian" decided over life or death. But I am of the opinion that, in spite of the identification of the warring parties by their religion, both the Ambon and Poso civil wars were essentially communal conflicts, religion being the most important identifying factor of the opposing parties. Thus these conflicts – although politically clearly connected with the change of orientation of the Soeharto government since 1990 – are of an other nature than the anti-minority violence on Java and other places mentioned above.

In fact, especially on Ambon and, generally, in the Molukkas (in Poso, local power politics seem to have been the most important factor starting the violence) there have always existed some, and complex, tensions between the communities in these regions. The communities identify themselves collectively both by tribal and religious attributes. Thus, after a bloody conflict starts between communities, religion easily becomes the rallying point. The disturbing fact is that these communal conflicts tend to boil down to confrontations, in these cases, simply between Christians and Muslims. Thereby, religious hatred can grow and develop its own momentum. The whole atmosphere between the involved communities gets poisoned. Add existing suspicions and prejudices and new outbreaks of conflict can be easily provoked by (politically or otherwise) interested parties.

Thus, although these conflicts *are* conflicts between communities defined by their respective religion, they have not much to do with the teachings or other specific traits of Islam or Christianity. They should be characterized as communal conflicts.⁹ By this I mean that emotions, hatred, prejudices relate to the collective identity of a primordial group, united by language, local culture, locality, religion, tribalism a.s.o. If a member of such a community touches a member of another one, his or her community will react collectively against the community of the perpetrator.

In fact, the Ambon and Poso conflicts only are a part of a general climate of violence and brutality that obtains in Indonesian society today. This general proneness to violence has two characteristics. (1) Small frictions, misunderstandings or confrontations easily evoke violent reactions, physical fighting, using weapons. (2) These fights easily take on such a communal character: the involved individuals bring their *kampungs* (neighborhoods) villages, schools, their communities into the fray. If there is a fight between a extortionist and a taxi driver and the one is a Muslim and the other a Christian (as happened in Ambon), it may always become a war between their respective villages or *kampungs*, it may widen, especially if *kampungs* are tribally or religiously homogenous and living in close neighborhood to *kampungs* from a rival tribe or religion, to become a war between ethnic groups (as happened on Kalimantan) or between religions. Even in Jakarta we had, not so long ago, neighborhoods who regularly fought each other, until a year or two ago, there were villages on Java that were warring every two months with some deaths while being of the same tribe, the same religion, the same social strata.¹⁰

Thus the two civil wars in Eastern Indonesia between Christians and Muslims (hopefully, they are now over) were in my opinion, primarily communal conflicts that, although religious hatred figured terribly in them, have not much to do with "Islam" or "Christianity". Therefore, the background for ongoing conflicts among religious communities in Indonesia

should not, in the first place, be looked for within these communities in general. These conflicts are first of all one of the many expressions of the phenomena of general social disintegrative tendencies in Indonesian society which, in a certain local constellation, can blow up in a communal war which then, because religion is the strongest element in their respective collective identities, simplify becoming a conflict between religious communities.

4. Positive developments

All these developments have left their scars in religious communities. Many Christians have asked themselves about their future in Indonesia. The existence of hard-line groups that sometimes resort to violence (especially against "sinful places" like gambling-dens or even coffee-shops, but in some instances also against Christian institutions that they said were engaged in "Christianization") added to this atmosphere of apprehension. Hard-line Islamic publications openly voiced, and still voice, extremely sectarian views, often directly alluding to Christians. There has been, in my view, an unfortunate tendency to religious segregation. A *fatwa* promulgated already 25 years ago by MUI, but that was only effectively promulgated after the fall of Soeharto, commanded that Muslims should refrain from expressing Christmas greetings to Christians. Since then, a whole tradition of grass root level inter-religious contacts has dried up. I heard Muslim friends express their dismay at the fact that at school the teacher of religion

