AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE COMING AND SPREAD OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE MALAY PENINSULA, AND THE INDONESIAN AND PHILIPPINE ARCHIPELAGOS *)

Cesar Adib Majul

An all too common feature of history has been how such externally—introduced cultural institutions as religion, has served to move peoples from their parochial, self—contained communities into wider ones committed to universal values. As it were, both Islam and Christianity, which are universal in intent, have served to induce peoples in Southeast Asia to conceive of themselves as part of wider human communities that have transcended the limitations of race, language, region and geography. Yet, paradoxically, Islam and to a lesser extent Christianity as well, have provided those very elements of identity which played a large part in the struggle of the Malay peoples against foreign domination. No full understanding of these peoples' political, economic, and social conditions as well as of their concomittant expectations and tendencies is possible without taking into account the spiritual framework within which they lived.

I.

The initial contacts between the Muslims from "above the winds" and the native peoples of Southeast Asia was made possible by the participation of the latter in the international trade that extended from Arab lands to China. This participation increased an become more marked at the end of the ninth century.

In 878, on account of the massacre of large numbers of Muslims in Khanfu (Canton) by a Chinese rebel leader as well as the deterioration of the political situation and increased piracy in the area, thousands of Muslim merchants, mostly Arabs and Persians, fled to Kalah (Kedah or Klang) in the Western coast of the Malay Peninsula. This port settlement then became a major entrepot of fhe Arab trade and for some time its farthest eastern stop. From Kalah some Muslim traders settled in nearby places like Palembang. Arab trade in Southeast Asia soon became more organized and noticeable. Actually, a local trade began to flourish. It was probably due to this that Borneo and subsequently Sulu came to be known to Muslim traders. Even after they were again allowed to visit Chinese ports during the second half of the tenth century, Kalah retained its importance to the Muslim. By then Muslims had settled in such places as Champa and Leran in Eastern Java. At this time, the great religions in the area were Hinduism and Buddhism which existed alongside with animistic beliefs and spirit worship among a great part of the inhabitants.

At the end of the thirteenth century, a Muslim principality was born in Samudra—Pasai, in the north of Sumatra, aptly known to Malays later as the "gateway to the Holy Land (Mecca)". At the same time, if not slightly later, Trengganu and Parane began to evince Muslim characteristics by having Muslim chiefs.

Of far reaching consequences to the spread of Islam in the islands of Southeast Asia was the establishment of the Malacca settlement around 1400. Its founding chief, of Palembang origin, not long after embraced Islam. Tradition whispers that this was due to a marriage alliance as with a Pasai princess well as the gentle prodding of Muslim traders who had it within their power to enrich the infant principality.

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Not long after, Malacca, due to its favorable maritime position, grew into a most favored entrepot as well as a center for Islamic studies and teaching. Contacts with Malacca led Brunei's ruler to become a Muslim around the second quarter of the fifteenth century. From Malacca, teachers of Arab descent with possible Sufi inclinations sailed to Java to spread the Faith. Missionary activities become more prominent during the reign of Sultan Mansur Shah (1458–1477) who was a patron of Muslim scholars and studies. It was during his rule that Ternate chiefs became Muslims.

Around the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Madjapahit, in central Java, a center of Hindu culture, yielded to a coalition of Muslim chiefs from some Javanese coastal principalities.

During the last quarter of the thirteenth century, simultaneous with the birth of the Muslim principality in the north of Sumatra, Sulu had its share of Muslims coming to stay. In less than a century, Sulu as well as parts of North Borneo became the scene of the work of Muslim missionaries who were in all probability Sufi–oriented. They were, in any case, aided in their labors by the descendants of those Muslims who had came earlier.

Around 1390, due to political disturbances in Palembang, coincident with the elimination of the last vestiges of the Shri–Vijayan empire, there ensued an exodus of Sumatran nobles to other parts of the Malay world. A Sulu tradition narrates how a Sumatran prince, with a group of ministers or learned men, arrived at Buansa, Sulu, married a local girl and established a principality. This prince, called Rajah Baguinda, and his followers might have been part of this exodus. Furthermore, tradition says that a certain Sayyid Abu Bakr arrived in Buansa where he later on married a daughter of the Sumatran prince. This Sayyid is a historical figure and his tomb still exists in Sulu. He is credited with the establishment of the Sulu sultanate, an event calculated to have taken place around 1450. Tradition loves to recount how he taught Islam, built schools, converted the inhabitants of the interior of Jolo island, and extended the frontiers of the sultanate by his charismatic personality, learning and gentle manners. All the sultans and royal datus of Sulu claimed to be his descendants. Again, if traditions are to be believed, and they do contain a great deal of truth, it was during Sayyid Abu Bakr's rule that Mindanao was visited by a few saintly Muslims. On this detail, traditions vary. One maintains that they came from Malacca; while others say that one of them was a brother of Sayyid Abu Bakr. They are reported to have left descendants.

