

6. Inter-religious Dialogue

In the preceding chapters, we discussed the Muslim fear of Christianisation and objection to secularism on the one hand, and the Christian fear of an Islamic state and defence of religious freedom on the other. At times, when the relations between Muslims and Christians were tense and mutual suspicions were strong, the Government intervened as a presumed fair and neutral intermediary. However, the political contexts in which a certain Muslim-Christian antagonism occurred frequently led the Government to portray ambivalence: sometimes it supported certain demands of the Islamic groups and sometimes, in line with the Christians, it opposed them. In any case, the Muslim-Christian antagonisms apparently led some of the Christians to believe that their rights as religious minorities could be better defended through cooperation with the Government rather than with the Islamic groups. Likewise, some of the important leaders of the Islamic groups believed that they could realise their interests more easily if they allied themselves with the Government. This situation necessarily strengthened the polarisation between the two religious groups.

Nonetheless, there were also efforts to bridge the gap between the two religious groups through dialogue. There were two types of dialogue, one was sponsored by the Government and another was initiated by private institutions. In the former case, the Government usually invited the representatives of religious groups as participants. The Government also determined the theme of the dialogue that was usually focused on how peaceful inter-religious co-existence could be established and how each religion could contribute to national development. The theme indicates that through the dialogue the Government primarily wanted to maintain socio-political stability for the sake of development. This security approach was indicated by the fact that the Government sometimes organised a dialogue simply as a reaction to an inter-religious incident and it often tended to support the position of the religious majority against the minority. The Inter-religious Consultation of 1967 discussed in Chapter 1 is a good example. We can also find the same tendency in the Government sponsored dialogues in the following decades.

The dialogue initiated by private institutions was generally pioneered by the Christians and responded to positively by the leaders of other religions. Probably due to the influences of modern liberal ideas and the new challenges faced by the Christian missions, by the second half of the 1960s,

both the Vatican and the World Council of Church (WCC) called for dialogue. Following the decision of the Vatican Council II (1962-1965) to look at non-Christian religions in a more positive way, the Catholic Church encouraged her followers to engage in inter-religious dialogue. In 1967 and 1968, a Catholic priest named Cletus Groenen wrote 12 articles in the Catholic weekly, *Penabur*, on the relevance of Vatican II to Indonesia.¹ Bakker noted that in 1968 an inter-religious meeting of Muslim, Catholic, Protestant and Buddhist leaders was successfully held in Sukabumi, West Java. Later in 1970, the religious leaders who participated in this meeting visited Cardinal Darmojowono in Semarang and in that visit they asserted their commitment to establish inter-religious harmony.² The dialogue in Sukabumi was probably due to the efforts of Groenen who worked in West Java during this period.³

In line with Vatican II, in a consultation held in March 1967, in Kandy, Ceylon, the WCC decided to promote dialogue with other faiths. Later in 1970, the WCC organised an inter-religious dialogue in Ajaltoun, Beirut and then in 1971, the Central Committee of the WCC established a Sub-Unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faith. Ever since, the WCC has actively organised international inter-religious meetings in different places of the world.⁴ As noted in Chapter 2, since 1968, the leader of the DGI, T.B. Simatupang was a member of the Central Executive Committee of the WCC. It is not surprising, therefore, that some prominent Indonesian Muslim and Christian leaders were invited to participate in the international meetings organised by the WCC. These Indonesian participants often wrote their respective accounts of the meetings when they returned home.⁵

Thus, the Christian and the Muslim leaders were already involved in dialogue since the early years of the New Order. However, the proponents of inter-religious dialogue were actually a minority among the Muslim and the Christian leaders. What I mean by 'the proponents' here are those who not only participated but also believed in the importance of dialogue for establishing inter-religious understanding and cooperation. Among the Muslims, the proponents of dialogue were mostly the promoters of the non-ideological view of Islam that emerged in the early 1970s and became stronger in the following decades. For the Christians who had been afraid of an Islamic state, these Muslim leaders were certainly the most natural allies. Moreover, most of the promoters of the non-ideological view of Islam also did not concentrate on Christianisation as their major discourse (even though, they or at least some of them were personally concerned with Christianisation too). Thus, along with the Christians and others, they developed the common discourse on development, democracy and pluralism.

Both the Protestant and the Catholic proponents of the dialogue were also a minority. Father Ismartono, a Jesuit who worked in the KWI, identifies three types of Catholics, and only one of which, 'the humanist group' concerned with social issues is interested in dialogue. The other two groups, the 'charismatic' and the 'ecclesia-centric', are not, because the former is much more interested in the spiritual experience, while the latter is characterised by a concentration on internal church affairs.⁶ Regarding the Protestants, one could make a contrast between 'the ecumenicals' and 'the evangelicals': the former are generally interested in dialogue while the latter are not. Given the fact that there are so many Protestant churches, we can certainly find a spectrum of positions along the line between 'the evangelicals' and 'the ecumenicals'. Most of the leaders of the PGI are generally more active in dialogue than those of the Indonesian Evangelical Association (PII).⁷ However, according to Th. Sumartana, the prominent Protestant intellectual, the involvement of the PGI leaders in dialogue did not mean that all churches in the PGI were pro-dialogue because the PGI leadership often could not effectively influence its members.⁸ It is noteworthy that like the Muslim proponents of dialogue, both the Catholic humanists and the Protestant ecumenists also opposed the idea of an Islamic state but at the same time they developed criticisms of aggressive missionary activities.

In the 1970s inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia was mostly sponsored by the Government. The privately-initiated dialogue started more seriously in the early 1980s. Later, in line with the increasing demand for democratization, in the 1990s inter-religious dialogue organised by private institutions also increased. In this context, Steenbrink pointed out to us a very interesting contrast between dialogues sponsored by the state and those carried out through private initiatives.⁹ In what follows, I will pay more attention to the two types of dialogue in terms of development, interaction, convergences and contrast of their respective discourses. Before discussing the two types of dialogue, I shall discuss the emergence of the non-ideological view of Islam as an important background to the Muslim-Christian dialogue in Indonesia.

1. **The Non-Ideological View of Islam**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the ideological debate on Pancasila versus the Jakarta Charter soon re-emerged after the fall of Soekarno. The debate sharply marked the political tensions and rivalries between the Islamic groups on the one hand, and the military and its secular and Christian allies

on the other. The military leaders apparently realised that after the collapse of the Communist Party, their strongest political rival would be the Islamic groups. In this context, in contrast to Soekarno's accommodating policy in relation to ideological differences, Soeharto's Government tried to impose Pancasila as the only valid and legitimate ideology for the country. The Government, therefore, tried to remove the Islamic political ideology from among the Islamic groups, and at the same time encouraged the cultural and ritual dimensions of Islam – a policy that was often considered by some Indonesian and foreign observers to be close to that of the Dutch colonial Government.¹⁰

The strong Government opposition to Islamic ideology certainly made both the traditionalist and reformist Muslims unhappy. However, the reformist Muslims had more political frustration because in 1966 the military refused the rehabilitation of their party, Masyumi, and subsequently prohibited its former leaders from running the newly established reformist Muslim party, Parmusi. This political frustration eventually pushed the younger generation of reformist Muslims, particularly the activists of the Association of Muslim Students (HMI), to find a way out. It was in this context that the so-called 'renewal movement' emerged from among the HMI leaders in the late 1960s, and became widely debated in the early 1970s.¹¹ The embryo of the movement was a weekly discussion circle called the 'Limited Group', held in the house of Mukti Ali from 1967 to 1971. Besides Mukti Ali himself, the participants of the discussion were the prominent HMI activists in Yogyakarta such as Ahmad Wahib, Djohan Effendi and Dawam Rahardjo, while Nurcholish Madjid who studied in Jakarta sometimes also came to join them. Occasionally, the circle invited non-HMI and non-Muslim participants such as the poet Rendra, and the Catholic student activist, Pranarka, as well as foreign researchers like B.J. Boland and James Peacock.

One of the major issues discussed in the Limited Group circle was the relationship between Islam and politics and the crucial question was, whether the dominant view among the Islamic groups that Islam should be referred to as a political ideology was to be maintained or not. In the discussions, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib and Dawam Rahardjo eventually found that the ideological view of Islam was theologically and historically baseless and politically unpromising. In short, for them, Islam should not be an alternative to Pancasila. When Ahmad Wahib and Djohan Effendi disseminated this view among other HMI activists, internal tensions within the organization emerged, that eventually forced them to resign from the HMI in 1969. After the resignation of these two prominent HMI leaders, however,

Nurcholish Madjid, the chairman of the Central Board of the HMI in Jakarta who was previously sceptical if not totally opposed to Djohan Effendi's and Ahmad Wahib's ideas, wrote secretly to them that he personally agreed with their views.¹²

Accordingly, by early 1970, in a paper presented to a meeting of four organisations of young Indonesian Muslims: HMI, PII (Pelajar Islam Indonesia – Muslim Students of Indonesia), GPI (Gerakan Pemuda Islam – Muslim Youth Movement) and Persami (Persatuan Sarjana Muslimin Indonesia – Association of Indonesian Muslim Graduates), Nurcholish Madjid declared the necessity of the renewal of Islamic thought.¹³ Inspired by Harvey Cox's *The Secular City*, Nurcholish Madjid argued that while secularism as a materialistic philosophy was opposed to Islam, secularisation was not, because the latter means a dynamic process in which people acknowledge the authority of reason and science to deal with worldly affairs. In other words, he said, secularisation was 'desacralisation', that is, the profanation of things wrongly treated as sacred. Secularisation in this sense, he said, was in line with the Islamic belief that nothing was absolutely sacred but God; and that the human was the vicegerent of God (*khalifa*). As the vicegerent of God, every human being had to use the rational faculty to understand and explore the material and social realities of the world, and to be ready to learn from, and to be open to, good ideas coming from any source. Later in 1972, in his speech delivered in Jakarta's cultural centre, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Madjid said that the roots of the Muslim idea of the Islamic state were religious legalism and apologetics. He argued that Muslim legalism was influenced by the Islamic law developed in the Islamic traditional discipline called *fiqh*, while in fact, he said, *fiqh* had to be radically reformed before it could be applied to a modern society. In addition, for him, the Muslim reference to Islam as a political ideology was nothing but an apologetic reaction to Western ideologies like socialism and nationalism. Madjid said that apologetics was not the right solution to Muslim problems because it was defensive in nature, and in the long run it would have a boomerang effect.

Nurcholish Madjid's renewal ideas soon reached a wider audience, because his paper was published in the media and also distributed to other student activists by his friends. The senior reformist Muslim leaders like HAMKA, Muhammad Natsir and Muhammad Rasjidi, as well as the prominent HMI leader in Bandung, Endang Saifuddin Ansari, soon reacted negatively to Madjid's ideas. In fact, Madjid was not the first general chairman of the HMI who opposed the Islamic state idea. In the early 1950s, when the

tensions between different political ideologies increased before the coming elections of 1955, rather than supporting the aspiration of the Islamic parties for an Islamic state, the general chairman of the HMI, Dachlan Ranuwihardjo, declared his support for the idea of a national state.¹⁴ However, it seems, the general political frustration among the reformist Muslims, Madjid's use of such a controversial term as 'secularisation' and his ability to justify his view in Islamic theological terms thanks to his educational background in Islamic studies; all apparently helped create stronger and more serious opposition to his ideas. Nonetheless, because the New Order Government really opposed the ideological orientation of the Islamic political parties, the non-ideological view of Islam promoted by Nurcholish Madjid and his associates was, as Boland put it, "in all probability not unwelcome to the Government."¹⁵

Positive Christian Responses to the Islamic Renewal Movement

If the Government welcomed, or even supported, the Islamic renewal movement, then what were the responses of the Christians to this movement? This question is important for at least two reasons: firstly, this non-ideological view of Islam was in line with the political aspiration of the Christians who were afraid that Indonesia would turn into an Islamic state; secondly, the question of the relevance of religion to modern society bothering the proponents of the renewal movement, was actually not a specific question for the Muslims, but for all believers of all religions in the world.

Indeed, there were positive responses to the Islamic renewal movement from the Christians. In 1973, J.W.M Bakker, a Jesuit of Dutch origin, wrote an article in the Catholic journal, *Orientali*, on the Muslim view of secularisation.¹⁶ In line with Madjid, Bakker argued that secularisation was an unavoidable historical process in which the authority of religion on worldly affairs was transferred to the authority of reason. For Bakker, religious authorities should welcome secularisation because it liberated both religion and reason, and put each of them in their respective appropriate places. On the other hand, for him, if religious authorities opposed secularisation, secularism would necessarily replace religion. In an apologetic tone, Bakker said that compared to Catholicism, Islam had more theological difficulties in accepting secularisation, because while the First Vatican Council (1870) asserted the transcendence of God in relation to the autonomy of human beings and nature, the dominant theological view in Islam emphasised the all-embracing power of God at the expense of the autonomy of human beings and nature.