told the children not to have contacts with non-Muslim and Chinese children. Christians are also worried about a tendency of local authorities enforcing *shariah* regulations in their regions. Hand in hand with local "*shariahization*" goes, in certain districts, often in the name of the newly won "autonomy of the regions", a policy of making religious life for Christian communities more and more difficult, by, as already mentioned, on principle denying the building of churches, closing down all communal Christian activities, forbidding loud singing during services etc. All this sometimes under the pretext that these regions were traditionally Muslim. That there are no regions in Indonesia where only the original (religiously possibly homogenous) population exists – in all "Muslim" regions you have Christians from Eastern Indonesia, Christian Batak people, Christian Javanese and Christian Chinese – is overlooked (overlooked is also that in "Christian" regions of Indonesia¹¹, the percentage of Muslims, and of mosques, is growing steadily, a natural and inevitable consequence of the freedom of movement within the country).

These developments could give the impression that things are bad between religious communities, especially between Christians and Muslims. The astonishing fact is, that relations between Christians and Muslim, while still far from being without problems, have probably never been better. Undetected by most of the public, the last eight years have seen some encouraging developments. The fundamental fact is certainly that the *Pancasila* national consensus that Indonesia

belongs to all Indonesians has not suffered through all the troubles Indonesia has gone through during these last years. Thus there is not a single politically relevant group that questioned the non-discrimination principle.¹² Of course, Christians are, in my opinion rightly, worried about calls by hard-line groups for the introduction of Islamic *shariah* law for Muslims in Indonesia. The political parties being in favor of making *shariah* law a state law for Muslims represent, after the last elections, about 17% of the electorate. *Shariah*, even if only for Muslims, would, in my opinion, be the end of *Pancasila* since it would violate the principle implicit in *Pancasila*, that the state does not have the right to determine the religious life of its citizens. Besides, repeated assurances that *shariah* would be "safe for non-Muslims" fail to assure Christians. But, in the opinion of most political analysts *shariah* is still far away. Both the two biggest parties, Golkar and PDIP, but also Abdurrahman Wahid's PKB (14%) and Amien Rais' PAN (6%) do not support introduction of the *shariah*. Even more significant is the fact that the leadership of the two big Muslim organizations, Nadlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, have clearly stated that making *shariah* into state law would not fit in with the social-cultural conditions of Indonesia.

A second, highly significant and often overlooked fact is that the quasi-war between Christians and Muslims in Eastern Indonesia between 1999 and 2002 – where, in fact, both sides regard themselves as the victims of violence from the other side – has not spilled over to other regions. There have been

no revenge attacks on Christian on Muslim Java and no attacks on Muslims in Christian parts of Indonesia. More amazingly still, the much vilified political elite in Jakarta, including the political parties, have not use the conflict in the Molukkas and Poso for political gains. During the whole campaign there has, as far as I know, not been a single incident where party speakers demanded revenge or "rectification" of what has happened in conflict regions. In other words, the political elite has resisted the temptation to use these tragic conflicts in a sectarian way.

A third, in fact most amazing development during the last eight years has been a significant warming of relations between Christians and the big Muslim organizations Nadlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. I would say that only 20 years ago relations between Christians and "*santri*-Muslims"¹³ was limited to political cooperation,¹⁴ to, of course, daily contacts between Christians and Muslim on the grass-root level and formal meetings, usually government sponsored, between the leaders of the religious communities. But which Catholic priest would know a *kiai* or have ever seen a *pesantren*? Change began slowly, especially through the towering figure of Abdurrachman Wahid who incorporated a complete modern openness and commitment to religious freedom with the Islamic tradition exemplified by the Mogul rulers of India of protecting all minorities and feeling responsible for their well being. As chairman of Nadlatul Ulama for 15 years he has promoted a modern, open minded Islam among NU's youth who

now form the leading edge of Indonesian intellectual openness. On the other hand, theologians like Nurcholish Madjid, with his new interpretation of what Islam means¹⁵ projected the image of an open, tolerant Islam on the national scene. Here has to be mentioned the fact the Islamic State Institution (IAIN), for instance Sunan Kalijaga in Yogyakarta and Hidayat Syarifullah in Jakarta, have since the 70ths taught an open and dialogue minded Islam.