In an important sense, the introduction of Islam and its subsequent spread in Sulu represents in capsule form a process which was repeated in other parts of the Indonesian islands. First was the peaceful arrival of Muslim traders. Mixing with the local population, they raised families and formed communities within a larger native society. Then came Muslim teachers to strengthen the Faith among the local Muslims as well as to spread Islam further. Soon local chiefs began to embrace the Faith, to be followed by their people. However, once the chiefs and their followers had declared for Islam, they began to spread it to other areas, not in all cases without the possibility of some coercion.

Many alternative but complementary explanations have been propounded to explain the expansion of Islam in Southeast Asia. Some sociologists have emphasized that many Indonesians, especially those belonging to the humbler strata, readily accepted Islam in order to emancipate themselves from an oppresive caste system since Islam postulates the equality of all believers before Allah. Others have pointed out that the chiefs had become Muslims because of their need for political and economic alliances which could easily be provided by the Muslim traders. And once these chiefs embraced Islam, many of their followers, out of traditional habits of obedience, followed likewise. Religiously–inclined thinkers would like to speculate that the simple doctrines of Islam were, **per se**, attractive to the kind of religious

mentality found among the masses of the Indonesians. Some of them would point out that Islam, as propounded by the teachers, who were mystically-inclined in many instances, fitted well into the religious patterns exemplified by the people.

All of the above, however, do not deny that numerous Muslim marriages on the part of the traders generated communities of the faithful, which, on account of some of the above factors, could have served as bases for the spreading of Islam. From a more general and theoretical point of view, it is also possible that the nature of the international trade at the time could have effected certain changes in the Indonesian islands as well as in Sulu such that they created a spiritual vacuum which Islam readily filled. Actually, the advent and expansion of Islam in a great part of Southeast Asia is such a complex phenomena that one single theory may not suffice as an explanation. Probably, a combination of all the above theories, expressed in a more systematic and general form, would be closer to the truth.

II.

In 1511, an event of far-reaching consequences to the slow but steady expansion of Islam in the islands of Southeast Asia, took place. Blocked in their attempt to reach sources of spices in the Moluccas by the Muslim-ruled land mass from Morocco to the Balkans, the Portuguese sailed around the southern coast of Africa and arrived in Arabian waters. After establishing a few strong points in Asia and defeating a Muslim fleet at Dui in 1509, they reached Malacca in 1511 and succeeded in capturing it. Thus was the centuries-old Muslim primacy in the Southeast trade dented. Nevertheless, Portuguese expectations to fully control the spice trade did not materialize. They did not have enough men and furthermore they often alienated the native populations. Moreover, on account of discrimination against them, Muslim traders commenced to patronize other ports like Pasai which then began to rival Malacca. Many Javanese ports grew up at the expense of Malacca. Also, Brunei began to develop itself as a center to take over Malacca's former role in relation to the Moluccas and the Philippines.

"First pepper, then souls" was a principle guiding the adventurous Portuguese. This meant that the Portuguese had first come to monopolize the spice trade, and then extirpate Islam in the region. But this double aim of the Portuguese had to contend against three factors: that Islam had already been associated with the aristocracy of many principalities, that Islam had already began to serve as a source of identity to a vast majority of the inhabitants, and that the Portuguese were viewed as intruders and a danger to the existing profitable trade relations. Added to these factors was that the displaced Malaccan aristocracy and their allies were still able to harrass the Portuguese. Thus the view of a modern scholar that the Portuguese opposition to Islam and the trade controlled by Muslims provoked the latter to accelerate their own missionary work and local trade activities. The further Islamization of some parts of Java, Makassar, the Philippines, and the Moluccas, can be explained by this view.