Bakker then moved on to some examples of how Muslims in different countries like Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan and finally Indonesia, faced the issue of secularisation. In the nineteenth century, Turkey introduced secularisation through the Tanzimat reform but the ulama opposed it and as a result, in the next century, Mustafa Kemal Attaturk proposed secularism. In Egypt, the debate on secularisation started in 1925 when the ulama strongly opposed 'Ali 'Abd al-Rāziq's *al-Islām wa usūl al-hukm* (Islam and the Principles of Government) in which he argued that the mission of the Prophet Muhammad was not to establish a state but to guide the spiritual life of human beings. Despite the opposition of the ulama, secularisation in Egypt proceeded, particularly since the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser and then Anwar Sadat. In Pakistan, President Ayub Khan appointed Fazlur Rahman to carry out the Islamic reforms; but the fierce opposition of the conservative ulama to the reforms eventually pushed Rahman to leave his country. In Indonesia, Bakker said, in 1940 Soekarno angered the ulama when he initiated the debate on secularisation in his articles on 'the rejuvenation of Islam' in which he praised 'Abd al-Raziq's view and the policy of Kemal Attaturk. Later, argued Bakker, the debate on secularisation continued in the debate on Pancasila versus Islam in the Constituent Assembly in 1957. Bakker observed further that prominent Muslim leaders in general were consistently opposed to secularisation, until Nurcholish Madjid declared the Islamic renewal movement in 1970. Bakker lamented that those who opposed Madjid's view did not understand the difference between secularism and secularisation and wrongly saw that secularisation was a distinctive problem faced by Christianity in the West. It was regrettable, Bakker argued, that none of the critics referred to the problem of secularisation faced by the other Muslim countries. In his final remarks, Bakker asserted that he believed that the future of Indonesian Islam was in the hands of the proponents of secularisation and this was nothing but good for the advancement of Islam itself.

In line with Bakker, Victor Immanuel Tanja, a minister of the Protestant Church of West Indonesia (GPIB) also made a sympathetic assessment of the Islamic renewal movement. Tanja took a Ph.D. programme in theology at Hartford Seminary, USA, from 1973 to 1979 and wrote a thesis on the HMI and its position among Islamic reform movements in Indonesia.¹⁷ In his thesis, Tanja tried to trace back the history of the HMI and its relation to the early Islamic reform movements in Indonesia, like Jong Islamieten Bond, Sarekat Islam, Persatuan Islam and Muhammadiyah and the reform movements in the Middle East, particularly the two Egyptian reformists, Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Ridā. Based on this historical account, Tanja argued that the ideas of reform

or renewal proposed by the HMI activists like M. S. Mintaredja, Deliar Noer, Dawam Rahardjo and particularly Nurcholish Madjid were much more in line with 'Abduh's liberal position while the ideas of their opponents like Rasjidi, Natsir, Saifuddin Anshari and HAMKA were close to the conservative stand of Rashid Ridā. In this context, Tanja said that he disagreed with Kamal Hassan who, in Tanja's view, saw that Madjid's renewal movement was merely a political accommodation to the military regime of the New Order. For Tanja, the positive attitude of the proponents of the renewal movement to secularisation and their rejection of the idea of an Islamic state should be seen as a religious position validly chosen from within the Islamic tradition itself. Tanja also believed that these ideas would be a very good foundation for establishing positive inter-religious relations in Indonesia.¹⁸

There were positive and negative responses to Tanja's thesis, particularly when it was translated into Indonesian and published in 1982. Perhaps, among the books published in that year, Victor Tanja's book was the one most widely discussed and reviewed, particularly among Muslim reformists. HMI activists in Jakarta and Yogyakarta organised seminars to discuss the book in which Tanja was often invited to speak. Besides numerous reviews of the book published in the media, a former HMI activist, Agussalim Sitompul, even wrote an entire book to criticise it.¹⁹ The fact that the book was about the HMI and its author was a Christian minister apparently stimulated curiosity, sympathy and criticism among many Muslims. There are at least two important points in the criticisms of Tanja's book: firstly, some historical accounts of the book are inaccurate; secondly, Tanja was too eager to identify Madjid's renewal movement with the HMI as an organisation. The last point seems to be more interesting because some of the HMI activists like Agussalim Sitompul and Djohan Effendi, obviously disagreed with Tanja's position. Sitompul said that Madjid's idea on secularisation was never approved as the official position of the HMI.²⁰ In line with Sitompul, Djohan Effendi said that as a student organisation, the HMI was much more like a transit station for Muslim activists rather than a permanent place. In this context, he said that the HMI as an organisation was always sceptical about supporting the renewal movement and therefore, these ideas went out of the organisation along with Madjid when the latter finished his chairmanship.²¹ On the other hand, Nurcholish Madjid was naturally happy with Tanja's book. In his letter to the reformist Muslim leader, Mohamad Roem, dated 29 March 1983, Madjid wrote: "many people criticise the book but I think, its account of myself is ironically better and more honest than the one written by my acquaintance, Muhammad Kamal Hassan."²²

Both Djohan Effendi and Agussalim Sitompul were probably right in their criticisms of Tanja's analysis. However, if we remember his background as an Indonesian Christian minister, we may see that Tanja's tendency to identify Madjid's ideas with the HMI as an organisation was perhaps motivated consciously or unconsciously by his eagerness to see the HMI as a potential partner in dialogue and cooperation. Likewise, Madjid's happiness with Tanja's book could be more personal in nature but at the same time it could also become the seeds of mutual understanding between the two important leaders in particular and the Muslims and the Christians who shared their ideas in general.

The interest of the Protestant intellectuals in the Islamic reform movement is also reflected in the annual programme called 'Seminar Agama-Agama' (Seminar of Religions). Started in 1981, the Research and Development Office of the PGI organised a one-week Seminar on Islam for about 20 students coming from different Protestant Academies of Theology (STT) throughout Indonesia. The seminar was designed to give those students a general understanding of Islam, particularly the development of Islam in Indonesia. The important person behind this programme was Olaf Herbert Schumann, a German minister of the Lutheran Church who worked in the Research and Development Office of the PGI from 1970 to 1981. From 1964-1966, Schumann studied Islam in Cairo and then in 1975 wrote a PhD thesis on the Arabic Muslim literature on Jesus. When he worked in Indonesia, Schumann also taught Islam as a subject in some STTs, and wrote some books on inter-religious dialogue. Although he was appointed Professor of Missiology in Hamburg University in 1981, he still regularly visited Indonesia to teach in the STTs and to support the seminar.²³

The topics of the seminar gradually developed from the phenomena of Islam in Indonesia to the topics of common concern like modernisation, social justice, the environmental crisis, human rights, and religion and culture. The number of students who participated in the seminar also gradually increased and the speakers were extended from the Muslim and Protestant figures to the Catholic, Hindu and Buddhist intellectuals and so it became a 'Seminar of Religions'.²⁴ In this context, besides the fact that many of the Muslim speakers invited to the Seminar of Religions were those names commonly associated with the same stream of Islamic reform,²⁵ the first two seminars clearly paid specific attention to the Islamic renewal movement. The first seminar in 1981 discussed the book by Harun Nasution called *Islam Ditinjau Dari Berbagai Aspeknya* (Islam Viewed from Its Different Aspects).²⁶ In addition to Nasution's book, Th. Sumartana, one of the important per-

sons behind the seminar, presented his paper on the controversial diary of Ahmad Wahib recently published in that year. Even more than the first seminar, the second one in 1982 was focused on the issue of Islamic reforms in Indonesia and the literatures discussed in the seminar were Victor Tanja's thesis, the diary of Ahmad Wahib and the works by Deliar Noer and Harun Nasution on Islamic reform.²⁷

In his paper for the second seminar, having referred to the books by Deliar Noer and Harun Nasution, T.B. Simatupang, the prominent leader of the PGI, argued that the Islamic modern movements were not competitors to, but one of the components of the nationalist movement in Indonesia. In other words, both Christians and Muslims were in fact nationalists. In addition, for Simatupang, the ideas of the Islamic renewal movement of the HMI described in Victor Tanja's thesis should also become the concern of the adherents of other religions. Thus, for him, the same nationalist impetus and the same concern with the relevance of religion to modern society were the very foundation of Muslim-Christian cooperation to develop the country.²⁸

Another book discussed in the seminar was the diary of Ahmad Wahib. We have mentioned that Wahib was among the early promoters of the non-ideological view of Islam in the late 1960s. Wahib was killed in a motorcycle accident in March 1973 and his diary was posthumously published in 1981. The publication of the diary as a book soon triggered controversies among the Muslims: while his friends and sympathizers were fascinated by Wahib's critical and honest view of Islam, others called it a heresy or a tragedy for Islam.²⁹ Having investigated the book, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) even asked the Department of Religion to restrict its distribution.³⁰ Despite the opposition, perhaps because its Islamic view was favourable to the Government, the latter never banned the book and it was one of the bestsellers in Indonesia in 1981.³¹

In general, besides his obvious support for secularisation and his criticism of certain established orthodox teachings of Islam, Wahib made some of the Muslims angry because while he was very critical of Islam and Islamic leaders, he highly praised certain Catholic priests whom he knew very well. In the early 1960s when he was a student of the Faculty of Natural Science, Gajah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Wahib used to stay in the Catholic student dormitory, Realino. There he experienced direct and warm encounters with the Catholics through daily conversation, sports, music etc. It was partly this experience that led him to oppose the simple dichotomy of Muslim and non-Muslim. His close and warm relations with some of the priests whom he considered good and sincere people led him, in his note on 16 September

1969, to question the theological view that non-Muslims would simply go to Hell in the hereafter.³² On 13 December 1971, Wahib wrote that he dreamed of the Virgin Mary wearing a white dress and smiling at him. This dream was quite impressive to him as he wrote: "I am not a Christian, but I do not know why I found peace and calm in my mind when I faced her. Would this happen in my real life?"³³ In 1971, Wahib moved to Jakarta and studied at the Academy of Philosophy, Driyarkara, an institution established and run by the Catholics. If we remember the Muslim-Christian tensions during the period of Wahib's notes (1968-1973) recorded in this book, we shall soon realise that he was really a unique person among the Muslim activists.

Th. Sumartana chose Wahib's diary as his focus for discussing the Islamic renewal movement both in the first and the second seminar. In 1981, Sumartana wrote two articles on Wahib's diary: one in *Tempo*, and this was the paper presented to the first seminar and another in the academic journal, *Prisma*, and this was later presented to the second seminar in 1982.³⁴ Moreover, the second seminar also invited Ismed Natsir, one of the editors of the diary, to present a paper on Ahmad Wahib. In his paper, Ismed Natsir objected to those who said that, having been influenced by the Catholic priests, Wahib eventually lost his faith in Islam. In fact, Natsir said, Wahib was born into a committed Muslim family, and when he returned home, he often was a preacher in the Muhammadiyah mosque of his hometown, Sampang, Madura. However, as a young man, argued Ismed Natsir, Wahib opened himself to any influence without fear of losing his religious identity. Natsir also referred to some notes found in Wahib's original diary, but not included in its published edition to indicate that Wahib was actually a very pious and committed Muslim.³⁵ On the other hand, Sumartana argued that the dogmatism and exclusivism criticised by Wahib were actually not phenomena specific to Islam, and therefore Wahib's diary should be taken as an example of a creative and critical assessment of religion for all believers, including the Christians. Moreover, for Sumartana, due to the influence of their western masters since the colonial period, many of the Indonesian Christians consciously or unconsciously believed that Islam was identical with underdevelopment and ignorance. In fact, argued Sumartana, he did not find any example among the Christians who developed such a creative and fresh religious thought like Ahmad Wahib. To emphasize his point, Sumartana quoted Wahib, who wrote in his diary that secularisation was still problematic in the Christian world but the Indonesian Christians immediately accepted it without criticisms, and therefore, Wahib questioned whether this attitude was based purely on ideal reasons or simply because they were

afraid of the aggressiveness of the Islamic groups. For Sumartana, this was truly an honest question to the Christians.

Our discussion so far demonstrates how the Christians responded positively to the emergence of the renewal movement among the reformist Muslim activists. In fact, a similar development was also found among the Muslim traditionalists of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). The most prominent proponent of the non-ideological view of Islam in the NU circle was Abdurrahman Wahid who was to become the President of Indonesia in 1999. In the early 1970s, when he had just come back to Indonesia from his study in Baghdad, Abdurrahman Wahid still believed in Islam as an ideology.³⁶ However, probably after having contacts and discussions with leaders of the renewal movement like Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi and Dawam Rahardjo, by the mid 1970s, he had already abandoned the ideological view of Islam. By this time, Wahid was often invited to give a lecture on Islam in the regular course for the ministers of the East Java Christian Church (GKJW) in Malang. In this context, Greg Barton found that Wahid's explicit support for Madjid's secularisation idea was clearly expressed in a paper presented to a meeting of the GKJW ministers in 1976.³⁷ This evidence indicates that at least since the second half of the 1970s, Wahid was already known in the Christian circle as a traditionalist Muslim intellectual who supported a non-ideological view of Islam. Furthermore, since 1982 Wahid was among those who were often invited to speak in the annual Seminar of Religions organised by the PGI. The following report of the second Seminar in 1982 may illustrate how the Christians were happy with Abdurrahman Wahid's serious involvement.