But the real breakthrough came, astonishingly enough, after one of the for Christians most traumatic incidents, the already mentioned destruction and burning down of all 25 Christian churches in and around the East Javanese city of Situbondo in October 1996. Situbondo is "NU country". Gus Dur (Abdurrachman Wahid), then head of NU, immediately condemned the riots and even asked for forgiveness.¹⁶ What then came reads like a good story. The young Catholic Javanese parish priest Benny Susetyo, instead of immediately trying to build up his burnt down church, and after receiving the blessing of Gus Dur, visited the surrounding *pesantrens*. There, the *kiais* expressed to him their horror at what had happened and promised help in building up the churches again. Since then relations between Christians and NU got more and more cordial all over Indonesia. Thus, f.i., many Christian churches are now guarded at Christmas night by *Banser*, the militias of NU. But also with Muhammadiyah did the relations become more cordial, although mostly in the top levels. In PAN, a

Muhammadiyah based political party founded by Amien Rais, some Christians participated.

A fourth, very important development, happened in politics. Here the old "nationalists – Islam" schism – which surfaced always when ideological questions were on the agenda, but in "real politics" never had much significance until it was instrumentalized during the first 20 years of Soeharto's New Order - has lost much of its political relevance. While it did surface for a short time after the election victory of Megawati's PDIP in 1999, both following cabinets, that of Abdurrahman Wahid and that of Megawati Sukarnoputeri, included elements of both groups. During the campaign preceding last parliamentary elections (April 4, 2004) questions of religion were almost completely absent; even explicitly Islamic Parties like PKS did not campaign in the name of Islam, but against corruption and for social justice. No party campaigned for the introduction of *shariah* (although some of them have it on their official agenda). All pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates for last July's presidential elections were "mixed" between "Islamists"¹⁷ and "nationalists" (all of the "nationalists", of course, being Muslim too).¹⁸

These positive tendencies received a big boost by the growing terrorist threat hanging now over Indonesia. The real watershed were the Bali bombings on October 12, 2002. They shocked Indonesians out of their somehow complacent attitude towards the fact of religiously motivated terror.¹⁹ On the

one hand, extremist groups that had used the new democratic openness after the fall of the Soeharto government to come out into the open, now retreated into more low profile positions. On the other hand, liberal Muslim groups, but also the popular leaders of big Muslim organizations, began to present Islam more forcefully as an inclusive religion that, as the majority religion, felt responsible for peace and prosperity of the whole Indonesian society. Muslim groups initiated prayer meetings among different religions for the victims of the Kuta killings. Leaders of the big Islamic organizations Nadlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah founded a National Moral Council consisting of the leaders of all Indonesia religions. Din Syamsuddin of the Council of the Islamic Community (MUI) founded a similar forum (The Indonesian Committee on Religion and Peace).

II. PROMOTING RELIGIOUS HARMONY

1. Some observation

If we look back at how relations between different religious communities developed, a few things can be noticed. The first is the absence of dogmatic intolerance in Indonesia. This includes not only those large parts of the population who practice a somewhat easy going Islam, but also the mainstream "*santri*-Muslims". Thus, although the question of imposing *shariah* law on Muslims will not go away, one of the constants of political orientation in Indonesia is the readiness of the

Muslim population of all shades to accept non-Muslims fully as co-citizens.

Thus, and this is the second observation, religious conflicts in Indonesia are not the result of principled dogmatic considerations, but of frictions between communities. This became, of course, most obvious in the dreadful communal wars between Christians and Muslim in the Molukkas and the region of Poso. These communal tensions are aggravated by the fact that religious identities are often connected to different tribal identities. Communities differing both ethnically and religiously living in one political community (a village, a city), very often in homogenous *kampungs* (smallest social entity), this is the most dangerous situation. Economic and political rivalries, interests of the political elite, but f.i. also of the military, together with inter-religious prejudices make for a dangerous mixture. It is noteworthy that physical conflict always broke out in areas where the conflicting groups were more or less of equal quantity. I cannot enter here into the question how to tackle these situations.

