Dialogue and beyond : Christians and Muslims together on the way

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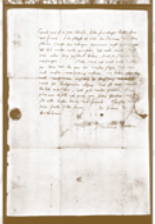

Dialogue and Beyond:

Christians and Muslims Together on the Way

The Lutheran World Federation

Dialogue and Beyond: Christians and Muslims Together on the Way

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Edited by

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Preface

Ishmael Noko

For many years, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been engaged in Christian-Muslim relations worldwide, ranging from humanitarian work in Mauritania to study programs on interfaith dialogue. From 1992 to 2002, the Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) carried out a study program on Islam. An initial period of inner-Lutheran deliberations was followed by a further phase that included Muslim dialogue partners.

The LWF conducted three consultations of Muslim and Christian scholars in areas of conflict: Bethlehem/Middle East (1999); Dar es Salaam/Tanzania (2000); and Yogyakarta/Indonesia (2002). These consultations went far beyond academic dialogue; they led to an enriching, cross-cultural and interfaith sharing of theological reflections, life and faith, spirituality, interfaith prayer and a walking together toward peaceful neighborliness and pro-existence.

Some of the lectures delivered at the Yogyakarta consultation are published in this book. It is our hope that the insights gleaned will encourage churches and Islamic communities in their dialogue and beyond, as they work toward reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and for a just, participatory and sustainable society. It is my strong hope that such dialogue will continue at all levels, and that new ways of working together will emerge.

In so doing the LWF is motivated by the biblical imperatives expressed in such passages as Psalm 3:15 where the Psalmist notes that God fashions the hearts of all human beings and observes all their deeds, Acts 17:26ff. where Paul in his dialogue with the Athenians reminds them that God "made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, … so that they would search for God … and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us," and the quranic dictum that God is closer to us than our jugular vein (Q. 50:16).

With the publication of this book, the LWF working group on Islam concludes its voluntary work over the past ten years. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the members of the group: Roland E. Miller (coordinator), Willem Bijlefeld, Jan A. Henningson, Olaf Schumann, Sigvard von Sicard and David L. Windibiziri. Without their commitment and expertise this program could not have been carried out so successfully. Hance A. O. Mwakabana staffed the program until 2001, when he was succeed by Ingo Wulfhorst.

Introduction

Sigvard von Sicard and Ingo Wulfhorst

Throughout history, people of different religious traditions have encountered one another in a variety of situations. In some instances, representatives of these traditions have been enriched through the sharing in one another's experiences and expressions of faith. In other situations members of these traditions have either withdrawn within the "secure" parameters they have set themselves, or have embarked on discussions from dogmatically determined positions not only as regards their own tradition, but also of the "other." As the title of this volume indicates it has over the last decades become evident that neither of the above options are adequate in the "global village." Christians and Muslims have to move beyond diatribe and fighting to a common commitmen in the service of humanity in obedience and faithfulness to their call.

Both traditions have in their sacred texts the concept of "the way." Christians were first known as the "people of the way" (Acts 9:2 etc. *Cf.* Ex 18:20) and Muslims are constantly reminded of the *sirat mustaqim*[1]—the straight path (Q. 6:161 etc.)—and the *shar'*—the path that leads to the water hole, the clear path, hence the *shari'ah* which guides the believer on the way (Q. 45:18, etc. *Cf.* Ps. 119:33). The way that Christians and Muslims are embarked on is not identical with God's eternal statutes, cut in stone, because the way is alive, is the living way, for God is the Living God and it is His living way that He has revealed. It is not the path as such, but the life-giving water at the end of the path that is the goal. Christians and Muslims need to walk that path together to reach the water that will give life.

In the preface to the first volume presenting the work of the Islam working group of the study program "Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths," initiated by the LWF Department for Theology and Studies' Office for the Church and People of Other Faiths, it was pointed out that a Christian theology pertaining to Muslims must be a relational one.[2] Since that study the group has moved toward implementing that idea in practice by enabling Christians and Muslims to get together to consider ethical, economic, political and social concerns and issues facing their respective communities in local situations, issues however which have a wider relevance.[3] The present volume offers some of these papers in the hope that they will inspire Christians and Muslims as people committed in faith to the service of God and their fellow human beings to tackle common concerns in their local areas.

The material is arranged in three sections. The essays by O. Schumann and R. E. Miller in the introductory section analyze the nature of dialogue and give an overview of the Christian-Muslim study program.

The second section covers papers on issues of common concern to Christians and Muslims, looked at from their respective perspectives. It is a particular honor that it has been possible to include the address of the Sultan and Governor of Yogyakarta, Sri Hamengku Buwono X, whose stance embodies what Christian–Muslims Relations are all about. The "Message" from the Yogyakarta consultation offers a summary of the presentations and was approved by all—Christians and Muslims.

The final section seeks to take the relationship between Christians and Muslims beyond verbal dialogue to the nitty-gritty of *diapraxis* of tackling situations together and includes examples of dialogue experience from Indonesia, Nigeria, Germany and Britain. It is hoped that these will challenge Christians and Muslims in other places to embark on similar undertakings.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Djaka Soetapa and Robert Setio of Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for taking care of the local logistics, as well as to their students who contributed to the daily reflections from their respective faith traditions. Thanks are also due to Klaus Pähler of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Jakarta for the financial contribution to this consultation.

We would like to thank the contributors who gave up their time to prepare their papers and participate in the meetings, readily and honestly sharing their insights and concerns on sensitive issues beyond their own circles.

May the Almighty, to whom belongs all honor and glory and praise, grant that the spirit which breathes through these pages inspire and lead Christians and Muslims together on the way.

Notes

[1] In this publication an attempt has been made to simplify transliteration.

[2] Roland E. Miller and Hance A.O. Mwakabana (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Theological and Practical Issues, LWF Studies 3/1998* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1998).

[3] Consultations were held in Bethlehem, Middle East, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania and Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Some Reflections on the Meaning and Aims of Interfaith Dialogue

Olaf Schumann

There is neither a religion nor a religious community which throughout its history has not had contact with other religions or religious communities. Therefore, while interfaith encounter is nothing new, we must not forget that the character of such encounter is usually very varied depending on how the religions involved see themselves and what their doctrinal attitude is toward other religions. Historical and societal circumstances determine the atmosphere of such encounters and the topics that come to the fore. Some religions have managed more or less successfully to remove adherents of other religions from their territory by relegating those who remained to ghettos or restricted areas, giving them a special social status as accepted minorities, or positioning them among the low-cast people.

Others, such as some of the Eastern religions, allowed people to practice different religious cults on different occasions while carefully safeguarding particular characteristics which may be considered the borderline between the different religions. It is simply not true to say that some religions accept other religions in the core of their self-understanding. Even Hinduism, usually mentioned as the example *par excellence* of religious tolerance and openness, draws a clear line as soon as the basic teachings of the *sanatana dharma*, the eternal rule of *karma* and *samsara*, or of retaliation, are questioned. According to this basic teaching, every act or intention to act will have its consequence (*karma*) also for the *atman* (soul) of the actor. Even a merciful God could not effectively interfere in this eternal rule, or law, because the gods themselves are subject to it. Thus, not God but the *sanatana dharma* is "almighty" if this term were used. A monotheistic understanding of God Almighty would come into conflict with the Hindu concept. Even Gandhi did not question this rule, while Buddhism, teaching some way out of this rule to obtain immediate salvation, was excluded from Hinduism. On the other hand, Christianity is often referred to as a basically "intolerant" and exclusive religion with a pronounced claim to being the only and true way to salvation. This may explain the sometimes rather aggressive attitude toward other religions. While this cannot be

denied, it is questionable whether other religions really react in a less determined way if, for example, with regard to Islam, the *tauhid*, or the confession of the absolute oneness and unity of God, is denied? Or Buddhism with its strict denial of a personal creator and, particularly in Theravada Buddhism, the renunciation of a personal and unconditioned "soul" (*atman*), Hinduism and the s*anatana dharma* have already been mentioned. These are not just marginal questions, but matters related to the "metacentre" of a religion, to use Gerhard Rosenkranz's (1896–1983) term. Every religion contains teachings and convictions which are non-negotiable because they determine its very identity. They can, if necessary, be explained in terminology other than the traditional one of the dogmatic tradition, or interpreted, but there is no bargaining about them.

In other words, such an interpretation may seem necessary, especially where a situation occurs which calls for a different approach, and that therefore accentuates different aspects of a religion's self-understanding and self-presentation. Moreover, a religion's self-perception may need some reconsideration whenever it faces challenges and critique. Therefore, the identity of a religion, like that of a person, is neither static nor perennial. It is dynamic and needs continuous self-assertion and relevant self-expression while remaining recognizable. While Christians who refute the Trinitarian understanding of God will no longer be recognizable as Christians, people who only know and repeat the classical dogmatic formulas without understanding their meaning and therefore are unable to explain them, may also run into trouble. Dialogue requires clarity of expression and the ability to explain what one believes, and why one does so. This does not contradict the insight of every believer that in every faith there are mysteries which cannot be explained in plain language. Nonetheless, an effort to reflect their meaning should be expected. A person of faith might seek to comprehend the Trinitarian understanding of God and why Christianity developed this understanding without abandoning the central concept of monotheism inherited from Judaism. Similarly, a Buddhist who compromises with monotheists on the question of a personal and absolute understanding of God might have difficulties in finding the consent of his or her Buddhist brothers and sisters.

These considerations should be kept in mind before entering into interfaith dialogue, even if the topics discussed during such an encounter are not necessarily religious ones. The participants, however, consider themselves religious people. Religious faith, of course, is something individual, or more precisely, relates the individual to someone (God) or some insight or consciousness (*nirvana*) which for them means a truthful and ultimate concern. Although faith and belief are individual, they do not isolate the believer.

The symbols and expressions used to identify and name the believer are not private ones, but accepted and maintained by a community which thus expresses and identifies the decisive religious characteristics of its own identity and that of its believers. By accepting this they become recognizable as members of their religious community.

This statement needs some clarification. Although basic principles, symbols and expressions are accepted by the members of a community, they need not necessarily be understood in the same way by all its members. Particularly a dynamic faith tends to interpret them in original terms that do not necessarily meet with the consent of all the members of the community. We are not addressing here questions of heresy and schism which may develop out of such divergencies. Nevertheless, with regard to interfaith dialogue it must be maintained that every participant, whether Christian, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist, Hindu, etc., may only speak on his or her own behalf and not in the name of his or her respective community—i.e., s/he speaks as a Christian (and is recognizable as such), but not in the name of the Christian community, or of Christianity.

Interfaith dialogue is not a dialogue between religions, but a dialogue between believers or adherents of different religions: everyone speaks in his or her own name, as a member but not a representative of his or her community. In the event that official representatives take part in dialogues then it must be made clear that such persons have obtained a special commission or hold a position in their community which allows them to speak and act in such a way. Usually a report or account is expected of them. There is good reason to clarify this point because time and again the responsibility and obliqueness of dialogues are questioned. Interfaith dialogue is not a type of synod or council where binding decisions may be made. Still, individuals bear some responsibility vis-à-vis their community. The way they appear, the impression they give, and the attitude with which they communicate with others will in one or the other way influence the impression and attitude of the others toward them and their community including the value of their convictions.

This applies in particular to doctrinal questions. Sometimes it is said that interfaith dialogues tend to or even aim at modifying or harmonizing doctrinal expressions of different religions, rather than combining them to some common interfaith creed. There is, of course, no legitimacy for such an aim.

Nonetheless, interfaith dialogue is more than a casual encounter. The term dialogue itself should be understood in its very basic meaning. *Dialego* means to discuss, to talk about, to investigate. As a transitive verb it requires an object,

in other words, those doing dialogue need an object which becomes the topic of such discussions or investigations. The term dialogue implies that there is more than one person involved. The number of participants depends on the topic and the people concerned with it as was the case in Plato's *Dialogues*, the paradigm for any dialogue.

Any discussion or investigation needs a topic or an objective on which the interest of those participating in dialogue is focused. If such an objective is not recognized, and whenever there is nothing demanding a solution, or a deeper understanding, or common action, then there is no need for dialogue. Thus, dialogue begins where people who are related by living or working together face some common problems which urgently need to be solved, and who are convinced that a solution can only be meaningful as long as it is found together and mutually accepted. In this respect dialogue can be understood as a way of solving conflicts. Thus, in dialogue people of different religious or social backgrounds meet, motivated by the feeling of urgency presented by problems that call for a common resolution.

Such questions may be theological/doctrinal or societal in nature. While we stated earlier that harmonizing different doctrinal expressions and moving toward a quasi all-embracing world religion is not legitimate, this does not mean that dialogue on doctrinal matters is illicit or useless. We need to distinguish between two types of interfaith dialogue. While one addresses mainly doctrinal or theological matters, the other is more oriented toward social, legal, scientific, economic and similar issues, and may therefore be referred to as societal dialogue. It becomes religious in as far as the participants understand themselves as active and convinced members of their respective religious community, and discuss such problems on the basis of a religiously motivated and developed ethic and a sense of responsibility.

The importance of societal dialogue is obvious in light of the fact that today almost all societies are plural. This calls for a common understanding of basic values, norms and orientations which are verified, accepted and implemented by all groups in the society. One of the basic characteristics of a modern and civilized society is that no group may be marginalized or eliminated for cultural, ethnic, religious, social or other reasons. The possibility to participate in every field of social activity invites people to contribute to the common welfare whatever treasures they have developed in their traditions including social-ethical or spiritual values. The sharing of such values undoubtedly strengthens mutual trust and respect among adherents of different religions. Acts of violence, tor-

ture, vandalism or terror which attack or even destroy human dignity and are perpetrated by individuals or governments, and measures and policies which cultivate injustice, exploitation, oppression and discrimination, constitute atrocities which are rejected by the teachings of most living religions. Opposition to and resistance against them should therefore be the natural and uncompromising answer of all religious people, and the strategy of their actions should be a united one, designed also in a societal dialogue.

But what about doctrinal traditions? Dialogue on such matters is primarily an opportunity to state one's faith and beliefs, and to clarify misunderstandings by listening to and answering questions or critiques others may forward. Closely related to the matter of misunderstanding is that of distortion. Motivated by past and present polemical or hostile attitudes, distortions which may sometimes not even be recognized as such can be identified and thus eliminated. Unfortunately, we frequently experience that interfaith controversies tend to become more emotional and acrimonious than other struggles, although this would appear contradictory to most religions' claim to peace and compassion. Being convinced that truth and righteousness are best preserved and represented in one's own religious tradition, it is difficult to accept that other communities have their own understanding to which they are committed. Interfaith dialogue on doctrinal matters and expressions of beliefs may therefore create an understanding for the sincerity and truthfulness of other people and their religious awareness. This does not, of course, imply a necessary acceptance of the contents of their beliefs, but it may well imply a keen and respectful appreciation of the people themselves and what they believe. It is a deep-rooted prejudice to presume that everything that differs from one's own understanding and perception of faith must be negative and contradicts God. In the course of dialogue one may experience a new and different spiritual richness which quite often helps to discover rich treasures in one's own tradition, often neglected or even altogether overlooked. It moreover demands a renewed and comprehensive reflection on one's own principles of faith and the ability to express them in such a way that they become understandable to others, even if they do not accept them as being relevant for themselves.

For those familiar with interfaith dialogues these statements may seem self-evident. Others are very insecure regarding the conduct and aims of dialogue on doctrinal issues, and often a defensive or apologetic attitude is adopted in order to defend oneself and one's beliefs against efforts to undermine them. Experience, however, affirms that an active and apprehensive participation in dialogues does not weaken or undermine faith but, rather, helps to deepen its understanding and

opens it for easier communication. Thus faith becomes relational, not relative: it opens relations with the other, but relations exist only as long as those who are related are distinguishable from each other. A dialogue with the aim of removing the contours of the partners in dialogue will disable itself. Dialogue is possible only between people of different opinions, not with oneself or with the images one creates of others presuming that these self-created images are identical with the people themselves. We need to stress again that in dialogue we learn to see and understand the other one as they see and understand themselves. Without dialogue it is impossible to check whether the image we have of the other corresponds to reality, or merely reflects our own imagination and judgement. People who avoid dialogue, but are still judging and talking about others, only deal with the products of their own imagination. In this respect adherents of the monotheistic religions are to be reminded of one of the Ten Words: Thou shalt not create any image of God to adore it. A believer will also not create any image of another person whom they have to deal with**.** If someone does, then that image will be no more than a duplicate of the one who creates it. Then "dialogue" will be no more than a monologue with one's own image of the other which issues from one's own imagination. On the other hand, a dialogue between different creatures of God will lead them to a better understanding of God who created all of them. Here I do not speak about artists who create a portrait of someone. But, every artist knows quite well that the portrait s/he creates includes traces of her or his own perception of the person portrayed.

This insight leads to another aspect of interfaith dialogue in the fields of doctrine and belief. Throughout our lives we continue learning and understanding, thus developing and completing our identity and our perception of ourselves. This process may be hampered whenever we are lacking the right motivation for further investigation. Therefore, such a mutually stimulating encounter may be described as a walking together on a path rather like the disciples on their way to Emmaus. While realizing our limited ability to understand perfectly, we help each other to deepen our insights by reflecting also on the contributions of the other one. In the course of such a walking, searching or even wrestling together with the same or similar questions of meaning and truth, a deep mutual appreciation or even friendship may develop despite the difference of religion which remains a wound in our human, and therefore constantly incomplete relationships.

Mutual trust needs to have been established in order to stimulate each other through dialogue on religious matters to come to more profound and comprehensive insights. The way to such new and dynamic relationships is a long one,

and those who stand aside just watching or theorizing – and not to mention those who are just criticizing – will not be able to grasp what is really going on. We will therefore reflect on the "long march" toward this new approach to dialogue.

In the past, and in some circles even today, the other one or the other (religious) group was considered to be in the wrong, on the side of evil, and thus "axes of evil" have been drawn by many communities against each other. In the Middle Ages, it was usual for the Pope to declare someone or a group as "evil" which in those days meant either heretic, or schismatic, or heathen. After excommunicating them or declaring them infidels, they could be attacked by any means. Today, a powerful president can announce this verdict, and the consequences will be the same. Whenever people were tired of warfare, some intellectuals demanded the use of "spiritual" weapons against the "enemy," proving the shortcomings and faults of another faith and then inviting its followers to join the true religion. Friendly relations among different people were unthinkable, and the "love" for the sinner (on the other side) lasted only as long as there was some hope that they might convert someday. In the Middle Ages, it was not only mainstream Roman-Catholic theology which understood any encounter with Muslims, Jews and other heretics or unbelievers as an opportunity for intellectual attacks. Knowledge about "the other" should only serve to prove its vanity and idleness. In this point the Reformation was not much better.

There were, however, a few thinkers with open, global minds who initiated different ways of encounter. For example, John of Segovia in Spain (d. probably 1458) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) in Germany, developed plans to conduct what they called *contraferentiae*, to which adherents of different religions were invited to analyze not only their differences, but also their commonalties. Their argument that lay people, particularly merchants with their far-reaching experiences, constituted the most appropriate participants and informants is most interesting. Their presence would safeguard that the discussions would focus on practical and real questions and not on theoretical, doctrinal, or intellectual ones favored by priests and scholars. Only at the last stage would the "religious experts" step in to help clarify real doctrinal issues.

Both of the above mentioned scholars and a few others before them had obviously abandoned the hitherto practiced "interfaith disputations" favored by those Abbasid Caliphs as al-Ma'mun (905–935) who had supported the theological "free thinkers" of the Mu'tazila (a group of theologians arguing by reason and not only scriptural evidence) in the ninth century, or by the Mongol Khans as had been witnessed by the Franciscan monk, Willem van Rubroek, in the middle of

the thirteenth century in Karakorum in which the religious representatives had to prove the truth of their convictions. Usually, the winner was not so much the more truthful, but the more eloquent. Therefore, from a religious perspective, such disputations were of little use.

But, it touches on one point which neither the fifteenth-century scholars nor participants of today's interfaith dialogues may neglect and which has not been mentioned until now. Is it legitimate to meet and investigate some vital problems with people who conceive truth in quite different ways? What are the motivations for conducting dialogue on doctrinal matters?

For John of Segovia and Nicholas of Cusa and those who at the time supported their ideas it was quite clear: after centuries of warfare, the crusades, and the increasing and successful counterattacks by the Ottoman Turks who had already captured Constantinople—a city that the young Nicholas of Cusa had visited when it was still the capital of the Byzantine Empire—peace and civilized relations should be the topic of the day. They were convinced that the basic teachings of Islam were not alien to Christianity. They were deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, and it just needed common efforts to rediscover them and thus revive the original relationship. Moreover, there was the underlying conviction that differences are no reason for enmity.

The search for arguments to legitimize dialogue with people who formerly were condemned for being heathens, unbelievers and therefore doomed to hell, continues with a similar or even stronger urgency. There are still groups and sects in every religious community who renounce any contact with "others" except for the purpose of proselytizing. I avoid the word "missionary," because any mission which does not respect and love others also in their otherness, and therefore considers them only as objects for religious propaganda cannot claim any support from the testimony of the New Testament and it is therefore not legitimized as a Christian "mission." Presenting the Good News of God's new approach to humankind is an offer, not a threat. This needs, of course, more elaboration and is the topic of a theology of religions. For a dialogical encounter with others this question about the legitimacy of dialogue is essential.

It seems obvious that in every religious tradition the believers will find different arguments and reasons to justify interfaith dialogue. Everyone can therefore only speak on their own behalf. For Christians, the way in which Jesus dealt with "others" should be exemplary and the point of orientation. Here the role of the Samaritans in some of the gospels is of primary importance and interest. Jesus never criticized them because of their differing religious principles or convic-

tions. It seems that Jesus did not involve himself in doctrinal disputations. He meets the human being: the Samaritan woman, the Syro-Phoenician mother, the Roman soldier, the Jewish customs officer—and he affirms their human dignity by respecting them as human beings.

By proclaiming the Kingdom of God, Jesus presented himself as the Messiah. Not a political or national Messiah as was expected in his day, but as a Messiah who called on his listeners to live according to the will of God: where God is confessed as God and God's will is done, there God rules and God's love and justice are implemented. In the language of St Paul, the notion of the "Kingdom of God" is translated as the "justice of God." Through Jesus' guidance and the strength (*dynamis*) of the Holy Spirit the weak are empowered by God to become citizens in God's realm, and to act according to God's love and justice. Jesus and Paul make it quite clear that this empowerment is done unconditionally by God. Therefore, the emphasis is not only on the oral confession, but also on the practical implementation of God's will (*cf.* Mt 7:21).

When asking for a Christian legitimization to participate in dialogue with people of other faiths the answer may be as follows: differences in religious convictions are not a reason to refuse encounter or communion with others. Even the wicked ones are not excluded, because Jesus also met with them and in various texts it is stated that God loves all of His creatures, even those who have turned away from Him. When God comes down to meet with them, someone who lives in accordance with, or at least oriented toward, God's will cannot refrain from doing likewise. God's grace is experienced in life, and it manifests itself in the lives of the believers. Through theological dialogue, insights into faith and beliefs are deepened, and through societal dialogue conditions of life are to be improved to let people feel that God is still the Lord in His creation.

This is an attempt to point out what for Christians may be helpful to legitimize their encounter with people of other religious traditions, even if they are not primarily concerned with "mission." If they speak and act as Christians, then they will be recognized and identified as such. The same holds true for the adherents of other religions who, of course, have to look into their own traditions in order to legitimize interfaith dialogue.

This is a decisive step. Those who do not feel a sincere commitment to dialogue and even doubt its religious legitimacy will find it difficult to become truthful and reliable partners in such an encounter. In such a case, they should try to reflect again on the contents of their belief in God and their role in the world which anyway is still in God's possession.

There is no question that attitudes toward interfaith dialogue vary and are even controversial. Nonetheless, saying that religious dialogue is nonsense because there are adherents of certain religions—or religions as a whole—who are unable and unwilling to engage in dialogue reveals a very archaic attitude in which the stranger is always identical with the enemy. Although the Bible and Qur'an state that the first murder in the history of humankind was that of the brother and not of a stranger, and in spite of centuries of enlightenment and progress, the archaic attitude toward the stranger still seems not to have been touched by any progress of human development.

Since the end of Communism, and particularly after the events of September 11th, 2001, a massive propaganda of warfare has been launched against others, in this case against Muslims. Dialogue with Muslims, so it is said and written in books and magazines, has not proved to be useful and should therefore be abolished. In other areas of the globe, conflicts among people of different religious and/or ethnic backgrounds are also taken as proof that interfaith or intercultural dialogues are useless, because they could not prevent the outbreak of violence and hatred. Often the benevolence of good-hearted and naïve people is exploited, while the agents of evil prepare for their next attack on humanity. These are some arguments against interfaith dialogue.

A word should be said with regard to situations of conflict where efforts were made to bring the conflicting parties to peace. In most cases the people who knew one another from dialogues were entrusted to take the first steps toward each other toward reconciliation. If such people could be found, then usually the next steps toward taking concrete measures to stabilize the situation could be undertaken without much delay. They were not able to prevent the outbreak of violence, because on nearly all such occasions defending the interests of those in power had led to warfare and the spreading of enmity. While they were not strong enough to face them, they were quite efficient as agents of peace. In cases where there had not been any previous dialogue experience it was much more difficult to encourage the adversaries to meet and prepare for reconciliation.

Religious people who are confronted with explosions of barbarism and the reactions against them have to reconsider their commitment to dialogue. First of all, it is remarkable that in many of these conflicts the language used is not political, but one that originates in religion or, to be more precise, in apocalyptic currents inherent in many religions including Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. The confrontation which is expected and prepared for, or which for some has already begun, is seen as a final clash of cosmic or global dimensions

between the forces of good and evil. Therefore, the "axis of evil" must be clearly defined, and the conviction to know "how good *we* are" allows no doubt or dissent, which would weaken the unitary or collective front against evil. It is evident from history that such language usually was used before crusades or other wars legitimated by religious visions like *jihads* as practiced by *jihad* warriors. The danger of such apocalyptic war scenarios is their unaccountability. If it is true, thus runs the argument, that the final stage of confrontation has begun, then the use of any means [weapons] to destroy the enemy is legitimate.

Frequently this danger is not realized, or it is suppressed, because most secularized or "enlightened" people today are unaware of the religious character of their thought patterns. Many people today do not have the background which enables them to understand what is afoot. They simply trust the politicians, who by implication are themselves ignorant when it comes to the undercurrents of religious fervor. It is evident from many remarks and actions that quite a number of them are inclined to fundamentalist and apocalyptic convictions, in the East as in the West, in the South as in the North. It is not by chance that their language reflects and expresses such fancies which are nourished by their worldview. Therefore it cannot be expected that interventions and their consequences are calculated rationally. In reality some of the present conflicts seem to be conflicts of different worldviews rooted in different fundamentalisms and their apocalyptic understanding of our age.

Interfaith dialogue has not come to its end. On the contrary, it will become even more important and urgent in the future, and will have to include more explicitly the role religious convictions and symbols play in politics and warfare in order to dismantle their origin and to analyze their character. To take up this topic will demand courage and knowledge about the developments and dynamics of such religious currents. When presenting his *Projekt Weltethos* [project of a universal ethics] Hans Küng had pointed to the political dimension of dialogue between the adherents of different religions since religions have often been the reason for conflicts and war. Religious people should not only be concerned with religions, but with religious concepts about imagined cosmic developments which motivate unscrupulous or unaccountable politicians. Here it will become apparent to what extent participants in such a dialogue are ready to trust one another. They need to view and investigate their own past and to present their own religious concepts with the same critical and genuine love for the truth and justice which is applied while scrutinizing the traditions of others. If they are ready for that, then they should use their findings and warn their contemporaries about

the concealed dangers of such situations as the present one in which apocalyptic fighters inspired by *quasi* religious sentiments endanger God's precious creation and the creatures living in it, including ourselves.

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Christian–Muslim Relations: A Study Program of the Lutheran World Federation, 1992–2002[1]

Roland E. Miller

In presenting the origin of any project we may allude to a conceptual genesis. Olaf Schumann has provided that in his essay on interfaith dialogue. The Islam group project is an example of such dialogue–both with ideas and with people. There is also an historical genesis, and in the following we will describe the unfolding of the project that grew naturally from the study program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). We may also refer to a factual genesis, and in this case it is so impressive that it would be a matter of wonder if there were not something akin to the Islam project sponsored by the LWF. But what do we mean by "factual genesis"?

There is first of all the fact of Islam, an overwhelming global reality. It is preferable to personalize the statement–there is first of all the fact of the Muslim world. Islam is the system that is built on *islam*, the "commitment" to God. As a system it involves history, law and theology, culture and civilization. Muslim is the adjective, and it refers to the people who surrender. It refers to fellow human beings with whom we are in relation. There are nominally 1.2 billion such "surrenderers," within at least forty-four Muslim majority nations, and with significant minority populations in many others. The fact of Islam is that one-fifth of the human race is involved!

There is secondly the fact of the LWF. Representing the largest body of Protestant Christians and itself a formidable statistical force with the same global span as Islam, it is singularly appropriate for it to be a leader in the dialogical engagement with Muslims.

Luther may never have met a Muslim personally, but his interest was strong, and seemed stronger amidst an undiscerning and unmindful church. He wanted to know more about "Turks" and expressed his disappointment with those who did not:

> To be sure, it has—and often—disquieted me, and still does, that neither our great lords nor our scholars have been at any pains to give us any certain knowledge about the life of the Turks in two classes, spiritual and temporal. [2]

When in 1543 he firmly encouraged the first European printed edition of the Qur 'an and with Melanchthon wrote the preface to Bibliander's Swiss publication, he made a stunning statement of enduring significance. His was not a dialogical age, but when he said,

> Those who only censure and condemn the base and absurd characteristics of the enemy, but remain silent about matters that are honest and worthy of praise, do more harm than good to their cause ….[3]

his words have a contemporary ring.

The "contemporary ring" is the final element in the "factual genesis" of the Islam group project. After a period of improvement, current relations between Christians and Muslims are becoming increasingly uneasy. In various areas there have been conflicts at the grassroots level. At the academic level, a whole enterprise is being built up around the "clash of civilizations"[4] theory, and very broad and misleading statements are being made. At the geopolitical level "wars and rumors of wars" are in the air, aggravated by a serious lack of effort to build personal relations. If the contemporary ring is one of dissonance, it is the task of Christians to step forward in the harmony of deep friendship, not only expressed in dialogue, but also in active reconciliation and peacemaking. The mood of the day is a pressure toward the kind of effort represented by the Islam group project.

Our description of the Islam group project[5] begins with its historical evolution, and then journeys through the three phases of its evolvement in the past decade. The final phase includes an estimate of the accrued insights.

The beginnings of the Islam group project

The project grew out of the LWF study entitled "Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths." In the first phase of that study four meetings set the tone: "Religious Pluralism and Lutheran Theology" (Geneva, 1986); "God-Word Relationship in Religion" (Pullach, 1988); and "Islam in Asia" (Bangkok, 1991). Several publications emerged from these efforts.

The second period of the "Theological Perspectives" study began with the decision to address religion-specific issues through five groups, each dealing with a particular religious tradition: African Religion, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam. In mid-1992, a core group of five section leaders was established.

The core group along with Drs Paul Rajashekar and Hance A. O. Mwakabana met in Chicago, USA, October 30–November 1, 1992, and provisionally appointed the members of the five sections. The historical genesis of the Islam group dates from that meeting. Four of the members who were initially proposed—Jan Henningsson, Roland E. Miller, Olaf Schumann and Sigvard von Sicard—and the fifth who was appointed shortly thereafter, David L. Windibiziri, remained with the project for its effective life, thereby providing valuable continuity. Later, two additional scholars were added: Willem Bijlefeld and Charles Amjad-Ali. Bijlefeld was present for two meetings and made important contributions; various circumstances limited Amjad-Ali's participation to publishing articles.

The Chicago core group meeting laid down the general parameters of the proposed study including definitional questions; a concern for the religious mood; theological aspects and the Christian response; the relation of the Lutheran heritage; and the need for grassroots dialogue. This brought the first phase to its conclusion.

Phase II

Phase two included individual preparation and working sessions in Sigtuna (1993) and St Paul (1995).

The Sigtuna meeting, 1993

To define and begin the task the members of the Islam group conducted their first working session at Sigtuna, Sweden, 1993. The group reviewed Islamic developments in regional areas and dominant issues. The overriding Muslim emphasis on orthopraxis was noted, and this guided later considerations. Points that needed to be considered in relation to a Lutheran theology of religions were identified. Study papers were selected and assigned, and logistical aspects were addressed.

The St Paul meeting, 1995

The Islam group met in St Paul, USA, 1995, to read and critique the papers assigned at Sigtuna, and to identify any emerging consensus. The papers were later published in *Christian-Muslim Dialogue, Theological and Practical Issues*.[6] They covered a broad range of significant issues. Two basic presentations focused on

issues directly related to the theology of religions, a fundamental project concern. One, by Roland Miller, sought to provide a Lutheran frame of reference, while the other, by Willem Bijlefeld, directed the group's attention to the importance of dialogical theology.