Starting at 9 in the morning, he (Abdurrahman Wahid) talked openly about the history and position of the NU in local and national politics. The discussion was quite interesting, and he was so generous with his time that he continued till 3.00 p.m. even though the actual timetable for him was from 10.30 to 12.00. This lecture provided much new knowledge to the participants who were 'blind' to socio-political issues and the development of Islamic renewal movement in Indonesia.³⁸

However, up to 1984, Wahid was not yet the top leader of the NU, and so the influence of his ideas on the organisation was still limited. In addition, the lateness of the development of the renewal ideas in the NU circles was also due to its formal political position. Unlike the reformist Muslims, who could not rehabilitate their political party, Masyumi, the NU's participation

in national politics was not formally disturbed by the New Order regime, at least to the end of the 1970s. However, at every election, many NU activists were often pressurised to support the Government party, Golkar. Initially, NU played a dominant role in the Islamic party, PPP, and led protests against some of the Government's policies. Being unhappy with the NU's frequent attitude of opposition, the Government tried to subdue the NU faction within the PPP. By the early 1980s, the reformist Muslim politician in the PPP, Djaelani Naro who had a close relationship with the Government, eventually expelled several important NU representatives within the party. By 1983 NU was under more pressure to choose either accommodation or opposition to the Government. In the National Consultation of 1983 in Situbondo, the NU finally made two significant concessions: (1) to withdraw from formal politics, so that its formal ties with the PPP were cut; and (2) to accept Pancasila as the basis of the organization.³⁹ The second decision was related to the MPR Decree on the GBHN of 1983 in which it was stated, among other things, that Pancasila had to be the sole basis of all social organisations. In this regard, the NU proved to be the first religious organisation to accept this rule before it was officially declared by President Soeharto as the Law No. 8 /1985.⁴⁰ Wahid was certainly one of the major proponents of the two significant decisions in Situbondo, and by the next year (1984) he was elected Executive Chairman of the NU. Ever since, he became increasingly influential both inside and outside the NU.

Under Wahid's leadership, the NU also became more attractive to both foreign and domestic social researchers. In this context, a minister of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (HKBP) Church named Einar Martahan Sitompul wrote an MA thesis on the "NU and Pancasila" that was submitted to the STT Jakarta in 1988 and published in the following year.⁴¹ In his study, Sitompul tried to uncover the historical development of religious thought within the NU in response to the socio-political changes from 1926 when the NU was established to its 27th Congress in 1984. Sitompul looked at the orthodox Sunni tradition and how the NU took those elements of the tradition to justify its particular position in a certain socio-political context. He argued that although the NU took different positions in relation to the socio-political changes of the country, they should not be interpreted simply as evidence of NU's political opportunism. The rich materials of the orthodox Sunni tradition, Sitompul argued, provided the NU with a flexible, adaptive and contextual political attitude without losing its basic Islamic principles. In this context, Sitompul maintained that the NU's acceptance of Pancasila as its basis was based on serious religious reasoning and therefore, it was

not a temporary political tactics but an assertion of the NU's responsibility for the future of the nation as a whole.

We can say that Sitompul's study was an attempt to see the NU sympathetically from its own religious point of view. No matter whether his analysis of the NU was objective or not, Sitompul probably represented the view among the Christians who felt very positive about NU's non-ideological view of Islam and its acceptance of Pancasila as the basis of the organisation in 1983. In other words, the NU somehow did not represent the threat of the Islamic State any more to the Christians. Moreover, when the thesis was published, Abdurrahman Wahid wrote an introduction in which he affirmed that according to the traditional *fiqh*, Indonesia was a state based on a peace agreement (*dār al-sulh*) between Muslims and other groups and therefore, it should be accepted and defended by the Muslims.⁴² Wahid also wrote that he was very grateful for Sitompul's study, not only because it was a sympathetic description of the NU but also because it was a good example of how all religious groups could learn from one another. "This process of learning from one another among us [that is, religious groups] will certainly enrich our knowledge and understanding of our own state and the problems it faces," wrote Wahid.⁴³

2. **Inter-religious Dialogue and National Development**

We have mentioned that to weaken and control the political force of the Islamic groups, the power holders of the New Order suppressed the Islamic ideological orientation of the Islamic socio-political forces. The Government's negative policy towards Islamic ideology, however, was accompanied by a positive call for development, particularly economic development. The latter was strongly justified by the fact that the country had suffered from serious economic deterioration inherited from the Soekarno regime. In this context, the proponents of the New Order often said that if the political parties and other social forces during the Soekarno period were 'ideology-oriented', then now they had to be 'programme-oriented'. In other words, for the New Order supporters, instead of being preoccupied with ideological issues that would only bring about unnecessary socio-political conflicts, all social forces should direct their energies to the common concern of the whole nation called 'modernisasi' or 'pembangunan'.

The first term (*modernisasi*) is none but 'modernisation' while the second term (*pembangunan*) is more or less a translation of the English word 'development'.⁴⁴ The meaning of the two terms could probably be differen-

tiated, but for our analysis here the differentiation has a very limited significance, particularly because the New Order regime tended to use both terms as identical. If we look at the book by the 'architect' of the New Order, Ali Moertopo, for instance, we find that he refers to the two terms interchangeably without clear differentiation.⁴⁵ In his study of Muslim responses to modernisation, Hassan does not clearly differentiate the two terms either. Hassan, however, demonstrates that the Muslim ideological responses were more directed to modernisasi than to pembangunan.⁴⁶ Perhaps, this was the reason why the Government eventually preferred the term pembangunan to modernisasi.

The Government idea on development probably came from Soeharto's economic advisors since 1966 led by Widjojo Nitisastro, a PhD in economics from the University of California, Berkeley, who was to become the Head of the Body for the National Development Planning (Bappenas).⁴⁷ 'Development', however, was not adopted as a formal Government policy until a few years later. In his speech to the MPRS in August 1967, Soeharto said that his administration was preparing a Five Year Development Programme (REPELITA) that was expected to be ratified by the MPRS in 1968 and to be implemented by the Government in 1969.⁴⁸ Indeed, in 1968 the MPRS approved the REPELITA and ever since, development or pembangunan had been the most central discourse of the New Order regime and almost as sacred as Pancasila and the Constitution of 1945. All Government officials repeated the word Pembangunan again and again in their speeches; all students from elementary to university levels should memorize what Pembangunan was; all religious leaders were encouraged to speak about the function of religion to support Pembangunan; and Soeharto was eventually called the Father of Pembangunan.

Among the religious groups, the Christians appear to be the earliest group who responded very positively to the idea of modernisation. In June 1967, the Indonesian Council of Churches (DGI) organised a Conference on Church and Society in which the major issue discussed was how the churches could contribute to modernisation and development of the country. Soeharto, who was the Acting President, came to the Conference and delivered a sympathetic speech.⁴⁹ The Conference was probably supported by the WCC because, as noted in Chapter 2, since 1962 the leader of the DGI, T.B. Simatupang, had been involved in similar conferences both at the national and international levels. In general, the Conference emphasized that the churches had to motivate their members to participate in modernising the country in the fields of politics, law, economy and culture. In terms of

socio-cultural modernisation, the Conference suggested that the Christians should maximise the functions of the Christian social service institutions such as schools, universities, health centres, orphanages and publications.⁵⁰ With regard to the modernisation of politics, the Conference was rather worried about the dominant role of military officers in the state institutions, but it still hoped that the military could lead the country to a democratic political system. On economic development, the Conference suggested that the churches could motivate their members to participate in cooperatives; to create the vocational education needed by modern industries; and to tell the real economic situation of the country to foreign churches so that the latter could ask their respective Governments to provide aid for Indonesia. The Conference was also concerned with modernisation of the national law, and it was in this context that Islam was mentioned. The Conference stated that the Christians had to reckon with Islam and Islamic law seriously, to avoid antagonism and confrontation with the Muslims, and "if there is a view that in terms of modernisation Islam is a 'laggard', then the concern of the Christians was to help them to be 'innovators.'"⁵¹

In line with the Protestants, the Catholics also made a positive response to modernisation. In the above seminar, Father Dick Hartoko, a Jesuit and editor of the Catholic cultural magazine, *Basis*, was invited to present a paper on the Catholic view of modernisation. In his paper, Hartoko explained that Thomas Aquinas (d.1274) was the earliest theologian who opened the door for modernisation because he argued that science and reason on the one hand, and revelation and faith on the other, had their respective autonomous realms. However, in the following centuries, said Hartoko, the Church was still unfriendly to science, and her positive attitude to it was just introduced in the modern period by Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) and then followed by Pope John XXIII (1881-1963). Accordingly, the Vatican Council II and its *aggiornamento*, said Hartoko, tried to bring the Church positively into the middle of the modern world. Hartoko argued further that in the past, Christian love was realised by individuals through charities, but in the modern period, Christian love should be realised collectively through the so-called modernisation. "If the people of Samaria helped others by giving oil and wine, then we are now to cure the wounds of our nation and all human beings by carrying out modernisation," he wrote.⁵² Besides Hartoko's paper, it is noteworthy that the major involvement of some Catholic intellectuals and activists in the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) was also evidence of their serious support for Government modernisation.⁵³

In contrast to the Christians, the Muslims responded differently to the Government call for modernisation and development. The negative and oppositional political attitude of the military towards the Islamic groups in the early years of the New Order, particularly to the reformist Muslims, was the main reason why the Muslims were sceptical if not totally negative to the Government call for modernisation. In his study of this topic, Hassan classified three types of the reformist Muslim responses to modernisation.⁵⁴ The first was the ideological response characterised by a defensive attitude and high concern with the influences of western culture embodied in modernisation. For instance, Nurcholish Madjid wrote in 1968 that modernisation was only compatible with Islam as far as it means 'rationalisation' not 'Westernisation'. Hassan explained that the reformist Muslims suspected that modernisation was nothing but efforts of the secularists in the Government to eradicate all traces of Islam in public life. I also would like to add that for some of the Muslims 'Westernisation' could also mean 'Christianisation'. The second type was what Hassan called 'the idealist response', which put the national development within the framework of Islam as a comprehensive system covering social, economic, political and spiritual fields. The idealists generally believed that only through the application of the shari'a by the state could the 'true' national development be realised. Therefore, among their most important agenda were the unification of Islamic political forces, the establishment of autonomous Muslim social and economic institutions, and the intensification of Islamic propagation (*da'wah*) programmes. The third type was the accommodationist response characterised by efforts to put Islam and Islamic groups in congruence with the Government views, by proposing a non-ideological view of Islam and an open attitude to Western culture.⁵⁵ This type of response mainly came from the proponents of the renewal movement in the early 1970s.

Government Sponsored Dialogue on Religious Harmony and Development

After the elections of 1971 in which the Government party, Golkar, obtained a spectacular victory, the Government became more active to persuade religious groups to support Pembangunan. In this context, in September 1971, A. Mukti Ali was appointed to be the Minister of Religion. Ali Munhanif has noted that Ali Moertopo and Soedjono Hoemardani, the two important Personal Assistants to President Soeharto and the patrons of the CSIS, played a decisive role in Mukti Ali's appointment.⁵⁶ Mukti Ali was a non-NU figure, a former activist of the reformist Muslim school student union,

PII (Pelajar Islam Indonesia), and in the early 1950s used to work as a secretary in the Central Board of the Masyumi, but in 1955 had decided to study abroad.⁵⁷ As noted, in the early years of the New Order, Mukti Ali hosted the 'Limited Group' discussion circle, the embryo of the renewal movement among the HMI activists.⁵⁸ Moreover, thanks to his study at McGill with Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Mukti Ali had sympathy with other religions, so by the late 1960s he initiated an inter-religious dialogue in Yogyakarta, even in his own house.⁵⁹ Mukti Ali's track record apparently matched the interests of the New Order Government. First, as a reformist Muslim, he was expected to eliminate the long-established dominance of the NU in the Department of Religion. The NU was an important wing of the Islamic party, PPP, and the marginalisation of the NU people in the Department was partly related to the Government attempts to force all civil servants to be Golkar loyalists. Secondly, as the patron of the renewal movement and an activist in inter-religious dialogue, Mukti Ali was perhaps expected to be able to bridge the gap between the Government, the Muslims and the Christians. Thirdly, Mukti Ali was politically weak, because he had no personal power base, neither in a political party nor in the Islamic organisations like NU or Muhammadiyah.