The situation is different on Java (were 62% of all Indonesians live and Christians are a tiny minority of probably about 3%). Here tensions obtain in a clear majority – minority situation. Violence almost exclusively takes the form of popular attacks against buildings of the minority (that can lead to deaths, although always more or less incidentally). Not dogmatic differences, and also not economic or political rivalry,

but miscommunication, distrust of the other religious community, loathing, and sometimes hatred towards the other religious community, generally not by the whole population at a certain place, but by part of them are behind these tensions. Very often attacks are the result of agitation; local people that have lived together peacefully all along are incited by outsiders. Christians usually complain about not being allowed to worship, Muslim cite provocative behavior of Christians, trying to build ostentatious churches in a poor Muslim neighborhood, and "Christianization" (best to be translated by *prose-lytization*).

Faced with this situation, what can we, Indonesians, do to build up positive relations among different religious group, in order to obtain a harmonious living together? Specifically, how can Christians and Muslim come to trust each other? How can we safeguard, and strengthen, the longstanding tradition of living positively with each other?

2. Suggestions

Firstly, I think, we should acknowledge that there have been always problems. There have always existed deep suspicions and prejudices between the Christian and Muslim communities. We live with a very difficult common history which became part of our collective identities, a history of crusades and colonialism, of Arab invasion and 300 years of the "Turkish threat" to Christian Europe. Muslims in Indonesia are suspicious about Christian intentions since Christianity came with

the colonialists. These suspicions have been reinforced by reckless proselytizing by certain Christian sects. Christians, on the other hand, are suspicious that "strict" Muslims, should they come to power, would restrict their religious freedoms. If conflicts break out, regardless from what causes, or if they are provoked from outside parties with certain political intentions, they feed on these suspicions and prejudices.

On the other, inter-religious conflict is not unavoidable in Indonesia. The overwhelming majority of Indonesians of every creed, including the formal and informal leaders, want peace and tolerance. But in order to achieve a lasting climate of tolerance and sincere respect for each other we have to continue to get to better know each other, to install mechanisms of dialogue on all levels, especially the grass-root level and we have to address the existing problems and complaints between the communities. Of course, in order to lower the general proneness to violence its underlying causes have to be addressed. The whole of our Indonesian society has to be guided to a healing process, a task I cannot enter into here.

Maybe the first thing we have to learn again is the meaning of tolerance. Tolerance means, at its best, the cheerful acceptance of the other, of others, of other communities *although* they are others. It has nothing to do with a relativistic "all religions are the same anyway" or admonitions not to take one's religion too seriously. Not in spite of our religious convictions, but *because* of them we acknowledge the other

positively. And this is only possible by establishing channels of communication on all levels.

On the grassroot level contacts between local leaders of religious communities – a thing not difficult in Indonesia; you can always "silaturahmi" and will be accepted friendly, - for instance at the level of "RT" and "RW" (smallest local units in cities) and of the villages. Nothing helps that much to overcome prejudices than to know each other.

The we will have to become more sensitive to each other. Minorities must get a feeling of what is regarded as provocation by the (majority) community and abstain of it. Majorities should learn that, instead of throwing their weight about, they should make smaller groups feel welcome, at ease, safe, free to practice their religion and not discriminated at all. I would impress upon my fellow Catholics on the island of Flores that they should go out of their way to make the Muslims living among them feel really at home and fully respected in their rights as human beings and fellow citizens. This needs a learning process.