In the course of the discussions a strong feeling was expressed that the group should avoid simplistic theological comparisons of Christianity and Islam. It was felt that a great deal of work had already been done along that line. The surprising abundance of material on dialogue was also noted: in the six-year period, 1990-1995, at least 500 titles of works on Christian-Muslim relations, were published in English and German. What had not been adequately dealt with was a theology of living together based on reconciliation. Theology of religion, it was therefore assumed, would ideally develop *in via*, on the way, and the needed dialogue would ideally take place in the context of mutual action and service. It also seemed logical to think that agendas would have to be set at local levels, with particular attention paid to common and concrete Christian-Muslim issues. Any disturbing dichotomy between theological systematization and practical engagement was to be avoided. This implied in turn that a full theology of religion could only be developed by the whole church in the course and as the outcome of living experience.

The meeting also drew up its position paper for a forthcoming consultation that would involve all five of the above mentioned study groups.

St Paul core group meeting, 1995

This was a meeting of the steering committee of the complete "Theological Perspectives" study project. It is noted here because it received the progress report of the Islam group, as well as those of other groups, and established the program for the 1996 consultation on "Theological Perspectives."

Phase III

The Bangkok consultation, 1996

All five study groups were fully represented at the consultation, and each one submitted a position paper that received careful attention. The Islam group's position paper, *Summary Report from the Working Group on Islam*, was revised

at the consultation to take into account the discussion. In the introduction it was recognized that the questions Islam puts forward threw theology of religions back on its foundations, producing fresh theological reflection on the basic commitments of the faith. At the same time, it was affirmed that in seeking the appropriate response to Islamic views, a living theology of religions would become and must be a relational one. The body of the *Summary Report* included:

- A description of the context in which the churches have to redefine their relations with Muslims
- A response to the concerns of the churches living within multireligious societies, and some theological dimensions of our engagement with Muslims
- A highlight on the issues that need further exploration, and
- Proposed recommendations to the member churches for developing a practical theology of living together.[7]

Specific recommendations included: the increased dissemination of material to local churches; suggestions for further study and dialogue; the development of Islamic study as a concern in church structures and theological institutions; and the encouragement of cooperative activities for the common good. Agenda topics for future consultations were listed under three categories: one with respect to Muslim concerns; another in the light of Christian theology; and the third from the perspective of immediate and common relevance.

Publication of the Islam group's papers, 1998

It has been noted above that the compilation of papers was entitled *Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Theological and Practical Issues*.[8] The urgent nature of Christian-Muslim relations was a pressing factor in the decision to make them available to a wider readership as quickly as possible. As Hance A. O. Mwakabana noted in the preface, the LWF member churches are involved "in what is surely one of the most important engagements in our religious history."[9]

This concluded the *inter nos* period of the Islam group's study. The question was whether the project could move forward to the stage of actual dialogue with Muslims. We therefore describe the next period as the "third stage continued."

Three Christian-Muslim consultations: phase III continued

In his foreword to the publication of the Bangkok proceedings, Viggo Mortensen observed that "the opportunities for mission and dialogue have never been as manifold as now." [10] In the Islam group itself Willem Bijlefeld had noted that it is not enough to clarify the theological reasons why Christians should enter into interreligious dialogue. The development of a dialogical theology demands actual involvement in dialogue. Following the logic that was implicit in the project from the beginning the LWF therefore acted to move it into a post-phase III period of interfaith dialogue. Three Christian-Muslim consultations were conducted in the period 1998-2002 under the auspices of the LWF: Bethlehem, 1999; Dar es Salaam, 2000; and Yogyakarta, 2002.

Dialogue assumptions and planning: Brunel meeting, 1998

Planning meetings for forthcoming consultations were conducted at Brunel University, Surrey, England. The Islam group commented on the fundamental purposes in dialogue, all of which contribute to the theology and mission of the church. It identified the current urgency of Christian-Muslim dialogue, defined its purposes, selected topics and worked out planning details.

The Islam group listed three primary goals in dialogue:

- To understand and to create understanding
- The theological basis: the understanding of one's neighbor is one of the great acts of Christian love in today's world
- The "spin-offs": we learn to do theology "on the way" and we gain learning and opportunity for witness to the gospel
- To reconcile and to promote peaceful relations
- The theological basis: Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation and has said, "Blessed are the peace-makers"
- The "spin-offs": we are able to make some contributions to positive, neighborly living and we help to provide a basis for problem solving

- To learn from others

- The theological basis: as Luther said, God's "strong light" produces knowledge of God's gracious generosity among all humans

- The "spin-offs": we grow in mutual regard and we further develop and deepen our understanding of theology of religions

In identifying the particular significance of Christian-Muslim dialogue and its urgency at the present time the Islam group noted the following factors:

- Islam is theologically related to Christianity

- As Lutherans we can both give and learn through the experience

- There is a history of problematic relationships between Christian and Muslims that needs to be overcome

- There are interfaith misunderstandings and ignorance that need to be eliminated

- Christians and Muslims comprise 53 percent of the world's population, and their relationship is crucial for the welfare of global society

- Dialogue assists in solving practical problems, including conflict situations

- Dialogue provides an essential resource for sharing insights.

Bearing in mind the criteria of felt need and local relevance, it was decided to concentrate on three categories—human growth and responsibility, cooperation for the common good and relevant mutualities—in determining the possible agendas for the forthcoming consultations. The agendas would be finalized only after consultation with the local organizers. An example of how this later evolved is the agenda of the third dialogue reported on in this volume.

Dialogue insights, 1998–2002

Rather than providing details of the three consultations that varied greatly in the light of local circumstances, this report will limit itself to some general observations in regard to the insights gained.[11] The following may be noted:

- Despite the common elements each dialogue has its own rich texture. Thus a phenomenology of dialogue is still in the making.

- The three consultations gave a sense of the wide door of opportunity available for Lutherans and member churches of the LWF. Taking advantage of the opportunity can be a matter of significance, theologically and practically.

- Lutherans bring to the dialogical engagement a well-rounded theological exploration into issues raised by the interfaith encounter. Muslims are less interested in dialogue as a theological process, but are more interested in it as an approach to cooperative action and problem solving. As one Muslim stated in Dar es Salaam, "We are on the road together, and this road is life and death." It is the blending of faith and order/life and work within the Christian-Muslim relationship that holds special promise for theological development in general, and theology of religions in particular.

- There is some continuing suspicion about Christian intentions in dialogue. A more determined reciprocity/cosponsorship may help to reduce the level of suspicion. At the same time, it must be remembered that the structure of the Muslim community differs significantly from Christian ones, making it difficult to identify organizational equivalences.

- Dialogue will inevitably differ depending on whether the participants are dominantly educated élites, or traditionalist religious leaders, or grassroots believers. For pragmatic reasons international dialogue encounters tend to draw participants from the first group. In the future, dialogue will need to be balanced in approach, and the grassroots level can no longer be neglected. This must be affirmed, at the same time as we recognize that some notable efforts, many unreported, are already being made at local levels.

- The virtually global crisis created by terrorist activities means that Christian-Muslim dialogue has attained a new level of significance, combining theological and practical issues with existential force. The decade-long effort now concluding challenges the LWF to move into the future with the prospect of making a distinctive and critically important contribution to church and world.

- Dialogue encounters are logistically simplified, their conduct enhanced and their potential outcomes amplified where there are amicable relations to build on.

Wrap-up meeting of the Islam group, Yogyakarta, 2002

The Islam group met in a concluding session to evaluate the Yogyakarta dialogue and to finalize its public releases. It was agreed to recommend the publication of the papers that were presented in order to stimulate and to enlarge the concern for Christian-Muslim dialogue, and to share some to the insights gained from the dialogical experience.

In the light of the growing tension between Christians and Muslims around the world, as well as the signs of positive relations where churches have taken up the challenge the group emphasized the urgent need for further LWF-sponsored series of dialogue consultations set within relevant local situations. Such a series would have a direct bearing on the life and mission of the LWF member churches and society at large. The groups was pleased to know that the LWF has in principle endorsed such a program.

Conclusion

We will conclude this report with two personal remarks and two final observations. The personal remarks are these:

- The Islam group could not have carried on its work without the leadership and logistical support of J. Paul Rajashekar (up to 1992), Hance A. O. Mwakabana (1992–2000), and Ingo Wulfhorst (from 2001), of the Office for the Church and People of Other Faiths.

- As a member of the core group and as a frequent chair of the Islam group the writer has greatly appreciated the contributions of the other four regu-

lar members of the Islam group. They offered their services voluntarily in the conviction that the project would undergird positive Christian-Muslim relations in the years to come.

- It is also in place to register two final observations of a general nature:

- At the Bangkok consultation in 1996 the Islam group made thirteen recommendations to LWF member churches.

- Arguably the most critical among them may have been the following one: "That the churches be challenged to prepare a program of dialogue through selected congregations on appropriate topics."[12] Examples of where this challenge is taken up are: the international conferences for Christian-Muslim mutual relations organized by the Lutheran Church of Nigeria from 1993 onwards; the Islamisk-Kristent Studie Center in Denmark established in 1996; the Tume ya Waislamu na Wakristo ya Amani, Maendeleo na Usuluhishi (the Muslim-Christian Commission for Peace, Development and Conflict Resolution) which grew out of a consultation between Baraza Kuu ya Waislamu Tanzania and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania in 1999. The Lutheran contribution to the Christian-Muslim dialogue will attain its maturity once the churches have respond to this challenge worldwide.

The Islam group concludes with the hope that the LWF will be enabled to carry forward its concern for a practical theology of religions in the current global context, in whatever new and appropriate forms are needed to bridge the gaps that this decade of experience has revealed, doing so both in the service of humanity and to the glory of God.

Notes

[1] This was one of five study programs on other faiths initiated and carried out by the Office for the Church and People of Other Faiths, Department for Theology and Studies of The Lutheran World Federation.

[2] C. Umhau Wolf, "Luther and Mohammedanism," *Muslim World*, vol. XXXI, no. 2 (April 1941), pp. 161f., quoting *On War Against the Turk*.

[3] Sara Henrich and James L. Boyce (trs. and eds.), "Martin Luther – Translations of Two Prefaces on Islam," *Word & World*, Special Edition on Islam, vol. XVI, no.2 (Spring 1996); Preface to *Tract*, p.258. www.luthersem.edu/word&world/Archives/16-2_Islam/16-2_Boyce-Henrich.pdf.

[4] See Daniel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

[5] Various names were assigned to the project from time to time, but "Islam Group Project" came to be the accepted one. The materials for this report are drawn from official LWF reports and from the writer's files.

[6] Roland E. Miller and Hance A. O. Mwakabana (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Theological and Practical Issues*, *LWF Studies 3/1998* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1998).

[7] Hance A. O. Mwakabana (ed.), *Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths*, *LWF Documentation 41/1997* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation), pp. 161-180.

[8] *Op. cit.* (note 6).

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[11] Information about individual dialogue encounters may be obtained from the LWF.

[12] *Op. cit.* (note 6), p. 388.

Greeting of the Governor of the Special District of Yogyakarta to the Dialogue Meeting between Christians and Muslims

Sri Hamengku Buwono X

Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh. Peace be with us all. Dear participants in this dialogue, Christian and Muslim, who are blessed by God, let us together—in accordance with our belief—praise and give thanks to God Almighty, due to whose kindness we may engage in this Christian–Muslim interfaith dialogue in an atmosphere of togetherness, of equality and in peace.

In his book, "*The Intra-Religious Dialogue*,"[1] Raimundo Panikkar challenges us to be more courageous and to view our experiences more critically. Opening our minds enables us to engage in interreligious relations, without renouncing the faith we adhere to. Entering into a deep, interreligious dialogue requires a sound, strong grounding in one's own faith. It is in the context of dialogue and meeting that bridges can be built between the adherents of different religions, leading toward mutual understanding, reconciliation and peacemaking.

The facts clearly show that social turmoil in this country is also rooted in religion. Therefore, efforts need to be made through interreligious dialogue to reduce, or, if possible, to eliminate the religious factor as a source of conflict.

In the words of Zuly Qodir, researcher at Interfidei (Institute for Interfaith Dialogue), Yogyakarta, religion is a double-edged sword. While it offers solace and calls humankind to live in peace and harmony and to honor universal values such as justice and truth, religion sometimes incites to violence.

This reality makes it difficult for activists engaged in reconciliation to proceed. The violence stirred up by religious sentiments gives rise to the impression that religion actually supports violent behavior. As a consequence, religious people are narrow-minded and therefore compelled to act the way they do. Such people

consider religion to be a bastion, and in the name of religion can behave in an uncultured or cruel manner against those outside.

We have to acknowledge that we live in a situation of religious pluralism. Whether we like it or not, the pluralistic reality determines the place and discourse of our religious living. The pluralistic reality is clearly expressed in the Qur'an: "We created you from one man and one woman, and we made you various nations and tribes, in order to let you know each other" (Q. 49:13). The same reality is underlined in the saying of the Qur'an: "To you your religion, to me my religion" (Q. 109:6).

According to the hermeneutical understanding of Aloys Budi Purnomo, Roman Catholic pastor and rector of the Higher Seminary of St Peter in Pematang Siantar, Indonesia, the revelation of this holy verse from the Qur'an not only points to the pluralistic reality, but presents a perspective for discovering the elements of pluralism.

In its basic teaching, Islam, like other religions, is a non-violent religion. Every time Muslims meet they greet one another with *Assalamu'alaikum*, which is answered with *Wa'alaikum Assalam*. When it is fully pronounced, a prayer is added: *Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*, which means: "and the compassion of God and His blessing." The words "peace, blessing and compassion of God" are in fact the three essentials of Islamic teaching.

The revealed religions reject violence as a means of solving differences, and do not consider race, tribe, religion or nation as the greatest object of loyalty or veneration. Total loyalty and veneration are due only to God. Generally, religious teaching always includes substantial values of universal character. But it is also well understandable if between the religions there are differences of creed.

Therefore, interreligious dialogue needs to take into account the importance of religion and the duty of every individual to obey its rituals. Moreover, it should lead to mutual understanding and religious tolerance within the framework of religious coexistence. Obtaining a profounder understanding and practice of religious convictions will help to broaden the horizon and deepen insights, lead to discerning differences, and put the religious communities firmly within the context of Indonesia's social pluralism and plurality of religions.

It is in this context that we welcome this interreligious dialogue meeting amid the religious turmoil in Indonesia. Choosing a topic for dialogue demands first of all a profound understanding of the meaning of religion and theological reflection. In the light of today's societal diversity, dialogue, in its first stages, requires a dialogue between adherents of the same religion since there are internal differences regarding the interpretation of religion.

In its second phase, dialogue should only be attended by a limited group of people, and undertaken with the utmost sensitivity and care. An interaction between the two phases would lead to the third phase, the dialogue between religions and society, which is potentially complicated.

This stage requires a great degree of wisdom, and the awareness that dialogue must be conducted in two directions and in a mood of openness. Mutual trust and respect as well as careful preparation are vital prerequisites. Therefore, the timing of dialogue is crucial since it involves people with different levels of awareness.

We must therefore wait patiently for the right momentum to embark on this third stage of dialogue. It requires an open mind, mutual trust and tolerance and depends on the religious communities themselves.

Different religious traditions are as manifold as colors whose number is nearly unlimited, and which become visible when white light falls on the prism of human experience: this white light disperses in traditions, teachings and religions and the number of divisions is innumerable. Red is of course not yellow, the same holds true for Hinduism which is not Buddhism. Nevertheless, people often do not know precisely where to draw the borderlines, except if there has been a previous agreement to determine where red comes to its end and yellow starts. It is similar regarding the coming of Islam and Christianity where, besides the color green or some other color, there are still nuances of red or yellow mentioned earlier.

It is with this vision and hope that the government of the Province of the Special District of Yogyakarta welcomes and expresses its great appreciation to all, especially the Lutheran World Federation, who made it possible for this Christian-Muslim dialogue meeting to take place. May the Lord Almighty bestow His blessings and compassion to let this interfaith dialogue result in agreements which may be implemented among the adherents as together they seek to develop a religious life full of peace. *Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*

Notes

[1]Raimundo Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (New York, NY: Paulist, 1978).

Human Growth and Responsibility

Komaruddin Hidayat

Cultures are always plural, with diverse languages, traditions and religions. It is uncertain how many languages, traditions and religions have existed during the course of human history—all have shaped the attitudes of individuals, as members of society and members of a nation. From this perspective humankind is indeed one: living on one and the same earth. Yet, in cultural terms, we have become diverse as is reflected in the diverse languages and religions. Human beings are constrained in the range of their possible experiences by the their social and cultural environments.

Humanity is the first and foremost identity. Before one is a Muslim or a Christian, one is a human being and wishes to be recognized as such through one's own path or faith. Naturally, without exception, we all intend to be human. All human beings are potentially ready to fight for their dignity, and against any form of inhumanity.

We need to develop a greater sense of unity, a greater awareness of humankind living on one planet (or in the so-called global village) since the destiny of our planet is uncertain and fragile, partly due to natural causes, social and ecological damage, and partly because of the threat of the clash of planets. It is said, that astronauts have a greater awareness of this after returning to earth from their adventures in outer space. Our earth is like a green and marvelous marble which flies and swings in the sky, but is completely fragile for it can suddenly be hit by a stray planet. It is therefore vital that we develop a sense of goodwill among the citizens of the earth.

Religious pluralism and moral responsibility

Religious pluralism and tolerance are relatively new issues. Modern means of mass transport, more sophisticated communication and information technologies, as well as rapid population growth have meant that the encounter between individuals and communities of different religious, cultural and professional back-

grounds has become inevitable. This encounter has undoubtedly changed social relationships. In terms of religious attitudes, there exist at least three categories: the exclusivist, the inclusivist and the pluralist or "parallelist." The first two are common to all religious adherents. Those who claim that their religion is the true one must, to a certain extent, be exclusive; they believe that their faith is the most valid and the closest to salvation. Yet, increased contact with others will lead to a more inclusive outlook and the recognition that some teachings of one's own religion can be found in other religions, such as, for example, the teachings on moral and human values which all religions share. Thus, at the human level, the greater the interaction the more inclusive one becomes. When conflicts between adherents of different religions occur, the reasons would then not be religious but political, economic, or social. It is vital that these be addressed and solved. According to the third attitude, the pluralist one, each religion basically derives from the same source of truth, while using different symbols, languages and cultures, due to sociological, anthropological and historical factors. Therefore, religious differences do not lie in the substance but in the symbols. Therefore, a hermeneutical approach is necessary in order to correct the growing misunderstandings between people of different religious affiliations.

Religions continue to exist and to thrive in spite of being questioned by philosophers and mocked by many. In the wake of globalization and modernization the world religions have become more developed than ever before. Nonetheless, the dialogue and cooperation between religions needs to be further developed. Religion can no longer be regarded as a private matter, because in reality the roles and symbols of religions have entered the public arena. Even in the secularized Western world, the role of religion is no longer confined to the private sphere; instead, religions have gone public. And, especially in the Muslim world, to say that religion is a private matter would be somewhat naïve; religion has grown and developed in close relationship with individuals, societies and even states.

If social growth and religions were always connected, then people would have to be aware of political ethics and global ethics, so that the diversity of religious doctrines and symbols would not belittle or destroy the dignity of our humanity. Religions become sources of enlightenment or liberation, sustaining the growth of humans, who are free, civil and religious beings. Religions play a very significant role in supporting, through spiritual nourishment, the growth and development of human qualities. Religions should not shackle human beings. Nonetheless, while every religion claims to create peace and to protect the poor, once it becomes institutionalized, a paradigm shift takes place. Thus it moves from being a liberating

force to becoming part of the establishment, and subsequently, religions tend to oppress rather than to liberate and enlighten. This has given rise to mottoes such as "Spirituality-Yes, Religion-No," and "Yes to God, No to Religion," implying that the institutionalized, organized and rigid religions have lost their spirituality. What remains is simply religion as a group identity and communalism. Once religion has become established in society, some may take part in religious activities for reasons such as power, economic gain or social enhancement.

Human beings as moral beings and homo religiosus

It goes without saying that there cannot be human beings without morality, because the essence of humanity is basically morality. As morality distinguishes human beings from animals, it should be emphasized that humans are moral beings and that the core of all religions is morality. Thus, saying that when establishing morality religion does not need to be considered is both unrealistic and a-historical. Besides, religions have been the main providers of ethics. For religious peoples, moral values such as liberty, equality, humanity and responsibility cannot be properly applied to society unless they are based on religious teachings. Thus, morality without religion is unacceptable to most human beings. Since mere morality can be non-religious, or can derive from any tradition, for religious people, religion is as necessary as morality itself. Morality is necessary, but it is not sufficient. This is why many have suggested that *homo sapiens* be termed *homo religiosus*.[1] In other words, all those who believe in a religion or religions are, at the same time, moral beings.

The problem is which direction human beings should take regardless of their adherence to a religion. Many would suggest that all human beings must go back to their human and divine nature (*fitrah*). This is partly so because religions have two main characteristics: first, to be religious is a primordial and emotional need; second, religions fulfill needs which cannot be met by others. The Qur'an, for example, says, "So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the faith (*hanif*): Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made [hu]mankind: No change in the work by Allah…"(Q. 30:30). *Hanif* is inclined to right opinion, firm in faith, sound and well-balanced, true.[2] Thus, *hanif* can be regarded as human nature. Prophets and religious leaders have to remind human beings of their covenant with God.

As for human nature, I would suggest that human beings are endowed with the most suitable synchronism of faculties to face the forces of obstruction with which

the universe confronts them. The human being is a creative energy, an ascending spirit who, in his or her onward flight rises from one state of being to another. A human being's life and the onward march of his or her spirit depend on connecting with reality. This connection is established through knowledge—the sense and perception enhanced by understanding.

Religious people would claim that one major effect of the central experience of religion, and the faith arising from it, is to make people less self-centered; to free the individual from the tyranny of self; and, to make him or her more self-less, more "Other- oriented" or God-centered. The religious ideal is the individual who is free from the need for praise and approval from others (and can therefore think and judge matters independently), who deems possessions and power to be ephemeral and valueless, and who is more concerned with the common good than with self-advancement. Only few will aspire to this ideal. Those wanting to denigrate religion find it easy to point to societies in which religion has been the cause of hatred, conflict and destruction. A religious person would argue that a truly religious society is the foundation of a civilization in which there is religious tolerance, where new ideas can emerge and flourish, and where there is an efflorescence of the arts and sciences. Examples of such societies include the Abbasid Empire, centered on Baghdad (132/750–749/1258), the Fatimids in Egypt and Muslim Spain (297/909–567/1171), for Islam; the Byzantine Empire (312–1453 CE) in the early Christian centuries; the Buddhist Empire built by Asoka in India (300–200 BCE) and the Hindu Gupta Empire in India (320–480 CE).

Toward a global ethic: the contribution of religions to a humane society

I believe that religions should provide humanity with a worldview that unifies world society and provides a moral code according to which human beings can orient their lives. As human beings tend to be both local and global in their orientation, seeking a common ethic is vital. If one is more concerned with one's own society and neglects other societies one is not helping humanity. Communalism could only emerge when individuals or groups looked at themselves, rather than at all human beings. In-group solidarity will in turn lead to out-group enmity. Instead, one should have both: group solidarity and human solidarity.

While each religion has its own particular authority for implementing certain ethical standards, the practical results are to a large extent similar. Many basic

ethical principles are common to all religions as for example in Christianity, "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Lk 6:31); "None among you truly believes until he likes for his brother that which he loves for himself" (*Shahih Muslim*, book 1, chapter 18) in Islam.

According to Islamic cosmology, human beings are at the pinnacle of creation and from there act as the deputies of God (*khalifat Allah*) to fight domination, exploitation, inhumanity and injustice. Thus Islam opposes any kind of domination and exploitation. To any careful reader of the Qur'an it will become apparent that the concept of justice is central to its teachings. It enjoins its followers to do justice and benevolence. "Verily, Allah enjoins justice and benevolence" (Q. 16:90). It goes even further admonishing us that animosity with other nations or peoples should not detract the believers from doing justice. "O you who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness with justice, and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise that with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness" (Q. 5:8). Human beings posses an exceptional quality within the created world. The Qur'an affirms that God "formed human beings harmoniously" and breathed into them of his spirit (Q. 15:29) and that the angels bowed down before Adam. There is also a prophetic *hadith* (narration) that says, "God created Adam in His image."

According to the Christian tradition, "women and men were created in the image of God, able to know and love their Creator, and set by Him over all earthly creatures that they might rule them and use them while glorifying God."[3] Subsequently, Jesus Christ revealed to men and women the extraordinary dignity that they have in being children adopted by the Father in the name and image of the one who is for all time the perfect son.[4]

Because all human beings share in this dignity, either in reality or in hope, they have the right to be respected, served and loved. Christians and Muslims are obliged to render service to all people. Human dignity may be best promoted by respecting the dignity of life, the dignity of spirit, the dignity of the conscience and the dignity of freedom. Within our societies and national organizations, we can manifest our will to cooperate in humanitarian service, regardless of our religious or ideological affiliations.

Whereas human responsibility can take many forms, we are obliged to act together. Thus, we can all subscribe to the declaration made by the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions meeting in Chicago which stated, that men and women of various religions are responsible for a better global order. Furthermore, it underlined the involvement for the sake of human rights, freedom, justice, peace and

the preservation of the earth, and admonished the different religions and cultures to have a common involvement in opposing all forms of inhumanity and to work for a more humane society.[5]

The declaration affirmed a very special responsibility for the welfare of all human beings. A better global order cannot be created or, indeed, enforced with laws, prescriptions and conventions alone. The realization of justice in our societies depends on the insight and readiness to act justly. Action in favor of rights presumes a consciousness of duty and therefore both the heads and hearts of women and men must be addressed. Rights without morality cannot endure long, and there will be no better global order without a global ethic.

Every human being–regardless of gender, age, race, skin color, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin - possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity. The Golden Rule,[6] or ethic of reciprocity, which is found in many religions and ethical traditions states, What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others! (See Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31). Self-determination and self-realization are thoroughly legitimate–as long as they are not separated from human self-responsibility and global-responsibility. Every form of egoism, every self-seeking, whether individual or collective, whether in the form of class thinking, racism, nationalism or sexism, is to be rejected. For these prevent humans from being authentically human.

The Parliament furthermore declared that it believed there to be at least four irrevocable ethical directives: 1) toward a culture of non-violence and respect for life; 2) toward a culture of solidarity and a just economic order; 3) toward a culture of tolerance and a life in truthfulness; and 4) toward a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.

History has demonstrated that our earth cannot be changed (Q. 13:11) unless there is a change in awareness regarding such issues as war and peace, economy and ecology. It is precisely for this alteration in the inner orientation, in mentality, in the "heart," that religions bear a special responsibility. I am convinced that the new global order will be a better one only in a socially beneficial, pluralist, sharing, peace-fostering, nature-friendly and ecumenical globe.

The spiritual problem of the modern person belongs so intimately to the present that we cannot as yet judge it fully. The modern person is a newly formed human being; a modern problem is a question which has just arisen and the answer to which lies in the future. The question seems rather vague, but it is related to something so universal and so global that it exceeds the grasp of any single human being and of any single religion. I am deeply convinced that human growth is possible only

through spiritual and ethical collaboration of all responsible individuals and organized and informal religious communities. We are obliged to replace the history of conflicts of religions with the history of harmony and peace.

Since we human beings are cultural beings, we are automatically pluralists. Yet, to be socially plural within the context of undeniable globalization does not necessarily mean to be pluralist in attitude. To be tolerant is not spontaneous; it is a civic and active position. Global ethics must be established and socialized. For this, a pluralist education in the broadest sense is very much needed. Without, more and more human beings will go astray while the problems will never end.

Conclusion: universal responsibilities for living together

Pluralism is an historical necessity which God does not intend to change. Within this new context, human beings share in the responsibility for creating a better global order in which conflicts no longer occur and inhumanities are no longer perpetrated. Common truths which can be derived from all theologies should be more seriously explored and developed in a spirit of openness and eagerness to learn so that we have the same substance of our faith and a similar direction in our lives. Modern history is still replete with instances of conflict and any effort to do justice to all creatures, without discrimination and exception, must be greatly appreciated.

If we wish to live as a world community, we will have to strive toward a more just and better quality of life for all. Exploring and reinterpreting our religious traditions to meet the growing demands of world community implies a willingness critically to look at ourselves and our readiness to confront in our tradition anything that may, intentionally or otherwise, contribute to the demeaning of others.

Notes

[1] This suggestion was first made by Robert Marett, *Sacraments of Simple Folks* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) p. 3, see Moojan Momen, *The Phenomenon of Religion: A Thematic Approach* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), p.21.

[2] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, (Maryland: Amana Publications, 1989), p. 55.

[3] Austin Flannery, O.P. (ed.), *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II: Constitutional Decrees*, *Declarations*, A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), pp. 174ff.

[4] Maurice Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 90.

[5] Hans Kung and K.-J. Kuschel (eds.), *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1993), pp. 18f.

[6] *Cf.* Message in this publication

Human Growth and Responsibility

Roland E. Miller

Introduction

If we look at ourselves and at the condition of our societies critically, we must recognize that we are not in fact worthy to stand before God. We have fallen short in our moral growth and in our human responsibility to be the representatives of God. Whether as individuals or as groups, we have failed to prohibit evil and commend the good in adequate ways.

Instead of human growth, we see decline; instead of human responsibility, immaturity. We go from crisis to crisis as global survivors rather than as a confident humanity, moving forward and upward. We have plenty of teachers, institutions, programs and consultants on every subject. We have leaders and pandits, politicians and bureaucrats, all of whom claim to have a measure of wisdom. Nevertheless, as we strive to climb higher on the ladder of human development, we slip on its rungs and fall back.

Understanding the human

In this essay I shall not discuss the constitution or makeup of human beings–i.e., body, mind, soul, spirit and heart–and their interaction in one whole. There is a great deal of confusion about this in Christian thought, and I see similar uncertainty in Muslim thinking.[1] Likewise, I will not be examining in any detail the great questions of ultimate destiny, i.e., the issue of final salvation. Rather, I will approach the matter of "understanding the human" from the double aspect of height and depth which connect with both Christian and Muslim anthropology. Who is this human being who must grow and be responsible? We have to assess properly the human vocation and spiritual capacity to answer questions of growth and responsibility.

Martin Luther King once wrote a little book with the interesting title, *The Measure of a Man*.[2] In today's language he might have restated it as "The Measure of

a Human Being." In this brief work he noted the contemporary importance of the question, "What is man [sic]?,"observing that there is "fantastic disagreement" in answering that question.[3] I am interested in his use of the term "measure." How do we measure the human?

It seems to me that as far as Christians and Muslims are concerned we could speak of a "fantastic agreement" on this fundamental fact that all humanity before God is marked by the character of height and depth. There is a difference of opinion regarding the exact measuring of humanity's double character, but there is agreement about its existence. In both religions, human growth and responsibility are dynamically related to this understanding of the human. We turn first to the factor of height.

The height

We will consider the height characteristic from the Christian point of view. In Psalm 8:4, the Psalmist asks the question, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" The answer is that although God has made them lower than divinity or angels, God has "crowned them with glory and honor"(Ps 8:5). It is interesting to compare the Qur'an where the angels are asked to bow down to Adam.[4] There it appears that God has made humans a little higher than angels. Whether a little higher or a little lower—however it may be expressed—the important thing is that God has created human beings with a remarkable status. In what does that height consist? It certainly does not consist in being an associate with God. The desire to be like God, or to be co-Lord with God is *shirk* (associating anything or anyone with God), and that is the fundamental sin of humanity. But, what then does it mean to be "crowned with glory and honor"?

The Christian answer is that the aspect of height includes at least the following four elements:

- Humanity bears the image of God
- Human beings have a working partnership with God
- Men and women have a loving fellowship with God, and
- Humans are invited to share in God's eternal bliss.

The first element is that humanity bears the image of God. The creation account in the Bible (Gen 1:26f.) says, "Let us make humankind in our image, and according to our likeness." Christians have at length discussed the meaning of the metaphorical term "image," and opinions differ. A simple analogy helps us to see the basic meaning. When we see a tree reflected in water, we know that the tree is a tree, and that water is water. There is no confusion. Yet, the water does have the capacity to reflect the tree. So also in some sense human beings have the capacity to reflect God, and that is their special honor. In what does that capacity consist?

Some have suggested that the term "image" refers to human reason. Men and women have reasoning minds that have a powerful potential. Martin Luther King says that, "Through his mind he [man] can leap oceans, break through walls, and transcend the categories of time and space."[5] Reason is joined with freedom and will; human beings have the freedom to use their minds and their will to make choices. Other authorities suggest that the term "image" refers to the concept of spirit. A human being is essentially a spiritual being, and that implies the ability to seek and to enjoy a relationship with God who is Spirit. It is on this basis that the Psalmist can utter this famous cry, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:2). There is a third, widely held opinion about the meaning of "image." According to this view, it refers to holiness and righteousness. God is holy, as the angels said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" (Isa 6:3). Being holy, God also made human beings righteous, even though they later spoiled their character. Therefore God rightly demands of all men and women, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2). Perhaps the implication of the word "image" includes all of these meanings.

For one more meaning I would like to return to the biblical passage that says, "Let us make humankind in our image." Immediately after these words God adds, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:28).