Before his appointment, Mukti Ali accompanied by Ali Moertopo and Soedjono Humardani, met Soeharto in the latter's house. In that meeting, Soeharto said repeatedly that he expected Mukti Ali to pay serious attention to development (*pembangunan*).⁶⁰ Indeed, during his ministry, Mukti Ali always tried to explain the relationship between religion and development, and all of his speeches published in nine volumes were entitled "Agama dan Pembangunan" (Religion and Development). Actually, about one week before his appointment as the Minister of Religion, on 3 September 1971, Mukti Ali was invited by the German Cultural Foundation to deliver a lecture on religion and development at the Goethe Institute, Jakarta.⁶¹ This English lecture was soon translated into Indonesian and delivered to various audiences on different occasions in October 1971.⁶² In this lecture, Mukti Ali argued that the ultimate goal of development was "the development of the *whole* man and of *all* men." This meant that for him, development should include both the spiritual and material dimensions of human life. Thus, he rejected the idea that both secularism and Westernisation were inherent in development. He also emphasised that development programmes should give priority to social justice over economic growth. He strongly believed that the teachings of all religions were a positive support to development and therefore, religious believers should "move out of their religious ghettos and narrow communal interests" to support development.⁶³

When Mukti Ali started his ministry, he stressed the importance of inter-religious dialogue for national development. Inter-religious dialogue, he said, could be an effective means to increase the participation of religious groups in development and to prevent them from inter-religious conflicts.⁶⁴ This preventive function of the dialogue was certainly parallel with the Government view that socio-political stability was necessary for development. In an interview with me, Mukti Ali said that the relations between Muslims and Christians at that time were “as if they did not know each other” and this situation, he said, could easily lead to a dangerous conflict.⁶⁵ His project on inter-religious dialogue, therefore, was strongly related to what he frequently referred to as “the harmony of religious life” (*kerukunan hidup beragama*), that is, peaceful co-existence of religious groups.

The harmony of religious life is a social condition in which all religious groups could live together without losing their basic right to perform their respective religious duties. Everybody lives as a good religious believer in a harmonious and peaceful condition. Therefore, the harmony of religious life cannot emerge from blind fanaticism and indifference to the rights and feelings of the others... . The harmony of religious life can only be obtained if every religious group becomes open-hearted [*lapang dada*] to one another.⁶⁶

The harmony of religious life, he said, should be developed within the principle of ‘agreement to disagree.’⁶⁷ This means that in a dialogue one was ready to accept and respect the other totally, that is, with all of the latter’s aspiration, customs, mode of life and religious conviction.⁶⁸ The principle of agreement to disagree was related to Mukti Ali’s strong opposition to apologetic discourses developed by some Indonesian Muslim intellectuals against non-Islamic religions.⁶⁹ Instead of developing apologetics, Mukti Ali suggested Muslim scholars should look at other religions in a more sympathetic way, that is, by looking at the views of the believers of the religion in question or the insiders’ perspective. Some scholars called this approach ‘phenomenological.’ Among the proponents of this approach was Wilfred Cantwell Smith with whom Mukti Ali studied at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University from 1955 to 1957.⁷⁰ Not long after his return to Indonesia, in 1958, Mukti Ali joined the Ninth Congress for the History of Religions in Tokyo in which many scholars of the subject from all over the world participated. This meeting seems to have made Mukti Ali more convinced of the importance of this approach to the study of religions.⁷¹ In early 1960s, Mukti Ali introduced this approach through the subject called ‘the Science of Comparative Religion’ (*Ilmu Perbandingan Agama*) to his students at the Insti-

tute of Islamic Studies (IAIN), Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta.⁷² This subject was also to be taught in all IAINs all over the country.

As the Minister of Religion, Mukti Ali tried to develop the principle of agreement to disagree through the project on the harmony of religious life. He appointed Djohan Effendi, the former activist of the Limited Group, to be the head of the project. According to Djohan, there were three main programmes of the project: meetings of religious leaders, a programme of social research and camps bringing together students of different religious backgrounds. From 1972 to 1977, there were 23 dialogues of religious leaders held in 21 cities all over the country. The participants of the dialogues included Government officials, religious leaders of Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and even of Javanese mysticism and local beliefs.⁷³ In general, the dialogue was still far from Mukti Ali's ideal of agreement to disagree but it was quite different from the debate in the Inter-religious Consultation of 1967. Djohan Effendi explained:⁷⁴

The goal of the dialogue was not to discuss theological issues, but social issues as a common concern, or the so-called development issues.⁷⁵ These were to be discussed from the perspective of every religion. The important thing in the dialogue was not the decisions taken in it but personal contacts and friendships among the participants. Within two or three days, they stayed in the same place, had the same meals together and shared jokes. Thus, they became close to one another.

The second activity was a social research programme and this was carried out since 1976 in seven regions. The research was carried out by a team of seven involving Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and the topic of the research was determined by the team.⁷⁶ Before the field research, the members of the team were briefed in the Training Programme on Religious Research (*Program Latihan Penelitian Agama*, PLPA). Started in 1975, the programme was organised and financed by the Office of Research and Development of the Department of Religion. Karel Steenbrink, who also taught in the programme, noted that the PLPA was organised in a place where "all participants had to stay for three months together" and they were "stimulated to select inter-religious relations or even tensions as the special topic for their one-year field research, which followed the three months training."⁷⁷ In his assessment of this project, without explaining whether the results of the research were important or not, Djohan Effendi only emphasised that the programme was a good opportunity for people

of different religions to develop intimate relations and to learn from one another.⁷⁸

The third programme of the project was student camping. This was initiated in 1977 in Jakarta and Medan. In Jakarta, the participants of the camping were students of the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN), the Academy of Theology (STT) Jakarta (Protestant), and the Academy of Philosophy Driyarkara (Catholic). In Medan, the participants were activists of Muslim student organisations (HMI and PII) and the Protestant student organisations (GMKI). During the camps, the participants had discussions with some invited speakers and among themselves. On the final day, they performed a voluntary work together for the community where the camp was held. Again, for Djohan, the important thing in this programme was personal contacts and the experiences of being together with people of different religions.⁷⁹ The programme, he said, provided the participants with early personal contacts from a young age, and so when they graduated and became the leaders of their respective religious groups, they would not have difficulties in communicating with each other.⁸⁰

So what was the result of the project? In this respect, it is important to look at Steenbrink's observation of the programme on dialogue:

Quite often they produced optimistic and sometimes embellished statements about the positions and practices of various communities. The unifying Pancasila ideology was very often quoted as a great support for the harmony of religions and their cooperation for national development... An important result of these meetings was that often for the first time religious leaders came together in the pleasant atmosphere of a comfortable conference centre with good food and often luxurious facilities, serving as start of informal exchanges as well. One of the weak sides of the initiative was that it started as a 'project' with many single and unique initiatives. There was generally no other follow up for an inter-religious meeting than the publication of the minutes, which were published *in extenso* and spread in about 1000 copies.⁸¹

With regard to the social research programme, Steenbrink made a similar observation:

Several results of this investigation were doctrinal and embellishing as well. For instance: Pancasila ideology propagates harmony of religions and this was therefore, supported by a vast majority. Nearly all concrete conflicts were imputed to non-religious factors or only some individuals were blamed not

groups. But quite a few of this research provide us with very concrete data and honest reports about mutual perceptions and complaints.⁸²

Djohan Effendi, the head of the project, was far from satisfied with the project as well, and therefore, he would probably agree with Steenbrink's observation. However, as has been indicated, Djohan Effendi thought that the project was somehow a good beginning to open the locked door of communication among the leaders of religious groups. On the other hand, he actually wanted to proceed to a more serious dialogue in which sensitive theological issues, for instance, could be discussed. This was the reason why he was later more comfortable with, and even became one of the initiators of, inter-religious dialogue organised by private organisations.⁸³

The minimal achievement of the dialogue could also be related to the Government's simple expectation that inter-religious dialogue would enhance socio-political stability for the sake of development and therefore, the emphasis was much more on peaceful coexistence than on creating mutual understanding and cooperation among the religious groups. Furthermore, like other Government development projects, inter-religious dialogue was a project from which the civil servants received extra income additional to their regular low salaries, and so sometimes they took the project without clear understanding of, or commitment to it. Last but not least, because the project was a Government initiative, the religious groups were somehow *still* suspicious of the Government intentions. Mukti Ali remembered that when he proposed the dialogue programme both Muslims and Christians were suspicious: "they said to me, it was meaningless" (*mengada-ada*).⁸⁴

The Christians particularly became more suspicious of Government intentions when the latter wanted to establish a Body for Inter-religious Consultation (*Badan Konsultasi antar Umat Beragama*). As discussed in Chapter 1, a similar institution had already been established in the Inter-religious Consultation of 1967; but since its inception it had no clear activity. The origin of the idea to establish the body apparently did not come from Mukti Ali but from the President and the military.⁸⁵ This idea was obviously in line with the New Order's corporatism in the sense that religious groups as social forces were to be put in an organisation that could be controlled and managed by the power holders. This was also in line with the Government view that religious groups should be controlled to create socio-political stability for the sake of development. The Christians' suspicion of the Government was related to the latter's proposal that the body was expected to hold an inter-religious consultation on "the ethical code for religious propagation."

As discussed in Chapter 2, like his predecessor, Mukti Ali also wanted to restrict religious propagation only to those outside the recognised religions, while the Christians consistently opposed this idea. Partly because of the Christian opposition to the proposed topic for the inter-religious consultation, and partly because there was no consensus among religious leaders on the position and function of the body, Mukti Ali finally failed to establish the body and no inter-religious consultation was held.⁸⁶

In 1978, Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara, a retired army general, was appointed to Mukti Ali's position. Alamsyah continued the dialogue programme and at the same time he put it more clearly within the framework of maintaining the socio-political stability for development. In this respect, Alamsyah proposed that religious harmony should be developed into 'a triad of harmony', that is, intra-religious harmony (harmony among different sects and groups within the same religion), inter-religious harmony and the harmony between religious groups and the Government.⁸⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2, as parts of his policy on inter-religious harmony, without further consultation with the religious leaders, Alamsyah issued two decrees, one on the restriction of religious propagation and another on the Government control of foreign aid for religious institutions. Both decrees were certainly welcome by the Muslim leaders but strongly opposed by the Christians.

Moreover, by contrast to Mukti Ali, after a series of meetings between the religious leaders and the Government since 1979, in 1980 Alamsyah successfully created the Forum for Inter-religious Consultation (*Wadah Musyawarah Antar Umat Bergama*) in which the organisations of five recognised religions were represented. In his speech at the inauguration of the Forum on 30 June 1980, Alamsyah said: "Since I have been in office as the Minister of Religion, I have always suggested to [you] to strengthen religious harmony [because] it is a primary factor in the development and strengthening of national stability and defence."⁸⁸ Alamsyah also said that the inter-religious dialogue during the Mukti Ali era was more academic and philosophical, while now he would like to develop a more pragmatic one. The Government, he said, would support the development of religious life, and if the believers of different religions "cannot help each other, at least they do not disturb each other."⁸⁹

As one would expect, it was the Government that dictated the issues to be discussed by the Forum rather than the religious groups themselves. As noted in Chapter 2, one of the issues discussed in the Forum concerned the celebration of religious feast days. In addition, in 1982, the Government asked the Forum to give advice on certain moral and social issues like drug

abuse and alcoholic drink; and to organise prayers for rain in a long dry season. Moreover, as a former personal secretary to the President, Alamsyah was able to obtain considerable financial support for his programmes. In this context, since 1983, the representatives of religious leaders in the Forum, high Government officials and members of Parliament paid a joint yearly visit to places of worship and social institutions of different religions in the provinces. This activity was financed by the Department of Religion and widely covered by press and television. However, later when this programme was evaluated, some religious leaders questioned the value and sincerity of this way of dialogue.⁹⁰

In interviews, I asked Mukti Ali and Djohan Effendi about their respective opinions regarding Alamsyah's policies. Mukti Ali said that Alamsyah did not really continue his dialogue programme because he was a military man who did not understand religion very well and could not be involved in dialogue.⁹¹ Djohan Effendi argued further that there was a shift of emphasis from Mukti Ali to Alamsyah: while the former believed that religious harmony should be developed through dialogue, the latter believed that religious harmony could be effectively maintained through regulations.⁹² It seems both Djohan Effendi and Mukti Ali were only partially right. As we already discussed above, there is somehow continuity between Mukti Ali's and Alamsyah's policies on dialogue. The issue was not simply the contrast between a religious scholar and a military man or between dialogue and regulation but the fact that the Government idea of dialogue was based on the top-down approach to maintain the socio-political stability needed for development. Both Mukti Ali and Alamsyah were somehow trapped within this approach.