A big responsibility lies with the formal and informal leaders of religious communities. They have to be convinced that religious tolerance is demanded by their own religions. Generally speaking, in the religious teachings of most religions, one can find exclusive and inclusive elements. Very often, because of psychological reasons, the exclusive ones are more

popular and better known than the inclusive ones. But if one looks at those elements from a deeper theological point of view, it becomes clear that the exclusive elements have to be interpreted in the light of inclusive ones. This is the reason why theologians who have delved deeper into the roots of their religion tend to be more open minded than others who have not studied their religion deeply. Thus, a concerted effort has to be made by all religions to do justice to the inclusive elements of their teachings - not only to advance religious tolerance but in order to be more faithful to their own faith. Here are some point:

- First of all, negative views of or allusions to other religions should not be made. 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 should be done in a respectful and balanced way, through pointing out that the criticism stems from the point of view of the other religion concerned.
- Instead of forbidding the children of one's own religion to have contact with children of other religions, such contacts should be encouraged. Children should be encouraged to congratulate each other at the occasion of their religious feast days and to participate in the joy.

- Children of different religions should participate jointly in common social and cultural activities. After taking into account their respective age and educational levels, they should be guided to discuss together problems of social and political ethics such as narcotics, AIDS/HIV, democracy, human rights, problems of ethnic, tribal and religious minorities and their rights, social justice, solidarity with poorer citizens, and other relevant issues.
- At the high school and university levels, students should receive some rudimentary knowledge about the beliefs and religious practices of the other main religions of the country from competent and sympathetic teachers holding moderate points of view.
- Children and young people should learn not to bully or despise children of minority groups, but to develop instead tolerant and responsible attitudes towards them.
- The young should be explicitly introduced to the fact that modern societies, including their own, are pluralistic, and be taught skills and knowledge to enable them to cope positively with cultural and religious pluralism.
- The young should not be turned into narrow minded fanatics, but be taught to be open-minded and tolerant.
- The young should be guided to be able to experience the general values of humankind as part of the grace of God, and especially of the values of just humanism.

- The young should be assisted to feel confident about their own religious beliefs - not in an exclusivist way by despising others - but in an inclusive manner through seeing what is positive in other religious beliefs.
- Children should be educated to be sensitive and attentive to people that suffer, are suppressed, cannot defend themselves, are being exploited or abused, regardless of whether they are from one's own religious community or not.

3. Key points

There are some key points on which we should arrive at an inter-religious consensus. The first point would be a commitment to the principled renunciation of violence, even in the pursuit of noble goals. We should educate our communities to a principled attitude of non-violence, to always act in a civilized way. The commitment to religious freedom which is already recognized in Indonesia should become central point of any democratic and civilized society. It is very important to establish relations of trust among religious leaders. Then difficult questions can, and must be brought into interreligious dialogue.

Christians would insist on recognition in practice of freedom in practicing their religion. To give an example. For them freedom of worship means at this moment, in the first place, the right to building churches where they are needed.²⁰

Muslims would insist that the question of "Christianization" (Christian proselytism) is taken up. Muslims since long have demanded that religious preaching be regulated by the state. Christians have, up to now, categorically rejected this demand because, in view of the misuse of the decree on building permits for religious buildings, they are afraid that such regulations would be used to rescind religious freedom. I share this fear. But I am also of the opinion that religious freedom has to be understood in relation to the respective social-cultural context. In my opinion religious freedom does not give the right to actively approach members of another creed in order to persuade them to change their religion, still less so if accompanied by promises of rewards.²¹ Thus the big Christian churches have to distance themselves credibly from all kind of trying to talk other out of their religion, let alone induce them to do this by offering material gains. Mission today can only mean giving witness to the power of the gospel by one's life and deeds, by being a positive element in the building of a just, prosperous, civilized society where people respect each other (if then somebody feels called to follow the way of another religion, this has to be respected).²²

But good relations between the religions need caring. From the minorities, sensitivity for the feelings of the majority, a positive attitude to Islam in general, and the renunciation of proselytizing is demanded. From Islam is demanded a clear recognition that the state is not entitled to enforce any religious practices, the acceptance of the plurality of the

Indonesian society and the safeguarding of religious freedom. From all religious groups, a firm commitment to human rights, democracy, social justice, pluralism and religious freedom is demanded.