From this very close juxtaposition of the words "image" and "dominion," I conclude that another possible meaning of the term image is "responsible rulership." God created the world and saw that it was good. Then God created humans with the responsibility to manage creation with the divine principle of goodness, and to control it for the glory of God. This is also what I take Muslims to mean with the *khalifa* principle.[6] The position of responsible dominion is one of great stature. That is why the Psalmist who spoke of human beings as being crowned with glory and honor, went on to add these words (Ps 8:6f.):

> You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea … O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

According to the Christian view, a second element in humanity's "crown of honor" is the privilege to have a working partnership with God. This connects with what we have just said. God has created the world, and turned it over to human beings to take care of it, to tend it and to steward it. It is still God's garden. When the Indian Muslim theologian, Abul Kalam Azad, talked about *rubbubiya*, lordship, he spoke about God as a gardener. God, is the chief gardener, but uses our assistance. Sir Muhammad Iqbal took a somewhat similar approach, and expressed it very dramatically. He suggested that we are cocreators with God in building this world. These ideas are helpful also for the Christian understanding. There is a phrase in the Bible that underlines that understanding—we are "fellow-workers" with God.

At the beginning of the Christian church, there were rivalry and jealousy among the first Christians. They were arguing as to who had the most important functions. At that time, St Paul addressed the debate and these words enlighten the issue:

> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building (1 Cor 3:7–9).

What could yield a higher honor than to be a fellow-worker with God? To be able to work with God as God's servant in God's garden is to be crowned with glory and honor.

In considering human height and potential Christians take note of a third factor, i.e., the possibility of enjoying a loving fellowship with God. As we saw, the first element in the created stature of human beings is that they image the divine, and the second is that they function as God's servants who work for and with God. But not only that. From the Christian perspective they also share a companionship with God that we may describe as a fellowship of love. "God is love," as the Scriptures testify. God therefore loves human beings, and desires spiritual fellowship with them. This is metaphorically pictured in the biblical account of creation. God was "walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze" (Gen 3:8). We are not intended to take this sentence literally. It points to

God's desire to converse with God's creatures. In the New Testament "walking with God" is interpreted as "walking in love." The point of the metaphor is that God graciously maintains a relationship of love with the men and women that God has created. This spiritual relationship is further pictured in the human language of parent and children. God is God, and humans are humans. They are totally distinct. Yet, there is no separation in love. Therefore, when God through the Prophet Hosea (Hos 11) speaks of divine compassion, he describes human beings as though they were God's own children:

> I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them. … How can I give you up, Ephraim? … My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger (Hos 1: 3–9).

Similarly, the New Testament declares: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 Jn 3:1).

The relationship of love with the Divine Being is surely the supreme height of human dignity. The Bible has a special word for it. It is *agape*, a Greek word that signifies self-giving love. It is a love that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13:7). It is the element that lifts human responsibility from the level of duty to the level of joy.

The final element in the human potential, the divine invitation to human beings to share in the bliss of God's eternal garden, Paradise, is where God's love and peace will rule visibly and forever. In the Bible the disciple John heard a voice from heaven describing this new garden,

> See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away (Rev 21:3–4).

It is remarkable that both Christian and Muslim theologians have discussed the question of whether we will actually see God. The very fact that such a question can be discussed is a sufficient indicator of the high status of humanity before God.

The high status implies a high responsibility. We are to grow up to our divinely given stature and take responsibility for the welfare of God's creation.

The depth

To understand the human is to understand humanity's depth as well as its height. We have dealt with the high level of human potential. We must now examine the depth that results in our often failing struggle to grow personally and to assume social responsibility.

When my wife and I came to India in 1953, tuberculosis was a scourge in the area where we were located. Literally thousands of people suffered and died from the disease. The majority of people, especially the poor, were quite uninformed about it. Many came to us for symptomatic treatment; that is, they wanted relief from their coughing and chest pain. It was difficult, and often impossible, to explain that the problem was more serious than that. Only when they had recognized this would they consider the extended and costly treatment and care this disease requires.

I cite this personal story to make an obvious point—we cannot deal superficially with the factor of depth. Why are there death, crying and pain which need to be relieved? Why is humanity continually restless and in turmoil? Religion will recover its power only when it substantially addresses human problems. This applies fundamentally to the problem of evil, concerning which religion claims to have some expertise. To address the problem substantially means to deal with cause as well as the symptom.

I will deal with the issue of human lowliness, from the Christian perspective, through three points: (a) the fact that human beings are naturally limited; (b) the fact that men and women are sinful; and, (c) the fact that a radical moral problem requires a radical solution.

There is great potential in the picture of human dignity that we have portrayed, but we must remind ourselves that a human being is ontologically lowly, and our limitations are both physical and mental. We need to remind ourselves of our essential creaturehood. At the physical level, we are earthy, made of earth, and return to earth. I would like to make reference to a part of the Christian funeral service that I personally do not like very much. At the moment when the body of the deceased person is lowered into the ground, someone—sometimes the pastor, sometimes a relative—picks up some dirt and drops it into the grave. As this is being done the pastor recites the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." While this is a crude and perhaps unnecessarily cruel way of testifying to the physical frailty of the human being, it is an effective way of underlining human earthiness and finitude.

Not only are humans physically frail, but they are also mentally limited. Many of the problems we face in life are not the result of our being wicked, but simply the product of our natural inability. We are just not wise enough to deal with our problems and to solve them. Our mental limitation needs no evidence. Whether it is the mysteries of our own inner being, or the unknown immensities of the universe, we cannot correctly measure them. Our capacities are small, and our lifetime short. One reason why we need each other so much in our common world is because we are existentially so limited. Most of all, we need the help of God, the Unlimited One and the All-Knowing One, and thus the search for human growth and responsibility begins with prayer.

The second and very crucial point that needs to be made in terms of human lowliness is the fact that human beings are sinful. We are not only small ontologically, we are small morally. The Christian perspective requires that we face this fact realistically. We do not only have a problem of natural frailty, but what the Qur'an calls a "proneness to evil" (Q. 12:53). We seem to be in a constant state of rebellion against God's will, and in captivity to evil tendencies and powers. The condition is more serious than a lack of growth and occasional spells of irresponsibility. Human beings more often than not seem to prefer the low road to the high road, take a position against God's ethical demands, go their own way, and even become degraded. Apparently, we are in a state of contradiction. Attempting to measure human lowliness King said,

> In a real sense the "isness" of our present nature is out of harmony with the eternal "oughtness" that forever confronts us. We know how to love, and yet we hate. We take the precious lives that God has given us and throw them away in riotous living. We are unfaithful to those to whom we should be faithful. We are disloyal to the ideals to which we should be loyal. "All we like sheep have gone astray." [7]

These are powerful words, but in this connection, I find the words of Ali Shari'ati, the Iranian reformer, even more compelling. When he describes the human dilemma, he uses two pictures. According to one picture, our hearts contain elements of both Cain and Abel. They are in bitter contention within us. In Ali Shari'ati's second picture, we are both mud and spirit. The putrid clay and spirit are in conflict within us. One draws the human toward God. The other "summons and drags him down to stagnation, solidity, immobility, death, lowliness and ugliness."[8] Thus a person is a dialectical being. "In his [sic] essence and life destiny, he [sic] is an 'infinite direction,' either toward clay or toward God."[9] The human predicament has never

been more eloquently stated. There is a difference between the Christian and the Muslim view of the predicament. The Christian perspective holds that a human is a dialectical being according to his/her fallen nature, while the Muslim perspective regards it as an aspect of his/her created nature. Yet, both are in agreement regarding the terrifying struggle between good and evil. Failure in that struggle will produce fearful results in this life and a calamitous denouement on the final Judgment Day. In this life, the fearful results are very evident, from Auschwitz to Ruanda, from Kossova to Gujarat, from Palestine to New York City. The Bible has vivid descriptions of the Day of Judgment. So does the Qur'an, which declares, "The Calamity! What is the Calamity? Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Calamity is! …Raging fire!"(Q. 101:1–3).

That brings us to the third element in the Christian perspective of human lowliness. That is the idea that such a moral problem requires a radical solution.

From the Christian perspective some change in the human condition is needed to enable a higher level of obedience, even though we may not rise to the full height expected. Some form of deliverance is needed from the powers that beguile us and drag us down. Christians believe that such deliverance can come from God alone, the only Creator, and they further believe that it does come because of the radical love of God, for humanity. There is a human side to deliverance, as well as the divine side. The human factor is "change of mind" or repentance for having gone astray. It is the divine factor, however, that is conclusive. We may summarize it as the forgiveness of sins, and with it the gift of new life and new possibilities. God's forgiveness of human sins gives humanity a fresh start. It creates in men and women the spirit of gratefulness for divine mercy that enables new spiritual development. It inspires us, at least to some extent, to modify our behavior so that the Abel in us becomes stronger than the Cain.

In the Christian view, God's empowering forgiveness is related to both a particular act and an ongoing action. The particular act is the divine self-giving revealed in Jesus, the Messiah, the Word and Spirit of God. As the New Testament says,

> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, … that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, … (2 Cor 5:18–19).

On that basis, it also says, " If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn l:9).The ongoing action of God is that of God's Spirit who moves people to make the

principle of self-giving love their own. So, the Christian view is that God does not leave us alone, but rather acts decisively through Christ to provide a solution to an otherwise insoluble dilemma. I am well aware that Muslims do not share this view, holding rather that God forgives human beings directly. Nevertheless, as Christians and Muslims we agree that forgiveness comes from God, and we affirm that when people take it into their hearts, it becomes a powerful reality and driving force for human growth and responsibility.

Despite what we have said there is the problem of application. Christians believe that they have appropriately analyzed the essential cause of the human failure to grow and to be responsible–that is, the radical nature of sin. They also believe that God has provided the solution–that is, God's extraordinary gift of forgiving love. Yet, it is clear that Christians have been unable to apply the solution effectively and consistently to their lives in this world. There is ample evidence in history, and around us today, of Christian failure. Because of this difficulty, Christians have tended to look very longingly toward the heavenly garden where all their questions will be answered and all will be bliss. Nevertheless, I believe that God wants us to make something better out of this old garden here on earth, and all the divine commands reflect that wish. Thus, Christians have to use their spiritual resources better and model their lives more truly on the pattern of the servant Jesus. We have to grow morally, and we have to become more responsible. How can this be made to happen? What is the methodology for moving from the depth to the height?

Some people believe that the answer is to educate people. In this essay, I have concentrated on understanding the human being. In the paradox of height and depth, and in the approach to its solution as outlined above, Christians believe that there is a basis for realistically measuring human potential and a foundation for the exercise of social responsibility. How should we build upon that foundation?

Educating the human being

In searching for the practical answer to human growth, many people have given education a high place. Religiously minded people, however, are not convinced that purely secular education, no matter how high a quality it may be, can provide that answer. There must be an education of the spirit, in whatever way that is channeled. Undoubtedly the theory and practice of education, and in particular religious education, is a huge area for potential cooperation between Christians and Muslims.

Both Christians and Muslims have strong traditions and deep commitments in this area. Christians here know that Muslims take education very seriously. Certainly, the concept of *hidaya*, guidance, is a crucial one in Muslim thought. It is my impression that many Muslims believe that some form of education is the solution to the human dilemma that I have described. Similarly, education has always been very important for Christians. Some Christians too would say that it provides the essential bridge between theory and practice.

What is the reality? It must be recognized that if education is the key to human growth and responsibility, then we have failed miserably to make it work well. The last century was the century of education. It was also the century in which an estimated 60 million civilians and 43 million military personnel died in human struggles. It was a century of immeasurable suffering. Do we still believe that education is the answer? We need something more than a thin veneer of civilization that buckles and breaks under the slightest strain. What kind of education are we talking about? What kind of education will deal realistically with the depth of the human condition, as well as imaginatively with the height of our possibilities?

Certainly, Christians and Muslims need to respond freshly to this call through their religious education programs. It is through them that religion has the greatest opportunity to make a long-term impact. Yet, we all know that no other area of religious practice is more heavily criticized than this one. Religious education is stuck in the swamp of deadening tradition or aimless experimentation. From the Christian perspective, I suggest that three elements will have to be remembered as we face the task of educating the human: appropriation, challenge, and application.

Another term for appropriation is faith, and another term for faith is confidence. The faith is not in ourselves, or we would not be confident. The faith is in the Creator God and God's gifts. We must begin the process of education by appropriating through faith the change in our condition that is offered by a gracious God. Jesus the Messiah referred to it as a new spiritual birth. Our natural tendency toward self-centeredness, anger and hatred is so strong that I do not share the hope that we can simply and easily educate people out of it without appropriating the fresh start that God offers us. New habits of the heart, if I may use Robert Bellah's[10] phrase, depend on a transformed heart. The Psalmist illustrates this conviction in the well-known prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me" (Ps 51:10). In Christian faith, the prayer is answered through God's forgiveness of our sins and the promise of spiritual help in overcoming evil. That faith gives birth to a sense of confidence that defies the powers of evil.

The second theme in the Christian view of educating the human is summed up by the word challenge. God's loving concern for the world is a challenge to us, a challenge to be like-minded. The Bible calls on Christians to have the same servant mind that was present in Jesus the Messiah (Phil 2:5). St Paul knows that is a challenge. So he says,

> Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. … but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12–14).

There is an interesting passage in the Our'an that I like very much, the Sura 90:10–17, which says,

> Did We not ….guide him to the parting of the mountain ways? But he hath not attempted the Ascent - Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Ascent is! [It is] to free a slave and to feed in the day of hunger an orphan near of kin, or some poor wretch in misery. And to be of those who believe and exhort one another to piety.[119]

The passage exhorts us to climb, and the mountain we are to climb is the mount of ethical action. It seems to me that these passages point to a dynamic form of religious education that can make some difference in individual lives and in the progress of general society.

The third element in the Christian perspective on education is application. Application involves the specific content and pedagogical style of religious education, and is a complex subject which I am not qualified to deal with. I will therefore limit myself to some conclusions that arise from our study of human nature.

Although I do not wish to impose the height-depth paradigm as the only guide for educational content and method, I certainly hope that all education conducted under religious auspices will take account of it. What does that imply?

The depth implies honesty about ourselves and our histories. We cannot engage in romanticism. Romanticism means saying something is so, when it isn't. We cannot deal in what Hindus call *maya*, illusion. We must be self-critical.

The depth implies an awareness and accurate assessment of the weakness in much of our educational content. In the opinion of many, especially youth, the content of religious education needs a thorough overhaul to make it more relevant to the real needs of people.

The height, on the other hand, implies that we will not give in to defeatism. Defeatism differs from realism. Defeatism does not take into account that God is involved in the human situation. There is a passage in the Bible that says, "See, I am making all things new" (Rev 21:5).

The height implies an imaginative use of great moral examples and heroes who will inspire youth to prohibit evil and commend good.

The height implies an unfearing willingness to include fair and positive learning materials about other religious traditions in the curricula of religious education programs.

And finally, the height means that the religions will give prominence to peace and reconciliation motifs in the materials of religious education; will provide examples of cooperative action to overcome common problems;[12] and will ensure a standard of pedagogy that not only brings new life and enthusiasm to the function of teaching, but also encourages teachers to be role models in the great struggle between mind and spirit.

We may add that the role of youth themselves in creating a more responsible human society cannot be ignored. We adults should recognize that we are behind many of the difficulties that face young people today. We have not been able to stem the tide of secularization that now affects youth. We have passed on some of our prejudices to our young people. We have allowed the development of a culture of violence and corruption. In fact, we need the youth to help us solve these very problems. We need their natural interest in other people, and their willingness to live and let live. We need their freshness, their energy, and their readiness to take risks. Young people must not be only the objects of a process, but the subjects of a possibility. The possibility is to make "the Ascent." "Ah! who will convey to thee what the Ascent is!" (Q. 90:10–17).

Notes

[1] For a summary of the Christian view and the interplay of the various terms involved *cf.* Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. I (New York: Ch. Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. l2ff. Al-Ghazali, more than any other Muslim theologian, probed into this subject, especially in the *Ihya. Cf.* D. B. MacDonald's summary in *Aspects of Islam* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Liberal Press, 1971). Al-Ghazali recognizes a spiritual something in humans, referring to it both as *qalb*, heart, and as *ruh*, spirit.

[2] Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Measure of a Man* (Philadelphia: Christian Education Press, 1959).

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[4] The occasion is recorded in the Q. 7:11ff. and Q. 2:34.

[5] King, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 9.

[6] *Khalifa* may be translated as deputy or vice-ruler. The Q. 2:30 says: "Lo! I am about to place a viceroy on the earth." *Cf.* Q. 6:166. In an interesting combination of ruling on behalf of God and human growth the passage Q. 7:69 says: "Remember how He made you viceroys after Noah's fall, and gave you growth of stature."

[7] King, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 7.

[8] Ali Shari'ati, *On the Sociology of Islam: Lectures*, translated from the Persian by Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), p. 90.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 9lf.

[10] Robert Neelly Bellah, *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985; reprint 1996). Bellah is an American sociologist with a background in Islamic Studies.

[11] This translation and other quranic quotations are from Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: Mentor, 1956).

[12] Materials for Christian-Muslim cooperation may be found in Roland E. Miller and Hance A. O. Mwakabana (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Theological and Practical Issues*, *LWF Studies 3/1988* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1998).

Interfaith Marriage – an Islamic Perspective

Noriah Mohamed and Ghazali Basri

> And among his signs is this, that he created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them and he has put love and mercy between your hearts: verily in that are signs for those who reflect (Q. 30:21).

The purpose of marriage

God created men and women so that they can be partners for one another, love one another, procreate and live in peace and tranquility according to the commandments of God and the guidance of His Messenger (peace be upon him—pbuh).[1] According to Islam marriage fulfils five interrelated functions: sexual gratification; companionship and emotional security; reproduction; the socialization of children; and, an act of *'ibadah*, the worship of Allah.

Shari'a[2] injunction on marriage to non-Muslims

Non-Muslims are divided into People of the Book, the *ahl al-kitab*, and the polytheists or idolaters, *mushrikun*. Regarding marriage involving non-Muslims, the Holy Qur'an commands:

> Do not marry Unbelieving women (idolaters), Until they believe: A slave woman who believes Is better than a unbelieving woman, Even though she allure you. Nor marry (your girls) To unbelievers until they believe: A man slave who believes Is better than an unbeliever Even though he allure(s) you... (Q. 2:221).

The commentaries of Abdullah Yusuf Ali commenting on the above verses states,

> If religion is at all a real influence in life to both parties or to either party, a difference in this vital matter must affect the lives of both more profoundly than differences of birth, race, language, or position in life. It is therefore only right

> that parties to be married should have the same spiritual outlook. If two persons love each other, their outlook in the highest things of life must be the same.[3]

Religion here is not used as a mere label or matter of custom or birth. Although the partners may initially have different religious affiliations, if through their mutual influence, they come to see the truth in the same way, they must openly accept the same rites and the same social fellowship. Otherwise, the position will become impossible, at the individual as well as the social level.

For this reason Islam does not allow marriage between a Muslim and a polytheist or idol worshipper. Most Muslim jurists of different schools will agree on this. Nonetheless, Islam allows marriage between a Muslim man and women of the People of the Book, which is explained by the following qur'anic injunctions:

> 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. (Lawful unto you in marriage) Are (not only) chaste women The People of the Book Revealed before your time... (Q. 5:6).

According to *shari'a*, a husband cannot prevent his wife from observing her faith and celebrating her festivals even after marriage. An example of this is Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) marriage to a Coptic woman, Mariya al-Qibtiyyah, who had given birth to Ibrahim.

Why a Muslim man can only marry a non-Muslim, a kitabiyya woman

There are a number of reasons why Islam allows a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim woman, a *kitabiyya*. As head of the household the husband not only maintains the family, but as guaranteed by Islam is also responsible to maintain his wife's rights according to her own faith. The wife of *ahl al-kitab* living under the guardianship of a Muslim husband, whose respect of the basic tenets of her faith, her Scripture and her prophets (as they are part and parcel of Islamic teachings) is guaranteed.

In the same vein, Islam is consistent in prohibiting the Muslim man to marry a polytheist (*mushrik*) woman because Islam is absolutely opposed to *shirk* (associating anything with God, polytheism). From an Islamic point of view mar-

riage of this sort would be disastrous, because it would be impossible for two such people to live together in love and harmony. Let us look at the Malaysian case of interfaith marriages.

The position of Islam in Malaysia

While Islam is the official religion of the Federation (article 3.1 of the constitution), other religions may be practiced alongside it in peace and harmony. The state rulers or Sultans are at the same time the religious heads in the respective regions or states (article 3.2 and 3.3). In states without a ruler or Sultan, such as Malacca, Penang, Sabah, Sarawak and the Federal Territories, the chief of state, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, is also the religious head. The constitution also provides for freedom of religion. While article 11.1 states that every person has the right to profess and practice his/her religion, mission is subject to article 11.4. which provides for legal control of the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among Muslims.

In accordance with article 11.4, the states have full power to enact laws and regulations pertaining to religious affairs. Thus it is pertinent to look in greater detail at some of the enactments passed by the state so that we can get a better understanding of the situation.

The state of Selangor

The capital, Kuala Lumpur is situated in the state of Selangor, one of the thirteen states in Malaysia. Below we shall outline some of the provisions made under the Selangor Administration of Islamic Law Enactment 1989 and Islamic Family Law Enactment 1984 relevant to this essay.

Part VII: conversion to Islam

Under the heading capacity to convert to Islam, section 67 states that a person who is not a Muslim may convert to Islam if he or she has attained the age of maturity according to *Hukum Syara' (baligh)*[4] and is of sound mind. To ensure that the conversion is valid, section 68.1 stipulates that a person must utter in reasonably intelligible Arabic and fully aware of their meaning the two clauses of the affirmation of faith,"I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that the Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." Section 70

provides that if a man or a woman at the time of conversion to Islam has a natural child who has not attained the age of maturity according to *Hukum Syara'* (*baligh*), the child is converted to Islam at the same moment.

Section 10 articles 1 and 2 stipulate that no man shall marry a non-Muslim except a *kitabiyyah*, and that no woman shall marry a non-Muslim.

Other states including the Federal Territories have laws which are similar to those of Selangor. It must be noted that there have been controversies regarding the issues of interfaith marriages and the conversion of minors since they are regarded as being contrary to the provision of freedom of religion stipulated in the constitution.

Five stories for reflection

(I) I am a Punjabi, born thirty years ago in Port Klang. I come from a very strict family. As we were the only Punjabi family in a community of predominantly Chinese and Indians, everyone knew us. My father worked as a guard at the nearby factory and he could see almost anyone entering the road to our house. After form five, I joined the International Fashion Training Center in Kuala Lumpur. I have five brothers who were very protective of me. They would take me to the bus and pick me up when I got back. I could only go out on Sundays to meet friends, and then only girl friends.

After I graduated from fashion school, I stayed at home for a few months and then started looking for a job. It was not long before I accepted a job at a boutique in Kuala Lumpur, even though my mother wanted me to find work nearby. Nonetheless, I insisted in spite of the thirty-kilometer commute.

On my daily trips to and from work I used to pass a carpet shop where a young man, who later became my husband, worked. One day he came into the boutique and introduced himself. Ahmad and I soon became close friends. During the early phase of our relationship, we sometimes argued about religion. I knew that I would have to become a Muslim in order to marry him. After working at the boutique for about six months, Ahmad asked me to convert; he took care not to force me.

Ahmad warned me to be careful about telling my mother, but I decided to tell her anyway. One day when my mother and I were alone I told her everything. She was aghast and said straightaway, "You can't marry that man. You must quit that job right now and never go back." When I told her that Ahmad was in Singapore for several

weeks, she agreed to allow me to give a week's notice. I made plans to run away but Ahmad disagreed and said he would come down and talk to my family.

On route to my house, Ahmad lost his way. He asked a security guard for directions to the Punjabi house. The guard was actually my father, who instantly became suspicious and told Ahmad that there was no Punjabi house in the neighborhood. Ahmad went back to Kuala Lumpur feeling very frustrated.

When my father came home that day, I could immediately tell that something was wrong. They kept me locked up in the house for about four months, until I managed to run away. I took a bus to Kuala Lumpur where Ahmad met me and arranged for me to stay with a Chinese woman. He then contacted a friend whose wife was also a convert. They made arrangements for me to receive instruction in Islamic studies in preparation for my formal conversion to Islam.

After studying the basics of Islam, I finally said my *shahadah* (testimony of faith), although I was a little bit nervous. However, despite the nervousness, I was also happy because I had finally managed formally to convert to Islam. Then Ahmad and I started preparing for the wedding.

In the meantime, my brothers were searching for me. I tried to hide but they found me, and managed to force me into their car and drove me to my house in Port Klang. They kept me there for about three months until they flew me to India. One of my brothers took me to the Punjab, where we visited Amritsar and the Golden Temple. They took me to see the guru and sent me to a pious religious Sikh who was supposed to "turn around" my thinking so that I would denounce Islam. Much happened, including beatings. I could not take it anymore and finally decided to mislead them. I promised that I would be a good daughter and return to Sikhism. I had to act that way for over a month. Sensing that there was no more they could do, they followed the advice of the pious religious Sikh and took me home.

After we had returned to Malaysia, they kept me in the house for a year. I could neither telephone nor write to anyone as they watched me closely. I told my parents that by keeping me indoors I would eventually go crazy. I kept searching for a way to get out of the house. One day I saw an advertisement for job vacancies with Singapore Airlines. They did not like the idea, but I promised them that I would not meet Ahmad or do anything to start things again. Eventually they believed me and sent me to Singapore. Just before leaving for Singapore, my brothers took me to a lawyer to reverse my conversion. I did not sign at that time, telling them I would sign once I was in Singapore They wanted me to live under my uncle's supervision and to train as a flight attendant. Ahmad happened to be in Singapore

and I immediately arranged to meet him. He wanted me to come back to Kuala Lumpur immediately to get married, but I could not do so as I had to complete the training. This took about three months. The lawyer that my family had hired came to Singapore, but he could not meet me. He made another appointment for me to sign the papers, but I did not want to reconvert. I ran away and returned to Kuala Lumpur where Ahmad and I were finally married.

The marriage has seriously changed the relationship with my family. They know that I have converted to Islam and that my marriage is final. In the end, they kicked me out saying, "You are a Muslim now… You are no longer our daughter." I know that my mother loves me and I love her very much. I have tried to explain to her that I am not against her and have told her that even though I am a Muslim, nothing could change my feelings for her. I love my family very much and feel no animosity toward them. I hope that one day they can accept me as a Muslim and take me back.

(II) "After we had been friends for about five years we agreed to get married." This is how thirty-year-old Syadia started her story. As expected, when I approached my parents regarding my marriage proposal, they were upset primarily because I would have to convert to Islam since my husband was a Muslim. I come from a small family; I am the eldest and have two younger brothers. I could understand why my parents were upset. But, because of my sincere appeal and explanation, within a month they accepted the situation and finally gave their consent. Being Christians (Baptist) both my mother and father understood when I explained Islam in relation to Christianity. We have been married for almost a year and, unexpectedly, have so far not encountered any major problems. This is because my husband comes from the *Sayyid* family who would normally marry only a *Sharifah*,[5] the same family clan. The only thing that I see as a problem is my inability to live up to my in-law's expectations with regard to preparing for the Hari Raya Puasa[6] festivities. Other than that, I have no problem with my own parents nor with my in-laws.

(III) Brought up as a Christian in a Protestant family, I knew almost nothing about other religions. It was only much later, during my university days, that I started asking questions about Islam as a result of my contact with Muslim students from Pakistan, Mauritius, Syria, Kenya, Sudan and Malaysia. In addition, during my teenage years, my parents and grandparents played host to overseas students.

These new Muslim friends were happy to talk about Islam, and I found myself increasingly attracted to all that I learned. I come from an open-minded family, and was lucky not to be hampered by the common prejudices against Islam. In fact

my parents were critical of some aspects of the Anglican Church. My grandmother was different. Having grown up in the glorious days of the British Empire she had inherited all the usual prejudices against Islam and Muslims. When I broke the news to her that my Muslim boyfriend had asked me to marry him, her rejoinder was, "How do you know he hasn't already got four wives." Since my parents had already given permission for us to be married, my grandmother could not prevent it. She finally accepted it some years later, when my husband and I returned on a visit from Malaysia bringing to her two new great grandchildren.

(IV) I was a Taoist before I became a Muslim. I became attracted to Islam a long time ago when I was working in a private company that employed many Muslims. I was married then with two children. My husband and I were having great difficulties and our marriage was not a happy one. One day I was struck by an advertisement of an outreach program to non-Muslims by an Islamic organization in Kuala Lumpur. I decided to have a look.

There I met a few sisters, one of whom soon became my confidante because of her loving and caring character. From then onwards, I would sneak away from my husband and my two children just to listen to talks about Islam. After almost two years I embraced Islam.

When my parents found out from my ex-husband that I had embraced Islam and was married to a Muslim, they and my two children said, "Don't you ever come back home." Despite those strong words spoken to me, I still hoped that one day God will open their hearts to accept me. After I divorced my former husband and had remarried, we managed to come to an agreement. I shared my two children with my ex-husband. They spent three days with him and four days with me. When they were with me, I tried to show them the way of life in Islam, knowing that it is not easy for my children to accept this. I know how difficult life was for my two children. I could only pray to God that one day I would be able to convince them to become part of us, the Muslim community.

(V) Born into a family of strong Hindu traditions, my parents named me Darmaseelan. I am the fifth of six siblings. My late father, was an engineer and my mother, a teacher. All of us were vegetarian and practiced Vedic Hindu life. Because of my deep interest in religion, I was baptized to be a Brahmin and was given the name Shivachariya, the servant of Lord Shiva. At seventeen, I was already teaching Hindu religious hymns and songs in temples. After graduating from university in 1988, I traveled all over Malaysia to preach Hinduism.

My interest in Islam began when I watched a television program where a Muslim scholar was discussing God and faith in Islam. His explanation was so simple, yet convincing, and made me think about the nature of godhead in Hinduism. From then on I started reading books and listening to talks about Islam. On my twenty-eighth birthday, August 1991, I finally became a Muslim. I am grateful to my foster parents who have made great efforts to guide, support and help me to become a good Muslim.

Moreover, I am fortunate to have such an understanding mother, even though at the beginning she was somewhat upset by my conversion. Nevertheless, after some explanation and because of our close relationship, she could accept me. When I got married to an Indian Muslim girl in 1996, my mother, my sisters and my brother attended my wedding. I was happy that my mother had given her consent. As a family man, I must make a point of paying her regular visits with my wife, our daughter and two sons.

Discussion

The following questions will provide some guidance for discussion.

- ***First story***: is there any hope that she might come back to her parents?
- Would her parents accept her after all the bitter experiences they had had?
- What would be her relationship to her brothers?
- Would the husband be able to provide her with the parental love and affection that she has lost?
- Is there any chance of their children seeing their grandparents on their mother's side?
- ***Second story***: Does this constitute a "model" for successful intermarriage in Malaysia today?
- Is preparing oneself with a new set of cultural norms more difficult than that of fulfilling religious norms?

- ***Third story***: Are Europeans more liberal when it comes to interfaith marriages?

- Are those coming from a Protestant background more liberal than those from non-Protestant families, i.e., Catholic families?

- ***Fourth story***: How will the children be able to cope with being brought up according to two different sets of norms?

- Who will decide on their religious affiliation?

- ***Fifth story***: Would it be a different situation if the father were still alive considering that Hindu families normally observe strict Hindu teachings?

- By marrying an Indian Muslim girl, does this man have fewer problems (social and cultural) than if he marries a Malay girl?

Conclusion

In some extreme cases, interfaith marriages have disastrous consequences such as family dislocations, elopement, divorce and other forms of injustices. There are also cases where a Muslim converts to another religion as a result of intermarriage. These stories are difficult to solicit due to a lack of public interest. The provisions made in the constitution and the Malaysian socio-cultural environment contribute greatly to a harmonious religious life. It is important that husband and wife, as well as society at large, are reminded of the main purpose of marriage which is not merely sexual gratification and procreation, but to provide companionship and emotional security for both partners. Only if these ideals are realized, will interfaith marriages have meaning. In the context of Malaysian society, interfaith marriages have to a certain extent helped society to become more open and mature in their aspiration for a just and progressive society.

Notes

[1] In this volume, peace be upon him, will be shown as pbuh.

[2] Islamic law.

[3] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an* (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corporation, 1989), p. 89.

[4] *Hukum Syara' (baligh)* is Bahasa for Islamic Law, *baligh* means mature.

[5] *Sayyid* (Lord) and *Sharifah* (noble woman) are terms used for descendants of the Prophet through his daughter Fatima.

[6] Hari Raya Puasa (*'Id al-Fitr*) is a celebration marking the end of a Muslim month of fasting and abstinence, Ramadan. It is a special occasion for Muslims. Hari Raya Puasa officially begins at the sighting of the moon on the day before the next month on the Muslim calendar, Syawal. The first moon of the month of *Shawwal* is sighted by religious elders in the late evening from several vantage points in Malaysia. The festival actually begins the following day, ushered in by prayers at the mosque early in the morning, and a visit to the cemetery to pray for the departed souls of loved ones. Then, of course, comes the feast.