The next Minister of Religion, Munawir Sjadzali (in office from 1983 to 1993) also continued the project on religious harmony, but it was apparently not his first concern. One important thing that Munawir Sjadzali did with the Forum for the Inter-religious Consultation in late 1983 was to invite religious leaders to discuss the Government intention to make Pancasila the sole basis for all social organisations. His attempt through the Forum was apparently not very successful because although all of the religious organisations represented in the Forum later accepted the regulation, this acceptance was more a result of internal discussion within the religious organisations themselves rather than that of the Forum.⁹³ In addition, as we shall see, the following Minister of Religion, Tarmizi Taher (in office from 1993 to 1998) reinforced the project but this was much more in response to incidents than a deliberate effort to support the Government development discourse.

Critical Muslim and Christian Responses to the Government Initiatives

If we look at the Christian writings in the early 1970s, we find that there were positive responses to Mukti Ali's dialogue programme. In his book published in 1972, J.W.M Bakker, for instance, described with great sympathy how Mukti Ali from the late 1960s until he became the Minister of Religion in 1971 tirelessly promoted inter-religious dialogue.⁹⁴ Likewise, Eka Darmaputera, a Protestant minister who was to become the leader of the PGI, wrote in 1973 that since Mukti Ali became the Minister, there were positive developments in terms of inter-religious relations in the country. To show implicitly the contrast between Mukti Ali and his predecessors, Darmaputera said that Mukti Ali could put himself as the Minister of all religious groups, and his dialogue programme was not a reaction to a certain inter-religious incident but a preparation to face the future together. Nonetheless, for Darmaputera, the dialogue initiated by the Government should be considered only as a beginning and therefore, it had to be improved. Dialogue, he said, should not be simply "to see each other" but "existential encounter" in which everybody was expected to be ready to accept and to be accepted by the others without neglecting their respective differences. The national development, argued Darmaputera, demanded not only inter-religious harmony but also inter-religious creativity.⁹⁵

Almost a decade later, in 1982, the Muslim traditionalist leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, also criticised the Government-sponsored dialogue. For him, this dialogue was illusory because instead of talking openly about the existing inter-religious problems, it tended to hide them behind ceremonial smiles. The dialogue, he said, was in fact merely a series of monologues in which the participants tried to reiterate their respective religious teachings in relation to the Government development programmes and their loyalty to the state ideology, Pancasila.⁹⁶ On the other hand, Wahid explained that outside the formal dialogues initiated by the Government, informal communication between religious groups began to emerge and for him this was a more promising pattern of inter-religious relations. He observed that in this communication, the young theologians and activists of different religions tried "to create a common theology of human development and social justice."

What was actually 'the common theology of human development and social justice'? This theology apparently originated from discussions among religious intellectuals, particularly Muslim and Christian intellectuals on development issues since the early 1970s, that is, in the period when Mukti Ali promoted his idea on religion and development. Through both

discussion forums and their writings, those intellectuals tried to think about the position of religion in relation to development, sometimes from their respective religious teachings and sometimes in more universal terms.

Two articles written by Th. Sumartana in *Tempo* may serve to illustrate this theology. In an article published in 1974, Sumartana criticised two popular slogans on religion and development.⁹⁷ The first slogan was "Religion provides the motivation for development". For Sumartana, this slogan clearly used religion to justify rather than to direct and influence development. Behind the slogan, he said, there was a philosophy of a dualism of the human being: the soul and the body. The former was considered as the realm for religion where motivation was supposed to lie, and the latter was the realm of action where development actually operated. This would finally lead religion, he said, to be left in its own realm without any influences on the concrete decisions and actions of development. The second slogan was "to develop a human developer". This slogan, he said, could avoid the soul-body dualism of the first slogan, but at the same time it fell into another dualism, that is, between humanity and the world. This view, he said, tended to neglect the fact that the human being was not such a strong creature as could change the world. In other words, this slogan, he said, would lead religion to ignore the socio-structural realities involved in the process of development. Within these two slogans, argued Sumartana, one could find the traditional and established framework of religion in which religion was still considered as the centre of everything and the store of perfect truths. This framework eventually led religion to lose its power to criticise development, namely human beings and their world. Moreover, because the two slogans were based on the traditional and established religious framework, they would only contribute to harden religious groupings. In short, for Sumartana, religion should function as a critical voice in the framework of development; and to create this function, religion should be freed from its traditional exclusive framework.

The second article was on religion and social justice, published a few months before the above article.⁹⁸ In this Sumartana proposed some critical questions on the possibility of enhancing social justice through religion. He said, there were many people whose incomes depended on their role as religious leaders. Then he asked, was it appropriate for a religious leader to become rich? This question was important, he said, particularly if one expected that a religious leader had to struggle for social justice. It was true, he said, that religion did not forbid anybody being rich, but who else could see the urgency of social justice better than a poor person? In fact, he said, wealth was a primary support in society to develop injustice. Without answering this

question, he moved on to another question: should religion specifically serve the poor people? Sumartana's answer to this question was more than a simple yes or no. A religion that cannot be effectively involved in the issue of social justice, he said, was a poor religion and a religion of poverty. However, he said, one should not identify the poor with social justice, because like the rich, the poor were not free from sin and therefore, they could become oppressors when they became rich. What was then the appropriate position of religion on the issue of social justice? For Sumartana, to answer this question, one could look at how religion dealt with Marxism. He then asked: "Can religion seek social justice without being trapped in Marxism and without falling into the impasse of Marx's concept of human being? Can religion struggle for the need of the poor without deifying poverty and the poor?"

Sumartana's appeal to religion to function as a voice critical of development and as a force to enhance social justice was obviously parallel with the so-called theology of liberation developed by Catholic theologians in Latin America. It is interesting that the theology of liberation was highly appreciated in Indonesia not only by the Catholic theologians but also by Protestant and Muslim intellectuals. If we look at the articles on religion and development published in the prestigious journal called *Prisma* from 1975 to 1984, we find that the theology of liberation was introduced by both Catholic and Protestant intellectuals.⁹⁹ The importance of the articles lies in the fact that *Prisma* was not a Christian journal at all. The journal was published by the Institute of Research, Education and Information on Social and Economic Affairs (*Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan & Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial*, LP3ES), a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) established by the early 1970s by some intellectuals of Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI) and Masyumi backgrounds. In the first edition of *Prisma*, its editor, Ismid Hadad, explicitly stated that the journal was intended to be a free discussion forum on economic development, and social and cultural changes in Indonesia.¹⁰⁰ Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that *Prisma* was a medium of dialogue, and the fact that both Muslim and Christian intellectuals wrote in the journal indicates that it was also a medium of dialogue for them.

Indeed, the dialogue truly took place and this was indicated by the fact that some of the Muslim intellectuals and activists later tried to establish an Islamic version of the theology of liberation. Dawam Rahardjo, a Muslim reformist intellectual and one of the leaders of the LP3ES, for instance, in 1983, organised a seminar by inviting a Catholic priest, Kees Bertens, a Muslim theologian, Harun Nasution and a foreign scholar, Karel A. Steenbrink, to discuss the possibility of developing an Islamic theology of libera-

tion. To Rahardjo's disappointment, Harun Nasution said that the issue of social justice in Islam was not a theological (*'ilm al-kalām*) but legal issue (*fiqh*), and because his expertise was in *kalām* not *fiqh*, he could not propose something similar to that of the Christian theology of liberation.¹⁰¹ In fact, there is a lot of material in Islamic tradition, including *'ilm al-kalām*, which can be developed to be an Islamic liberation theology. Why was Nasution reluctant to develop this type of theology? Perhaps, he was worried about its political implications. As a theologian who worked in the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN), Jakarta, he was known as supportive rather than critical of the Government modernisation programmes. On the other hand, the Muslim proponents of liberation theology were generally NGO activists who were not dependent on the Government but on foreign funds. Thus, for them, to be critical of the Government was normal if not necessary.

Despite the above seminar, Dawam Rahardjo could eventually find the Islamic theological reflections similar to the Christian liberation theology in the works of the Egyptian philosopher Hassan Hanafi and the Iranian religious intellectual Ali Shari'ati.¹⁰² Rahardjo was certainly not the only Muslim intellectual who was interested in Hassan Hanafi's and Ali Shari'ati's writings in particular and liberation theology in general. In fact, the interest of the Muslim intellectuals in the theology of liberation increased in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. In 1987, the Protestant publisher, Sinar Harapan, published a book on the theology of liberation by a Catholic priest named Waho-no Nitiprawiro.¹⁰³ The book was originally a thesis submitted to the Catholic Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Kentungan, Yogyakarta. The book was soon banned by the Government, but it had already reached the hands of student activists, particularly in Java, and became the topic of closed discussions among them. In June 1988, the NU activists in Yogyakarta, organised a seminar on the Islamic perspectives of the "theology of development", another euphemism for the "theology of liberation." There were at least two papers in the seminar trying to find elements of liberation in Islamic teachings: the papers by Masdar F. Masu'di and Moeslim Abdurrahman respectively.¹⁰⁴ These two Muslim intellectuals later published their respective books on how Islam should function as a transforming force to enhance social justice.¹⁰⁵ Another Muslim intellectual who had the same concern was Mansour Fakih who argued that Harun Nasution's rational Islamic theology should be replaced with a theology concerned with the weak and the oppressed.¹⁰⁶

By the early 1990s, several activists of the Muslim traditionalist student organisation, PMII (*Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*), who established the Institute of Islamic and Social Studies (*Lembaga Kajian Islam dan*

Sosial, LKiS) in Yogyakarta, translated and published the works of foreign Muslim intellectuals who promoted the idea of liberation from Islamic perspectives, particularly the works of Hassan Hanafi and the Indian thinker Asghar Ali Engineer.¹⁰⁷ These activists also frequently visited or invited the Catholic theologian, J.B. Banawiratma, to study the Catholic theology of liberation. The interest of the PMII activists in the theology of liberation was also related to their experience in the field, particularly in the Kedung Ombo affair in the late 1980s. The Government constructed a dam in Kedung Ombo between 1985 and 1989 and this was to the disadvantage of the poor people living in that area who lost their land, without adequate compensation from the Government. The PMII activists were disappointed to find that the Muslim leaders in that area supported the Government, while the Catholic priest, Mangunwijaya, came there to support the demand of the people. This experience inspired these activists to study the Catholic theology of liberation and to find a similar perspective within the Islamic teachings.¹⁰⁸

In fact, both Islamic and Christian traditions contain teachings on social justice. Perhaps, the special thing here was that the Muslim activists wanted to learn about the concept of social justice from the Christian theology of liberation. Religious boundaries then became irrelevant because social justice was considered a common concern for all. It became an alternative to the early Muslim-Christian antagonist discourses on Islamic as against secular ideology and at the same time it was a criticisms of the Government discourse on development. These Muslim activists, however, were a minority among the Indonesian Muslims. Many Muslim leaders were also concerned with social justice, but they did not feel it important to learn from the Christians or to cooperate with them.

3. **Politics, Incidents and Dialogue in the 1990s**

By the late 1980s, there were indications that the Government had become more accommodating to Islamic groups. In 1989, some Muslim interests were accommodated in the Education Law, and in the same year the Religious Court Law was ratified. In 1990, Soeharto supported the establishment of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI). In 1991, Soeharto signed the Presidential Instruction on the Compilation of Islamic Law to be applied in the Islamic Courts. Soeharto also supported the establishment of the Islamic Bank (Bank Muamalat Indonesia) and the Muslim newspaper, *Republika*. After the 1992 elections, many of the Mus-

lims associated with ICMI became ministers of Soeharto's new cabinet, and the economic ministries that had been previously controlled by Christians were henceforth headed by Muslims.¹⁰⁹ There was also a decline of the influence of the Christians in the higher positions of the intelligence services and armed forces. While a group of Catholics in cooperation with certain army generals established the CSIS in early 1970s, now the ICMI also established a think tank called the Centre for Information and Development Studies (CIDES). It was said that some of the ICMI leaders thought that it was the time for them to take 'revenge' on the Christians.

Why was this? Hefner argued that state accommodation of Islam was a positive response to the emergence of the Muslim middle class in particular and the success of the Islamization of Indonesian culture in general.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, without entirely denying what Hefner said, Liddle emphasised that this 'Islamic turn' was strongly related to Soeharto's political tactic to make sure that he was to be re-elected as President by the MPR, rather than a true accommodation of Islam.¹¹¹ It seems, as Bruinessen argued, both the socio-cultural and political explanations were important to understand Soeharto's Islamic policies.¹¹²

In line with the above analysis, in Chapter 4 and 5, I argued that although both the Education Law and the Religious Court Law somehow indicated Government accommodation of Islamic interests, there were also compromises or limits to this accommodation. I also indicated that despite the compromises, the debates on the drafts of the two Laws had negative impacts on Muslim-Christian relations in the country. In this context, I would say that Liddle was probably right to say that Soeharto's close relation with the Muslims was primarily a political tactic to counter-balance the opposition of some important army generals rather than a genuine accommodation of Islam. However, we cannot deny the fact that Soeharto's accommodation with former Muslim opponents helped increase the fear of the Islamic threat among the Christians. Thus, no matter whether this fear was groundless or not, it affected their attitudes to and relations with the Muslims. In what follows, we shall discuss some cases to see how inter-religious dialogue developed in this political context.