In a post-traditional social and political context, characterized by a plurality of religious attitudes, a clear commitment to the right of every person to follow his or her religious convictions, even if this means changing one's religion, is demanded. Neither the state, nor religious groups can claim the right to determine whether and how members of society practice religion. This also implies acknowledgment of the right of religious communities to make their convictions known to society. But this will only be socially acceptable if, in practice, a clear distinction is made between *proselytizing* and *giving witness of one's faith*.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it should be realized that acceptance of pluralism and development of an attitude of positive tolerance towards other religions does not come from alone. People have to learn it. School for instance, instead of deepening religious differences, should offer opportunities to instill values of fairness and tolerance in children. We have to involve ourselves in an ongoing learning process where we learn to accept other in their otherness. In Indonesia, there still exists an old tradition of tolerance and an ability to live together in a good,

positive way with members of the community with other religious convictions and practices. We should make this effort.

- ¹ But not *Confucians*. Because of anti-Chinese racist prejudice everything smelling "Chinese" was outlawed under Soeharto and Confucians had been forced to register as Buddhist, making, f.i., Confucian marriages impossible. This was changed under President Abdurrachman Wahid although its after effects still linger along. A grave ongoing violation of a human right is that, as consequence of an extremely one-sided marriage law people belonging to traditional tribal religions cannot legally marry (since 1973). Mixed marriages, too, have to be concluded except according to the rites of one of the five officially recognized religions.
- ² If religious buildings are attacked by mobs, security forces will, as a rule, stand by and do nothing while afterwards the rebuilding of the destroyed facilities may meet with bureaucratic obstacles. But it must be said, that this unwillingness or inability of the security forces happens to obtain also in other cases where mobs are on the rampage.
- ³ Since these for Indonesian Christian traumatic events Christian are a crucial point in Christian Muslim relation in Indonesia, they should not, as usual, be politely glossed over in "inter-religious dialogues"; they should, in the opposite, be faced squarely, but unemotionally and realistically, even if a completely satisfying solution may be some time away. Not counting churches destroyed in regions of civil war, there have been about 500 churches attacked and destroyed during the last 12 years. A list by the *Forum Komunikasi Kristiani* names 938 churches (until June 1 2004) that were closed by violent attacks, many of them destroyed or burned down since 1945: 2 churches during the president ship of Soekarno, 456 under Soeharto, most of them after 1990, the rest under the following three presidents; if one does not count the about 250 churches that were destroyed under the civil wars in Sulawesi and the Molukkas, you still get 688 churches that have been attacked. The reasons for these attacks are usually that they are accused to have been built without the necessary permits (which are extremely difficult to obtain, see below), or, if these permits have been given, that local people experience these churches as intrusions. Really terrifying and traumatic to Christians have been a number of large scale, always unprovoked, possibly well organized attacks on Java and the island of Lombok where all the churches in a certain city were systematically destroyed. The six massive attacks are the following: Surabaya (where 10 Protestant churches were simultaneously attacked, but only damaged, not destroyed), Situbondo (all 25 churches in and around the city

completely destroyed, in two waves: the first in the late forenoon, that a second wave in the afternoon making sure that no building had escaped destruction), Tasikmalaya in 1996, Rengasdengklok in 1997, Jakarta-Ketapang 1998 initiated by a clash between Ambonese employees of a gambling place and locals (followed two weeks later by an attack on, and expulsion of, Muslims-Bugis people in mostly Christian Kupang), Lombok (Mataram, Ampenan etc.) in 2000.