Interfaith Marriages

Sigvard von Sicard

Over the centuries, Christians and Muslims have lived in close proximity to one another, often being members of the same nuclear or extended family. Nowadays, migrations, mobility and encounters, made easier through contemporary means of transport are enabling people from different cultural and religious backgrounds to meet. In a growing number of cases this has led to marriages between people of different backgrounds for intermarriage implies the crossing of ethnic, linguistic, religious, racial and national boundaries by a woman and a man in life's most intimate union. The increasing occurrence of intermarriages across international barriers is today an aspect of globalization. This raises for both Christians and Muslims a number of important questions. Christians and Muslims therefore need to understand and appreciate the other's understanding of marriage.

Marriages between Christians and Muslims go back to the days of the Prophet who himself took the Coptic slave girl, Mariyyah, given him by Muqauqis, the governor of Egypt as his wife. She has come to be known in history as Umm Ibrahim as she bore the Prophet a son.[1]

Interfaith marriages being a *fait accompli* present a challenge for Christians and Muslims. They can either in the Christian context apply rigorously such biblical texts as

> We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land (Ezra 10:2).
>
> Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods … (Deut 7:3f.).
>
> Do not be mismatched with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14).

Even if commentators question the use of the latter as applying to marriage, they might attempt to extend *khesed*[2] to *agape* of God through pastoral care and understanding in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 7:12–16,

> To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you. Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

Or, in the Islamic context, they can apply inherited cultural and legal ordinances or open up to the deeper and spiritual meaning of such qur'anic texts as *Surah al-Rum* (30:21)

> He created for you mates from your selves that you might find rest in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are portents for folk who reflect.

This essay assumes the latter inclusive approach. No attempt has been made to outline any actions or questions which would need to be raised in connection with the counseling of Christians and Muslims contemplating marriage.[3] Rather, an attempt has been made to highlight those dimensions that would need to be taken into consideration in facing the challenge.

The proposed approach is demanding as it involves not only a thorough understanding of the biblical and quranic views of marriage, but also demands that the church take into consideration a variety of dimensions which are part and parcel of life as a whole. Marriage does not take place in a vacuum, but takes place within cultural, economic, legal, political, social and religious contexts. It needs to be remembered that every marriage involves two personalities molded by their respective contexts and hence in most cases involves different viewpoints. Such views can be complementary or contradictory. In the latter case, they demand a give and take, understanding and appreciation, if not acceptance of a different view. Throughout every one of the following points an important Arabic and Islamic concept needs to be kept in mind. The concept is that of *kuf'*, *kaf'*, *kafa'a* implying equality, similarity, suitability etc. The two contemplating marriage should be equal, on a par, be perfectly matched, be appropriate for one another, be a match etc. Husband and wife must be fit for each other in respect of character.[4]

The cultural dimension

In some cases the Christian and the Muslim share the same culture, in others not. For those who share the same history, language and background it may be easier to face those issues which confront people in every marriage.

Where two people do not share the same history, language and background their marriage is likely to be severely tested. This is where ethnicity comes in. Yet, where there is a will there is a way particularly within the framework of the global village. In such situations, it is possible to embody multiple identities in which parts of each one's customs are preserved.

In this context issues such as how and where to spend the holidays, the kind of food to eat, the matter of hospitality, decoration, music, humor, dress code, position of the woman, etc. have to be considered.

There are also the views of the nature of the family, relationships within the family and outside to the community, rites of passage, responsibility for the elderly etc. which have to be considered.

The economic dimension

While in some situations this may not be a serious issue, in most cases economic factors play a significant role demanding openness and understanding, particularly since in many instances today both partners would tend to be working. In this context the impact of secularism has to be kept in mind.

The movement from a traditional lifestyle, be it Christian or Muslim, to a secular one which encompasses physical, social and psychological mobility may play an important role.

The educational dimension

In the past, this aspect has too often been overlooked. With universal education, literacy and information technology making great strides, awareness of this dimension and its importance for a successful marriage is growing. Research shows that the level of education of people who enter into interfaith marriages is more likely to be above average.

The legal dimension

In many instances, this is a minefield. Every country and tradition has its rules and regulations. A marriage contracted in one country may not be recognized or valid in another. Those intending to be married and those seeking to help and advise them need to look into the legal aspects and ramifications of interfaith marriages. In Islam, marriage is a contract in civil law (*'aqd al-nikah*) whereas in the Christian context, the parties enter into holy matrimony in which before God they commit themselves to each other "until death us do part."

The political dimension

Although politics may not seem to be such an important factor, it may have serious implications both with regard to the more individual commitment to the one or other political view or action as well as to international geo-political considerations. The global village is a reality which may have consequences for interfaith marriage. Identification with either the so-called "Christian" West or the Muslim world by one or both partners may have serious repercussions. Care has to be taken not to confuse ideological determinants with theological ones, which in many cases have been translated into social and structural realities. When this happens, the consequence is that each community becomes more separate from the other. At the same time, it is possible for political awareness to lead to a sense of independence. A common cause and commitment erodes traditional attitudes and removes or at least weakens religious, social and economic barriers.

The social dimension

Nowhere else is the Arabic concept of *kuf*, *kaf*, *kafa'a* more appropriate. The social background of each person is often either the bedrock of a marriage or its bane. It is not a question of economic standing as much as of perceived position in a given society. One party may seem poor or impoverished but considers him/herself or is considered to be of noble ancestry. Another may belong to the *nouveau riche* and perceived as lacking social graces. The communal as over against the individual view of society also has to be taken into consideration. Intermarriage becomes an index of full acceptance of both partners into the wider society. It has the potential of preserving as well as strengthening the individual's identity, but also carries within it the danger of weakening and eroding such an identity.

The ethnic dimension

Historical as well as contemporary mobility has in many societies led to a blurring of distinctions as in the case of Palestine where the past and the present have molded a Palestinian identity. The situations in East Africa and Sudan are similar, where the ethnic line between the Arab and the African is indistinct. The same would seem to be the case in Indonesia between the original inhabitants and the immigrant communities. In such situations, intermarriage is more likely to succeed unless other factors are brought to bear on the marriage. One aspect of this has been the development of an identity based on language–be it Arabic, Bahasa Indonesi or Swahili.

The religious dimension

This dimension is in a sense all encompassing since the above factors are generally seen as being imbued with and affected by the religious outlook of the parties. It therefore becomes crucial for the parties and those involved in counseling and advising them fully to appreciate and understand the overarching role of religion. In most societies religion is all inclusive, communal and participatory. For those who come from a background where religion is a purely personal matter this can prove unsettling. In such cases it is more likely the relationship will end in divorce.

Some of the challenge is to appreciate what the other tradition understands by marriage. From the Christian perspective it may be useful to note Yusuf Ali's comment on *ayah* 221 of *Surah al-Baqarah*.

> Marriage is a most intimate communion which finds its highest fulfillment when intimate spiritual harmony is combined with the physical link. If religion is at all a real influence in life to both parties or to either party. A difference in this vital matter must affect the lives of both more profoundly than differences in birth, race, language or position in life. It is therefore only right that the parties to be married should have the same spiritual outlook. If two persons love each other, their outlook in the highest things of life must be the same. Religion is not merely a label or a matter of custom or birth. The two persons may have been born in different religions, but if, by their mutual influence, they come to see the truth in the same way, they must openly accept the same rites and the same social brotherhood. Otherwise the position will become impossible individually and socially.[5]

It has to be remembered that Islam is not only a religion but also a social order. Marriage in Islam is regarded as a meritorious act (*nafila*). It is seen as a great blessing expressing the will of God as well as a human calling. This can be seen in such *hadith* (prophetic tradition) and quranic passages as,

> When the servant of God marries, he perfects half his religion (Malik b. Anas).
>
> And of His signs is this: He created for you mates from yourselves that you might find rest in them and He ordained between you love and mercy (*Surah al-Rum* 30:21).
>
> ... your Lord created you from a single soul and from it created its mate ... (*Surah al-Nisa* 4:1).
>
> He it is who did create you from a single soul, and therefore did make his mate that he might take rest in her (*Surah al-A'raf 7:189*).
>
> And Allah has given you wives of your own kind...(*Surah al-Nahl* 16:72).
>
> They [your wives] are a raiment for you and you are a raiment for them (*Surah al-Bakarah* 2:187).

In connection with Q. 2:187, Yusuf Ali comments "Men and women are each other's garment" i.e., they are for mutual support, comfort and protection, fitting each other as a garment fits the body.

It has to be remembered that in Islam texts regarding marriage are primarily moral and legal precepts with detailed regulations concerning family, social and political life. Marriage in Islam is a contract, based on consent between two adults. Often, however, a guardian's consent is considered compulsory. Muslim marriages are dissolvable if the rights and regulations laid down by law are broken.

Consideration of Christian-Muslim marriages within their varying social and religious contexts has to take into account their implication for the wider society within which they take place. Too often attention is given to the difficulties and crises which spouses and their offspring encounter, rather than the many successful interreligious marriages. Differing religious backgrounds may contribute to the success or otherwise of a marriage. Where one partner displays a stronger religious behavior, such as in dress, food or other daily activities, tension between the partners

tend to spiral. Where however a more open-minded and tolerant religious behavior is displayed between married partners the relationship blossoms and is enriched.

From a practical perspective therefore the following points will need to be kept in mind:

- The Christian and Muslim partners have to decide what form their marriage ceremony is to take. They need to keep in mind what form the courts recognize in the country in which they get married as well as what validity the ceremony has in other countries should they change their country of residence. Such situations are likely in the fluid situation of the contemporary world.

- The Christian and Muslim partners have a responsibility not just to themselves as individuals, but to their families, friends and community. They have to take into account that some may respond negatively to their plans. Marriage is not just a matter of two individuals; it involves their families, friends, clan and ethnic group.

- The Christian and Muslim partners need to have a clear understanding and agreement on polygamy which is an accepted fact in traditional Muslim societies.

- The Christian and Muslim partners need to take into consideration the rules and regulations pertaining to children such as, which religious tradition they are to follow, and what happens to the children in the case of a divorce.

This essay started with the recognition that both the biblical and quranic traditions contain specific statements and regulations regarding marriage. These can be taken literally and legalistically. If however Christians and Muslims are contemplating marriage they need to reinterpret these statements and regulations to take account of the situation in the contemporary pluralistic world. The biblical and quranic revelations and exhortations were purely situational and circumstantial and meant to apply to particular situations in the early miniature faith communities. The pronouncements cannot fit all cases, particularly when the social set up is such that a literal interpretation and application would lead to division and harm a potentially harmonious society. A literal and unflinching interpretation and application of Scriptures and laws are bound to cause disharmony particularly in areas with faith minorities.

Notes

[1] Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah* (*The Life of Muhammad*), translated by A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955, 1978), p. 653; M. H. Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (Indianapolis: North American Trust, 1976), p. 376.

[2] The Hebew word *khesed* designates an attitude required by fellowship and includes a disposition and an attitude of solidarity, i.e., kindness, loyalty. It expresses beneficent personal disposition and action. The Greek *agape* covers outgoing, unselfish love.

[3] List of such issues can be found in PROCMURA, pp. 4–5; Moslems, pp. 20–21; Couples Islamo-Chrétiens, pp. 57–67; C. Lamb, pp. 35–41 and pp. 48–51.

[4] Ibn Maja, *Sunan*, *Nikah* 46. Cairo 1313/1895.

[5] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an* (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corporation, 1989), p. 89.

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Neighborology and Pro-Existence

M. Amin Abdullah

Yogyakarta – a multifaith community

In terms of religious freedom Yogyakarta is, for the time being, unique and inspirational.[1] Adherents of various religions–Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Confucianism–coexist peacefully in this city. There have been no violent acts such as the burning of churches or mosques in this city.[2] There are many temples, chapels, churches, mosques and viharas, universities, hospitals, bookstores and even shopping malls that belong to the different religious communities.

Besides the well-known State University of Gadjah Mada, there are the Roman Catholic universities of Sanata Dharma and Atmajaya, the Protestant University of Duta Wacana, the University of Indonesian Islam (UII) and the Muslim universities of Muhammadiyah Cokroaminot. The Yogyakarta State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) was established in 1951. The city of Yogyakarta is rather like a big campus surrounded by some ninety-eight universities, institutes and academies. Students come from all over Indonesia and are of various religious affiliations. Most of those studying at the Roman Catholic or Protestant universities are Muslims. The opposite is true in Kupang, East Nusatenggara, where the majority of the students at the University of Muhammadiyah are Roman Catholic. So far, there have been no communal disturbances nor violent outbursts between students of different religious affiliations. This is not only true at the university level, but also at the levels of elementary, secondary, senior high school and vocational training where students adhere to different religious traditions. The only problem that has recently surfaced is an appeal by the Council of Indonesian Muslim Scholars (MUI) that schools and colleges administered by non-Muslims should provide Islamic religious instruction for their Muslim students.

This favorable situation is not limited to the areas of education and training. The same atmosphere of inclusiveness can also be seen in the area of health care. There are four large hospitals in the city. Of these, one is state run, the Sarjito hospital, while the other three are run by Muslims (PKU Muhammadiyah), Roman Catholics

(Bethesda hospital) and Protestants (Panti Rapih hospital) respectively. Most Muslim families, including my own, do not hesitate to consult the doctors at the Catholic or Protestant hospitals. They would even consider having surgery there. Most of the patients in these hospitals are Muslims. In some cases, some of the nurses and other medical staff are devout Muslims or Muslimah (Muslim woman).

Another interesting aspect of religious life in Yogyakarata is the interreligious nature of the cemeteries. There is today a debate among Muslim theologians as well as within Christian communities regarding multireligious burial grounds. Many Muslim theologians reject the idea of burying Muslims and non-Muslims in the same graveyards. Friends of mine from the districts of Aceh and Banten were taken aback when they realized that in the public cemetery near IAIN in Yogyakarta, Muslims were buried next to Christians, each using their own traditions and symbols. There had been no complaints nor protests from the religious communities against this practice of inclusiveness.

No one knows how long this beautiful, interesting and comfortable atmosphere of multireligious coexistence will last. This harmony depends on mutual trust and responsibility among all religious, social and cultural actors as well as on the sincere and deep commitment of the various religious communities.

Supporting good neighbourliness in a multireligious community

Housing

The concepts of inclusiveness and exclusiveness in religious life have only recently become subject to public debate. I believe that this discourse is still limited to theological or philosophical debate, and not praxis related. Translating theological and philosophical discourse into daily practice is one of the difficulties encountered by the multireligious community. The concept of exclusive salvation and its impact on the formation of the "truth claim" in the minds of the believers engenders the harmony of multireligious communities.

One of those practical areas is housing. From the very beginning, exclusive housing was not provided for one or the other religious community. There are no special blocks reserved for a certain religious community, whether Muslim, Christian or Buddhists; there are no areas reserved for Christians or Muslims. All areas in Yogyakarta are mixed, inhabited by adherents of different religions.

This leads to harmony and good neighborliness among adherents of different faiths. Every citizen has the possibility to listen, talk, see, experience and understand what his or her neighbors do in matters related to their religious teachings and tradition. From early on my daughter, for example, sees and learns about the church, baptism and the sacraments.

Christians also know about Islamic traditions such as using a loudspeaker to sound *adhan* (call to prayer) five times a day. Although these loudspeakers frequently disturb them, especially in the early morning, they never complain or protest to the local government, since they have been integrated into their own daily schedules.

I cannot imagine what life would be like, if in future certain areas or apartment blocks were to be segregated according to religious affiliation and I fear that tension among those living in exclusive blocks would only increase.

In spite of the majority of the population being Muslim, there are a great number of churches in Yogyakarta. The natural process of assimilation between Western and Eastern religions and cultures has successfully fostered religious harmony, mutual understanding and coexistence.[3]

Improving religious text books

The most difficult task facing multireligious communities is the problem of the "truth claim" vaunted by theologians and religious leaders from either side, whether Muslim or Christian. The debate among theologians concerning the authenticity and truthfulness of their respective religions does little to enhance interreligious relationships.

Within each religious group there are many ways of practicing and expressing one's religion: orthodox, liberal, scriptural-literal, fundamentalist, traditional, modernist, etc. In other words, in addition to an external pluralism—the relationship to the other religious communities—there is an internal pluralism within every religious community.

In light of these difficulties it is important that every religious leader is intent on improving the quality of religious text books, especially in terms of religio-social communication. There are scholars who can enlighten their followers through publishing books and articles in journals and newspapers.

Muhammadiyah, a modern Islamic movement, has published a treatise or thematic exegesis of the Qur'an on communication between interreligious communities (*Hubungan Sosial Antarumat Beragama*).[4] The students' movement

of Muhammadiyah, NU (*Nahdhatul Ulama*) as well as Catholics and Protestants have voiced their critique of the multireligious and multicultural landscape in such dailies as *Kompas*, *Republika* and others.

It is not only the formal religious organizations that contribute to improving, developing and enriching the content of religious texts and religious discourse. There are also other groups that are making serious efforts to improve the quality of interreligious dialogue, and to facilitate mutual understanding among the different religious communities. Publishers play a significant role in this.[5]

History of religion, the comparative study of religion and religious studies at IAIN, UGM, Sanata Dharma and Duta Wacana

At the academic level these universities underline the importance of good neighborhoods and promote peaceful coexistence. At IAIN, especially at the faculty of Ushuluddin, interreligious encounters have been studied at the academic level. Although this faculty is less popular than others at IAIN, it has contributed significantly to enlarging and enriching the horizon. Many books have been published, and interreligious dialogue has taken place in several towns in order to create a deeper understanding among the different religious communities.

The need for dialogue is also emphasized by the faculty of theology, of Sanata Dharma, Duta Wacana and Satya Wacana in Salatiga. These universities and institutes frequently cooperate in conducting international and national seminars on topics related to the problems of pluralism, religious dialogue, fundamentalism, mission and *dakwah*.[6]

Since 1999, the University of Gadjah Mada in cooperation with Temple University, USA, has run a Master program focused on comparative religion and religious studies. This is the only such program in the country. The lecturers come from Protestant, Catholic and Muslim backgrounds conducting the studies and lectures in an integrated team spirit. The students come from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Independent multireligious studies

Besides universities, institutes and religious organizations, there are independent groups concentrating on multireligious studies. These groups work independently, without any formal relation to the state or a formal religious organization. Nev-

ertheless, their contribution toward building a harmonious religious coexistence is eminent. The most vocal groups promoting multireligious studies and raising awareness are the Muslim Paramadina in Jakarta and the Christian, predominantly Protestant, Interfidei in Yogyakarta. These two groups are the most active groups in terms of holding seminars on interreligious dialogue, disseminating information, publishing books, journals and newsletters.

It is these two groups that are contacted for seminars or workshops on topics related to interreligious dialogue.

The preservation of social and cultural values in a pluralistic community

In order to maintain a favorable climate, adherents of all religions should be aware of the difficult situation they face. A changing political and economic landscape, at home and abroad, may easily aversely affect the stability of the multireligious community. Prior to the decline of General Suharto's regime [1965–1998], the riots triggered off by a bad, unjust and corrupt regime were amplified by religious prejudice.

Although the multireligious communities feel comfortable in their daily lives and activities, certain vested political interests may interfere. Suddenly religion becomes politicized, literal and intolerant. It is therefore important to study the roots of religious intolerance and to get to know the other.

It is not easy to obtain a complete picture of or an exhaustive explanation why Yogykarta is a model for peaceful coexistence. Such factors as the absence of armed militia from religious groups, the charisma of local Javanese leaders and the long history of the multireligious communities in this area no doubt contribute to relative stability. It is the interplay between the different factors outlined above that nurture and sustain the concept of neighborly coexistence.

Conclusion

According to the Qur'an the creation of a compassionate and just society is at the core of Islam. Compassion is a particularly difficult virtue, demanding that we go beyond the limitations of egotism, subjectivism, insecurity and inherited prejudice. Not surprisingly then that there have been times when all three of Abrahamic religions—Christianity, Islam and Judaism—have failed to achieve these high standards.

During the eighteenth century, Deists[7] rejected traditional Western Christianity largely because it had become so conspicuously cruel and intolerant. Sometimes Muslims or Christians use "God" to support their own prejudices. Christians and Muslims who while attending divine services denigrate those who belong to different local, ethnic or ideological groups deny one of the basic truths of their religion. It is equally inappropriate for people who call themselves Christians and Muslims to condone an unjust social system. The God of historical monotheism demands mercy not sacrifice, compassion rather than decorous liturgy.

Notes

[1] I have to underline the term "for the time being." In the early 1970s, the city of Ambon in the Molucca district was well known as a prototype and excellent example of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims. Unfortunately, the situation has changed due to growing suspicion and mistrust. Better education, economic progress and their impact on the political arena have affected the peaceful life and the very idea of pro-existence in that district.

[2] For a good comparison between the city of Yogyakarta and other cities in Indonesia, see Mohtar Mas'oed et al (eds.), *Kekerasan Kolektif: Kondisi dan Pemicu* (Yogyakarta: BP3PK UGM, 2000).

[3] See Zakiyuddin Baidhawy and Mutohharun Jinan (eds.), *Agama dan Pluralitas Budaya Lokal*, Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial (Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, 2002).

[4] Majelis Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam, PP Muhammadiyah, *Tafsir Tematik al-Qur'an tentang Hubungan Sosial Antaumat Beragama* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka SM, July 2000).

[5] *Cf. Masyarakat kitab dan dialog antaragama : studi atas pemikiran Mohammed Arkoun / Ruslan*i (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 2000) and *Mengurai Konflik Muslim-Kristen dalam Perspektif Islam*, translated from Mohammad Mustofa Ayub's work.

[6] *Dakwah* is Bahasa for the Arabic *da'wah*, call to Islam.

[7] Deism is movement or system of thought advocating natural religion, emphasizing morality, and in the eighteenth century denying the interference of the Creator with the laws of the universe.

Neighborology, Mutuality and Friendship

David L. Windibiziri

Introduction

In today's world the issue of who is one's neighbor seems to have become more important than ever, especially in light of ever more numerous and increasingly violent confrontations. People, who used to live in relative peace, find themselves exposed to unexpected clashes with people in their neighborhood. The reasons for this are many: Muslims in Indonesia are killing Christians; Hindus in India are killing Muslims and Christians; the confrontations in the Middle East are escalating. Wherever one turns one will find it hard to find the confidence and trust between neighbors one used to experience in local communities.

We know that Christians and Muslims have a firm basis for friendly, even loving relationships with all human beings based on the injunctions in their holy books and traditions.

The Old Testament understanding of brother was originally restricted to somebody who was one's tribal or religious brother (Lev 19:18). This was later extended to the strangers in the land (Lev 19:33–34). The New Testament culminates in Jesus including the love of one's enemy as part of one's obligation to become perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect (Mt 5:43–48).

In the Qur'an, the textual basis for the concern for one's neighbors is Sura 4, aya 36. If we go to Al-Taj al-Jami'u (a collection of Prophetic Traditions), volume 5, Sheikh Mansur Ali Nasif defining the scope of neighbor as one who lives with in the same neighborhood, or at the same workplace, or in the same trade, or on the same farmland.

When it comes to defining the scope of the neighborhood, the Prophet's wife Aisha is quoted as having said that your responsibility toward your neighbor is upheld within a radius of forty houses from one's own house.

Furthermore, all neighbors are classified according to their rights. A non-Muslim neighbor has one level of rights as a human being. A Muslim neighbor has two levels of rights as a human being and a fellow Muslim, while relations have three levels of rights as human beings, fellow Muslims and finally as blood relations.

There is also a *hadith*[1] related by Abi Shuraih who reported that the Prophet said several times, "By God, he does not believe." When the companions asked him who he was talking about, the Prophet replied, "He whose neighbor is not safe from his evils." This *hadith* is given on the authority of al-Bukhari (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/874).

Why then the new situation?

The scriptural or textual basis for good neighborliness is built on divine guidance. All that is required of a person is to search for correct information about the authentic teachings of the true Messengers of God, and to relate them faithfully to contemporary issues. According to Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, former Grand Mufti of Nigeria, it is now time for us to try the measures God revealed to God's successive Messengers, because from all indications, the various measures being taken based on the basis of human perception alone have failed to solve the problem of communal problems in Nigeria.[2] I shall limit my considerations to the situation in Nigeria with which I am most familiar and where there has been a definite escalation in confrontation and violence over the past few years.

The politically elected governor of Zamfara State, Ahmed Sani Yarima, introduced the *shari'a* legal system in Zamfara State on 27th October 1999. Many people did not take this seriously considering it political distraction that would soon fizzle out.[3]

In the following months, *shari'a* was introduced in several other northern states (Sokoto, Kano, Kaduna, Kebbi, Niger, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Gombe, Bauchi and Kwara). Whereas it had been stated that it would only apply to Muslims, this has turned out not to be the case. Rather, it has become a political instrument for fomenting trouble. There have been serious riots in various parts of the country,—in Kaduna in 2000, in Jos and in Kano in September and October 2001—where thousands were killed and property worth millions of Nairas destroyed.

The reasons for these crises are difficult to understand. The community in Jos for instance had lived together for many years without conflict or violent communal clashes. Why then was there such an unexpected explosion creating tension to the point that the local people, the Birom, drove out the "strangers," the Hausa-Fulani, who have lived in the Jos area for several generations?

In January 2002, President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo called for a Presidential Retreat on Peace and Conflict Resolution where governors, royal fathers, com-

munity leaders and various representatives from the seven states which have experienced serious conflicts met and listened to presentations and analyses of the present situation.

In his paper, Religion, Governance and Communal Conflict,[4] one outstanding Muslim, Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, states that the root causes of the contemporary conflicts in Nigeria are always related to politics, economic interests, ethnic rivalry or religious bigotry. He continues that all of them are due largely to the low level or absence of God-consciousness in Nigerian society at large. If the governing authorities were to follow divine guidance, the four principal causes of communal conflicts would be controllable.

Furthermore, he states that Islam and Christianity have some fundamental tenets in common, which are more than sufficient to forge a permanent, peaceful coexistence between the followers of these two revealed religions. The fact that we should worship no one but God and that we should not take human beings for our Lords, gives us a solid foundation on which to develop mutual understanding, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. We have, however, some negative factors militating against the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Christians. According to Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, they include an inadequate knowledge of the contents, sound meaning and implications of the divine message in the Holy Books. He continues that only a few of today's religious leaders in Nigeria have studied their respective Holy Books from cover to cover. They normally pick out passages and verses here and there, interpreting the Divine Message out of context, and causing serious conflicts in the society out of self-interest.

Furthermore, there is another negative factor militating against peaceful coexistence in the form of the material acquisitiveness as well as a commercialization of religion on the part of some religious leaders. Others are very much concerned with their quest for popularity.[5]

Shari'a

I believe Sheikh Ahmed Lemu to have a strong point here. The governors who have introduced *shari'a* in their states have done so because they believe that this will win them votes in the next election. They are guided by their own political ambition and not by religious understanding of what true *shari'a* means in an Islamic context. It seems that *shari'a* is being abused in many ways. It is noteworthy that it never deals with people in higher positions.[6] They can commit atrocities and be

totally corrupt without any fear of being punished in accordance with the *shari'a* laws. It is only the common people who suffer. The poor cattle thief had his hand cut off, and poor Safiya who was caught pregnant was sentenced to death in spite of the fact that even the Muslims could not agree on her fate.[7] The *shari'a* judge said she must die, while the Islamic scholars said she must not die.[8] Where are justice and fairness in such a situation? Where is religious sincerity?

Unfortunately, it appears that Muslims have brought in thugs and bandits from neighboring countries such as Niger and Chad, who some claim have been paid to kill Christians. There have been verbal reports from Tafawa Balewa, Jos and Gembu where such people have allegedly been paid between 5,000 and 8,000 Nairas [USD 40-60] per day for killing innocent people. Some journalists reported on some Hausa-Fulani recruiting their kinsmen from Niger and Chad to help pursue the war.[9] Or, in Mambilla where more than forty people suspected of having been recruited by influential citizens from neighboring countries were arrested.[10]

It is deplorable to stoop so low in one's religious conviction that one is willing to sacrifice one's spiritual values for secular benefits.

The situation in Jos

It was a great shock to hear that Jos was on fire because of a Christian - Muslim conflict. The local people, the Birom, think of Jos as their area. Nonetheless, for decades other people have settled on this temperate plateau. For many years, it has been a tin mining area, and the Jasawa as the Hausa-Fulani settlers call themselves, have lived there for so long that they can no longer be called settlers. Nevertheless, strong political tensions between the two groups came to the fore because the local Birom considered the political activities of the Jasawa as being detrimental to their interests. Since the Birom are mainly Christian while the Jasawa are mainly Muslim there is a religious aspect to this situation.

When we met our Christian and Muslim friends after the conflict had subsided, it was encouraging to hear stories about of how in some cases good neighborliness got the upper hand. This depended to a certain extent on the local neighborhoods. In Dadin Kowa and Zarmaganda, Christian and Muslim neighbors formed vigilante groups that prevented any intruder. By mounting roadblocks and not allowing troublemakers in they were all saved. In Unguwan Rogo, Christians suffered a lot. Nevertheless, there were some Muslims who protected and hid Christians so that they were not molested and killed. One Imam shielded a house and took

breakfast to the Christians hiding there the following morning before sending for soldiers to take the people to safety.

In Tudun Wada, it was Muslims who suffered the most, but a Christian hid the Imam and his family and got them to safety before his house was burnt. In that area the mosque and the church are in the same neighborhood, and it was the pastor who prevented the burning of the mosque by personally removing the burning tire from the mosque.

In the refugee centers Christians and Muslims were not segregated but had to help each other, eat together and share together, until the danger was over.

Irrational forces

In his presentation to the Presidential Retreat on Peace and Conflict Resolution in Kuru, 24th - 26th January 2002, Yusufu Bala Usman referred to what he called the irrational forces.[11] He said that a widespread attitude toward these violent communal conflicts, especially in the immediate aftermath of the bloodshed, arson and other devastation, is that these are simply the result of madness. It is often said that the brutal killings of non-combatants, particularly women and children, by burning them alive, cutting them up with knives and cutlasses, gunning them down as they run away, the destruction of vehicles, buildings, livestock, crops, etc. are the result of irrational forces that defy logic, or any rational explanation, being unleashed. The actual perpetrators and those who plan it appear not to gain anything tangible beyond the satisfaction of eliminating the "enemy."

There seems to be evidence that these conflicts are premeditated and from the perspective of those involved they appear rational and logical. These violent attacks are used to try to obtain concrete political, economic and other goals.

Mutuality

In various places of work one will find Christian and Muslim employees living together peacefully. Among such groups and also in the civil service one comes across *adashe*, a system where a group of approximately ten people agree to make a monthly contribution to a common fund which will then go to one member of the group. These groups are formed regardless of religious conviction and are there for mutual help and support.[12]

Various trade groups or associations in workshops or in markets are formed based on professional skills, and are not religiously exclusive. In alumni associations and parent/teachers' associations one will also find people of different religious convictions joining hands for the specific purpose of promoting the education for their children.

One important factor that transcends religious barriers is love. There are various rules and regulations that may cause problems for an interfaith marriage, but if love is strong enough it cannot prevent the marriage, and this social factor can bring about solutions in crisis situations, as in Rukuba outside Jos.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude on a personal note. In the 1960s my wife Margaret and I lived on a compound in Bauchi, home to Christians and Muslims. At the time I was working with the government as an accountant. One of my neighbors became my good friend, and I always encouraged him to send his children to school. It was not so common for Muslims to do that in those days, but in the end he agreed, and his children went to the Anglican Mission School together with my children. In those days there were no public schools in Bauchi, only mission schools. In 1967, I went to theological college, and lost contact with my friend and his family. Toward the end of 2001, the family heard my name on the radio in connection with the Christian-Muslim situation in our country. The mother told her son that this was the man who had made all of them what they were today and that they should try to find him. One day the son came to my house in Numan (about 350 km from Bauchi), and he told me this story. His father had died, but his mother was still alive and my wife and I went to visit her just a few weeks ago. This was a very joyful reunion where she had prepared a beautiful meal for us. We had not seen one another for nearly forty years, but the friendship was there in her heart for what we had meant to her and her children.

Mutuality and friendship are not being made easier by the various events that are taking place now. Nevertheless, as the author of *Ishmael My Brother* rightly observes so much depends on the attitude and approach toward others. If we are willing humbly, respectfully and lovingly to get to know and accept the other then it is also possible to build friendships. We all need the support friendship provides. When we respect one another as fellow human beings (and not just as "a religious system") we might be able to overcome our prejudices, and develop lasting love and friendships.[13]

Notes

[1] A *hadith* is a narration about the life of the Prophet.

[2] Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, paper presented at the Presidential Retreat on Peace and Conflict Resolution in some Central States of Nigeria, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Nigeria, January 2002.

[3] *The Week*, October 29, 2001, p. 17.

[4] Lemu, *op. cit.* (note 2).

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Tell*, December 3, 2001 p. 37.

[7] Safiya Hussaini was sentenced to death by stoning by an upper *shari'a* court in Gwadabawa, Sokoto State in October 2001. Safiya, a thirty-year-old mother of four, had allegedly become pregnant after committing adultery with one Yakubu Abubakar, a thirty-three-year-old man who denied responsibility for the woman's pregnancy.