The Monitor Affair and Dialogue

In September 1990, the weekly tabloid *Monitor* carried out a poll on 'the most admired person' and the result of the poll was published in its 15 October 1990 edition. The result indicated that President Soeharto was top, while the editor of the tabloid, Arswendo Atmowiloto, was ranked 10

and below him (11th) was the Prophet Muhammad. This result, particularly the low position of the Prophet, soon triggered protests from the Muslims who perceived a deliberate provocation. Many Muslim leaders made sharp remarks against the case, and there were also demonstrations in the streets that eventually led to physical attacks on the office of the tabloid. Many Muslims demanded that the Government prosecute Arswendo, and some demonstrators even demanded the death penalty for him. In general, the Government reaction to this case was in line with the Muslim demands: the tabloid was banned, Arswendo was prosecuted and he finally received a five-year sentence (but was released after four).¹¹³

The strong Muslim opposition in this case was partly because many Muslims considered it as a case of inter-religious relations. First of all, Arswendo was a Catholic (he originally came from a Javanese *abangan* family and converted to Catholicism when he married a Catholic woman). Moreover, the tabloid belonged to a highly successful Catholic publishing house called 'Kompas Gramedia Group'. Hefner noted that by the end of the 1970s the Group had gained a dominant place in the Indonesian print media industry. "In the mid-1990s this media conglomerate dominated the publishing industry, owning all parts of some twenty-three magazines and six newspapers, as well as the country's largest publishing house."¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the Muslims, particularly the reformists, had been very upset for a long time because their newspaper, *Abadi*, was banned in 1974 and subsequently there was no good Muslim newspaper that could compete with the Catholic newspaper, *Kompas*. While many Muslims read and contributed their articles to *Kompas*, among the Muslim hardliners this newspaper has been perceived as a Catholic instrument directed against Islam. Its name was often mockingly explained as an acronym of 'Komando Pastor' (the priest command). Moreover, Muslim magazines like *Panji Masyarakat* and *Kiblat*, could not compete with secular and popular magazines produced by the Gramedia Group either.

In an article published in 1980, M. Amien Rais, the Muhammadiyah intellectual who was to become the speaker of the MPR in 1999, had expressed his resentment of the weak condition of the Muslim media in the country with a cry: "save our soul".¹¹⁵ Amien Rais explained that the influential printed and electronic media in the United States like the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*, and the television networks such as ABC, CBS and NBC were very much controlled by the Jewish minority. This was the reason, he said, why the Jews could effectively influence American politics. Therefore, Amien Rais warned the Muslims that the influence of

the Christian media in Indonesia should not be underestimated. He argued that media were never neutral and the Muslims should not be so naïve as to expect that the Christian media would help them to publish things for the Muslim interest. In another article, having mentioned *Kompas* as the major newspaper in the country, Amien Rais said that Indonesian Muslims were so dependent on the Christian newspaper to express their ideas and positions as to be like the orphans who relied on the affection of the Christians.¹¹⁶

Many other Muslims shared Amien Rais' concern, particularly the Muslim reformists of the DDII, and their protests against the tabloid were obviously related to it.¹¹⁷ The leader of the Kompas Gramedia Group, Jacob Oetama, was apparently aware of this problem, so he agreed with the banning of *Monitor* and even fired Arswendo from an important position in the company. More than that, Jacob Oetama voluntarily returned the licence of another publication of his company, *Senang* magazine, to the Government in order to prevent more protests. *Senang* No. 34 (21 September–4 October 1990) edition had published a sketch of an Arab man without clear face with a halo around his head. The sketch was intended to illustrate the content of a letter from a reader who said that while he was in Saudi Arabia, he dreamed of the Prophet Muhammad, but he could not remember what the Prophet looked like. Many Muslims still believed that the Prophet could not be visualised, so the sketch became another target of Muslim protest. Jacob's decision to stop *Senang* was relatively effective because the Muslim protest against *Senang* was not as strong as that against *Monitor*.¹¹⁸

What was the effect of the Monitor affair on Muslim-Christian relations? If we look at Muslim comments on this case, some of them blamed *Monitor* (read: the Catholics) as a troublemaker amid the existing inter-religious harmony. "If you want to maintain religious harmony, do not hurt the feelings of another religious group, even though you personally do not like that religion," said Mohammad Natsir.¹¹⁹ In line with Natsir, Amien Rais said that the Monitor affair was an insult to the Islamic community and a disturbance of the existing inter-religious harmony maintained by the Government.¹²⁰ Another Muslim leader, Nurcholish Madjid who usually spoke for moderation and tolerance, now accused those behind the Monitor (probably he had the Catholics in mind) of being arrogant. He said, "I do not see Arswendo as a person, but I see a mechanism behind it. Its essence is arrogance, carelessness, insensitivity and so forth. Therefore, [he] must be given a maximum punishment...[and] *Monitor* must be banned forever."¹²¹ He also said, because of the *Monitor* and

Senang cases, that inter-religious dialogue should be temporarily suspended. The General Chairman of the PGI, Sularso Sopater and Cardinal Darmojowono also criticised *Monitor* and *Senang* but in more moderate terms.¹²²

On the other hand, the leader of the PGI, Eka Darmaputera, said that he believed that Arswendo had not intended to insult Islam. Moreover, Y.B. Mangunwijaya, the prominent Catholic priest, said the *Monitor* affair did not disturb Muslim-Catholic relations in the villages. The people who were angry, he said, were those who could speak in the media and had vested interests.¹²³ Among the Muslim leaders, it seems that only Abdurrahman Wahid was publicly critical of the Muslim attitudes to the *Monitor*. The Muslims, he said, should not be angry and violent. If they disagreed with the *Monitor*, they could boycott the tabloid; but they should not demand to ban it.¹²⁴ He lamented the Muslim violent attack on the *Monitor* office and accused those Muslims of having an inferiority complex. He said, "Islam is a religion of peace and love but they made Islam an angry and hateful religion."¹²⁵

In response to this situation, the Muslim NGO, *Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat* (P3M) organised a seminar on "religion and the plurality of the nation" on 21 November 1990, in Jakarta.¹²⁶ The seminar was more or less an inter-religious meeting because the speakers and participants in the seminar were important religious leaders, particularly of Islamic and Christian backgrounds. P3M had been established in the early 1980s as a continuation of the LP3ES' development projects for Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia funded by Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (FNS). The leadership of P3M included both reformist and traditionalist Muslims. The initiative of the P3M seems to have received sympathy from both Muslim and Christian leaders as well as from the Government. The Minister of Religion, Munawir Sjadzali, gave a keynote speech to the seminar, and the speakers were Franz Magnis Suseno, M. Sastrapateja (both were Catholic priests), Victor Tanja (a Protestant minister), M. Quraish Shihab, Ali Yafie (both were traditionalist Muslim scholars), Aswab Mahasin (a reformist Muslim intellectual) and Aggi Tjeje (a Buddhist).

What was the effect of the seminar, particularly for the Catholics? Franz Magnis-Suseno wrote two articles referring positively to the seminar. His positive assessment was probably not free from embellishment but at the same time we can see that he was quite happy with the Muslim initiative. He wrote that the seminar impressed him very much because many important religious leaders came to it and discussed sensitive issues openly and critically. He was also impressed by the fact that his paper on the absoluteness and relativity of religion from a Catholic perspective was almost paral-

lel with Quraish Shihab's paper analysing the same topic from an Islamic point of view. In his paper, Shihab explained that Muslims were convinced that Islam was the best religion, but at the same time they should leave the judgment on the followers of other religions to God. For Magnis-Suseno, this was in line with the Vatican Council II statement that did not only require the Christians to respect other religious believers but also emphasised that the latter could attain salvation if they lived according to their respective religious teachings. This humble religious attitude, he said, was a good basis for inter-religious tolerance in the country.¹²⁷

In contrast to the above article, Magnis-Suseno's second article talked much more openly about the socio-political contexts in the year 1990 and the relevance of the seminar. He said that as a member of a Christian minority, he could not deny the fact that the year 1990 was marked by some important events for the Muslim majority, among them the establishment of ICMI and the Monitor affair. Many of his Christian friends, he said, were concerned with these developments, particularly the explosion of Muslim anger against Monitor. They could not really understand, he said, why the Monitor affair was connected with the inter-religious issue as the tabloid did not have any connection with the Catholics. However, he said, he was optimistic about the future of religious harmony in Indonesia. Again, Magnis-Suseno praised P3M's seminar as a good example of how the Muslims were ready to develop brotherhood with the Christians.¹²⁸ He also argued that although there were strong protests against the Monitor, he did not find any Muslim statement questioning "the equal rights of the Christians as co-citizens." In other words, in their protests, there was no indication that the Muslims wanted to treat the Christians as second-class citizens under an Islamic State. As we can see, although it sounds positive, Magnis-Suseno's remarks could also be read to indicate that the fear of an Islamic State had actually increased among the Christians.

Private Initiatives in the 1990s: Dialogue for Democracy and Pluralism

In 1991, Th. Sumartana whom we have met before as one of the promoters of liberation theology obtained his doctorate from the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. By the same year, through his contacts with Christian leaders in Europe and Muslim and Christian intellectuals in Indonesia, Sumartana initiated an institute for inter-religious dialogue called 'Dialog Antar Iman' (DIAN) or 'Institute for Inter-faith Dialogue in Indonesia' (Interfidei), located in Kaliurang, Yogyakarta. The Interfidei was then officially inau-

gured on 10 August 1992.¹²⁹ Sumartana's initiative was supported by some prominent Muslim and Christian intellectuals and student activists.¹³⁰

Sumartana highly respected Mukti Ali as the initiator of inter-religious dialogue in the country.¹³¹ However, Sumartana was not satisfied with the New Order's view that dialogue was simply to create religious harmony or peaceful co-existence. For him, inter-religious dialogue should have a broader goal, namely to develop an open and democratic Indonesian society, and this was the main goal of the Interfidei. In his speech at a book launch of the Interfidei in 1993, he said:

The Institute [Interfidei] wants to show its concerns with the movement for changes in society towards a more autonomous, democratic and creative common life. This is probably the most important mission of this Institute, namely to create a communicating, mature and democratic society that is used to questions and able to have different opinions [i.e.,] an open and pluralistic society. This pluralistic nature would in turn become the most human way to solve our social problems together peacefully.¹³²

Thus, Sumartana believed that, through dialogue, all religions could develop their respective potentials to create a democratic society. As noted, by the early 1990s, there was anxiety among some intellectuals that Soeharto would use Islam through the ICMI channel for his political interest at the expense of religious minorities. As the Chairman of NU, Abdurrahman Wahid was the most important Islamic leader who refused to join ICMI. In March 1991, Wahid supported by several Muslim, secular and Christian intellectuals established the Democracy Forum (Fordem). Sumartana's view was parallel with, though not identical to, the concern of the Democracy Forum. Indeed, the second book published by Interfidei (consisting of the texts of lecturers delivered at the Institute) contained a paper by Wahid in which he expresses quite similar views to those of Sumartana on the important role of religion in developing democracy.¹³³

Because Sumartana believed that religion could be an effective force for democracy, he strongly criticised certain attitudes of the Christians that, in his opinion, were opposed to democracy. In Chapter 5, we noted that Sumartana was very sympathetic to the Javanese syncretistic Christian leader, Kiyai Sadrach and very critical of Western missionaries. For Sumartana, Indonesian Protestantism of the 19th and 20th centuries which the country inherited from the Western missionaries was anti-peasants, anti-workers, pro- the West, and intolerant of Islam. The Christians in Indonesia, he said,

could not be a democratic force unless they were freed from all of these characteristics.¹³⁴ Moreover, due to the fact that Muslims comprised the majority in Indonesia, Sumartana was very eager to stimulate democratic ideas among the Indonesian Muslims.¹³⁵ This was why among the first projects of Interfidei was to make critical summaries of the works of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals.¹³⁶ This idea is apparently in line with Sumartana's activity in the Seminar of Religions in the early 1980s discussed above.