- 4 I personally believe that there exists, in parts of Java, a network spying on Christians. Where ever there is a church building activity, they check whether permits exist or not. If they are not complete, they approach the local population to take action. In case, they are complete, they approach the local population to launch a protest, usually on the pretext that this church will –be used in order to "christianize" the surrounding people. Then, very often, the permits are simply withdrawn.
- 5 Typical for such difficulties is an email I received not long ago, reporting that on September 4 (2004) the leaders of 12 churches received a letter from the bupati of Bandung that they had to close down their churches. By phone I got further information that this happened in a Muslim neighborhood, that it was not about churches, but about places where Christians celebrate their Sunday services. The Christians used buildings that were not churches, precisely because they did not get permission to build churches. It can be safely assumed that in Bandung, one of the biggest industrial cities of Indonesia, live quite a number of Christians of different Churches. They all need churches. The closed places of worship belonged, f.i. to the Catholics, HKBP, Gereja Kristen Pasundan, Gereja Kristen Jawa a.s.o. It is quite unlikely that these churches try to proselytize the surrounding people (a HKBP church, f.i., tends only to Toba Batak from North Sumatra), but their presence is acoustically obvious on Sundays because of singing (and, f.i., Batak people do indeed sing with verve.
- 6 Only in Bandung – were the bombs went off during assembly – arrests of a few minor figures were made. In most other places almost no arrests were made. No effort was made to find the master mind behind. Christians were even accused of blowing the thing up in order to win sympathy. On the other hand, prominent Muslim figures, including some who never had been involved in Christian – Muslim dialogue, took the initiative to form an Indonesian Peace Forum, condemning these attacks forcefully and demanding from the authorities that they make a thorough investigation. I remember that one of the highest positioned persons we visited told us that it might prove difficult to bring the real perpetrators of the bombings to justice since "they might consist of well known personalities" ("mereka bisa orang-orang beken").
- 7 It may be stated here that, in general, one of the most difficult problems inherited by civil wars are the refugees. Things change so much on the ground that the re-

in a kind of limbo, in fact often in camps under wretched conditions (since they are not "refugees", but "internally displaced persons", international aid is slow in arriving) with nobody really interested in them.

- ⁸ The situation in the Molukkas in the 16th and 17th century is described by A. Heuken, *Be my Witness to the Ends of the Earth. The Catholic Church in Indonesia Before the 19th Century*, Jakarta: Cipta Loka Caraka 2002.
- ⁹ 14 years ago bloody clashes even developed within one Protestant Church, the Toba-Batak HKBP, after they split into a government sponsored faction and the others, see Andreas Ufen, *Herrschaftsfiguration und Demokratisierung in Indonesien. Entstehung, Entwicklung und Zerfall des Suharto-Regimes (1965-1999)*, Dissertation Hamburg 1999, 421. This shows clearly that, on the one hand, conflicts among communities easily can become violent, but, on the other, do not have much to do with the teaching for the resp. religions.
- ¹⁰ One can only speculate about the deeper reasons for this climate of communal violence. Under President Suharto people were not allowed to voice their grievances, they often felt as "victims of development", f.i. because they were driven from their land in favor of a government project, with insufficient compensation which in turn often evaporated before reaching their rightful receivers. Complaining would have exposed them to being accused of being communists which was, since 1965, the same as being threatened with death. Thus they had to accept and keep silent. Communal conflicts too were silenced and thus could not be resolved. Thus feelings of being the victim of injustice steadily accumulated. People got disappointed, felt isolated and abused, and their anger grew. After the democratic opening after the fall of President Suharto their anger burst unto the surface. At the same time, all injustices from more than 30 years ago were now remembered. Besides, rapid modernization with its breaking down of traditional social structures makes a plural society unstable. In other words, we have just begun to realize how big a task it is to unite such a number of different social components within the boundaries of a national state, in such a way, that they all feel at home, evolve a positive commitment to each other as members of the same nation, and are reconfirmed in their respective social identities.
- ¹¹ The core regions of the Toba and Karo Bataks, Minahassa, Tanah Toraja, Nusatenggara Timur, Papua; Ambon and Poso once were majority Christian places.
- ¹² Even hard-line, quite exclusivist publications do, in general, not question this principle; what they attack are all kinds of "sins" the Christians are perpetrating, including the claim that Christians were unproportionally represented during the first 20 years of Suharto's New Order. Although the difference is not always very clear, but what they claim is not a state where non-Muslim would be second

class citizens, but "justice for the Muslim majority". It does not lie in the scope of this paper to enter into this argument.