[8] *Tell*, *op. cit.* (note 6) pp.1, 32.

[9] *Newswatch*, October 8, 2001 p. 59.

[10] *Tell*, January 21, 2002 p. 46.

[11] Yusufu Bala Usman, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University and chairperson of the Centre for Democratic Development Research and Training (CEDDERT), Zaria, Nigeria.

[12] The traditional method of banking in Hausa culture mostly practiced by enterprising housewives.

[13] *Cf.* Anne Cooper, *Ishmael My Brother* (Ongar: Monarch Publications, 1998), p. 37.

Faith and Identity

Muhammad Machasin

The problem

Some conflicts in Indonesia bear the mark of religion. The identification with one's religious group can become so strong and exclusive that one forgets that which one shares with members of another religion. This goes against the belief of those pious people of faith who believe it to be wrong to exclude others simply because their object and method of worship are different. Yet, there are those who believe that this exclusion is only fair for theirs is the only true religion, and thus deny the adherents of other religions the right to practice their faith. To them the only proper conduct is trying to proselytize.

Faith cannot be expressed in a void; imposed models of expression make it difficult to find a genuine expression free from any socio-historical burden. Expressing one's faith which is sometimes no more than letting one's identity be known, means that one will shoulder the burden which is imposed from without. From thence comes the problem of telling what one is as defined by one's faith. Should one express one's faith, if one realizes that this expression will entail difficulties? Should one identify with those who profess the same religion even if one knows that there are considerable differences regarding the understanding and manifestation of one's faith? Does one have to confine one's identity to one's faith when one knows that one shares a common humanity with others?

In this essay I shall try to respond to these questions by analyzing the nature of faith and its relationship to identity. At the end I shall make some proposals regarding the possibility of creating an inclusive faith, or a theology of inclusion, as an effort to solving the problem we face today in Indonesia.

Faith and its expression

According to the Prophet, faith has more than seventy branches, the highest of which is pronouncing that "there is no god save God" and the lowest is picking from the street anything that may disturb the passerby. Faith always

manifests itself in conduct, actions or spoken words. However, sometimes it is not easy to define the right actions or words. Every religion has its long tradition of teachings regarding what should or should not be done, and certain ways of conduct have been defined as being the proper manifestation of faith. Nevertheless, there is always room for questioning whether certain deeds are actually a proper manifestation of faith, or whether in a given situation one kind of action is better than another.

Manifestations of the faith were prescribed by human beings (be they prophets, scribes, *ulama* (the community of learned men) or other religious authorities, or even laypersons), living in a specific situation. When the situation changed, some of these were no longer seen to be appropriate. In the case of Islam, some manifestations were formulated at the time of war in the name of God. Accordingly, *jihad* (meaning waging holy war on the enemies of Islam) was consecrated as the highest manifestation of the Islamic faith entailing the promise of Paradise without any question for anyone being killed during a *jihad*. Nevertheless, today when Muslims live in a pluralist state this manifestation of faith is no longer be acceptable. Who, then, defines how faith should be expressed? Since, theoretically, there is no hierarchical order in Islam after the death of the Prophet, it is the Islamic community that has the right to do so itself. However, throughout history the *ulama* are supposed to have had the authority to prescribe the teaching of Islam, although the Islamic community has the right to agree or to disagree. That is why some *ulama* are respected and their teachings followed, while others are not. Basically, every individual has the right to translate his or her faith into words or deeds, and no one can prevent him/her from doing so. But, in order for his or her translation to become a representative manifestation of Islam, other Muslims must have the opportunity to agree or disagree. From thence comes the Islamic methodology of *ijma'* or consensus, the use of which has been restricted to the first generation of Muslims or religious scholars. The discussion of this methodology and its use in Islamic history goes beyond the scope of this paper.

The point here is that there are at least two ways of expressing faith: individual and communal. The first is creative, free and open, but is in itself not authoritative. It can become authoritative through a process of dissemination and a form of public debate which eventually leads to consensus in the community. The consensus is authoritative, but takes considerable time and accordingly cannot easily meet the ever-changing demands of people. Nevertheless, it is from what has been agreed upon by the community and becomes communal identity that others sometimes understand their identity.

Just as culture colors religious groups, this communal identification sometimes raises suspicion, hatred and enmity while, at the same time, it brings peace, friendship and love to those who have the same identity. At times, it serves almost as a uniform, a way of telling others whether one is friend or foe. In Indonesia, some Muslims had to rid themselves of the shameful feeling of being Muslims. Islam used to be regarded as a sign of backwardness, inferiority, impoliteness, etc. leading to some Muslims not wanting to acknowledge publicly their religious identity. Today, we are in a similar situation when many equate Islam with terrorism.

Many factors such as ethnicity, experience, mythology, etc. weigh heavily on people and influence the images they have of one another. Nevertheless, enemy images do not only apply to people of a different religious affiliation or culture, but also to other groups within the same territory. Thus, the awareness of identity, sometimes becomes in itself a heavy burden.

Identity

Who tells us who we are and from where we derive our identities? From childhood on we are told to behave according to certain traditional patterns of behavior depending on whether we are male or female. We are named, inherit our skin color and many other traits without having a choice. Nature, tradition and history force some of these on us, and there is virtually nothing we can do to refuse or change this. No one can refuse being dark brown or white, male or female, Javanese or German. Although one can learn any language one likes, one cannot choose one's mother tongue. Likewise, one cannot change destiny – we cannot choose our ancestors.

However, as we grow older we have the possibility to develop an identity, which is somewhat different to what might have been expected of us. We may, for instance, decide that while we are Javanese, we are not like other Javanese people around us. Thus, here, identity is defined from within oneself, from what one wants.

There is another kind of identity that derives from what one has achieved in terms of education. Thus I am a teacher, a carpenter, or a taxi driver. At a first glance it would appear that this kind of identity comes from within the self, but as we look more closely, we will find that many things from without are involved here. As a teacher I must behave accordingly. As a carpenter I will take a place in society which is "lower" that that of a teacher.

To which kind does our faith-based identity belong? In the light of faith being something based on free choice, this identity must belong to the second: self-defined personal identity. Yet many people get their religion by way of ascription. It is the parents, the socio-cultural environment, or family tradition that are responsible for stamping a religious identity on persons since childhood, even though after reaching maturity they can choose for themselves.

Faith imposes certain obligations and prohibitions. It is through observing these rules that believers derive their religious identity. Sometimes, these obligations compel us to do what is contrary to our tendencies, desires, or natural qualities. For example, since there is no place for gays and lesbians in Islamic teaching, homosexuals are forced to suppress their instincts, at least publicly. Likewise, those whose religious understanding differs from that of the rest of the religious community, are frequently not brave enough to be outspoken. They have to bury their own identity since otherwise they may run into difficulties. Thus, what appears to be a collective identity is actually imposed from the outside. Therefore, there remain suppressed potential identities which one day may emerge as competing expressions.

When do we care?

Certain impulses are needed for us to become aware of our identity. The feeling of exclusion gives rise to the question from whence this exclusion comes and what the difference is between oneself and others. This leads to the question of fairness and provokes feelings of jealousy, resentment and hatred. Exclusion will be perceived as unfairness against oneself and may result in retaliation by those who are being excluded.

Globalization is a good example of exclusion. Through the mass media those who have no place in today's globalized culture can acquaint themselves with the lifestyles of those who benefit from globalization, engendering both negative and positive reactions to this exclusion.

One may also refuse to be identified with the people around one because one does not approve of their conduct. For instance, peaceful "soft-liners" will tend not to identify themselves with the "hard-liners" in the religious group. It is out of this kind of impulse that some people demonstrate their religious identity by covering their heads, wearing crosses or *hajj*[1] white caps, or greeting an audience with *salam*. There are of course those who do this out of sincere religious conviction.

Inclusive faith

The expression of faith is something creative. "There is no compulsion in faith" (Q. 2:256) says the Qu'ran. An imposed faith is actually no faith at all, and it is the individual who knows best what s/he believes. One cannot neglect that socio-historically constructed picture, but one has the right to change it, mend it, or even reject it. Every member of the community has the same right and therefore there should be an exchange of ideas. More than ever before, today's cyber world provides the opportunity to expose the public identities (including faith) that were restrained in the past by dominant cultures, orthodoxy, authoritarian regimes, etc. Nevertheless, this kind of freedom seems to be based on the impersonality and anonymity of the cyber world. We can discuss everything via Internet without our face being seen by others. Nevertheless, in reality obstacles remain that hinder the communication between members of different communities, nations and cultures.

It is a step toward a new, free world. It is high time that we break through traditional barriers in order for everyone to be able to acknowledge their own identity. We have to bear in mind that displaying one's identity may be as dangerous as suppressing it. Acknowledging different identities should lead to a process of learning from one another and finding a place for everyone in today's global society.

I believe that human beings are capable of finding truth by means of reason. Not individual reason, but a common understanding shared by all members of the community through a process of exchanging ideas. Faith, which is actually individual in nature, should be communicated to others in an endless searching of the most appropriate way of life.

Throughout history many believers have unconsciously subscribed to the theology of exclusion, thinking that theirs is the only faith that will save humankind. In a global, pluralistic and humane society only a theology of inclusion can survive: a theology which makes the believer aware of the oneness of humankind.

Our Scriptures could contribute much to this theology of inclusion. The Qu'ran states that God sent Muhammad only as a blessing for all [hu]mankind (Q. 21:107) and there is a saying related to this Prophet that the best people are those who benefit others most. It is true that we can find contrary ideas in the same Scriptures and, unfortunately, these ideas have been more attractive for us so far. However no one can deny that this choice has caused miseries in the history of humankind. Human wisdom is now at stake. It is not to create a competitor to faith, but to choose from what is provided by religion(s) in order to find a way which can save humankind.

Notes

[1]*Hajj* is the once-in-a-lifetime-obligatory pilgrimage of Muslims to Mecca, Saudi Arabia during the twelfth month of Dhul Hijjah of the Islamic calendar. *Hajj* the Fifth Pillar of Islam, is absolutely required of all capable Muslims.

Faith and Identity

Olaf Schumann

The question whether faith has anything to do with the identity of a person is one which most people would spontaneously answer with, yes. Most people would agree that it is impossible to separate faith from personal identity.

We should not take this question too lightly. I remember that when I was a student in the 1960s many Christians would claim to like and respect a certain Muslim or Hindu as a person, while having no respect for his or her religion. Therefore, while we live together in friendship and mutual respect, we may dislike or even reject the other's faith hoping that the Muslim or Hindu leave it, so that our relationship may be more harmonious.

This was a widespread opinion at the time, and I must confess that I was also to some extent convinced of its truth. It was motivated by a laudable intention: to build a bridge to "the other one" so as not to reject him or her. I experienced something similar while I was living in the Middle East. Some of my Muslim friends regretted that such an admirable fellow followed such a stupid religion, as Christianity was considered to be. I found this rather hurtful since I felt that I was not being taken seriously as a person. What and who am I without my convictions, the religious ones included? I realized that a Muslim or Hindu would feel the same way and understood that my way of thinking had not been right.

There is yet another attitude we come across whenever people of different faiths meet; it may be equally questionable although in its intention it is a means of preserving harmony and avoiding tension. I once heard the following statement from someone who was often invited to interreligious meetings, but who, in his writings, was well-known for his ardent attacks on religions other than his own. Since he was an important person, people felt honored whenever he accepted their invitation. He indicated that whenever he met people of other faiths he tried to be polite and friendly to them in order not to hurt their feelings. He would even utter some words of respect about their religion. But when he was together with his own coreligionists, he would point to the weaknesses and shortcomings of the other religion to let his own people understand that only their religion was the true one and the others were perverted.

How does one respond to such an attitude? According to my understanding there are two answers. First, any unkind opinion expressed, even in a closed circle, will eventually find its way to a broader public, including those whose faith was the object

of these disparaging remarks. Religious matters do not tolerate a speaking with two different tongues: sweet and amiable on the one hand, and without respect on the other. Religious matters demand integrity and honesty and therefore, when commenting on other faiths, one should be consistent, irrespective of who one is speaking to.

The second answer goes even deeper. I am convinced that it is a huge mistake to distinguish between the identity of a person and his or her faith. Faith, according to my understanding, is an integral part or aspect of a person's identity. When a believer hears that the basic tenets of his or her religion and faith are insulted s/he feels violated. Therefore, if one respects a person this includes respecting his or her faith and everything else which is meaningful to him or her. I think that for those accustomed to interreligious encounters such insights are self-evident. But, many people are still asking, How can I respect another faith? Would that not constitute a betrayal of my own faith, which is different, and could that not lead to a split identity?

For many people these are undoubtedly very serious questions. If we want to take these people seriously, we will have to take their questions seriously. Nonetheless, I find it more urgent to search for an answer to the question of how we as believers really understand human identity? What are its basic and constituent factors? And only then turn to the question of how we relate to one another.

This is more than a theological question. Cultural anthropologists and psychologists are also researching the elements of human identity. Culture and the human environment are usually mentioned as the basic factors contributing to the forming of a human identity. Whereas this is probably true, one should not forget that culture in particular is a product of humankind and thus the human character is reflected by the culture it creates. Therefore, culture does not only influence human identity, but is also shaped by it, and thus is an expression of it. Culture and human identity mutually influence one another. At the human level they are therefore relational and alter according to changes in living conditions, human consciousness and insights. Since culture is the product of a human collective, not every individual can identify with it. Ethical or conscientious considerations may prevent him or her from doing so. Therefore, in trying to define their identity or "self" in the context of culture, human beings are involved in a continuous struggle to retain their freedom against any hetero-determination, exercised by culture or the environment which may cause alienation. This means that identity is never static, but needs constant reexamination and reassertion. In the search for "the self," every human being has to repel any compulsion exerted by culture or religion reduced to a *fides quae creditur* (dogmas which must be believed without explanation) or obedience to rules and laws without being convinced of their legality.

There are also other relational factors which contribute to the forming of human identity, factors which transcend human understanding. As theologians we cannot just ignore that dimension although, if we were to do so, we would only follow a widespread albeit questionable trend. As a theologian in the Christian tradition, and I think the same would hold true for a theologian in the Islamic tradition, I am also concerned with the scriptural basis. In verse 7 in the second story of the creation (Gen 2:4bff.) it is mentioned that Adam (humankind) became a "living *nefesh.*" What does *nefesh* mean? The Greek version of this text translates *nefesh* with *psyche*. With this term, the Greek concept of *psyche* became the basis of further theological reflection, particularly in the Christian tradition. But *psyche* is a part of human identity, and thus has no longer anything to do with the basic understanding of the Hebrew *nefesh*. *Nefesh*, like the Arabic *nafs* which has been used in the Arabic translation of the Bible and which appears also in the Qur'an means nothing else but "self," or "identity," not just a part of it. Thus, human identity is constituted by the material form taken from the *adamah* ("mother" –earth) and the divine life-giving breath (spirit), both becoming an indissoluble unity and thus making "Adam" and denoting his "self," or his identity. Thus, *nefesh* is not something the human being receives in addition, but denotes what s/he becomes in her or his wholeness. The understanding of *nefesh* as the Greek psyche, and thus as something additional to Adam as his "soul," is not only misleading, but contradictory to the meaning of *nefesh*. Adam (humankind) did not receive a *nefesh*, but became one. This identity was given to Adam by God, and thus it includes Adam's relationship with his Creator.

At this point, biblical and qur'anic anthropology are very close to each other. However, mention should be made of a basic difference between the two regarding the Divine Spirit (or: the Holy Spirit, *al-ruh al-qudus*). While according to the biblical understanding the Spirit issues directly from God, the Qur'an conceives God as spiritual, but the Spirit itself is created. Therefore, according to the biblical tradition, (true) human identity is not without God's presence, while according to the qur'anic understanding "Adam" in his wholeness is a creature. It is important to understand this difference in order to understand also the difference in Christian and Islamic anthropology and the meaning of sin.

Before reverting to this point we need to examine what it means for "Adam's" identity or "self" being designed as the unity of the (in the biblical text: divine) Spirit and the (created) material. This relates him definitely to the Creator, but stresses also his createdness, and both together, denote his "in-dividuality" (= indivisibility).

It is beyond the scope of this essay to elaborate a whole scriptural anthropology. Suffice it to mention some basic connotations related to the human identity as

explained above, in a systematic rather than in a purely exegetical way. Christianity and Islam, consider "Adam" as the creature with the utmost dignity, distinguishing him from all other creatures, including the angels. In both traditions special names are given to him. The Christian tradition, refers to a biblical text (Gen 1:27 where Adam, like in the Qur'an, is perceived as both man and woman), speaks of "Adam" as the "image of God," while the Islamic tradition honors "Adam" as the *khalifa* (Q. 2:30), the *locum tenens* (vice-regent) of God in God's creation.

Both descriptions of "Adam" underline one basic point: Adam's "self" or identity which he received from God is not only a distinction given to "Adam" personally and constituting his nature. It is inseparably related to a special task and responsibility given to "Adam" which distinguishes him from other creatures. It is part of his self: as the representative of God in God's creation to secure the living conditions in God's property which are rooted in the life-preserving order implanted by God in creation. In Christian theology we have learned particularly from the scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Jewish *Tenakh*) that the *imago Dei* (image of God) basically denotes the function of the person given this name. In former times this usually was a king who ruled in the name of a god. "Adam" therefore realizes his identity and justifies his being called the "image of God" by acting and behaving in accordance with the divine will and the divine order infused into creation. The *nefesh* of "Adam" includes this task and responsibility. If "Adam" does not act accordingly, he loses his identity and destroys his image. This is what happened when "Adam" decided to act against God, and thus to replace God and his life-giving order with his own understanding of "order" which finally brought death to himself and enmity into creation. When Adam decided to put himself in God's place (to become like God, but as God's opponent) he severed his relation to God. This is the root of the Christian understanding of sin where Adam purposely destroyed his own identity, his self, and the life-giving Spirit was taken away from him. His "individuality" being "in-divisible" collapsed. This story, however, is taken up again by the incarnation of the *logos* as God's life-preserving order according to the Christian tradition, where Jesus Christ as the true Adam through accepting God's will restored the original disposition of "Adam" and his identity and reestablished their close and trustful mutual relation.

The Islamic understanding of human identity is similar, but not identical. I have already pointed to the different understanding of the Spirit of God as being also created. Also, the original nature of "Adam," his *fitra* which contains the basic confession of God's unity (*tauhid*), has not been destroyed by Adam's disobedience. He is basically still in the position to fulfil his role as God's *khalifa*

although God supports him by sending time and again prophets or messengers with written revelations (books) which are guidelines for his creed and his actions. Moreover, Islamic tradition makes it quite clear that Adam's identity is not confined to his own nature or to himself only. One term for "character" itself is *khulq*, the plural form of this term, *akhlaq*, are the "ethics," the basic principles which denote someone's behavior and attitude. Etymologically, both terms are related to *khalq* meaning creation.[1] Thus Adam's character is part of what God created in him, and therefore inseparably related to God's will who clearly distinguished good (*ma'ruf*) from evil (*munkar*). Adam's character identifies itself whenever it relates itself to other creatures and works for good and rejects evil.

A double dimension of human identity now comes into view. The first dimension is a remaining one and that is the relation with God, the Creator. Adam loses his identity, his self (*nefesh*) the moment he loses his relationship with God. This is exactly what happened according to the Christian, particularly Protestant, interpretation when Adam wanted to be like God and turned against God in disobedience (Gen 3:1ff.), and when God cut off Adam's access to divine life (Gen 3:22f.). Thus the original "image" of humankind was destroyed, and by losing his spiritual relationship with God, Adam lost his self and thus became mortal. Mortal means the impending possibility of a complete loss of any relationship, with God, and also with himself. How deeply Adam was estranged became clear when he confessed his being ashamed of himself and his nakedness. In other words: he could only stand his own presence by covering himself before himself. According to the Christian (Protestant) understanding it is only through Christ's denial to place himself and his own will above or against that of God's and thus restoring the acceptance of God's reign, and finally even by giving his life voluntarily back to God (which is in a way the deepest act of *islam* in its literal meaning) that the original relation between God and humankind (Adam) has been restored. This does not mean, as many critics like to presume, that Christ, or Christians, accept God as an alien authority demanding unconditional submission. The presence of God's spirit, and thus the presence of God's life-giving and life-preserving order in Adam (humankind) is a constitutional dimension of Adam's identity (*nefesh*). Accepting it means to accept the real identity, while refusing it means to refuse this identity. Christ obtained again this real "Adamic" identity when he accepted that the spirit of God should dwell in him. We all know that we live after Adam's separation from God but, according to Christian belief, also after the restoration of the relationship between God and humankind pioneered by Christ. The position in which we find ourselves now is exactly that of wrestling, of struggling to

ascertain our identity knowing about our failures, but also about God's grace and patience with us. Here we have to add a word about a widespread misunderstanding of the role of law, or commandments, in Christian thinking. The notion of the Ten Commandments is quite misleading. They become commandments for those who tend to disobey them. For a believer, they are not commandments which are bestowed by an alien authority, but they express something which is self-evident and therefore needs not to be commanded. Thus, the translation as "Thou must (not) ..." is actually wrong. It should read, "Thou (who is committed to God) will (not) ...". We find the same problem in St Paul's writings and the much explained relation between indicative and imperative. For a believer there is actually no imperative, because that which is expressed as an imperative is self-evident. That is the reason why in faith there actually is no law and no need for it.

Islam, as is well known, follows a different understanding of this story. Adam, because he did not renounce his responsibility but repented when God called upon him and asked for an explanation of what he had done, was not deprived of his *fitra*, "nature," which includes the confession of God's sole divinity and he did not lose his self (*nafs*). But, by being expelled from paradise Adam, also according to Islamic understanding, became more aware of the danger that his *nafs* may be destroyed and his relationship with God may be severed whenever he submits himself to the anti-divine intentions of his *nafs* (Q. 12:53).

We may conclude that both traditions see human identity which is expressed by *nefesh* or *nafs* as being rooted in the particular relationship between God and one of God's creatures, and that humankind is in danger of losing its identity, or self, whenever it loses this relationship with the Creator.

This relationship with God leads us to the second dimension of human identity, a not at all static one. The relationship with God gives humankind a unique meaning and dignity. Nonetheless, it is not just an ornament, and whenever humankind acts against God it is in great danger of perverting or even damaging its own identity, as was mentioned already with regard to Adam and the meaning of sin. The relationship with God also implies an obligation. Humankind was given a task, namely, to work for the well-being of God's creation and to safeguard it. Paradise was symbolized as neither jungle nor desert. The symbol of the garden implies loving care, which makes enjoyable whatever is cared for. God loves God's creation expecting that God's supreme creature love it as well. This God-given, life-oriented task is implied when humankind is called the image of God (*imago Dei*) or as God's vice-regent, *khalifat Allah*. Therefore, this task and its fulfillment are also a constituent aspect of human identity.

This second dimension makes it clear to us that human identity is not something static. By being related to the creative dynamics of God, human identity has to adjust itself to the manifold tasks originating from the place of its destination, God's creation. Creation is not static but develops according to God's design. The same holds true with regard to human society, humankind's first field of activity. The changes in societies, including the change from mono-cultural and mono-religious societies to plural ones, demand the dynamic presence of the believers who have to relate to new neighbors and partners. Encounters which include the sharing of religious experiences are not temptation aimed at losing one's own identity; rather, they are chances to give this identity a profile which is both recognizable and flexible. Thus, human identity, as long as it understands itself in its relation with God and God's creative Spirit, is also dynamic and realizes itself in the way it fulfils God's commission. Human self-understanding only detects an estrangement between itself and God or, between its own will and God's will, whenever it loses its relation with God. Then God's will becomes heteronomous, or a law imposed from outside and considered a challenge to human autonomy. Moreover, not understanding the actual tasks set by God may cause this kind of estrangement.

I am fully aware that many believers, Christian or Muslim, fear losing their identity whenever they communicate with people of other faiths in religious matters; some of them become very apologetic or even polemic in order to secure that their identity—or their understanding of their identity—is not damaged. In such encounters they cannot deny the impression that other people's human identity includes the dimension of their faith. They might also feel that religious aspects found in other faiths may be of some importance and meaning to them, but at the same time they might find such an idea unacceptable. In order to protect themselves from such considerations or even temptations, they try to seclude themselves, frequently accusing those who expose themselves to such encounters of compromising their faith and their religion, and thus opening the door for relativism or even syncretism.

I am afraid that such anxieties or fears are rooted in a basic misunderstanding regarding their identity. It is obvious that many people are opposed to any change in or reformulation of how their faith is expressed. They forget that the formulations they use to express their faith were formulated by their predecessors in faith, who formulated them in situations and while facing challenges quite different from what we experience nowadays. Even language itself has changed. Therefore, while these formulations undoubtedly had their meaning and value in those former situations, in the light of changing situations and contexts, their meaning cannot be communicated any longer, and often they have also lost their relevance. In new culturally and

religiously plural situations such as ours, a living and dynamic faith is usually able to reexpress itself in relevant terms and contents, and to reflect the awareness of the commission entrusted by God in that it touches the needs and expectations of the people who have to find their place in such new circumstances. Fears and reluctance to expose oneself to the new context and to express the faith in new, meaningful terms and actions seem to be signs that the dynamics of faith have weakened or even faded away, and therefore lack the courage for new, realistic and meaningful expressions. Openness and encounter are not matters of relativism, but of an ability to relate the faith to the context in which humankind finds itself now, accepting the tasks now arising as tasks also given by God to a creature or, moreover, a partner whom God has entrusted with responsibility and sensibility. Human identity is not something static. Like the expressions of faith, it is relational and has to prove its spiritual dynamics in encounters in which it manifests the meaning of being a human being who enjoys God's trust. Moreover, the human being has to accept God's commission and behave accordingly even, or particularly, in changing situations and different contexts in that he or she adapts to new tasks. This does not mean that the old expressions of faith inherited from our forebears become meaningless. In our changing situations we acknowledge the inherited expressions of faith as guidelines for us, but as guidelines which have to be followed, not imitated.

I have pointed to some remarkable convergence between Christian and Muslim self-understanding, and have rooted them in the basic meaning of *nefesh* or *nafs*, self. This convergence is not surprising, remembering the common roots of Christian and Islamic thinking. But, of course, the differences may not be neglected either. They cannot be removed, but maybe they can be better respected when we look into the different religious and social situations in which Christianity and Islam first emerged, and which imprinted in both of them very deep and characteristic convictions which later on determined their respective theological traditions.[2] It is not, as sometimes stated, the questions of believing in one God and of being related to God existentially which make the difference between Christians and Muslims; but it is a question of how this mutual relationship between God and humankind works. Christianity originated in the context of the Jewish belief in God the Creator of the universe and God of God's people. The monotheistic faith is the basis of its own understanding of the divine that Christianity inherited from Judaism. The basic question was, How does this one God maintain a relationship with God's people, or with humankind in general, which time and again turns against God? Thus the notions of God's grace and God's move to reconcile himself with God's created partner became the central topics of Christian theological thinking,

culminating in christology, the meeting point between God and humankind. This reconciliation could not remain a particular one, but had to include the whole of humankind. Thus, Christianity became a religion with a universal message. Islam was proclaimed by the prophet Muhammad in a polytheistic environment where the notion of a monotheistic understanding of God and the doctrinal and practical implications this had for the believer, had to be given absolute priority. Again, the Islamic message is understood as a universal one because God is the Creator of the whole universe. Humankind (Adam) is considered to be one, and all its members are called to *islam*. God's compassion with the sinner is controversial albeit important, but not the formative point in Islamic *kalam* (scholastic theology).

Both religious communities are no longer living in situations similar to those in which their religions were originally founded. They have, moreover, at least partly a common history in which they were challenged to stress certain points in order to clarify their own position *vis-à-vis* the other community. But now they are often not only living side by side, but as equal citizens in states which are no longer based on religious ideology. I am, of course, fully aware that this is not the case everywhere, and that in some regions or states Muslims or Christians are still struggling for their recognition as equals. Giving mutual support in the event of discrimination could be a call to common action, based on the awareness that in face of God, both, as God's creatures, have been given the same dignity. Can one side be proud of its identity when the other side's identity has been damaged or disrespected? How do they fulfill their task of safeguarding the divine order and well-being in God's creation in such situations of human misbehavior? This shows us that dialogue, or interreligious encounter, is an important element in our common desire to live according to our God-given identity. Not only through mutual deliberations, but also by common action can we help one another to reach a more appropriate and deeper understanding of the meaning of our self and the role it should play. The danger of losing one's identity in dialogue seems to me to be a very far-fetched and merely hypothetical argument borne out of a situation where this self is preserved in a tower of seclusion and self-defense and thus has already lost its meaning. It is far away from a living faith trusting in God and God's presence.

Nowadays, the situations in which Christians and Muslims have to verify their self-understanding as God's image or vicegerent are innumerable. They are challenged in the legal or in social situations which deprive human beings of their dignity and their rights such as exploitation of human resources, structural poverty and long-term unemployment. Direct human assault on the dignity of other human beings such as torture and other forms of maltreatment, forced displacement, arbitrarily depriving others of their rights

and properties have to be stigmatized because they are an assault on the Creator's dignity and righteousness which God awarded to every one of God's human partners. Responsibility and ethical consciousness in scientific research and making good use of the natural resources are other fields where Christians and Muslims share a common basic conviction about their role as self-conscious creatures with a special relationship to the owner of the universe. There may be - and surely are - differences in articulating the concrete means and methods to define the tasks and to achieve the goals, but both know of their responsibility *vis-à-vis* God who, for them, is not an alien law-giver but the center of their faith which is an integral element of their identity, or their self. Are Christians and Muslims aware that they could be in danger of losing their self whenever they reject or dissociate themselves from tasks with which they are confronted these days? In many situations, men and women have to struggle to obtain their identity, or to find it again whenever it was lost by negligence or by escaping the challenge where it had to prove itself and its validity. Their self, their identity is not safeguarded by an indefinite certificate of guarantee. "For those who want to save their life will lose it" (Mt 16:25).[3] If anyone wants to maintain it, he or she has to be aware of the concrete tasks around which his or her identity has to prove its truthful witness.

Human identity does not exist in a vacuum nor is it unrelated. Christians and Muslims believe that God created the universe and put humankind in the midst of it. There it has to prove that it is realizing its identity as God's most respected and beloved creature. For a Christian or a Muslim, this faith in God defines humankind's identity. God is dynamic and not static, and so is human identity. Only a deep-rooted faith in this God and God's dynamic presence in the world prevents humankind from losing its identity by considering it an unchanging possession.

Notes

[1] For Southeast Asian readers I want to point to my article, "Moral dan Etika Agama-agama ditinjau dari berbagai Aspek," in Olaf Schumann, *Pemikiran Keagamaan Dalam Tantangan* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 1993), pp. 311–322.

[2] The following remarks are close to some ideas I expressed in my article, "Relativism or Relational Encounter? Attitudes in Interreligious and Intercultural relationships," in *Kultur. The Indonesian Journal of Muslim Cultures*, I,1 (2000), pp. 17–32.

[3] See also Mt 10:39 and Jn 12:25.

Reconciliation in the Indonesian Context

Djohan Effendi

Introduction

During the last decades of the twentieth century, we witnessed a religious revival. While it is to be hoped that the transcendental values the religions espouse function as a control mechanism, regarding today's socio-economic and technological progress, the current religious revival has been marked by the emergence of a religious fundamentalism and communalism that tends to be highly sectarian and exclusive. Revival in itself consists of the sense of the reborn embodied in the form of a reassertion of being religious and devout. This phenomenon manifests itself not only in the private, but also in the public domain. Related to this phenomenon is the sense of being threatened by the general decay of society. This psychological awareness has aroused a highly religious sensitivity, leading to the emergence of "purification" and "orthodox" movements, usually consisting of a number of small groups that are commonly closed and exclusive. It is very interesting to note that these movements emerged among university students with a religious background, and alongside the declining influence of established mainstream institutions and organizations.

While the emergence of a religious awakening among the young is to a certain extent gratifying, it poses a serious threat when it takes radical forms, causing intolerance and prejudice among different religious communities. Such a situation is provocative leading to social conflict with religious nuances. As such this is a negative element disturbing good interreligious relations necessary for the development of social harmony.

Horizontal conflict

Today, conflicts in Indonesia are aggravated by ethnic and religious tensions. "Horizontal conflict" is a term used to denote the various conflicts that have

arisen since the collapse of the New Order regime[1] which had allegedly successfully maintained political stability and economic development through effective security policies. There is at present considerable anxiety that if the government fails to restrain social and political discontent Indonesia will disintegrate as has happened in some other former Communist countries. It is therefore vital that the distribution of wealth and economic resources between the central and local governments is regulated fairly and properly. The situation is becoming ever more sensitive and complicated. Local people are more involved in physical violence and mass killings motivated by ethnic and religious sentiments as well as economic discrepancies.