The activities of Interfidei took different forms including regular discussions, seminars, publications, research and common prayer. The initial funding of the Institute came from the Dutch Reformed Church, particularly through Sumartana's close friend, the Rev. Jaspert Slob. Later, the Institute also received support from the Asia Foundation, the Inter-Church Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO), the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) etc. Interfidei was also very active in organising conflict resolution programmes in the areas affected by the conflicts between Muslims and Christians in the late New Order and afterwards. It was in this period that the Interfidei developed its network in the outer islands.¹³⁷

Like other programmes of dialogue that are generally elitist, one may wonder whether the dialogue initiated by Interfidei really helped increase mutual understanding and cooperation among religious groups. When the attacks on churches in different places happened by the late 1990s, some people questioned whether inter-religious dialogue was useful anymore. The bloody conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Ambon and Poso after the fall of Soeharto increased this scepticism. However, for Sumartana, the incidents even indicated that inter-religious dialogue was really needed. In other words, for him the problem was not because inter-religious dialogue was useless, but because there were still few people who were eager to be involved in it.¹³⁸ Sumartana never changed his mind that religions could function to support democracy. In his reflection on the religious-class-ethnic-political conflicts of the late 1990s, he still wrote: "religious values actually can be a supporting force for efforts to defend human rights and to activate the democratisation process."¹³⁹

Several young activists who joined Interfidei came from the Muslim traditionalist student organisation background, PMII. In our discussion on theology of liberation earlier, we also mentioned the role of those activists who gathered in the LKiS in promoting the ideas of liberation in Islam. LKiS was established in the early 1990s by some leading PMII activists in Yogyakarta as an informal discussion group, and later as an NGO. Since its inception, the LKiS has been committed to developing tolerant, democratic

and liberating Islamic ideas. One of its important activities was a programme called 'Learning Together about Islam as a Force of Transformation and Tolerance' (*Belajar Bersama Islam Transformatif dan Toleran*). Funded by the Asia Foundation, the programme was started in 1997 and still continues. The participants of the programme were senior students of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), university students and activists. There are four topics discussed in the programme: critiques of religious discourses, religion and feminism, Islam and politics, and inter-religious dialogue and reconciliation. On the session on inter-religious dialogue and reconciliation, the participants were asked to recount their respective concrete experiences and impressions with other religious believers. These experiences were then discussed together with an expert or activist in the field. Christian activists and intellectuals have been frequently invited to contribute their knowledge and experience to this programme. The influence of this programme on the young Muslims has probably been very limited but it is obviously a positive Muslim initiative.

In Jakarta, as in Yogyakarta, there were also initiatives to carry out inter-religious dialogue. One of the important Muslim NGOs in Jakarta to be mentioned here is the Paramadina Foundation established in 1986. The most important person behind Paramadina is none but the promoter of the non-ideological view of Islam in the early 1970s, Nurcholish Madjid. The idea of establishing this institution was originally Dawam Rahardjo's and Madjid demanded that Utomo Dananjaya be involved as an organizer.¹⁴⁰ By the end of the 1970s, Madjid had gone to follow a doctoral programme at the University of Chicago, where he had the opportunity to study with the Pakistani scholar, Fazlur Rahman. Having completed his PhD degree in 1984, he came back to Jakarta and established the Paramadina, which was intended to be an institution where he could develop and disseminate his ideas. The audience targeted by the Paramadina was the middle and upper class Muslims, whose position was considered influential on the socio-political development of the country. The most important activity of Paramadina was the Religious Study Club (*Klub Kajian Agama, KKA*) in which middle and upper class Muslims could learn and discuss Islamic teachings openly. Discussions were usually held in very fine hotels in Jakarta, and Madjid was the main person who determined the theme of the discussion. Usually Madjid presented a paper on a certain topic, while another invited speaker would speak about the same topic but from a different perspective.

The early topics of the KKA were much more focused on Islam in general, particularly on the question of Islamic reform and its relevance to mod-

ern life. In this regard, besides developing his early ideas on Islam and modernization, he also developed an Islamic inclusive theology.¹⁴¹ What I mean by 'inclusive' here is a theological view which tries to embrace the other faiths without neglecting one's distinctive religious identity. Madjid argued that the Qur'anic use of the term 'Islam' sometimes refers to the teachings revealed to Muhammad, and in other passages refers to the message sent to earlier prophets as well. In this context, the term 'Islam' should be understood in its generic meaning, that is, a total submission to God. According to this interpretation, although the form of Islam revealed to Muhammad is somehow the perfect one, it does not abrogate the other Islams. Those who believe in other Islams, therefore, can attain salvation. Who are they? To answer this question, Madjid refers to the Qur'anic term *ahl al-kitāb*, which means 'people of the book'. According to the classical Qur'anic exegesis, the term refers exclusively to Jews and Christians, but with reference to Rashīd Ridā, Madjid argued that the term also includes Buddhists, Hindus and Confucians.

By the second half of the 1980s, Madjid's theological views on other religions were already widely debated but they became a subject of controversy after he delivered a speech on the subject in the prestigious cultural centre in Jakarta, Taman Ismail Marzuki in 1992.¹⁴² While Madjid's supporters argued that this theology was relevant to a modern and pluralistic society, the Muslim reformists of the DDII saw it an attempt to destroy Islam from within. The Christians, on the other hand, gave sympathetic comments. Franz Magnis-Suseno for instance said that although he was a Catholic, he hoped that he would be a Muslim in its generic meaning, that is, a person who totally submitted to God.¹⁴³ Likewise, the Catholic theologian, J.B. Banawiratma wrote that Madjid's idea on Islam in its generic meaning was similar to Karl Rahner's idea on 'anonymous Christianity'.¹⁴⁴ However, it should be noted that the Christians were sometimes also disturbed by Madjid's apologetic tendencies. His apologetics are primarily related to his attempts to justify his view that Islam is much more 'modern' in substance than Christianity by referring to some historical incidents in the West when the Church opposed scientific development. He sometimes also opposed the Christian doctrine of the Trinity by referring to some works of the Western scholars. Franz Magnis-Suseno reacted critically to these apologetic tendencies.¹⁴⁵

Madjid's inclusive theology was then developed further by intellectuals affiliated with Paramadina. In contrast to the PMII activists in Yogyakarta who were attracted to liberation theology, the middle and upper class Muslims in Jakarta were apparently much more interested in Sufism, the

spiritual teachings of Islam. Thus, the discourse on Islam in Paramadina also moved towards the need of its market. However, like liberation theology, in general Sufism also encourages religious tolerance. In this context, Budhy Munawar-Rachman, a young reformist Muslim intellectual who worked in Paramadina, tried to develop Madjid's inclusive theology further into a pluralistic theology based on the so called 'perennial philosophy' or *al-hikmah al-khālidah*.¹⁴⁶ This philosophy was known in Indonesia through the works of Frithjof Schuon, Huston Smith, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and the like. According to this philosophy, every authentic religious tradition has two levels of truth: the esoteric and the exoteric. Religions are different only at the exoteric level, but at the esoteric level they are the same. In other words, there is a transcendental unity of religion. Two other activists of Paramadina, Komaruddin Hidayat and Wahyuni Nafis later co-wrote a book on the perennial philosophy.¹⁴⁷ The interest in the perennial philosophy was strongly related to the increasing interest of some of the Indonesian Muslims in the study of speculative Sufism of Ibn al-'Arabi, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī and the like. In this context, Kautsar Azhari Noer, another activist of Paramadina, introduced Sufism as a tolerant and pluralistic tradition of Islam. Noer was a lecturer on comparative religion at the IAIN Jakarta and wrote a PhD thesis on Ibn al-'Arabi which was published by Paramadina.¹⁴⁸ Noer has been apparently involved in Paramadina activities since the second half of the 1990s.

In general we can say that compared with the controversy in the early 1970s, the new theological ideas introduced by Madjid and his friends in the 1990s had a much wider audience and supporters. Perhaps, these ideas significantly influenced a number of Muslim middle and upper class but certainly not the majority of Indonesian Muslims. Few Muslim reformist intellectuals of Muhammadiyah like Amin Abdullah and Abdul Munir Mulkhan supported these ideas, but they were a minority in the organisation.¹⁴⁹ The inclusive theology and perennial philosophy were not so attractive to NU intellectuals either because the latter felt more comfortable with developing a new interpretation of fiqh (close to the Christian liberation theology) rather than abstract theological reflections. However, at least these ideas successfully stimulated discussions among Muslim intellectuals and students in the 1990s.

The dissemination of the new ideas among the Muslim intellectuals and the Muslim middle class in general was partly facilitated by a journal called *Ulumul Qur'an*. This journal was established in 1989 by the Institute for the Study of Religion and Philosophy (*Lembaga Kajian Agama dan Filsafat*, LSAF). The editor of the journal was the director of LSAF, M. Dawam

Rahardjo, the Muslim intellectual whom we have met before as one of the proponents of the Islamic renewal movement in the early 1970s and the prominent activist of LP3ES who was interested in developing an Islamic theology of liberation as well as the person who originally proposed the establishment of Paramadina. Rahardjo explained that the journal was intended to be a medium of critical discussion on science and culture in the spirit of the Qur'an, that is, the first revelation to the Prophet, Iqra' (read!). He also emphasized that the journal was directed to the Muslim middle class and at the same time it was also open to non-Muslims who shared the same concerns to develop human civilization.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, besides articles on Islamic philosophy, theology, mysticism and other Muslim social and cultural issues, the journal also published articles on non-Islamic religions written by Muslim and non-Muslim authors. The Protestant theologian Victor E. Tanja and the Jesuit Magnis-Suseno were among the contributors to this journal. During the New Order period, *Ulumul Qur'an* proved to be a successful journal and its distribution reached even the cities outside Java.

In the mid-1990s, the activists of Paramadina developed contacts with the Christian intellectuals from the KWI and PGI to discuss the possibility of creating an institution for dialogue. On 10 November 1995, they had a meeting in the office of the Christian magazine, KAIROS, Jakarta, followed by another meeting in the PGI office. The result was that they eventually agreed to establish a society for inter-religious dialogue called MADIA (*Majelis Dialog Antar Agama*).¹⁵¹ The members of MADIA include not only Muslims and Christians but also intellectuals of other religious groups. Djohan Effendi was also active in the background behind MADIA. In the beginning, MADIA's activity consisted of discussions on theological issues held in different places: in Paramadina, KWI or PGI offices. One interesting thing in MADIA's activity was that they usually closed their meetings with prayers, offered alternately according to the respective religions of the participants. The MADIA activists became much more responsive to socio-political issues by the late 1990s when incidents involving religious symbols happened in the country. MADIA sometimes made public statements voicing religious tolerance and cooperation and received strong support from Abdurrahman Wahid.¹⁵²

It is also noteworthy that the theological discourse on pluralism also developed among the Christians during this period. We have mentioned in the first section of this chapter that, started in 1981, the Research and Development Office of the PGI organised a Seminar of Religions every year. The fifteenth Seminar of Religions was held in September 1995 in Salatiga

and the topic was “theologising in the context of religions in Indonesia.” In this seminar, Th. Sumartana and E.G. Singgih were the Protestant speakers who developed theological reflections on pluralism. In his paper, Sumartana urged that the Christians should develop a Christian theology in the context of religious pluralism or what he called ‘*theologia religionum*.’ This theology, he said, should emphasise the universal dimensions of the existing Christian theology without sacrificing its uniqueness. He suggested that the universal dimensions of the doctrine of the trinity could be developed in theology and pneumatology rather than Christology. For him, the problem with the existing Christian theology in relation to other religions lies in its too much emphasis on Christology and therefore, it became exclusive. For him, only when the universal dimension of the Christian theology was developed were the Christians able to talk with other religious groups about common problem and common mission.¹⁵³

In line with Sumartana, E.Gerrit Singgih argued that, in the existing Christology, there was too much emphasis on the divinity of Christ rather on his human nature. Thus, the balance between Christ’s divinity and humanity should be re-emphasised in order to develop a contextual theology. He also criticised the Christian theological view that salvation could only be obtained through faith in Christ. For him, this was the reason why certain churches were involved in ‘Christianisation’, that is, they tended to use social services as a means to convert others. By developing a scriptural exegesis, he argued, in the context of the present pluralistic society, Christian theology should look at good work as a realisation of, rather independent from, faith. With this theological understanding, he said, instead of using social services to convert others, the Christians should be open to cooperate in carrying out good works with other religious believers.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, the prominent Catholic theologian, J.B. Banawiratma, suggested in the seminar that Christian theology should be developed in a dialogical, critical and contextual approach in which the integrity of Christian belief in Christ was maintained but at the same time it was open to others. For him, sharing religious experience, theological reflections, socio-ethical analysis and common actions, all of these could be the basis of the theology of religions.¹⁵⁵

Nonetheless, this type of Christian theological thought was apparently still marginal among the mainstream Indonesian Christians. Among the Protestants, a few promoters of this theology can be found in the Christian Academy of Theology, Jakarta and the Faculty of Theology, Duta Wacana, Yogyakarta. One of these theologians told me that although he developed liberal theological ideas in the academic circle, he did not dare to propose

them to his own congregation.¹⁵⁶ The Catholics were apparently also very cautious with the pluralist theology. The priest who initiated inter-religious dialogue in 1967, C. Groenen wrote in 1994 that a Christian theology that was not concerned with soteriological Christology (the doctrine of salvation through Christ) could not be the basis for honest dialogue, being too abstract and unrealistic. It was unrealistic because of the fact that evangelisation was still the characteristic of Christianity. He also said that, although the Catholic Church positively encouraged dialogue, the position of the Church was in fact very traditional and conservative, because it asserted that Christ is the alpha and omega, and that in him the perfect revelation and all means of salvation are found.¹⁵⁷

Clashes in the Late 1990s and Dialogue as a Response

In 1996 and 1997, some violent incidents occurred in different cities of Indonesia such as Situbondo, Tasikmalaya, Banjarmasin and other places in which a high number of churches were burned by the rioters. As a reaction to these incidents, inter-religious meetings were organised either by the Government or by the religious groups themselves. In this section, we shall restrict our discussion to the Situbondo incident. In addition, we will also discuss some Government initiatives to reinforce the project for religious harmony in this period.