- 13 "Santri" is the name of pupils of an Islamic boarding-school (*pesantren*), but the word is also used in a more general way for people living consciously and culturally as Muslims, in distinction to "abangan-Muslims" whose Islamic practices are incomplete.
- 14 Especially between Masyumi and the two Christian parties who were united by their commitment to democracy and their distrust of the communists; the same holds for the Muslims student organization HMI and the Catholic PMKRI.
- 15 According the Nurcholish Madjid, "Islam" is not only the name of a religion, of "Islam", but means "surrender to God"; therefore, whoever surrenders his or her heart to God is, in fact, a Muslim, even if he belongs to other religions, see Nurcholish Madjid 1992, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 426 ss..
- 16 In fact, there are good reasons to believe that the whole thing was nothing spontaneous, that it was carefully organized; it is even known where the trucks came from – from a place more than 100 km afar – on which the people rode that did the mayhem.
- 17 The expression is misleading; meant are not ideologues or fanatics, but, according to the Indonesian use of the word "Islam" in a political context, those who define their political participation according to Islamic ideas and do pursue them through Islam-based parties.
- 18 That a Hindu from Bali could, in political reality, become president of Indonesia is certainly still decades away; still more is this true for Christians.
- 19 Religiously motivated terror had been obvious since 1999, but was played down and never seriously investigated by the authorities. The first bomb exploded in April 1999 at Istiqal mosque; the people hired to place the bombs were easily caught, but, strange enough, those that gave them the bombs and paid them never came to light – although the media reported that the house, in Western Jakarta, where the transactions were made, was quickly established. The first climax of religiously motivated terrorism were, of course, the Christmas bombings of 2000 which, as I mentioned, were not investigated seriously, in spite of the huge number of casualties (17 dead, more than 100, partly seriously wounded). Only Bali – and President Bush? – changed all this.
- 20 This does not only presuppose legal security, but an ongoing dialogue between the communities. Majority communities usually do not understand the simple fact that minorities have no place to build houses of worship except among the majority community, precisely because they are a minority. They also have to learn

maybe there are only a few member of this community living close to their planned house of worship. Thus the local majority community believes that since there are, f. i., only a handful of Christians living at the place where a church for 400 people is planned, the Christian plan to fill the church by converting the surrounding Muslims – which, of course, is quite nonsensical because this is not the way Christians do their mission. On the other hand, the resp. majority community can rightly expect that churches are not built in a provocative, insensitive way (f. i. a luxurious church in the midst of a poor Muslim neighborhood).

- ²¹ The Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church forbade such practices explicitly, cf. *Ad Gentes* nr. 13, *Dignitatis Humanae* nr. 4 (see next note).
- ²² As an example of how confrontations between Christians and Muslims can arise I give here the tensions surrounding the new law of national education of 2003. It is generally agreed that this law – which is now already in force – is of an inferior quality. But this is beside the point. The whole polemic concentrated on the question of religious instruction. The law stipulates that religious instruction is obligatory for all students, on all levels, from elementary schools to universities, both on public and private schools, according to the religion of the respective student, by teachers of the respective religion. While Muslims saw the law as a long fought for breakthrough, Christian fought it teeth and claws. Christians maintained that the state has no right to impose anything in religion and especially has no right to force their schools to provide religious instructions in other religions. Muslims, on the contrary, pointed out that at the majority of Christians schools all the students, including Muslims, have to follow Christian religious instruction (countered by the Christians with the argument, that the parents of these students did give their written permission which did not convince non-Christians, since writing a letter of permission was the condition that these children were accepted at Christian schools). Such confrontations should not be allowed to happen again. But this is only possible if both sides are willing to adhere to some basic principles which might mean that some practices have to end. In this case, f. i., both sides violated such principles: Christians abuse religious freedom when they pressure non-Christian parents to allow their children to be given Christian religious instruction (thus they should, in my opinion, allow all their students to receive religious instruction according to their wishes, or at least not force them into Christian religious lessons, replacing them, f. i. with ethics), while the law does indeed violate religious freedom because the state has no right to impose religious instruction on anybody. The state can provide the opportunity, but it has no right to force anybody to make use of it.