Since 1996, a considerable number of innocent victims have been killed, injured and taken from their homes. An ineffective government, inadequate enforcement of the law and the inability of the police and the armed forces to stop conflict have led to humanitarian disasters. These conflicts mostly began with isolated incidents in Ambon, Sambas, Poso and Sampit. The failure of local leaders, formal as well as informal, to contain these conflicts and to solve them fairly turned them into ethnic conflicts. In Ambon and Poso these conflicts had religious overtones inviting intervention from outside. Fortunately, the Poso and Moloccu conflicts have recently been settled and a process of reconciliation is underway. The spontaneous and enthusiastic response shown by grassroots people on both sides is highly encouraging and promising. A stable harmonious relationship between different ethnic and religious communities requires sincere efforts from all sides.

Uniformity versus multiculturalism

The New Order regime tended not to take into account the multicultural nature of the Indonesian people living in an archipelago, consisting of more than 17,000 islands and hundreds of different ethnicities, each with its own customs and language. With the aim of developing a uniform system of government and maintaining national stability, the regime used military action against those democratic elements that struggled to develop a civil society.

The New Order regime used a "top down" approach in running the country, and consequently did not give enough room to genuine creativity coming from the grass roots. This kind of approach is in absolute contrast to a multicultural approach where local institutions and local leaders help solve their own problems by drawing on local wisdom.

The collapse of the New Order regime has resulted in a vacuum marked by violence and bloodshed. It was during the transitional period that the governmental apparatus did not work effectively and a large number of innocent lives were claimed. A new system, a new approach and a strong new leadership are needed to respond to the challenges of the transition from authoritarian regime to democratic government. The situation calls for a government strong enough to run the country, a productive parliament to issue new and relevant bills, a credible court to enforce the law and, last but not least, a strong civil society to enable the government to run the country in a democratic way. The absence of these conditions will lead to people seeking their own ways of solving their problems which will sometimes involve violence and chaos.

Conclusion

Indonesian society being particularly diverse in terms of economics, politics, culture, race, ethnicity and religion it will not be easy to achieve reconciliation. These factors are closely interrelated and it is difficult to establish trust not only between the government and the people, but also among people. Without a government that can effectively keep peace and order, without the implementation of the rule of law and without mutual trust and respect there can be no reconciliation. Genuine and long-lasting reconciliation, therefore, has to be developed through sincere and real cooperation between local leaders and local authorities at the grassroots level.

Notes

[1] "New Order," was an official term of President Suharto's regime (1965–1998) invented to distinguish the regime from the "Old Order" of the first president of independent Indonesia, Sukarno (1950–1965).

Reconciliation in the Indonesian Context

Andreas A. Yewangoe

Conflicts in Indonesia

The signing of the 10-point Malino Declaration in December 2001 (Malino I)[1] and the 11-point Moluccas Agreement in Malino in February 2002 (Malino II)[2] indicate that efforts to reconcile conflicting parties in Indonesia are bearing fruit. It marks the end of conflict between Muslims and Chistians in Poso, Central Sulawesi and Moluccas Province. This is a great success in the light of the complicated crisis the Indonesian people are facing.

The conflicts are determined by different factors: religion, ethnicity, race and political interests. If the root causes are not addressed, then the unity of Indonesia will be threatened. Despite the different ways in which the conflicts manifest themselves, religious overtones predominate due to the fact that religion plays a significant role in the lives of the Indonesian people. Any interference in this domain is likely to lead to conflict.

Political conflicts: In this essay reference will be made to the conflict in East Timor. Following the UN-sponsored act of self-determination there was growing conflict among the people of East Timor, between those who supported integration and those who supported independence. The pro-Indonesia militia intimidated those who supported independence and forced them to move to West Timor. Those who supported integration were skeptical of UN officials whom they suspected of not being fair during the referendum and giving the pro-independence group greater political advantages. Various sources claimed that the Indonesian army, or at least some elements in it, supported the actions of this militia. As a result, many people, almost one-third of the population of East Timor fled to West Timor, as refugees and/or IDPs (internally displaced persons). Approximately 130,000 continue to live in the Indonesian province of Nusa Tenggara Timur.

Racial conflicts: The 1998 race riots targeted the Chinese people many of whom were raped and killed, and whose property was vandalized and destroyed. Added to the racial

motive were political and economic motives. Over the past decades, the Chinese people have been the scapegoats for all economic and political troubles. Although there are no exact figures it is estimated that 5,000 people have been victims of this conflict.

Ethnic conflicts: Approximately 500 people died during the Sambas riots of March 1999, and the Sampit (and/or Palangka Raya) riots in 2001 between the indigenous people (the Dayaks and Malays, in Sambas; and Dayaks in Sampit/ Palangkaraya) against the "newcomers" (Indon.: *pendatang*) from abroad (the Madurese). Property was destroyed and many fled to Pontianak and other places, settling there as refugees. Many Madurese returned to the island of Madura, in spite of the fact that they had left the island because of the serious land shortage. Many of them no longer have living relatives living in Madura. Negotiations are ongoing between the local government and the Dayaks people in order to enable the Madurese to return to their original home in West and Central Kalimantan. It is difficult to find a satisfactory solution to their problem and there is concern regarding their security if they return to their home country.[3]

Religious conflicts: As already mentioned, religious conflicts have had wide implications. In January 1999, a bloody conflict erupted between the Muslim and Christian communities in Ambon. It all started when a drunken man from the Batu Merah district (Muslim) blackmailed a taxi driver (Christian). This personal conflict resulted in mass riots, during which houses and other property were burnt and destroyed. Since then, the conflict has spread, not only in Ambon, but throughout Molucca (including North Molucca). Religious symbols (churches, mosques, etc.) are being targeted. Sermons delivered in churches and mosques have incited the two communities to fight one another. There is no exact data available, but the government is speaking of over 2, 000 victims.

The 1999 Poso conflict was similar. Starting with a drunk stabbing a youth, this personal conflict led to mass riots and the destruction of property. Despite a number of peace agreements between the two parties hostilities continued until the signing of Malino I.

Tolerance

Indonesia has always been described as a country where relationships between the various religious communities were good and harmonious, especially at the

grassroots level.[4] Indonesia's history is proof of this ability to coexist harmoniously and to accommodate and integrate new elements from abroad. Hinduism and Buddhism have existed side-by-side as symbolized by the fourteenth-century temples of Borobudur and Parambanan. When the world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity) entered Indonesia, they did not wipe out the already existing religions and cultures. Instead, these new religions adapted to the Indonesian context.[5]

In view of this harmony and in the wake of these religious conflicts people are asking why this is happening. What about the philosophical basis of *Pancasila*,[6] once declared the uniting ideology for the pluralistic Indonesia, where everyone, regardless of their religious background, had the same opportunities? Why does religious pluralism become problematic, instead of expressing the richness of Indonesia? Why do religions instead of providing peace between communities with different backgrounds, incite conflicts?

These are difficult questions to answer. Feelings of jealousy on the part of the economically disadvantaged, and the unsatisfactory execution of power on the part of the government, are some of the factors thought to contribute to the present climate. The former political equilibrium has been disturbed by the introduction of various policies which the adherents of a certain religion regarded as unsatisfactory. During the New Order, the so-called SARA (*suku*, *agama*, *ras*, *antar-golongan*–ethnic group, religion, race, inter-groups) were taboo subjects. All related problems were easily solved simply by keeping quiet. In fact, there were just as many SARA conflicts during the Suharto era (1966–1998). The New Order administration seemed to be very reluctant to discuss these problems openly for fear of disturbing development programs launched by this regime. Some of the problems were solved superficially, but the real root causes were never addressed.

In spite of the claim that the New Order had financial and political clout, nothing has been done to deal with the provocateurs or to find satisfactory answers. People are exhausted by the turmoil and are trying to save themselves, their families, their work. Minister Jusuf Kalla said to the conflicting parties in Poso as well as in Molucca: "If you do not want to seek reconciliation, then do not blame me if you fall into the condition of a *pariah* society—a society of marginalized people." If this trend continues, then the people of Poso and Molucca will find themselves in a worse position than those in other parts of Indonesia. This can be avoided if they are willing together to discuss their common future which presupposes a willingness to be reconciled to each other.

Reconciliation efforts

Intervention from outside was inevitable and Jusuf Kalla's initiative to hold the Malino I and Malino II meetings was welcome. Kalla's initiative was supported wholeheartedly by the Chief Minister of Politics and Security, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, a number of other governmental institutions, religious leaders and representatives of the grass roots.

In December 2001, a meeting (then known as Malino I) was held in Malino to discuss the problems of Poso. Discussions were not easy as each community advocated for its own state and agenda. Who would apologize to whom? Negotiations were complicated, almost impossible. Finally, reason won as everybody realized that this human tragedy must be brought to an end under all circumstances. So, on December 20, 2001, the two communities which for three years had been engaged in bloody conflicts agreed to end their enmity and, instead to built a new common future. With the 10-point Malino Declaration both sides agreed to,

To cease all conflicts and disputes

To abide by due process of law enforcement and support the Government's efforts to impose sanctions on any wrongdoers

To request the state to take firm and impartial measures against any violators

To maintain the peaceful situation, the two sides reject civil emergency status and interference from outsiders

To respect one another in an attempt to create religious tolerance

That Poso is an integral part of Indonesia's territory. Therefore, any Indonesians have the right to come and live peacefully in Poso by respecting the local habits and custom

To reinstate property to their rightful owners

To repatriate refugees to their respective original places

To rehabilitate, along with the Government, the economic assets and infrastructures of the area

> To respect all faith followers to implement their respective religious practices and beliefs as stipulated by the Constitution.
>
> In addition, the two factions also agreed to establish two joint commissions. One will deal with law and order, and the other will oversee social and economic conditions.
>
> The two parties will work with the Government to immediate[ly] disseminate the 10-point agreement to the grassroots community throughout Poso. The dissemination activities will be carried out by the officials at all levels in the Poso Administration, starting with the regent, district head, village heads, other low-level bureaucrats and assisted by the military.[7]

Following this declaration, two commissions were formed: the Security and Law Enforcement Commission, and the Social Economy Commission. It is foreseen that refugees will be repatriated and the conflicting parties have been urged voluntarily to return their weapons. Those who disobey will be charged under the new emergency law and the death penalty could be applied.

With the exception of one incident involving the explosion of a bomb in Palu, the people of Poso were satisfied with the agreement. Weapons were returned, refugees returned home, houses and farms were rebuilt and law and order restored.

In view of the success of Malino I, and taking into account the longing of the Molucca people for real reconciliation, a second Malino meeting was arranged in February 2002. There were of course those who were skeptical as to whether the success could be repeated in light of the fact that the conflicts in Poso and Molucca were very different. The conflict in Molucca, they insisted, was more complicated than that in Poso. Further, should the meeting in Malino II fail to formulate an agreement, then there would be no more chance for such meeting in the future. Yet, Jusuf Kalla went ahead despite the many potential hindrances which could prevent an agreement from being reached. He negotiated with the delegation of each community separately, trying to clarify various crucial issues such as the problem of the Republik Molucca Selatan (South Molucca Republic) and the *Laskar Jihad* (the Jihad warrior). The meeting, attended by thirty-five members of each community concluded that the enmity must be brought to the end. As a result the 11-point "Moluccas Agreement in Malino" was signed on February 12, 2002 and the parties agreed,

> - to end all conflicts and disputes

- to abide by due process of law enforcement fairly, faithfully, honestly and impartially, supported by the communities. Therefore, the existing security officers are obliged to be professional in exercising their mission

- to reject and oppose all kinds of separatist movements, among others the Republic of South Moluccas (RMS), that threaten the unity and sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia

- that as part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, the people of the Moluccas have the rights to stay and work legally and fairly in the Republic of Indonesia nationwide and vice versa, by respecting the local culture, law and order

- to ban and disarm illegal armed organizations, groups, or militias, in accordance with the existing law. Outsider parties that disturb the peace in the Moluccas will be expelled from the Moluccas

- to establish a national independent investigation team to investigate among others, the tragic incident on January 19, 1999, the Moluccas Sovereign Front (Front Kedaulatan Molucca-FKM), Republic of South Moluccas (Republik Molucca Selatan-RMS), Christian Republic of South Moluccas (Kristen Republik Molucca Selatan-Kristen RMS), jihad warrior (laskar jihad), Christ Warrior (laskar Kristus), coercive conversion, and human rights violation

- to call for the voluntarily return of refugees to their homes, and the return of properties

- to rehabilitate mental, social, economic and public infrastructures, particularly educational, health, religious, and housing facilities, supported by the Indonesian Government

- to preserve law and order for the people in the area, it is absolutely necessary for the military and the police to maintain coordination and firmness in executing their function and mission. In line with this, a number of military and police facilities must be rebuild and re-equipped to enable them to function properly

- to uphold good relationship and the harmony among all elements of believers in the Moluccas, all efforts of evangelism must highly honor the diversity and acknowledge local culture

- to support the rehabilitation of Pattimura University for common progress, as such, the recruitment system and other policies will be transparently implemented based on the principle of fairness while upholding the necessary standard.

In addition, the truce calls for the establishment of two joint commissions similar to those set up in Malino I. One will monitor the law and order, and the other will oversee social and economic conditions. It also makes provision for the establishment of joint security patrols.[8]

What remains now is to apply the declaration in practice. This requires the support of all Moluccan people. There remain those small factions that did not sign the agreement, but it is to be hoped they will recognize that the time has come to break the cycle of violence.

Reflection

Despite the difficulties the people of Poso and Molucca will face in the future, we have to be grateful that these two declarations have been already signed. The Executive Committee of the *Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia* (Council of Churches in Indonesia) appealed to its member churches in all parts of Indonesia to pray for the success and application of the declarations. Special hope is directed *to Gereja Protestan Molucca* (The Molucca Protestant Church) and *Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah* (Christian Church in Central Sulawesi), that they may be given the strength and wisdom to implement the declarations.

We believe that reconciliation is rooted in God's activity to reunite the broken relationship. Theologically speaking, unity between us can only be achieved if the unity between us and God has been recovered. God has taken the initiative to reconcile Godself with the human being (*cf.* Rom 5:11). This means, its effect and impact must be felt and realized in our reconciling relationship with our neighbors. The message of reconciliation has been entrusted to us (2 Cor 5:18–19). Consequently, it must be proclaimed to all people, even to all creatures.

As churches in Indonesia we are not happy with the conflicts and turmoil, experienced by the Indonesian people in the last few years. The Council of Churches in Indonesia issued many statements appealing to stop human tragedies in Indonesia. Nobody stands to gain anything by perpetuating the violence.

The only way to heal the wounds of people who have been engaged in such a long conflict, is reconciliation, whatever the price. This is probably "the way of the cross." The cup, once drunk by Jesus, despite its bitterness, must also be drunk by us.

Notes

[1] *Cf.* **www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/vID/1735ED094F8D583BC1256B7C00584EF3?OpenDocument**

[2] *Cf.* **www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/vID/3AB5F16761582B93C1256B7C0058F711?OpenDocument**

[3] For further information, see A. C. Manullang, *Menguak Tabu Intelijen. Teror, Motif dan Rezim. Penerbit Panta Rhei a1* (Jakarta, 2001).

[4] See, Victor Imanuel Tanya, *Pluralisme Agama dan Problem Sosial* (Jakarta, 1998).

[5] Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

[6] *Pancasila* pronounced Panchaseela, is the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state. Pancasila consists of two Sanskrit words: "Panca " meaning five, and " Sila" meaning principle. It comprises five inseparable and interrelated principles. They are: belief in the One and Only God; just and civilized humanity; the unity of Indonesia; democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives; and social Justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia.

[7] *Cf.* **www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/vID/1735ED094F8D583BC1256B7C00584EF3?OpenDocument**

[8] *Cf.* **www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/vID/3AB5F16761582B93C1256B7C0058F711?OpenDocument**

Message

We, Christians from various churches in Indonesia and Malaysia, Muslims from different organizations in Indonesia and Malaysia and members of the working group on Islam of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) met in Yogyakarta, 4 – 6 April 2002, for a consultation sponsored by the LWF in cooperation with the Study Center for Religions of Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta. We met in a country which in the past was famous for its outstanding tolerance among adherents of different religious traditions, but which over the last years has become a place where violent and destructive ethnic and religious conflicts have claimed thousands of lives and have in many areas destroyed societal and economic structures.

Against this background, we met to discuss the various aspects of our living together as members of the same society and nation, and as believers adhering to different religious traditions. Although interreligious meetings, particularly those between Muslims and Christians, have a long tradition in this country, we strongly felt that efforts to strengthen and deepen the relationship between us and our neighboring communities should be taken even more seriously.

In light of the recent conflicts, interfaith dialogue and communication have come under criticism from many sides. Encounters have evoked an impression of harmony, and the necessary vigilance, and awareness which could have prevented conflict seemed to have been neglected. We strongly reject distortions of the aims and the spirit of interfaith dialogue. For us, dialogue is not only a necessary means of communication among adult and responsible people in the same society, it is moreover a life-style appropriate for the encounter of people conscious of their common task to develop a civilized, righteous and prosperous society. We deeply deplore that religious differences can be used as tools to obtain political, economic or other advantages to the detriment of others and thus to contribute to the emergence of conflicts and destruction. We hope that all believers, whichever community they belong to, will be courageous enough to oppose such misuse of religion and actively work toward overcoming it. We are convinced that our faiths/traditions teach peace and mutual respect. Because of this conviction we expect from all those responsible for acts of violence in the name of religion, as well as those who are taking part in them, to refrain from doing so and to examine their consciences as believers. We have listened carefully to what his Excellency, the Sultan and Governor of Yogyakarta said in his opening address read by his deputy, Paku Alam IX, “efforts need to be made to

reduce or, if possible, to eliminate the religious factor as a source of conflict by conducting interreligious dialogue."

The words clearly point to the ambiguous role religious traditions can play. As members who are dedicated to the truth and spirit of our respective traditions, we deeply deplore the involvement of religious aspects in the current conflicts. It is a serious challenge for us to reflect truthfully on the lowliness of human nature which is the other side of human height which God has bestowed on God's most excellent creature. In open and honest discussion we exposed ourselves to a great variety of human situations and convictions. We tried to identify areas of divergence and those of convergence in order to get a clearer picture of our tasks in the future to further strengthen a climate of good neighborliness and social solidarity in which we work together accomplishing the good which God has prepared for God's creatures and repelling the evil which endangers the whole of God's beautiful and rich creation.

There was a call for a global ethic based on the Golden Rule.[1] The principle of human responsibility implies a global responsibility. This, in turn, calls for a global ethic implying respect for life, a just economic order, a culture of tolerance, and the concern for equal rights. The special religious responsibility was to encourage an alteration in the inner orientation of the heart.

The potential for such a development was discussed in terms of two human factors that are common to both the Christian and Muslim development – the height, that is, the human potential and the depth, that is the human problem. We need to be hopeful in view of the God-given dignity of humanity but also realistic about the depth of the problem. There was a call for religious education that will develop self-criticism, a critical approach to current systems, the use of moral examples, the inclusion of fair materials about religious traditions, and a concentration on peace and reconciliation.

The text books used in schools need to be revised in order to wipe out discriminatory, or even false, representations of one or another religious group, and to describe the teachings and history of each religion according to the understanding of its own adherents.

Wherever religious instruction is part of the curricula in high schools and universities, it should be presented in a dialogical way in order to avoid one-sided polemics or apologetics. The role which religious arguments have played during recent conflicts is a clear indication that there is a lack of knowledge among students about their own religion and its basic doctrines.

The principle of common responsibility is founded on the realization that all religions are intended to disseminate goodness and to prevent destruction of

all kinds. It implies the effort to overcome social crises and stupidity, to build democracy, mutual understanding and the concern for human rights, to develop religious tolerance and harmony, encourage respectful multiculturalism and strive to solve ethnic and religious conflicts. Other social problems such as poverty, unemployment, violence, moral decadence and ecological problems may be commonly addressed. One method for doing so is through grassroots dialogue related to common and actual problems and characterized by the spirit of respect, mutuality and cooperation.

The issue of interfaith marriage offers a laboratory for practically expressing common responsibility. The counseling of proposed marriage partners demands an understanding of both the biblical and the quranic perspective, For example, the Islamic law, s*hari'a*, clearly lays out the approach to marriage with non-Muslims. In some societies these regulations become the law of the state and involve directives relating to conversion. The stories of the interfaith marriage experience express the strains involved and the need for a thoughtful religious response. Such counseling will take into account cultural, economic, educational, legal, political, social and ethnic, as well as theological dimensions. It will not only call attention to the clear difficulties involved, but also to the rich possibilities that can be developed, where there is equality and mutual respect. The religious traditions in turn must rise above merely literalistic interpretations to take account of our new situation in the contemporary pluralistic world. There is a need for legal and policy reforms that will resist the marginalization of individuals involved in interfaith marriages, reforms that will be based on the principle of human rights.

A major area for expressing our common responsibility is in the issue of religious tolerance and respect. Religious feelings are easily exploited, and traditional Indonesian harmony has been disturbed by recent incidents. True tolerance is not achieved by eliminating diversity, but through developing respect and by identifying universal values, including God's creative purpose. Religious leaders and institutions need to integrate the basic call of the religions to love and goodness, recognizing that there is no substantial scriptural basis for Christians and Muslims to be intolerant and to abuse human rights. In that light we must put forward and interpret for our context scriptural passages that encourage tolerant attitudes.

The Indonesian context points to the reality that close neighbors are often more important than relatives who live far way, and it underlines the importance of human harmony. The religious traditions provide a basis for a true neighbor-

liness by their principles of love, kindness and mercy. Yet, religious adherents often fail to reflect these principles, limiting them to their own communities. We must accept the reality of our pluralistic society, and deal with neighbors through pro-existence, discovering ourselves in our caring interaction with others and witnessing to the loving kindness and peace of God. The factors involved in building a good neighborhood were deduced from the experience of Yogyakarta where we met. They include housing patterns, improving the quality of religious textbooks, the academic study of religions, the existence of independent groups working for understanding and the preservation of social and cultural values within an interreligious community. The crucial religious contribution to the experience is the principle of compassion.

Since faith is based on free choice, it belongs to personal desire. There should be no compulsion, and everyone has the right to change. At the same time, a believer has a responsibility toward other members of the community, implying a process of mutual learning and building one human society for the benefit of all people. Viewed "from above" human identity is the gift of God to humankind, and that includes human beings' relations with the Creator. While a human being's identity is shaped by culture, s/he must also struggle to remain free from it in order to reflect the image of God and to be the vice-regent of God. Adam loses his identity the moment he loses his relation with God. The involvement with a dynamic Creator implies a dynamic task. In a changing world, we must relate to new neighbors and partners, communicating freshly, fearlessly, and relevantly with people of other faiths in religious matters. Thus human identity is relational. In dialogue and common action we come to understand ourselves and safeguard one another's dignity. Dialogical encounters are the best way of overcoming traditional stereotypes about adherents of other religions which named them as heathen or unbelievers (*kafir*) discriminated against them and tended to question their human dignity. Any assault on the dignity of other human beings is an assault on the Creator's dignity. Christians and Muslims share a common basic conviction as self-conscious creatures of the Owner of the universe, and they are thereby called to a common awareness of the concrete tasks around them where their identity has to prove its truthfulness.

Such a crucial task, and one that is now urgent in the Indonesian context, is the task of reconciliation. Some of the current conflicts are basically political, social or economic, but the dominant ones are those with a religious nuance which make use of religious symbols. While there is no perfect answer regarding the roots of conflicts, there is no doubt that the condition requires a willingness to talk together, to be reconciled to each other, and to return to the old situation of peace. The

signing of two major declarations earlier this year related to conflicts in Poso and Maluku are signs that such reconciling desires and activities can bring positive results. Human reconciliation has its roots in God's own reconciling activity and involves the spirit of willing sacrifice, an attitude of contrition about past eruptions of hostility and practical wisdom to prepare for a better future.

Although the religions are often identified as contributing to the emotional vigor of conflicts, it has to be recognized that it is the believers of the religious communities, individuals or small groups, who have contributed to making effective steps toward peace and reconciliation. Most of them had experience in interfaith encounters and were therefore able to find the right way of re-establishing interrupted communication. These individuals and groups need support and encouragement, and their respective religious communities should accept their service as that of role models who need more followers. Interfaith meetings and seminars should be brought more in touch with the concrete situations in which the majority of the people live. This needs intensive and comprehensive theological thought and hermeneutical flexibility.

The call to reconciliation assumes great urgency because of the current revival of religions, especially through the emergence of "purification" movements that greatly influence youth. Ethnic and religious sentiments have been linked with economic discrepancy. Conflict and human suffering have increased since 1996, and these have been aggravated in Indonesia by the collapse of the New Order regime and the resulting vacuum of authority. Sincere efforts are needed to revive the spirit of reconciliation, a truly multi-cultural approach, the principle of local leadership, and the development of a strong civil society. In the final analysis the process of long-lasting reconciliation depends on the development of mutual trust, and through sincere and real cooperation among local leaders and authorities at grassroots levels.

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Notes

[1] "Treat others as you want to be treated." The Golden Rule is endorsed by all the great world religions and is often used to summarize their ethical teachings. For many centuries the idea has been influential among people of very diverse cultures. These facts suggest that the Golden Rule may be an important moral truth.

Diapraxis or Dialogue and Beyond

Sigvard von Sicard

Lissi Rasmussen defines *diapraxis* as "a relationship in which a common praxis is essential."[1] She clarifies that *diapraxis* is not the actual application of dialogue but "dialogue *as* action." It is action and relationship because it involves common action but such an action is undertaken in relation to another person or persons. Dialogue must become a practical habit – *theologia est habitus practicus*. *Diapraxis* calls for a contextual approach to dialogue where people meet and try to reveal and transform the reality they share. In such an engagement theological questions can arise and be dealt with out of which a deeper meeting, a real dialogue can emerge. *Diapraxis* is not idealistic, but takes given attitudes and situations seriously. Whereas dialogue has tended to lead to theoretical discussions, *diapraxis* is a way of life, of living out, of acting, of implementing dialogue. It has also been described as "the dialogue of life" or "dialogue in community." *Diapraxis* is more than that. It is more than casual conversations at the market, on the street, at festivals, in the course of civic or humanitarian projects. *Diapraxis* demands that Christians and Muslims live and work with one another toward reconciling conflicts and helping local communities act on their own choices in self-development toward a more just and participatory society. It is a living process, a way of coexisting and championing pro-existence. It involves people in communities working out ways to deal with violence, hooliganism, military or other despotism and economic depression. It takes place as people tackle corruption, educational and moral standards, etc., together.

In this paper an attempt will be made to consider the practical aspects of *diapraxis*. Why *diapraxis?* Where does one start? What is involved? How does one go about it?

Why diapraxis?

It has become a cliché to speak of the "global village," yet with mass communication, mass media, information technology etc. it is in a sense a reality. People can relate

instantaneously, know about what is happening in geographically distant places, which directly or indirectly has a bearing on their own situation. Exploitation of the environment in one part of the world has ramifications for other parts. Natural disasters, be they earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or floods have an impact much wider than the locality where these disasters take place. They demand global attention and concern, wherever people live. Closer to home parents, be they Muslim or Christian, are concerned about local issues such as health, education, morality and ethics. At the same time, prejudices and misunderstandings exist in every society, which are often the result of structures and processes. These need to be challenged and tackled.

All these concerns are only the external expressions of a general malaise in society and community. At a much more serious level, they reflect a lack of understanding and commitment to the revelations that Christians and Muslims claim as the basis of their existence. A careful examination of the life and teachings of Jesus shows that his emphasis was primarily on relationships and not doctrines. His message had to do with human fellowship and not institutions, with *koinonia* and not *torah*.[2] Similarly, the Qur'an stresses *sharikah* and not *shari`ah*.[3] The synonym for *sharikah*, *ummah* in its plural form, *umam*, refers to people who are the objects of a divine plan, who share a common faith. It does not have the limitation of time or space. As such it stands for mutual support, security and comfort in the same way as *koinonia*. In all cases, *koinonia/sharikah* implies an offer of frameworks and perspectives for all human beings involved in moral struggles.

An understanding and appreciation of what *koinonia* and its equivalents mean in a world marked by injustices and threats to peace and the creation is imperative. People need to consider what the threats are that face them and how these threats affect their situation and the lives of their respective communities. For some, this might mean a consistent emphasis on non-violence; for others an effort to recover a sense of calling. *Koinonia* is not a "house," an institution or a group from which one observes the "outside" world. *Koinonia* evolves as people face common questions, concerns and quests. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) expressed the thought that human beings were living beings made for *koinonia*.[4]

One aspect of life that concerns both Christians and Muslims is secularization because it marginalizes faith and emphasizes a secular ethic unrelated to religious ideals. It eventually produces its own "morality."[5] Globalization makes this even more poignant. It is no longer possible to view moral responses as natural consequences of any given faith tradition because humanity is confronted with global challenges which transcend and question all faith traditions. Globalization raises issues of human destiny and identity in new ways. Such issues point to a need

for communities where religious values can be reclaimed. The ultimate questions raised about human life by secularization and globalization include, What are we up to in this world? Is it chaos or creation? Is it slavery or freedom? Is it anxiety, self-defense and violence or reconciliation and peace? Religious challenges inherent in questions relating to justice, violence and ecological disaster, are the way toward a common approach which will lead to greater unity and development of community. Postmodern thinking is based on the assumption that everything is valuable, that all ideas should be taken into account, yet it seems that religion and religious ideas, norms and commitment should not. Christians and Muslims must ask, Why not? Where the moral core of a nation, society or community decays, evil's power to destroy itself is manifest. The nation, society or community embracing what is evil then tend to live it out in their own political and social lives.

Koinonia/sharikah in relation to ethics does not mean the development of rules and regulations. Rather, it is a process whereby on the basis of faith the respective religious traditions are probed for moral inspiration and insight, and where incessant moral counsel keeps the issues of humanity and the world alive in the light of respective revelations. It is practice that determines theory, rather than the other way round as is obvious in the study of any tradition. An existing social consensus of the difference between right and wrong develops into what is sometimes known as "common law." Theories have evolved on the basis of what people are and have been doing as can be seen in the role of *sunnah*, *`adat* and *`urf*. These are concerned with ethical and moral attitudes and goals which are rooted in the faith in one God and seek to realize God's will on earth, so aptly expressed in the quranic exhortation, "And let there be from you a community (*ummah*) who invite to goodness (*khayr*), and enjoin to goodness (*khayr*), and forbid indecency (*munkar*)."[6]

In most communities and societies there exists a social consensus of the difference between what is right and what is wrong based on a conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit common ethical basis. This in itself is a potential for *diapraxis*.

Many situations around the world are marked by economic, political, religious and social oppression. In those situations, Christians and Muslims have to make sure that the religious perspectives on life are not excluded or marginalized. Faithfulness to the highest norms of equality, fairness and justice demands from both Christians and Muslims a total and holistic commitment in accordance with their respective traditions. Manipulation by politicians, religious leaders, rampant corruption, inequality etc. requires joint action in the form of pressure groups which become the voice of the voiceless, the silent majority. This finds its expression in both biblical and quranic texts such as,

> So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift (Mt 5:23–24).

> Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all (Rom 12:17).

> O People of the Book! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God.[7]

Above all the Qur'an stresses that "God does not change the condition of people till they change what is in their hearts."[8]

Every human being possesses a basic dignity that comes from God. It comes neither from any human quality or accomplishment, nor from race, gender, age or economic status.

The time is now ripe, "now is the appointed time" when the world is moving from reduction to synthesis, from parts to the whole, from structures to processes, from clinical objectivity to epistemology, from building blocks to networks.[9] Christians and Muslims need each other to stimulate and deepen their appreciation of the opportunities and challenges God has given each one of them.[10]

Diapraxis offers opportunities for common witness in real life situations. It is a witness, not against others, but for and with others, a mutual witness of the hope inherent in the biblical and quranic traditions.

> …sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence (1 Pet 3:15–16).

Christians and Muslims have a common religious heritage as can be seen in such quranic *ayat* as

> We believe in God and that which is revealed to us and that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.[11]

> He has ordinated for you the religion which He commended to Noah…to Abraham, and Moses and Jesus, saying: "Establish the religion, and be not divided therein."[12]

By implication Christians and Muslims have a common message to a world in which humanity is threatened, and human beings are being reduced to commodities in a materialistic and commercialized world.[13]

Christians and Muslims who share the common values in their respective traditions regarding the world and human responsibility should be able to work together in the service of the communities in which they live in areas of common concern. Both have difficulties in maintaining human and religious values and identities in a secular world but both have been entrusted with a message.

> He it is who has made you regents in the earth.…[14]

> Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy (1 Cor 4:1–2).

Where does it start?

Repentance, *metanoia*, is central to the Christian tradition encapsulated in the words of the "General Confession" in the Common Book of Prayer,

> Almighty and Most Merciful Father; we have erred and strayed from your ways ... We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone those things, which we ought to have done; and we have done those things, which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us….

Repentance implies letting go of all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice because these break up the fellowship, the community, families and networks through argument, stubbornness, pride, harshness, rudeness, disrespect and so separate people from each other (Eph 4:31).

Repentance in a theological and ethical sense implies a fundamental and thorough change in the hearts of human beings from self-centeredness to God. It signifies an about-turn, a turning unto God (Acts 20:21). Essential elements of repentance are a) a genuine sorrow before God because of false self-interest;

b) a repugnance to sin; and c) humble self-surrender to the will and service of God.