On 10 October 1996, a riot occurred in Situbondo, a city dominated by the Muslim traditionalists of the NU, most of them ethnic Madurese, and with a vibrant, mostly ethnic Chinese, Christian minority.¹⁵⁸ In the riot, 24 churches, some Christian schools and a number of Chinese shops were burned or attacked, and five people were killed. The incident started at the courthouse where the trial took place of a person named Saleh who was accused of promoting heretical Islam and insulting the respected religious leader of Situbondo, K.H. As'ad Syamsul Arifin. The crowd that gathered in the courthouse was apparently not satisfied with the verdict and then tried to attack Saleh. Along with the police and the prosecutors, Saleh then escaped from the back door of the courthouse. In that situation, somebody improbably cried: "he is in the church" and the crowd moved to the nearby church and burned it. The crowd then continued burning the other churches, Christian schools and Chinese shops.

There was strong evidence that the riot was engineered. The rioters were mostly not local people: they were carried by special trucks from outside the town. When they burned the churches, these people moved systematically under the instruction of their leaders. The Saleh affair was also very

curious. Local people considered Saleh to be mentally ill, so it was not significant to prosecute him. The prosecutor, however, proceeded and charged him with blasphemy. After the incident of 10 October 1996, rumours spread that some of the NU people arrested by the police were tortured in prison, and even that one of them, Ahmad Siddik, was dead. A tape recording circulated on which a man claiming to be Ahmad Siddik said he had been tortured by a Christian military interrogator.

As noted, the Chairman of NU, Abdurrahman Wahid, was the most important opposition voice to the Government in this period. Having investigated the incident, the NU activists were convinced that it was engineered by anti-Wahid agents to discredit his leadership. They believed that the incident was orchestrated to provoke conflicts between NU's followers and the Christians to indicate that Wahid's political claim for democracy and religious tolerance was nonsense. Wahid himself publicly pointed his finger at the General Secretary of ICMI, Adi Sasono and his subordinate, Eggy Sudjana as the masterminds of the riot but they denied the accusation. Hefner noted that Wahid was also informed that certain army generals close to the Chairman of ICMI, B.J. Habibie, were involved in providing logistical support to the rioters.¹⁵⁹

What was the effect of the riot on Muslim-Christian relations? Both NU and Christian leaders had the same perception that the incident was engineered. Therefore, they initiated some private meetings to prevent further violence. Having realised that the tape-recorded interview of Ahmad Siddik was a deliberate provocation, both NU and Christian leaders agreed to block its circulation.¹⁶⁰ As an expression of solidarity with Ahmad Siddik, Christian leaders paid a visit to his family and distributed charities.¹⁶¹ Wahid also mobilised the activists of the NU paramilitary group, Banser Ansor, to protect churches from further attacks. One week after the incident, on 17 October 1996, the leaders and activists of the NU and the Christians organised a meeting in the Satellite Hotel, Surabaya. In the meeting, the Christians and the Muslims made a common statement condemning the incident, asking the Government to maintain security in the city and to put those who were responsible to trial. In the same meeting that was attended by about 200 participants, Wahid gave a lecture in which he explained his fear that a similar incident might happen again and urged those present to do their best to prevent it. He also explained that since the second half of the 1970s, he already had good relations with the Christians in East Java, particularly through his involvement in the training courses for ministers of the East Java Church (GKJW). Wahid argued that, instead of trying to establish a peaceful

co-existence, the Muslims and the Christians should develop mutual understanding through honest dialogue, "like the dialogue carried on by *Inter-fidei*." He reminded the audience that as a Muslim leader he saw it as his duty to exercise self-critique. He explained that he had often criticised the Muslim's misunderstanding of non-Muslims, and the interpretations of certain Qur'anic verses used by certain Muslim preachers to promote animosity towards Christians.¹⁶²

One important lesson from the incident for the Christians was that to be close to the Government did not mean that the regime would always protect them. Cooperation with the Muslims was apparently more important than with the Government authorities. In this context, the Christian leaders and activists in Surabaya regretted that the PGI leadership in Jakarta did not react immediately to voice the concerns of the Christians in Situbondo. Because of the indifferent attitude of the PGI, the Christians then established the Communication Forum for Christians in Surabaya (FKKS).¹⁶³ Moreover, the FKKS initiated private investigations of the incident, including making a number of photographs of the burned churches and then published them on the internet.¹⁶⁴ Some of these pictures were later published in a book, and its English version was sent to foreign countries.¹⁶⁵

As noted earlier, there were other similar incidents in Indonesia, which occurred in different places in 1996 and 1997. These gave a bad impression of the Government; and worse than that, the conservative Christian lobby in the USA tried to eliminate Indonesia from the list of privileged trade partners. In reaction to this development, the Minister of Religion, Tarmidzi Taher, travelled to the USA and gave lectures to project a positive image of harmonious relations between religions in Indonesia. The Government also organised and financed international inter-religious meetings. There were at least two international inter-religious conferences generously financed by the Government in 1997, one was held in the luxurious Horison Hotel, Jakarta, with the participation of the Hartford Seminary and Temple University; and another was held in Leiden, the Netherlands.¹⁶⁶

The Department of Religion also revived the earlier project on religious harmony that had been rather marginalised in the previous years. This project was partly given to the Institute for the Study of Inter-religious Harmony (*Lembaga Pengkajian Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, LPKUB). The LPKUB was originally established in October 1993 at the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN), Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta. Besides organising inter-religious dialogue, in 1995 the LPKUB started an English journal called *Religiosa: Indo-*

nesian Journal on Religious Harmony. The LPKUB appears to have received much more funding from the Government after the incidents in the late 1990s. Like most of the other Government projects, it was finally disappointing. To use the money, the officials in Jakarta and the people of LPKUB in Yogyakarta decided to acquire land for establishing a conference building. If one thinks of efficiency, this decision was strange because there are plenty of places in Yogyakarta that can be rented with much less cost. Worse than that, after the land was bought (located near to the Yogyakarta airport), it ended with a series of land disputes. In 1998, the building was half finished, but the money was already gone. The head of the LPKUB was Burhanuddin Daya, a professor of comparative religion at the IAIN Sunan Kalijaga. He was personally also disappointed with the project but too weak to confront the high officials above him.¹⁶⁷

Besides his activity in the LPKUB, Burhanuddin Daya had been engaged in dialogue on several occasions in Indonesia and abroad. However, he seems to have been pessimistic about the efficacy of dialogue. He acknowledged that the dialogue organised by the Government often led to formal conversations rather than open communication. However, he was not satisfied with the dialogue organised by private institutions either. He said, most of the privately organised dialogues were funded by the Christians, so the Muslim participants would have psychological difficulties in talking openly. He also believed that Christianisation was real and to deny it was like hiding behind a piece of grass. For him, the main problem of inter-religious relations was not religion, but the socio-economic gap between the rich Christians and the poor Muslims.¹⁶⁸

By this period, the Government also financed two big research projects on the violent incidents in general and inter-religious relations in particular. The project on the violent incidents was carried out by a team in Yogyakarta under the supervision of Loekman Soetrisno, a Catholic and leading anthropologist of Gadjah Mada University. The team consists of Muslim and non-Muslim social scientists and activists. The second project investigating the view of religious preachers on other religions was conducted by the team of the Office of Research and Development of the Department of Religion, the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) IAIN Jakarta, the Institute for the Study of Politics and Economy, University of Indonesia (LSPEUI), the Rectors of the Academy of Theology (STT) Jakarta, the Academy of Philosophy, Driyarkara, the Academy of Buddhism, Nalanda, Jakarta, and Hindu University in Denpasar. The psychologist of the University of Indonesia, Sarlito W. Sarwono (a Muslim) was the head of the whole team. The Rectors of the

religious academies helped create a team in their respective institutions to carry out research in the field.

Compared with the reports of similar research projects in the 1970s that were full of embellished statements, the report of this research project was much more critical. Perhaps, the incidents of the late 1990s pushed the teams of the research to be critical. The result of the first research project gave us some important and critical analysis of the socio-economic, political and religious background of the incidents in Sanggau Ledo, East Timor, Tasikmalaya, Banjarmasin, Sampang, Situbondo and Pekalongan. The conclusion of the research suggested that there were some social factors contributing to the violent incidents, namely the wide economic gap between one group and another in the structure of society, the psycho-social anxiety of the underprivileged group about the Government development projects, distrust of the Government bureaucracy, socialisation of militant religious teachings and the distrust of religious communities towards their respective leaders.¹⁶⁹

The second research project suggested that after analysing the questionnaires and interviews conducted with 1216 religious preachers of the five religions in nine cities, namely Metro (Central Lampung), Maumere (East Nusa Tenggara), Temanggung (Central Java), Malang (Est Java), Badung (Bali), Sumenep (Madura), Minahasa (North Sulawesi), Pontianak (West Kalimantan) and Samarinda (East Kalimantan), the team concluded that in general, in terms of social interaction with the people of other religions, the religious views of the preachers were moderate. However, in theological terms, most of the non-Muslim respondents had an inclusive attitude while those of most of the Muslims were exclusive. The team also said that because the Muslims were the majority in the country, this exclusive attitude potentially strengthened inter-religious tensions. The team also suggested that the Government regulations on inter-religious relations and MUI's fatwa on Christmas celebration (all discussed in Chapter 2) did not create but disturbed religious harmony in society. Therefore, the team suggested that the Government should reduce the regulations and let the religious groups themselves decided what was the best for them.¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

The rise of the promoters of the non-ideological view of Islam that happened in the early 1970s, and became stronger in the following decades, was certainly an important force behind the development of inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia. For the Christians who had been afraid of

the threat of an Islamic State, the promoters of the non-ideological view of Islam were naturally good potential allies. Without the ideological gap, the Christians felt that they could talk about a common concern with these Muslims. In the early 1970s, these Muslims who worked in the Government, particularly A. Mukti Ali and Djohan Effendi, started the project on dialogue. The project was intended to create the conditions of the so-called religious harmony, that is, inter-religious peaceful co-existence. The common concern defined in this official dialogue was nothing but a Government project on development. The project might have initially helped open inter-religious communication among religious leaders but did not truly create inter-religious understanding and cooperation. In most cases, it was the Government rather than the religious leaders that determined the topic of the dialogue. Thus, the dialogue became simply a formal meeting of religious leaders in which mutual suspicions were suppressed under the sweet smile of the participants. The other Government related initiatives such as the research on inter-religious issues and the joint-visit to places of worship, were not free from the same tendency either. Due to the incidents, in the 1990s, the Government revived this project. In this respect, besides the report of the research project that was unusually critical, the other initiatives seem to have served the organisers rather than to have enhanced inter-religious cooperation in society.

Some of the Christians and Muslims eventually felt that they should develop dialogue by themselves. As a reaction to the Government proposed discourse on the role of religion to support development, these Muslim and Christian intellectuals developed a critical discourse on development through the theology of liberation. In this context, the Christians and Muslims found that social justice was to be the common concern for all in relation to the Government led development programmes. In reaction to Soeharto's shift in political alliance from *abangan* Muslims and Christians to reformist Muslims in the 1990s, some Muslim and Christian intellectuals cooperated in promoting democracy and pluralism. The political shift apparently made some Christian leaders more convinced that cooperation with the Muslims, particularly the Muslim proponents of democracy, would be better than maintaining the Christian dependence on the regime. It was in this period that some of the prominent Muslim and Christian intellectuals developed theological ideas to support a tolerant and open attitude towards other religious believers. Although these theological ideas only had a limited influence on people's behaviour, they represented a serious attempt on the part of Muslims and Christians to create

better inter-religious relations. One might say that no matter how good the Muslim-Christian discourse on religious tolerance and pluralism was, it would have little impact on inter-communal relations in real life. Indeed, the socio-political cooperation between Muslims and Christian was still rare. However, if we remember the Situbondo case in which Muslim and Christian leaders successfully cooperated to prevent further violence, we should not be so pessimistic.