> Whoso commits sin commits it only against himself.[15]

> Ask pardon of your Lord, and then turn unto Him.[16]

In the Muslim tradition the concept of *muhasaba*, of examining one's conscience, goes right back to the quranic concept of *hasaba* – take account of, call to account for, expressed in the *ayah* - a miracle and a sign.

> …(Allah, their Lord, the Just.) Surely His is the judgement. And He is the most swift of reckoners (*hasibina*).[17]

This in turn leads to such concepts as *awwâb* – frequent in returning, hence repenting;[18] *iyab* – return;[19] *tawbah* – return, repentance;[20] i.e., to God. *Tawbah* is a kind of inward purification. It depends on three things, a) a conviction of sin; b) remorse (*nadam*); and c) a firm resolution to abstain from sin in the future.[21]

There is a need for a new interpretation of "who is my neighbor," which affects attitudes that determine each person's relationship with neighbors, human communities and with nature itself.[22]

As in the biblical tradition repentance and works go together.[23]

The examination of one's conscience has to be extended into the social, political as well as the religious realms. On the basis of their respective traditions, Christians and Muslims should discover the need to respect one another's freedom within the law to express their beliefs and convictions. They should come to an understanding of what the other's beliefs and values are as these are expressed in their own terms. It should lead to a respect for the convictions of the other regarding food, dress and social etiquette and help prevent people from behaving in ways which cause offence.

What is involved?

The scriptural implications for both Christians and Muslims is therefore that in order to become involved in *diapraxis* with one another they must start by scrutinizing their own respective attitudes and rethink and reconsider the basis and potential for common action. A starting point may well be the exhortation of Jesus,

> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? (Mt 5:46–47).

This rethinking has to begin by accepting each other as equals and by being ready to listen and to learn from each other. It is a process, a journey of discovery of the concerns and reasons that the other has for particular situations and issues as part of a search for the common good. One aspect of this is an openness to change, a willingness to consider and tackle the issue at hand from a different angle, to view a given situation from a different perspective, an alteration in the inner orientation of the heart. Solidarity means the willingness to see another person as one's self, and to regard injustice committed against another as no less serious than an injustice against oneself. As the poet and preacher John Donne (1571-1631) said "no man is an island, unto himself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." This demands mutual trust in the integrity of the other and a sharing of responsibility.

People cannot accept each other unless they are willing to listen to one another. This demands sensitivity and a readiness to discover and appreciate the framework within which the other is operating. In most cases this has nothing to do with language, since in a neighborhood context it has to be assumed that people speak the same language. However, one's cultural and religious backgrounds shape and determine one's perspectives, one's terminology and one's outlook and hence require a penetration behind the words and expressions used. The relationship has to be between people as human beings not between idealized systems or institutions.

This quest for understanding demands that the parties are honest about their beliefs and religious allegiance. It is very tempting to present an idealistic view of one's tradition, but if *diapraxis* is to have a solid foundation it is necessary to be honest and objective about one's own tradition.

Every institution and policy has to be tested to see whether it enhances or threatens human dignity or human life. Policies that treat people as economic units or reduces them to a passive state of dependence on welfare have to be challenged. This would seek to restore the priority of the human over the economic, the spiritual and moral over the material.

Diapraxis is involved with overcoming economic, ethical, political, social and religious crises, but even more importantly to forestall such crises through common action. This implies establishing those conditions, which make life more truly human, i.e., the right to religious freedom, freedom of speech, decent work

and working conditions, housing, health care, education, the right to raise and provide for a family, etc. Every member of the community has a duty to the common good—*maslaha al-'ammah*—in order that the rights of others can be satisfied and their freedom respected. Sometimes the common good has been presented as being in opposition to and an encroachment upon the rights of individuals. Christians and Muslims need to show that the common good is a guarantor of equal human rights for all, particularly of people on the fringes of society. It implies that every individual needs to be aware of and has a duty to share in promoting the welfare of the community as well as the right to benefit from that welfare.

Justice and righteousness are universal virtues. Laws like Deuteronomy 23:1–6 as shown in Isaiah 56 will no longer apply because of a shift from temple-centered religion and from preoccupation with ritual purity to more universal virtues. Those who submit themselves to the spirit rather than the letter of the law will discover that their tradition is not adulterated, but strengthened and enriched by new insights that arise in common concerted and shared actions.[24]

Diapraxis demands solidarity with men and women in various parts of the world in such a way that one is personally affected by the injustices and violations of human rights in distant places, such as unfair international trading policies, improper treatment of refugees, debilitating arms trade. Solidarity with one's neighbor has to do with promotion of equality of rights and equality of opportunities, which means opposition to all forms of discrimination and racism.

Diapraxis involves tackling subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as mere tools for profit rather than as free and responsible people. People need to be freed from the inertia and passivity that comes from oppression, hopelessness or cynicism and exert greater control over their own destiny. They must contribute to the well-being of others, because the destiny and duty of every human being to become more fully human is enshrined in the Christian and Muslim Scriptures.

How does one go about it?

How can Christians and Muslims bear common witness as they face an unprecedented global, ethical and moral crisis? How can their *koinonia/sharikah* be strengthened at a time when the very survival of humanity is jeopardized? How can they move beyond good intentions and mere statements? How can they

become a "prophetic sign" in a time of increasing degradation and destruction? What is the way forward?

The answer to these questions lies in an understanding of the concepts of *koinonia/sharikah* because they cover various dimensions and levels of ethics, fellowship, unity and diversity, local and global aspects, etc.

Diapraxis has in the first instance to be inspired not by fear, but by the love of God and of one's neighbor. If it is determined by fear then it will be based on self-interest, on the fear of losing one's possessions, position and even one's life, but if it is driven by the love of God and of His creation, then it will be based on the guidance He has revealed as exemplified by the quranic statement,

> [The righteous] feed with food the needy wretch, the orphan and the prisoner, for love of Him, [saying] We feed you for the sake of Allah only. We wish for no reward nor thanks from you. [25]

The attitude behind *diapraxis* is perhaps best reflected in the prayer of Râbi'a al-'Adawiyya (717–801CE),

> O my Lord, if I worship You from fear of hell, burn me in hell, and if I worship You in hope of paradise, exclude me from it, BUT if I worship You for Your own sake, then withhold not from me Your eternal beauty. [26]

Diapraxis requires that Christians and Muslims live and work together. It has to be an harmonious experience of neighborliness.[27]

It requires not just tolerance of but respect for one another. It proscribes any attempt at manipulating religious diversities.

Diapraxis entails determining together and agreeing on projects, which will strengthen the climate of neighborliness and social solidarity through which Christians and Muslims can accomplish the good, which God has prepared for God's creation.

In the complex, pluralistic world of today the old adage reminds us that "united we stand, divided we fall." Paul using the symbolism of the body has made the same point.

> Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many … As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." … But God

> has so arranged the body … that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Cor 12:14, 20–26).
>
> The way forward therefore is for Christians and Muslims to tackle practical issues together and to build opinion through pressure groups. Many concerns are local and diapraxis has to start at "home." Such pressure groups could become the basis for the creation of bodies at national and regional levels that could engage with civic and religious bodies in the pursuit of justice, equality of citizenship, human rights and civil peace.[28]

Such groups could consider a whole range of areas, e.g., education systems, the media, hooliganism, violence, truancy and anti-social behavior because these are means by which not only prejudice and ignorance can be dealt with, but also the potential discrimination, inequality, misuse and exploitation. Common action, grounded in religious commitments, strengthens relationships and lays the foundation for the well-being of society.

Diapraxis starts in sharing joys and sorrows, by showing an interest and participating in the others' festivals and funerals, successes and failures. It starts where people are. In order to involve everyone in a community it has to start with the issues uppermost in people's minds. Above all, it has to be joint planning and joint action. It starts in common projects and activities through which mutual services and friendships develop.

Stewardship—*wakalah/khilafah*—is increasingly imperative as scientific discoveries create new dilemmas for the human conscience. Genetic and social engineering, nuclear fission, space exploration, etc. hold potential for good or evil. They enable humans to improve the quality of life or to inflict untold destruction and misery on God's creation. Christians and Muslims, who claim to serve a merciful God and espouse loving solidarity with all their neighbors, have to develop a shared perspective on stewardship which does not only defend, but establishes the structures for responsible freedom and the rights of the weak and vulnerable.

New ethical challenges in the field of medicine have to be based on medical ethics securely rooted in the respect for human life.

Examples of this are many. A few instances will hopefully help those seeking to be involved in *diapraxis* to discover issues relevant to their own situation.

- The right to life. At the UN Conference on Population and Development Muslims and Christians made common cause as regards abortion.[29] However common action has to go further than the condemnation of abortion, because in the majority of cases the demand for abortion goes back to the breakdown of sexual morality and family life.

- Closely related to this is the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS. Fundamental moral principles have been abandoned and given way to an individualistic hedonism that has its basis in deification of the self.[30]

- Similarly, today's drug culture is threatening not only the health of individuals, but of society. Behavior or substances that undermine and destroy human life and society cannot be tackled only through legislation, tariffs and prohibition or indulgence, they have to be considered in light of the moral and ethical questions raised by religion.

- Muslims and Christians noting the growing waves of genocide and murder, whether connected with programs of ethnic cleansing, political machinations or as a consequence of misconceived ideas of the rights to personal freedom or protection have opportunities to raise their voices in common, first by facing such tendencies in their own ranks and then at national, regional and international levels.

- The right to a fair share of the common good. Capitalism which insists that the distribution of wealth must occur entirely according to the dictates of market forces seems to presuppose that the common good will take care of itself. Its central dogma is the belief that in an entirely liberal economy, each citizen, through seeking his or her own gain would promote the prosperity of society.[31] This does not invariably happen and to claim that it does amounts to idolatry or a form of superstition. The end result of market forces must be scrutinized and if necessary corrected in the name of natural law, social justice, human rights and the common good. Consumer choices must be governed by moral considerations.

This is to some extent highlighted by the following analysis of political systems.

- Feudalism: you have two cows. Your landlord takes your milk from you.

- Fascism: you have two cows. The government takes both of them, hires you to take care of them and sells you the milk.

- Communism: you have two cows. Your neighbors help you take care of them and you share the milk.

- Totalitarianism: you have two cows. The government takes both of them and refuses to admit that they have ever existed while at the same time forcing you into the army. Milk is prohibited.

- Capitalism/liberalism: you have two cows. You sell one and buy a bull. Your herd grows which is also the case with your economy. You sell them all, retire and live nicely off the returns.

- Creative capitalism/liberalism: you have two cows. You sell three of them to your company which is quoted on the stock market. You use bank guarantees written and signed by your brother-in-law at the bank, and use a debt/equity swap with an official bid so as to get all four cows back together with a tax reduction for the five cows. The milking rights for the six cows are through an agent transferred to an offshore company where the controlling interest is held by one of your closest friends who sells all seven cows back to your own company. The annual accounts confirm that the company owns eight cows with an option to buy one more.

From here the step to the bane of corruption is only a short one. This takes various forms, but is primarily concerned with financial irregularities. Its prevalence is clear from the vast number of local expressions given to the practice, e.g., *rushwa*, *hongo* (Swahili), paying off, buying off, bribe, inducement, backhander, enticement, sweetner, kickback, cut; *fasad* (Arabic) Whatever consequences this may have for individuals or communities, Christians and Muslims have to stand on the firm foundation of their respective traditions remembering that,

> The orphan must not be oppressed and the petitioner should not be brushed aside.[32]

> Give unto orphans their wealth. Exchange not the good for the bad nor absorb their wealth into your own wealth. Those who devour the wealth of orphans

> wrongfully, they do but swallow fire into their bellies, and they will be exposed to a burning flame.[33]
>
> Fill the measure when you measure, and weigh with a right balance; that is meet, and better in the end.[34]

Corruption does not only have to do with actions. It is the state of mind which for instance seeks to justify the production and trade in arms which by the nature of things enriches the rich, but leads to the death and destruction of the innocent often justified with a shrug of the shoulders by the expression "collateral damage."

Communities today are much concerned with the alienation and depravation if not the depravity of the young. In some countries, prisons and youth detention centers are being expanded, curfews are imposed on children as young as ten years old, parents find themselves called to police stations to collect their children and are ultimately fined. These approaches reflect societies set on a curative rather than a preventative approach. They deal with situations *post facto* rather than anticipating them. Christians and Muslims on the basis of their respective traditions need to give these situations careful consideration, make their voices heard and take appropriate action.

Christians and Muslims are increasingly concerned with consumerism in which by constantly coming up with new models producers hope to entice consumers to acquire the latest models thus using up limited resources The individual is reduced to the status of an isolated economic agent, whose life has meaning only as a consumer. Common action is needed which will demand responsibility for quality from the producers not just to meet some minimum standards, but which takes into account ecological and human factors. To promote the idea that the individual is primarily to be considered by society as a consumer is contrary to the teachings of the Bible, the Qur'an and any rational idea of what a human being really is.

Advertising on billboards, on television, through unsolicited mailings etc. not only creates a feeling of need, but often also involves questionable ethical and moral issues. If society has been able to campaign against cigarette advertising, it should be possible for Christians and Muslims to join together in campaigning against the wastefulness of unsolicited mail, sexually explicit billboards, inappropriate innuendoes, obscene language and violence in films and on television, the exploitation of women in advertising, etc. Advertising is in danger of producing societies where the satisfaction of real or artificial needs take priority over all else. If it is allowed to continue the result will be the decay of public values and standards of decency.

This development demands that Christians and Muslim actively address the media and its manipulation of sensational, simplistic and stereotypical images. Christians and Muslims have to make a more creative use of the latest tools of communication. Christians and Muslims share a moral language that is the objective basis of right and wrong, and must challenge the contemporary view that morality is subjective and is based on mere assertion of an individualistic opinion.

Christians and Muslims are equally concerned with the way in which religion is manipulated, misused and used as a political tool either for election purposes or for propping up or maintaining a particular interest. Educational programs in schools, colleges, universities and adult education systems have to be tackled so that they enhance the understanding and appreciation of participants' respective cultural and religious traditions in pluralistic societies.

Seminaries, colleges and *madaris* (Qur'an or mosque schools) should scrutinize their curricula and materials dealing with the Muslim and Christian traditions and replace false and contentious materials with ones that reflect the Muslim or Christian self-understanding of their tradition. Consideration should be given to inviting qualified Muslims and Christians to each other's institutions to present their respective traditions.

Communities are exploited through tourism, where the income generated through various ventures does not benefit the local community, but is siphoned off to make the rich richer. Countries such as Kenya have tackled eco-tourism to make sure that their resources are not devastated. Tourist brochures, rather than highlighting historical and cultural values, seek to attract customers by pointing to the more sleazy side of life. The pursuit of profit must not be allowed to override moral considerations. Based on the ethical and moral values in their respective traditions, Christians and Muslims could join together to offer what is known as "alternative tourism" as has been done in Palestine. This would offer visitors a much deeper and closer insight into the life, history, culture and religious traditions of the peoples of the area.

In most societies, work and employment have tended to become nothing more than a form of a commercial contract since this reduces the individual to an economic commodity. This can lead to the alienation between workers and their labor. An employee is not just a commodity to be bought and sold according to market requirements; this is tantamount to a new form of slavery. Work is more than simply a way of making a living. It is participation in God's creative activity. It increases the common good. The creation of wealth through productive activity is a right and a duty. Properly organized it can become a source of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Proselytism, by fair means and foul, has bedeviled relationships in communities. Overzealous people lacking sensitivity for the faith and ways of others have ignited tensions that in some instances have flared into open civil strife where governments have had to intervene. For adherents of two traditions that claim to expound peace this is clearly an anomaly. Christians and Muslims have an opportunity to deal with these situations and of turning them to the benefit of their communities where people from the two traditions discover deep and enriching insights in their own faith through tackling excesses.

The obverse is the common task of assuring tolerance and religious freedom to enable members of the community to have full freedom to worship and practice their faith without hold or hindrance.

Poverty is an obvious area for *diapraxis*. It demands that Christians and Muslims recognize the needs of people in the community without discriminating according to religious adherence.

Sharing religious experiences evolves as a result of *diapraxis*. In tackling common concerns, Christians and Muslims are bound to refer to the underlying religious principles for their involvement. This can in turn lead to sharing in reading, expounding and reflecting upon each other's Scriptures.[35] From this the step to sharing in meditation is a natural one. Meditation is a strong component in the two traditions. Through it, shared spiritual insights come to the fore, rather than a purely intellectual analytical exchange. Whether Christians and Muslims should join in common prayer will have to be considered by participants in *diapraxis*.

Diapraxis leads to a change in the conditions in which people's living conditions, be it physical suffering, political, social, economic oppression, pollution or ecological catastrophe. It is the basis from which theological reflection takes off. It liberates people from concerns about doctrines, rituals and the salvation of individual souls and enables participants to concentrate on identifying and understanding the causes of oppression and suffering, and so to work out how to tackle them. *Diapraxis* is not concerned with learning the truth, but doing the truth, because the truth is in the common action. An example of this is the Committee on Interreligious Development Action established in 1995 by three Christian and three Muslim organizations.[36] Its aim is to offer a more effective humanitarian aid and witness to common Christian and Muslim values. Ethics is the key to *diapraxis*. The building up of a community that contributes to the well-being of people is more important than religious differences. In situations of dire need there is no place for mutual condemnation or religious strife. The common experience of tackling floods, draughts, volcanic eruptions, epidemics,

etc. leads to an experience of God's presence in daily life. Imprisonment, loneliness, family issues help Christians and Muslim understand each other better, and lead to solidarity and openness in religious matters.

Radicalism, fanaticism and extremism are other areas where Christians and Muslims can find common ground. Extreme viewpoints are condoned neither in the Christian nor in the Muslim tradition. A recent development has been common action by Christian and Muslim "chaplains" in British universities.[37]

Different international interreligious organizations offer assistance, relationships and expertise of various kinds. They share similar purposes even though each has its own institutional objectives. Such organizations have been involved both positively and negatively in interreligious cooperation in particular social, religious and cultural contexts. Their representatives need to sit down together to take stock of the ramifications of such involvement. They need to make sure that the purposes and framework for participation are transparent, so that it is clear who makes the decisions and funds the initiative. The public character of the initiative and the organization's participation in it has to support the stated purposes of the initiative.

Town planning needs to be considered by Christians and Muslims.[38] The traditional pattern has been for adherents of each tradition to live together in what might be described as ghettos, or *sabon garis*, quarters for strangers. There may have been good reasons for this but with globalization this can no longer be condoned as it tends to perpetuate separation and suspicion. Today with the threat of violence the concern must be for meaningful and good neighborliness.

During recent disturbances in Nigeria some lives were saved because Muslims protected their Christian neighbors and vice versa. Such expressions of friendship and mutuality need to become a common goal. There is a need for the development of a pro-existence attitude in which people can discover their inner selves through caring interaction with others, which bears witness to the loving kindness and peace of God.[39]

Marriage and family life which is the very foundation of society is today under threat. In pluralistic societies interreligious marriages are common. These are an opportunity for real *diapraxis*. The partners in such marriages as well as their respective families and communities are faced by the challenge such marriages present. They require a thoughtful religious response. It is only as everyone involved approaches the cultural, economic, educational, legal, political, social, ethnic and theological issues that arise in a constructive and positive manner that the future stability of the community and society can be secured. The religious traditions must rise above mere literal interpretations to take account of the new situations in the

contemporary pluralistic world. Legal and policy reforms have to be introduced so that individuals involved in interreligious marriages are not marginalized.

Refugees and asylum seekers are a perennial concern in many parts of the world. Their plight as well as the conditions that create the necessity for people to seek refuge in other parts of the world is a common concern addressed by the Bible and the Qur'an.

> Have you observed him who belies religion? That is he who repels the orphan and does not urge the feeding of the needy. [40]

> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured (Heb 13:2–3).

Gender discrimination is perhaps one of the most widespread Faith and Identity phenomena in the world today. It is not confined to any one society or community and requires Christians and Muslims to reconsider their respective traditions in the light of the revelations that they have received. These clearly portray the equality of women and men as human beings, given their different psychological and physical makeup. These however have given rise to cultural interpretations which have led to oppression and discrimination.[41]

Christians and Muslims are called to bear witness in the world according to their respective traditions.

> And strive for Allah with the endeavour which is His right. He has chosen you …the faith of your father Abraham. He has named you Muslims of old …that the messenger may be a witness against you, and that you may be witnesses against mankind [sic].[42]

> And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations (Mt 24:14).

…and beyond

The above material is but an indication of the many areas where *diapraxis* can take place. It offers an opportunity to exchange conflict for meaningful conversation.

That, however, is but the beginning. Working together, acting together, etc. lays the foundation for a meaningful dialogue because once you have established a relationship the opportunities for considering the underlying ideas and reasons or rationale for your involvement crop up automatically. You cannot get involved in the struggle for human rights, against discrimination, exploitation etc. without sharing the convictions which compel you as a Christian or a Muslim to get involved in such a struggle. Beyond *diapraxis*, therefore, lies the whole area of understanding the driving force, the motive behind your actions. That sharing opens the doors to a deeper insight into the faith and hope that is within each participant.

Since *diapraxis* has a religious foundation, now is the opportunity to unveil the many and varied reasons for the involvement. Dialogue opens the door for sharing the very sources of the faith, the revelation God has so bountifully given in the Bible and the Qur'an. This is not the place to spell out what the dialogue should be about or where it begins. If it did it would be a theoretical construct. Dialogue has to grow out of the situations in which *diapraxis* takes place. What follows therefore is not an agenda, design, strategy or paradigm, but simply an indication of the kind of topics that those who move beyond *diapraxis* to dialogue, may find helpful.

It is very likely that participants will want to share their respective scriptural understandings of God's purpose with creation and human nature encapsulated in such scriptural statements as, "what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" (PS 8:4). "(Your Lord) created man [sic] from a clot… (and) ...taught man [sic] that which he knew not."[43] From these fundamental issues it is easy to move on to the many ethical guidelines in the Scriptures and ultimately to the participants' respective understanding of prophecy, revelation, human fallibility and its consequences, justification by faith, *'ubudiyah*, the kingdom of God, prayer, the hereafter etc.

Out of such dialogue there is bound to grow, by the grace of God, a deeper understanding of the glory and greatness of God, who is Lord of the worlds, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Owner of the Judgment Day unto whom, the only wise God be glory and majesty, dominion and power.[44]

Diapraxis: some basic considerations

Those who contemplate involvement in *diapraxis* may find it useful to reflect on some of the following questions. They can in the first instance be used by Chris-

tians and Muslims for internal consideration, but may be helpful once Christians and Muslims agree upon a project or action.

Who are we?

a) We are human beings

b) We belong to a family

c) We belong to a community of faith

What are our basic human needs?

a) Health and well-being

b) Values and morals

c) Care and concern

d) Recognition

What are we up against?

a) Moral decadence—exploitation

b) Materialism

c) Secularism

d) Human rights violations

e) Natural and human-made disasters—famine; wars; ecology; environment

How can we tackle this together?

a) Get together

b) Listen to one another

c) Be willing to change our minds about and attitudes toward one another

d) Respect one another including our respective Scriptures and traditions

e) Share insights based on our respective faiths

f) Consider common needs together in the community, region, country

f) Serve and work together on common projects

Notes

[1] The term *diapraxis* was first proposed by Lissi Rasmussen in "From *Diapraxis* to Dialogue. Christian-Muslim Relations" in Lars Thunberg, Moti Lal Pandit and Carl Vilhelm Fogh-Hansen (eds.), *Dialogue in Action. Essays in Honour of Johannes Aagaard* (New Delhi: Prajna Publications 1988), pp. 277–293 and subsequently developed in her book, *Diapraxis og dialog mellem kristne of muslime* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 1997), p. 281.

[2] See Jn 17:21 "that they may all be one…". (*Cf.* Ps 33:15 "he who fashions the hearts of them all …"). Fellowship of believers embraces confession of faults one to another with prayer (Jas 5:16); assembly, with exhortation and provoking to love and good works (Heb 10:24,25); "ministering to the saints" (Acts 11:29); bearing the infirmities of the weak and edification (Rom 15:1); love for and fellowship with one another are necessary to, and an evidence of fellowship with God (Jn 4:12) See Thomas F. Best & Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *Koinonia and Justice, Peace and Creation: Costly Unity* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993); WCC, T*owards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness*, Faith and Order Conference, Santiago de Compostela, August 1993.

[3] *Surah al-Nisa* 4:1 "your Lord created you from a single soul...."(Cf. also *Surah al-A`raf* 7:189); *Surah Al 'Imran* 3:103 "And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate." Compare *ukhuwah*, *jam'iyah*, etc.

[4] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, revised edition translated by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), VII,10; 1242a 25.

[5] The term "ethical" is used in the sense of ideas relating to morals, to the treatment of moral questions. The term "moral" is used to cover a concern with character or disposition and with the distinction between right and wrong.

[6] *Surah Al 'Imran* 3:104,110; *al-'amr bi 'l-ma'ruf wa 'l-nahy 'an al-munkar.*

[7] *Surah Al 'Imran* 3:64

[8] *Surah al-Ra'd* 13:11 (*Cf. Sûrah al-Anfal* 8:53) Compare George Herbert (1593–1633), *Outlandish Proverbs* (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1640), "God helps those who help themselves."

[9] Asghar Ali Engineer in K. G. Saiyadin, *Sanctions for Peace: Islam*, World Religions, no. 23, pp. 54f.; IIsmail Raji al Faruq, *Trialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1995), pp.3f.

[10] Ali Merad, *Charles de Foucauld au regard de l'Islam* (Paris: Éditions du Chalet, 1976).

[11] *Surah Al 'Imran* 3:83. *Cf. Surah al-Baqarah* 2:136.

[12] *Surah al-Shura* 42:13.

[13] *Surah al-Hajj* 22:78. *Cf.* Acts 22:15.

[14] *Surah al-Fatir* 25:39, *Cf. Surah al-Baqarah* 2:30; *Surah al-An'am* 6:165.

[15] *Surah al-Nisa* 4:111.

[16] *Surah Hud* 11:90. *Cf. Surah Al 'Imran* 3:133-136, *Surah Muhammad* 47:19

[17] *Surah al-An'am* 6:62.; ibn Mansur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, sv. hasaba. *Cf.* Hebr *darasha*–give account, demand, search. For a careful and systematic analysis of *mahasaba*, see Magaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad. A study of the life and teaching of Harith B. Asad al-Muhasibi* (781–857 CE) (London: Sheldon Press, 1935). She refers to his book *Kitab Muhasabat al-Nufus* (Book of Self-examination) also known as *Sharh al-Ma'arifa wa badhl al-Nasiha* (Exposition of Gnosis and the Bestowal of Good Counsel), p. 53.

[18] *Surah Qaf* 50:32.

[19] *Surah al-Ghashiyah* 88:25.

[20] *Surah al-Tawbah* 9:104; *Cf.* Carol LaHurd, "'So that the sinner will repent': Forgiveness in Islam and Christianity," *Dialog*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1996), pp. 287–292.

[21] Ghazali, *Ihya' ulum al-dîn*, book 4.

[22] *Cf.* Lk 10:30–36.

[23] *Surah al-Furqan* 25:70.

[24] *Cf.* John F. A. Sawyer, *Daily Study Bible. Isaiah*, vol. 2 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1986), p. 160.

[25] *Surah al-Dahr* 76:8f.

[26] Quoted in Margaret Smith, *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East* (London: Sheldon Press, 1931), p. 224.

[27] *Cf. Surah al-Nisa* 4:36 "Show kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is kin (unto you) and the neighbour who is not of kin, and the fellow traveller and the wayfarer and (thye slaves) whom your right hand possess."

[28] Th. Sumartana, "Religion and the Human Right," *Newsletter Interfidei*, Institut Interfidei, Yogyakarta, Special Edition (2001), pp. 23f.

[29] UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 5–13.9. 1994, Cairo. A. Shepherd, Abortion debate deferred as more voices join the Vatican. icpd:ngonetny in igc:icpd. general; Discours de l'Ambassadeur Ahmadou Ali Diaw, Directeur Général Adjoint, ISESCO. **www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/ngo/940912124617.html**

[30] I am indebted to Dr Muhammad Haron of the University of Botswana, formerly of the University of the Western Cape for this information. See also *Ar-Rashid*, October 2001.

[31] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, at **www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html**

[32] *Surah al-Nisa* 4:2,10

[34] *Surah al-Isra* 17:35. *Cf.* Lk 6:38.

[35] See Lissi Rasmussen, Appendix 2 "Refleksioner over bibel og koran," in *Diapraksis og dialog mellem kristne og muslimer* (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag 1997), pp. 140-164, where such passages as *Surah al-`Asr* 103 and Psalm 37:3–4, Mt 7:18–21 and *Surah al-Nur* 24:52–54, Rom 8:18–23 and *Surah al-Baqarah* 2:177b, *Surah al-Baqarah* 2:157–158 and Heb 11:1, etc. are considered. See also Andrew Rippin, "Interpreting the Bible through the Qur'an," in G. R. Hawting and Abdul Kader A. Shareef (eds.), *Approaches to the Qur'an* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 249–259. R. P. Modayil, "Experiential Moments in Interreligious Encounter," in Peter C. Phan (ed.), *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), pp. 247–256; M. Forward, "How do you read?: The Scriptures in Interfaith Dialogue," in Peter C. Phan (ed.), *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), pp. 103–115.

[36] The organizations involved are Church World Service (USA), Catholic Relief Service (USA), Kirchlicher Entwicklungsdienst (Germany), Rabita al-Alam al-Muslimin (World Muslim League) and two members of the International Islamic Council for Development and Relief. It was inspired by the efforts of the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

[37] "Student faith groups unite to fight fundamentalism in campus," *The Times*, Saturday March 2, 2002.

[38] *Cf.* M. Amin Abdullah, "Neighborology and Pro-existence," in this publication.

[39] *Surah al-'Araf* 7:96

[40] *Surah al-Ma'un* 107:1-3; *Cf. Surah al-Nur* 24:22; *Surah al-Hashr* 59:8.

[41] *Surah al-Nisa* 4:1. *Cf. Surah al-A'raf* 7:189. Gen. 1:27.

[42] *Surah al-Hajj* 22:78.

[43] *Al-'Alaq* 96:2,5

[44] *Al-Fatiha* 1:2–4; Jude 1:25.

An Indonesian Experience

Martin Sinaga

It is no exaggeration to say that today in Indonesia any project of an interreligious nature is becoming an urgent matter. Something like "dialogue or die" has its context in Indonesian society, and this notion has its roots in the long history of religious encounter throughout the archipelago. An analysis of the history of the religious scene reveals not only the context, but also the birth of interreligious dialogue and the urgent need for dialogue.

Not long ago, during the authoritarian regime of Suharto (1965–1998) there was religious harmony, but what appeared to be harmony (*kerukunan*) on the surface, did not reflect the whole reality. The religious harmony was only a reflection of a long process of de-politicization the regime imposed on the people. Religion was one elements of civil society to be targeted. The logic of the regime was that only after de-politicization could society be modernized and developed. A quasi-religious ideology *Pancasila* was introduced to replace any religious basis for a national worldview.

The people accepted such an authoritarian system for almost thirty-five years, mostly due to the 1965 traumatic genocide of around one million people suspected of membership in the Communist Party. The reason for mentioning this history is to point out that the religious harmony lasting for thirty-five years was probably the result of that event. It was not the consequence of religious dialogue. People experienced a de-confessionalized process of religion. The social perspective or engagement of religion was crippled and could only be shown through the ritual of praying for the president.

The Indonesian religions, due to the patronizing power of the state, for their part expected the state to help them spread their messages. Sometimes the state rewarded the religions, e.g., through the establishment of the Office of Religious Affairs (*Departemen Agama)*. As a result of the work of this Office many religious programs reached the 200 million Indonesians. It meant that religion was interpreted as a formal and official institution, but also as a specter producing fear and myths. As former Indonesian President, Abdurahman Wahid, pointed out, it was through such a process of religious development that Indonesians, after the fall of Suharto, have experienced enmity and prejudice. The conflicts, which sometimes result in violence and usually have their origin in economic and political situations, are attributed to religious tensions.

Religious studies and dialogue

In spite of the Suharto regime's hegemony, some studies on religion and dialogue were conducted and continue to take place. One of the most significant ones was that of the late Muslim intellectual, Mukti Ali, who after graduating from McGill University, Montreal, Canada in 1957, introduced a limited series of studies in Yogyakarta. He also introduced the Comparative Study of Religion as a new subject in the State University of Yogyakarta in 1961. He recognized that the study of religion was a way to revitalize religions, because, according to him, a new appreciation of religions is needed when religions need to free themselves from a literal interpretation. The new approach created a huge interest in an objective study of religious doctrine and interfaith.

Mukti Ali discovered that only after the students had come to an intellectual understanding of different religions could dialogue proceed in a creative manner. He felt that they were able to meet adherents of other religions more freely to engage in meaningful dialogue. Other institutions developed similar programs in the same vein. The Indonesian Council of Churches through its Board of Religion and Doctrine participated by promoting an annual seminar on interfaith from 1980 onwards. Christian theological seminaries also began to promote Islamic studies and *theologia religionum*.

Religious leaders began to hold formal meetings under the banner of "dialogue," but the discussions were mainly directed to issues of religious harmony as a prerequisite to nation building and development. They did not focus on getting to know and respect the existence of other faiths. These encounters prevented religious leaders from seeing the dynamics and crises of the nation. Only after the student demonstrations which toppled the Suharto regime in May 1998 did some religious leaders change their language and voice their concern. But it was too late. Communalism appeared and led to religious and ethnic segregation. Violence erupted resulting in a moral vacuum. Things fell apart and there was no center which could hold things together.

Dialogue as an issue for civil society

Nevertheless, some people have moved in another direction in their thinking about religious encounters. These thinkers believe that dialogue between Christians and Muslims should be part of a democratic process and that inter-communal

relationships can only be built through dialogue could inter-communal relationships. Only if communities were able to put aside their unnecessary rivalry could democracy be consolidated. They called on people of religion to join hands in building an open, democratic society by developing a dialogical attitude toward members of other religions. The result of their vision brought about a new interfaith movement, *Dian-Interfidei*, which has lead to the breakthrough in religious dialogue in Indonesia.

Dian-Interfidei can be seen as a new genre in interfaith dialogue. The urgent need for promoting an open and democratic society had to face both social criticism and interreligious dialogue. This approach recognizes the religious dynamic in dialogue, but also found it in the context of social transformation. Only on this basis, it is thought, can society and religion be criticized and renewed. The centrality of the people is recognized as agents of change inside society and religion. *Dian-Interfidei* was initiated in 1991 by the late Th. Sumartana and has promoted a new perspective of the critical role of interreligious dialogue in Indonesia. Once again, "dialogue or die" appears to be a reality.

Future perspectives

There seems to be another question concerning the existence of interreligious dialogue in Indonesia. How is this dialogue going to bring these concerns and processes inside the dynamic and life of each religious community? Interreligious dialogue must not be carried out only by NGOs, but also by the religious communities themselves. Only after that will dialogue cease to be a matter of reactions and become a way of being religious in a pluralistic society.

This will require an internal criticism of the theological systems of the religions, and at the same time a new structure of society, while religious institutions remain autonomous promoting their authority for the renewal of Indonesian society. This requires both a new attitude and process of learning within the religions and the development of a democratic process within society.

A Nigerian Experience

David L. Windibiziri

Like many other countries, Nigeria has been experiencing growing confrontation between Christians and Muslims over the last twenty-five years. Before the riots in Kano, Kaduna, Yola, Bauchi, Kafanchan and elsewhere in the 1980s and 1990s, tensions and jealousies pertaining to government appointments were less apparent.

A government inspired attempt in 1991, during which a group of Christian and Muslim religious leaders suggested that there should be forums for dialogue at all levels of government—federal, state and local levels—did not lead to anything. The Lutheran Church of Christ fostered the vision of creating an interfaith dialogue center where Christians and Muslims could meet to talk together, study together and generally have a forum for mutual interaction and exchange of ideas to enhance peaceful coexistence. The beginning was made with an International Conference for Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations held in November 1993, where forty-six Christians and Muslims met for the first time. Since then, four more conferences have been held in 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2002.

As far as possible these conferences have been organized in such a way that there are an equal number of representatives from both faiths, and that there are always two presenters for any given topic, one Christian and one Muslim. Topics include: justice and peace – the biblical perspective; the qur'anic perspective; the biblical/qur'anic teaching on the love of God; why do we experience fanaticism? A Christian view, a Muslim view; the position and rights of women in society – a Christian view, a Muslim view; the role of religion in sanitizing politics – a Christian view, a Muslim view.

We soon found that although we have been living together as neighbors for many years there is considerable ignorance about one another and our faiths. It has therefore been very much a learning period. We have been able to analyze our situation and background, and already at the first conference we remarked that most of the causes for crises and confrontations are not basically religious, but based on historical, political, social and economic issues.

While Islam spread to Nigeria mainly from the north through the desert about 1000 years ago, Christianity came from the sea to the southern part of Nigeria in the 1840s and to the northern part in the early 1900s. The colonial masters imposed Muslim rulers on the traditional tribes in line with their policy of divide

and rule. For example, a Hausa man was sent from Zaria to Kafanchan (more than 150 km away) to be chief over the tribe there, and the same happened in Tafawa Balewa where a ruler was sent from Bauchi (40–50 km away). After independence, these local tribes who had often converted to Christianity wanted their traditional rulers back, and therefore opposed the Muslim rulers imposed on them. This resulted in the conflict being seen as religious.

In the 1980s and 1990s the economic crisis worsened. When there is less to go round competition becomes stronger. Poverty can make people do things they would not otherwise do. Unemployed youths, frustrated because they have nothing, can easily be manipulated by ambitious politicians for their own selfish aims.

The deteriorating economic situation also meant that a large number of children could not go to school. Many are in the predominantly Muslim north where there has been strong opposition to the Western educational system. This has led to increasing ignorance which is a breeding ground for prejudice. Unfortunately, we must admit that ignorance about one another is not the prerogative of any one faith. On the whole, Muslims are ignorant about Christianity and Christians about Islam. In addition, many are ignorant about the teachings of their own faith. Educating the adherents of both faiths about their own religious teachings as well as about the main teachings in the other faith will help avoid blanket condemnations based on ignorance. Much remains to be done in this area.

One result of this ignorance is reflected in the way in which preachers on both sides make provocative and abusive remarks about the other religion. This issue has been widely discussed, and it has been agreed that this should be avoided. Nonetheless, we still find zealous preachers who believe that they can convince people by using totally false arguments. Here there is little difference between Christian and Muslim preachers. Both groups succumb to the temptation of using provocative language which rather than winning supporters drives them further into a defensive position.

One way of dealing with this problem could be to emphasize the importance of Christians to preach and argue from the perspective of the Bible, and for Muslims to quote and argue from the perspective of the Qur'an. As Christians we do not have the authority to make use of the Holy Book of another faith because we have not learned the proper context and interpretation. It is easy to misquote and thereby to create unnecessary tension and conflict, as happened in Kafanchan where conflict was triggered by the preaching of a Christian who quoted the Qur'an in such a way that the Muslims felt offended and therefore attacked the Christians.

During our discussions we have found that it is necessary to accept certain basic facts. It is impossible for Christians to explain the Trinity in such a way that Muslims will understand and/or accept this doctrine. It is fundamental to our faith and cannot be changed. Similarly, while Muslims find it hard to understand that Christians cannot accept Muhammad as the final prophet, they have to comprehend that for Christians, revelation is final in Jesus Christ, while Christians have to accept that the prophethood of Muhammad is a basic Muslim doctrine. We have to agree and to acknowledge that in questions of doctrine there are certain issues that will have to stand and be accepted. But, we can also agree that if such doctrinal differences are not misrepresented by the other faith they need not prevent us from working and living together peacefully.

Moreover, we need to learn that there are certain symbols that are precious to the followers of the two faiths. Whereas Muslims find the use of the cross offensive, Christians consider it a sign of the final revelation of God's love for humankind and God's plan for the salvation of the world, and a sign of God's victory over sin and death. Christians find it hard to accept the use of the sword because for them it indicates the opposite of peace and understanding. Nevertheless, we have found that as we discuss these issues and realize the importance the other faith attaches to its symbols it is possible to acknowledge them as an expression of faith, and to continue dealing with areas where it is possible to agree and work together.

As was stated clearly at one of the conferences, we will never be able to agree on issues of doctrine, but on issues of ethics and social responsibilities we have the same needs and it should not only be possible, but desirable to work together. When people are sick they need medicine; when young people do not have work they need a job; when there is no safe drinking water people need a well. The first question asked by those who would help should not be what religious affiliation the needy have, but the donors should rather ask themselves whether they will be able to provide for the needs.

Both Christians and Muslims agree that with regard to ethical issues there is a great need to fight immorality, corruption, bribery, gambling, drug addiction and other social ills. In fact, it was emphasized on several occasions that if Christians and Muslims were to put the teachings of both the Bible and the Qur'an into practice it would solve most of such problems. We can therefore conclude that there is a basis for cooperation towards tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Unfortunately this has not led to a cessation of hostilities. Over the years we have seen that outbreaks of violence always result in negative feelings on both

sides. When we started advocating for our program some fanatic Christians ridiculed our attempts by saying that bishops who advocated peaceful coexistence were fools who would wake up one morning to find their pews empty because all the Christians had been killed.

Moreover we found a totally unchristian attitude among ordinary Christians who would for instance clap whenever they were told that a Christian had killed a Muslim. The question was raised which cheek one should turn to one's opponents once one had already turned the first and the second cheek. The answer to this is that there is a secret cheek—the cheek of love. As Christians we are called to love all people in this world, including our enemies. Our love—even when it is silent—speaks louder than any violent reaction. There have been several instances reported where Muslims have converted to Christianity because they saw this attitude of love in the face of violence.

As Christians we should realize that if we respond to violence with violence we have already been defeated because then there is no difference between "them and us." Christians have a special calling to be the light of the world, and we should live out this calling. If we do not do so our testimony is destroyed, and we have lost our trustworthiness. We should also remember that Jesus said that those who take up the sword, will die by the sword. Our calling is a calling for reconciliation not for confrontation.

During the Jos crisis in September 2001 there was one part of town where nobody was killed and no property destroyed. Everyone living there, irrespective of whether they were Christian or Muslim, had joined hands and surrounded this area. They did not allow anybody whom they did not know inside the area. Later, several instances were reported of Christians who had saved Muslims and Muslims who had saved Christians. An outstanding Muslim leader from Adamawa State spoke of how his sister and her four children had been saved by a Christian when they ran into trouble.

Our project has been in existence since 1993. We have worked out a constitution for an independent Association of Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations, which will hopefully be registered by the government shortly. This registration should enable us to move to the next stage of creating venues at the grassroots level in the provinces to the international conferences at national level. Furthermore, it will enable us to acquire land, preferably in Abuja, to establish a study center. At the grassroots level it will also allow for local initiatives of practical cooperation on joint projects such as sewing centers, technical training centers, computer centers aimed at poverty alleviation.

A Christian and a Muslim university professor have jointly developed a faith-based approach to HIV/AIDS, which they are currently taking to schools, colleges and other groups of people to campaign for a common fight against this scourge

One of the weaknesses of our conferences is that we have not been able to probe deeply into some of the issues facing us. For instance: according to the Qur'an, there is no compulsion in religion. This is quoted all the time in order to prove that we can work together. Why then do we find that Muslims who want to change their religion are persecuted? We have not yet been able to address this issue. Another example is the question of mixed marriages. So far we have only touched the surface and not gone into the questions that will have to be tackled if there are going to be equal rights for men and women to choose their partners and not be exposed to compulsion. We want to include this aspect to show that we have embarked on a process where we have made some progress, but still have issues ahead of us that need to be considered carefully in light of our faiths.

Peacemaking is a necessity. If we want our children and grandchildren to be able to enjoy life in this world we must overcome all the negative forces that are at the root of violence and confrontations. Since we realize that most of these forces are political, social or economic, and that religion is often just brought in as a factor that can stir up sentiments that will only aggravate an already bad situation, we believe that religious people have a responsibility to work for peace and mutual understanding. It seems that politicians have failed to create harmony. When we watch business people we see Christians and Muslims discussing on how best to make a profit. They do not discuss religion. So why should religion keep us apart when business brings us together? Why should religion keep us apart when the world cries for development and decent living conditions for all people?

Christianity and Islam are the dominant religions in Nigeria. They will not disappear. There is no reason why we should not work hand in hand to find ways of living together in peace, harmony and mutual understanding, irrespective of our faith. This is the task ahead of us. It is our desire and prayer that we shall not fail the generations yet to be born. We must join hands in spite of all human reservations and doubts, trusting that God will bless our efforts since God is a God of peace.

A German Experience

Olaf Schumann

Background

The University of Hamburg has a tradition of being open-minded and sensitive towards non-European cultures and civilizations. This openness dates back to its predecessor, the former Colonial Institute, which when it opened in 1908 offered regular lectures on missiology, delivered by the Protestant, Carl Mirbt[1] and the Roman Catholic, Josef Schmidlin.[2] Thus, from the very beginnings, this discipline was founded on ecumenical awareness and cooperation. After World War I and the abolition of the monarchy, the institute was incorporated in the first "republican" university to be established in Germany. While there was no faculty of theology, the lectures in missiology were continued, and in 1929 the lectureship was upgraded to become an honorary professorship linked to the faculty of arts. Walter Freytag was soon appointed to take over this position, and in 1953 the city of Hamburg decided to establish a faculty of theology. The chair for missiology was established in 1954 and has since then been regarded as one of the pillars of the faculty and the self-understanding of theology as it is taught at Hamburg. Having had from the beginning an ecumenical outlook, the department of missiology did not only concentrate on missiological research, but ecumenism and the study of religions have always been integrated areas of interest and research.

Increasingly this openness and competence has proved to be highly relevant not only with regard to academia, but also to the city of Hamburg and the changing social composition of its inhabitants. Growing numbers of citizens originate from overseas. They have settled in Hamburg as merchants, professionals or students, and have maintained their faiths, beliefs and cultures. Thus, non-Christian religions and cultures are no longer something exotic existing only in faraway countries, but have become a concrete factor in the societal reality of Hamburg. Neither the traditional Lutheran church nor the other Christian denominations allowed to settle in Hamburg since the nineteenth century, nor secular society–factories, offices and particularly schools–can ignore this new reality. Some do so willingly, others are more reluctant. Then there are those who have taken up the challenge and accepted the new situation with some curiosity. One would have thought that

therefore the research and teaching offered by the department of missiology and ecumenics would be vital in the education of future clergy and teachers, so as to prepare them to face interreligious and intercultural problems. Unfortunately, public interest was not adequately met by the institutional and political leadership of the university and it has remained one of the smallest institutions of the university in terms of staff.

New challenges for missiology

In order to face this new challenge and to respond to the needs of the students, Prof. Dr Hans Jochen Margull, at the time director of the department, suggested that the department be split into an ecumenical and a missiological department with the understanding that the latter emphasize the study of religions. This suggestion was accepted, and in 1981 a new director was appointed to the department of missiology and science of religions. Financial difficulties since 1981 resulted in 1995 in the two departments being merged and the creation of the Institute of Missiology, Ecumenics and Religions. The former two departments retain some of their identity in as far as they function as two different departments under the same roof, each one of them continuing its former task albeit with an absolute minimum of staff.

When the new director of the department of missiology was appointed in 1981, an attempt was made to define the main emphasis of mission as the sending of God's messengers into the world, and there to prepare the coming of the Kingdom of God. Whenever it is expected that the messengers use some common sense, the first condition would be that they inform themselves about the context in which God sends them to work. A very important aspect of the situation in Hamburg is the increasing presence of many believers of other faiths and religions.[3] Thus, theology and particularly missiology have to take seriously this phenomenon which will obviously determine the future of Hamburg. Christ was the friend, not the enemy, of human beings regardless of their backgrounds. By meeting with them he was setting an example for Christians who claim to be his followers. This means that these new neighbors have to be taken seriously and be respected. This is impossible as long as ignorance and misunderstanding regarding their cultures and religions predominate.

In order to provide a solid basis for respect and appreciation—and not for apologetical reasons—scientific research into the history of non-Christian religions, including a special emphasis on the self-awareness and self-interpretation of their

adherents, must be strengthened. The scientific methods of the study of religions must be adopted without restriction in order to obtain objective information. This is not an end in itself. Since it is not the religions but their adherents who are living together, it is not only the religions but also their adherents who are of interest. This demands further encounter. The methodology therefore included inviting, whenever possible, adherents of other religions to lecture or participate throughout the whole semester. It was most encouraging that increasingly students from other faculties, particularly those who adhere to traditions other than Christianity, took part in these lectures and seminars. A climate of working and studying together was developed. Dialogue led to deeper mutual understanding resulting in a relationship of trust and friendship.

Methodology

The experiences and insights gained from these lectures and seminars led in 1984 to the foundation of a working group on interreligious dialogue. With the help of Muslim students such as Halima Krausen, who had close contacts with the Islamic Center connected to one of the long established mosques in Hamburg, and Buddhists such as Oliver Petersen, closely connected to the Buddhist Tibetan Center, the respective leaders of these institutions, Imam Mehdi Razvi and Geshe Thubten Ngawang, could be invited to become cosponsors of this working group. In the meantime, Halima Krausen has become Imam in her mosque and Oliver Petersen is a very active member of the teaching staff of the Tibetan Buddhist Center. Other members of these and other religious institutions were invited to attend as participants or to present lectures. The Canadian indigenous artist, David Seven Deers, whose traditional totem pole is exhibited at the *Museum für Völkerkunde*, Hamburg, (Museum of Ethnology) made a great impression because of his spirituality and worldview which he shared with the students. For some years, Gregor Mundus, OSB, from the nearby Benedictine monastery in Nütschau and Prof. Alexander Schwarz of Jerusalem were regular participants and lecturers. The Regional Rabbi L. T. Barsiley took part and lectured time and health permitting. Members of a Hindu community and a Jewish congregation have recently been attending regularly. Participants are mainly teachers, pastors and other professionals who come into contact with non-Christians in their daily lives.

The sessions of the working group are part of the regular program of the institute. Listed as seminars, they are cosponsored by the two religious centers

mentioned above. For each seminar a specific topic is chosen related either to religious and social questions of general interest. Topics include: dying and death; rebirth, immortality of the soul or new creation; spirituality in daily life; prayer or meditation; mystic traditions; pressing social and societal problems; attitudes towards "the other"; human rights and dignity; the concept of justice; education; religion and politics; understanding and meaning of ethics, etc. Sensitive issues such as the relationship between religion and war (e.g., of special relevance during the second Gulf War) or the legal and social situation of minorities in various contexts are also discussed. Participants also organized an exhibition about the genocide against the Armenian Christians during the Ottoman Empire and the involvement of foreign powers. It was most encouraging that both Armenian and Turkish Muslims were actively involved in the preparation.

This clearly indicates that religious people who are firmly rooted in the faith and teachings of their religions never need to become enemies, even if they are at odds in terms of their communal interests. In the course of the semester, lectures on the same topic are delivered from different perspectives. Whereas no one speaks on behalf of their religious community, because no one is entitled or authorized to do so, they are identified with their religious community and convey the convictions and beliefs of their respective traditions. While this gives a certain freedom, each participant is also challenged to account for his or her belief and its translation into societal life. The topics chosen should be relevant to all participants, and it is expected that each participant also feels a certain urgency to participate in searching for solutions to the problems based on mutual respect.

Aims of interreligious dialogue

With its interreligious dialogue the working group pursues different aims. The fundamental precondition for entering into dialogue is the principle of not talking about others, but talking with them. Maintaining this principle leads to two insights: a) by overcoming clichés and prejudices one arrives at a more differentiated perception of, respect for and a more adequate understanding of other cultures and religions, and b) a more sensitive perception of the particularities of one's own culture, religion and civilization, its historic and circumstantial backgrounds and the inherent problems. The social relevance of interreligious dialogue lies in its method of *dialegein*, or *dialegesthai*, which means struggling with and discussing matters of common concern, or to debate about ethical norms

and values which should be respected and agreed upon by all groups constituting a modern, plural and civilized society. Interreligious dialogue should also help to create a societal climate of mutual understanding and acceptance, and thus make society a prosperous home where everybody feels comfortable and is compelled to offer their best. Thus, interreligious dialogue does not primarily mean dialoguing about religious topics; rather, it is a dialogue about social matters conducted by religious people, aware of a special social responsibility growing out of a deeply felt religious commitment. It remains a "dialogue" even if more than two parties are involved. Expressions such as "trialogue" are nonsense. Dialogue is not restricted to two parties; in such a case it would be a "dyalogue." Dialogue points to a social attitude and a relationship which includes a verbal dimension as a basic means of communication.

Theological topics may, of course, also become the topic in interreligious dialogue. Nonetheless, since theological questions are usually directly linked to the self-understanding they are rarely included. In social discourse, all participants more or less regard problems as being their common problems. Only the motivations and solutions are inspired by religious backgrounds, and there thus exists a need to harmonize and adjust religious convictions and creeds. From the beginning, the Hamburg working group agreed that dialogue only makes sense if the different identities are recognizable and accepted. Any move to harmonize or unify the religions, or to ignore the basic differences among them, would lead to the immediate termination of the working group. Such a move would end dialogue and lead to a growing monologue among participants who tend to ignore their identities and thus no longer have any social relevance. We have to learn to live with our differences peacefully and constructively. The dynamics formerly misused to fight one another should be used to motivate one another to struggle for a prosperous future.

Theological dialogue becomes important in that it may help us to understand the motives and reasons behind the different expressions in our creeds, and so in turn help us better to understand and respect our faiths and beliefs. In times when people did not meet in dialogue, the others were usually considered to be infidels, heathen or *kafir*. The people who gave them these names did so out of a lack of knowledge and appreciation of their beliefs and faiths. Interreligious dialogue on theological matters helps us to understand that while others may express their beliefs and worldviews differently, they are sincere and truthful in their faiths and beliefs. Experience has shown that dialogue which touches on basic and essential theological topics is more meaningful if it is conducted among believers of two faiths or of those faiths which are historically and theologically

closely related, such as Jews, Christians and Muslims. Every religion has its own system of priorities and frame of reference, and theological topics discussed among members of two religious communities are not necessarily of interest to members of a third party with quite a different basic message.

The spiritual dimension of dialogue

Since those participating in interreligious dialogue have religious awareness and speak about social matters on the basis of their religious self-perception, there is always a spiritual dimension to their meetings. This was felt particularly at the outbreak of the second Gulf War in 1991. Participants expressed their desire for peace by ending the semester with a multi- rather than an interreligious prayer for peace. This meant that every religious group prayed in accordance with their own religious tradition and thus expressed their spirituality properly, while the others shared in silence and appreciation. Although the prayers were not spoken together there was nonetheless a common feeling that all participants felt responsible and challenged by a power which while it was present was beyond everyone's grasp. It should be mentioned that participants conducted this prayer in a room at the university, a secular institution. It needs some courage for religious people to exercise their right openly to express their stance on crucial social and political matters in a religious way in a secular, public environment. Such demonstrations must, however, not be misused.

The sensitivity regarding the spiritual dimension finally led participants of this dialogue to support the efforts of different student organizations to obtain a multi-religious meditation room on campus, open to students from different religious backgrounds. It is their conviction that a humane, future-oriented society, even if it is a secular one, must allow its university to provide its students with a place where they do not only develop their intellect and increase their knowledge, but also nourish the spiritual dimension of their personalities.

Results

Interreligious dialogue is a continuous endeavor; there are no failures *per se*. A number of former participants continued to be interested in interreligious dialogue and communication after they left university. A number of other programs

developed out of this initiative such as a group working on a new concept for religious instruction in schools taking into account the presence of many non-Christian pupils. This should not only be reflected in the contents, but also in the methodology. Other initiatives grew out of the religious congregations themselves: an interreligious forum supported by the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches; regional organizations of religious communities in which some of the main "guiding spirits" are former or present members of the working group. In November 2002, the first "Day of World Religions" was celebrated in Hamburg. On two days most religious centers opened their doors to visitors and some conducted seminars or gave information about their work and constituency, etc. The mayor of Hamburg attended the concluding session. In his message he stressed the importance of these dialogue programs in promoting social peace and cooperation. Furthermore, former and present members of the working group are active on committees and task forces working towards establishing an academy of world religions linked to the university, and staffed mainly by members of the respective religious communities. As a first step, courses in Islam, Judaism and Buddhism will be provided. The aim of this academy would be to help the religious communities to develop concepts of how their religions could adapt themselves conceptually and socially in an appropriate way to the new situation they are facing in Germany, or in Europe.

Unfortunately we cannot ignore that there are circles that oppose these developments and are determined to work against them. This opposition comes mainly from some Christian groups and political circles afraid that a mixing of religions and cultures will lead to a weakening of the Christian message and the west European *Leitkultur* (predominant culture) which has shaped the values and ethical norms of our society. They do not accept that particularly after World War II traditional values and social norms have fallen into a deep crisis and that new visions and perspectives are urgently needed. Since the contribution of these traditionalist circles is only negative and adversative it is difficult to imagine what constructive, future-oriented contribution may be expected from their side. It is one of the basic experiences of interreligious dialogue that those who participate gain deeper insights into their own faith and beliefs. This is due to having to explain to others the Christian faith and what it means for one's life. Last, but not least, it enriches every participant because it opens the way to comprehending and enjoying the spiritual wealth which is part of our common human heritage, and which is like a treasure safeguarded by other guardians.

Notes

[1]Protestant church historian and missiologist, 1860–1929.

[2]Roman Catholic missiologist, 1876–1944.

[3]The presence of religious communities in Hamburg is well documented in Wolfgang Grünberg, Dennis Slabaugh and Ralf Meister-Karanikas (eds.), *Lexikon der Hamburger Religionsgemeinschaften* (Hamburg: Dölling & Galitz Verlag, 1994). In its first edition (1994) it listed seventy-three different communities with various congregations. This number has increased considerably since.

An English Experience

C. T. R. Hewer

Britain is a relative newcomer to dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Although there have been small numbers of Muslims in Britain for centuries, the situation has changed significantly in the last fifty years. Today there are perhaps two million Muslims in Britain. Since 140,000 live in the industrial city of Birmingham, representing 14 percent of the total population, the context of this city is important. It has developed over the past two centuries as people from other parts of the United Kingdom migrated there in search of work and a new future. Its original roots were strongly influenced by dissenting Christians–Unitarians, Quakers, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. These were supplemented by Catholics from Ireland, Italy and Poland, and latterly by Christians from Africa and the Caribbean Islands. In addition to the Muslim community today, there are also 30,000 Sikhs, 20,000 Hindus, 3,000 Buddhists and 2,300 Jews. Within twenty years, Birmingham will become the first Black and Asian majority city in Britain.

This situation is repeated with variations in several other towns and cities across the nation, and many of the examples given here might be found in other places too. To bear witness to this, the first example is taken from the northern city of Bradford, where a group of Christians have set up a "house of presence" in the heart of one of the Muslim quarters of the city. Two or three Christians live in this house and devote their time to establishing relations with Muslim individuals, families and institutions in the area. The non-resident community is much larger and comprises people who work or live alongside Muslims in various capacities. For the Christians involved, residents, non-residents, visitors and onlookers, the house represents a source of mutual support for this mission and a challenge to consider how best Christians might love their Muslim neighbors and fellow citizens. Private and community prayer play an important part in the daily rhythm of the house, and a weekly prayer meeting is held to which people of other faiths are invited to share in silent prayer and later in fellowship. From this basis relationships grow and the house becomes a source of specialized and confident support for those beginning to grapple with these issues across the city and further afield.

One of the great demands of Christians in Birmingham is to learn more about Islam and the way in which it shapes the lives of Muslims. This prompted a project to set up courses entitled "Understanding Islam (mainly) for Christians" which consist of ten two-hour sessions hosted by different Christian communities around the city so that they are

easily accessible and people who would not normally attend courses can feel "at home." They run mainly in the evenings and also in the afternoons for those who are available. The level has to be adapted to the educational background of the participants, who are invited to feel part-ownership of the course through questions and setting agendas. Some Muslims attend in order to learn more about their faith, others come as they are curious to know what a Christian is saying about Islam, and slowly Muslim teachers join the team and engage in a joint presentation. Every course involves an escorted visit to a mosque, to look around, to observe a time of formal prayer, and to engage with a group of Muslims in informal discussion. Once empowered in this way, many people feel ready to engage with Muslims they meet and with communities so that barriers are slowly broken down. Follow-on monthly study circles and biannual study days are arranged for those who wish to explore topics at a deeper level.

One example of such an empowerment is a Christian woman who teamed up with a Muslim woman who runs a preschool nursery for children in a predominantly Muslim quarter of the city. These two women, with a small group of coworkers, have set up encounter and friendship groups with the mothers and grandmothers who bring their children to the nursery. The presence of an established Muslim woman leader who speaks the community languages and the fact that it meets on familiar territory have enabled the ice to be broken. It is an all-women group, which provides an air of comfort and began with sharing festive foods and stories. It gradually progressed to taking themes of mutual interest and then, once confidence was built up, visits were arranged to a mosque, then a church and finally to a Sikh Gurdwara.

It is not only Christians who are learning about Islam. After some years of building relationships of trust, the Christian who teaches the "Understanding Islam" courses was invited to present the content and methodology over fifteen weeks for students in a Muslim Institute of Higher Studies under the title "How do we speak about Islam in a way that makes sense in a British context?" This eventually led to the same teacher delivering two series of lectures on "Understanding Christianity" and then an extended series on "Christian–Muslim relations." Students from these courses become resource people for the "Understanding Islam" courses and hopefully eventually partners in their delivery. In this way friendships and working relationships are established and misunderstandings evaporate. This paves the way for a mutually respectful examination of some of the harder issues that divide Christians and Muslims.

Religious community leaders often share the same pastoral concern whether they be Muslim or Christian. This led to a group of pastors and Muslim leaders from a particular area setting up a monthly "fraternal" in which, over a period of seventeen years, many issues of a theological, pastoral, social and political nature have been discussed

and joint action has been taken. Initially these meetings consisted of such topics as "How do we celebrate our festivals and what do they mean to us?" then moved on to "How can we best educate our children in their faith?" before tackling such questions as, "How do we see God?" and "What can we say of the salvation of the other?" There are ups and downs in such a relationship, but persistence and commitment on both sides have seen this group survive for a commendable number of years.

In a middle-class commuter area of the city live a growing number of Muslim professionals who have formed a Muslim Community Association. This group took the initiative of contacting local Christians with a view to a monthly meeting to discuss topics of mutual interest. This dialogue group is a rarity in that the number of Muslims far outweighs the number of Christians. The general format of an evening is that there will be a Christian and a Muslim presentation around a set theme, which will be followed by a lengthy period of questions and discussion. Two interesting observations can be made: first, the Muslim presentation consists of reading a number of passages from the Qur'an with limited comments or acknowledgement of the associated body of scholarship; second, while there are often diverse Christian voices showing the range of such opinion, the Muslim voice is generally monolithic, thus prompting that impression of Islam. One difficulty thus exemplified is that there are few Muslim scholars, who are deeply versed in the Islamic sciences, who take part in such discussions. Participants tend to be educated in other disciplines and have pursued limited private Islamic study. This can lead to a somewhat truncated portrayal of Islam.

The Church of England has traditionally maintained an ecclesiology that sees it as having a pastoral concern for all people who live within the territory of the parish, diocese or nation. This might be exemplified by the fact that all people who live in a parish have the right to be married in the parish church and to be buried from it even if they are not members of the Church of England or even Christians. This applies also to members of other faith traditions, who have an equal right to the services of the church. This pastoral concern can be seen in the disposition of Church of England schools. Like the parish church, traditionally every person who lived in a parish had a right to have their children educated in the parish school and so a Church of England school has more the self-understanding of a "community school" rather than a "school for church members."

In several of the Church of England schools in Birmingham, there are significant numbers of children from other faiths, in a few cases a substantial majority. This role of serving the children of other faith communities brings the church into dialogue with such believers and their children. Accommodating the needs of such pupils in terms of dress, food, observing modesty and difficulties over elements of the curriculum such

as music and art, prompts a series of discussions that lead teachers and administrators to a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the faith of the other. Thornier issues like what and how religious education should be conducted, whether provision can be made for regular prayers in school and how the collective worship of the whole school might be observed bring about a deeper level of dialogue and prompt a reflection on how traditional norms might be reconsidered and reevaluated.

This model of pastoral concern is also seen in the redevelopment of churches in areas where the worshipping community has decreased and the church must seek new ways of engaging with the local population. One such church in a significantly Muslim quarter of the city has subdivided its church building into several smaller units, which can be used for a variety of social welfare projects. Here the Bosnian refugees have their office and hold their community functions, and mothers come with their small children for mutual support and recreation. The former church hall has been turned into a day nursery for children from six months of age. This is staffed by local people, most of whom are Muslim women. The nursery has a contract with the local hospital to provide day care for the children of staff, again many of whom are Muslim. Through the process of developing appropriate activities for the children, caring for their dietary needs and celebrating their festivals an earthed dialogue takes place with children, staff and parents.

This church has adapted a neighboring shop to turn it into a drop-in café where people can come to talk, eat and drink. This is often the first point of contact with the facilities that lie behind the shop such as a counseling service, employment office, training facilities and legal advice. All these are provided by the church in partnership with the social welfare departments of the local government. Because of the neighborhood, a goodly proportion of the clients are Muslim and so the very presence of these facilities brings about a level of dialogue and enquiry as to why Christians provide such services and of the underlying philosophy that underpins it.

From these examples of different forms of dialogue that are currently taking place, one can see that Christian-Muslim relations are multi-facetted. When we add to this the joint campaigns against the unbearable debts of developing countries and for other ways than war to deal with international terrorism and military build-up then the list takes on many new dimensions. An important paradigm shift is taking place. In recent decades the newly arrived religious communities have concentrated on establishing and building up their own communities. Now the task of the future begins, which is to draw from the riches of these faith traditions to create a better society in which all people, of any faith or none, can be helped to live in a society that truly respects the diversity of human values and allows each to grow to its potential.

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