As suggested above, the rise of Brunei as a trading center is explainable as a consequence of Malacca's fall to the Portuguese. A time came when the Portuguese were contrained to come peacefully to Brunei to gather products from Makassar and the Moluccas. With a flourishing trade, Brunei began to be a naval power and commenced to establish trading posts in places as far as the present site of Manila. The founding of the Bornean settlement in Manila probably took place around the 1520's. Brunei's predominance in the trade in the Philippines remained unchallenged till the arrival of the Spaniards in Philippine waters in 1565.

It was a scion of the Johore aristocracy, which was related to Malacca's sultans, who arrived in the eastern part of Mindanao to found a principality. On the basis of genealogical calculations as well as the fact that the Kingdom of Johore was not established till after 1511, it can be

calculated that this event took place around 1520. Coming with a group of sea—faring people from the Straits, this redoubtable prince created a principality, and by means of a few marriage alliances he was able to introduce Islam in Mindanao. Here again can be seen an event with causal connections with the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese.

III.

When the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines in 1565, at least three sultanates were already established in the South—Manila, too, was a thriving Muslim commercial settlement ruled by Muslim chiefs of Bornean descent. Actually, the royal houses of Brunai, Manila, and Sulu were related by marriage alliances. The Spaniards came at a time when Brunei was progressively gaining predominance in the islands with Islam securing a foothold here and there. In the early 1600's, Spanish officials perceptibly observed that had the Spaniards not come when they did, all the settlements **(barangays)** in the islands would have become Muslim or at least have Muslim chiefs. At the time of the coming of the Spaniards, nearly all the peoples in the Visayas and Luzon were still in the level of spirit worship and animistic beliefs, although a general belief in a Supreme Being was generally held.

Spain came to the Philippines with a clear dual purpose: to Christianize the inhabitants and increase the territorial domains of the Spanish Monarch. While colonizing the natives, the Spaniards saw to it that Brunei's power in the islands was eliminated. Their interference in the internal dynastic squabbles in the Brunei royal family in 1578 and 1581 was intended to contain Bornean activities, both religious and commercial, in the islands. However, Spanish initial victories in Borneo were not followed by colonization.

By the beginning of the 1600's, except for the Muslims in the South and the pagans in the interior mountains of the large islands, most of the inhabitants of the Philippines had been Christianized. A great number of them, whith their traditional chiefs, were clustered in towns. Within the hearing of the sound of church bells, they lived under the watchful eyes of the Spanish friars and soldiers. With the passage of time, the colony was divided into provinces and bishropics, and the Christianized natives, called **indios**, were provided with two forms of identity — that of a Catholic and that of a subject of the Spanish King. They were studiously isolated from the Muslims and other peoples of Southeast Asia, except when they were needed to serve as soldiers to extend the frontiers of the Spanish Empire.

Both as a matter of state principle and necessity to secure their colonial frontiers, the Spaniards never spared efforts to convert the Muslims into Catholicism and to transform them into docile subject. The series of wars, covering more than three centuries, which these aims generated, ended only in 1898 when Spain relinquished its sovereignty in the Philippines to the United States.

In the early few years of the seventeenth century, the Muslims were strong enough to entertain the intention of competing with the Spaniards for the control of the Visayas. But most of the time afterwards, they were mostly in the defensive, battling a series of Spanish expeditions whose recruits were composed mainly of native Christians. It was in this century that the **moro - moro** plays were instituted. A sort of morality play, the **moro - moro** depicted the wars between the Muslims and Christians, with victory falling to the latter. The end of the play usually had a Muslim sultan or prince become a Christian or a Muslim prince falling in love with a Christian warrior and hero. Intended to whip up a Crusader spirit among the Christian natives, they conditioned them to look down at Muslims as ugly, fierce, blood—thirsty, piratical, faithless, and thoroughly unreliable individuals. These plays were frequently staged up to the eve of the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines in 1942.

Not a few Spanish expeditions in Mindanao and Sulu during the seventeenth century were instructed to enslave Muslims, destroy their sea craft, burn their plantations, and depopulate their settlements. In the next century, when peaceful and diplomatic means failed to induce the Muslims to become part of the Empire, total war was declared on some of them to the oars. The nineteenth century had its share of destruction. Many islands were depopulated, although, at this time, the official policy was no longer to Christianize the Muslims but rather to transform them into Spanish subjects.

Not a few priests, however, recommended that Spanish officials help their missionary endeavors on the ground that as Christians the Muslims would be more inclined to be docile and loyal to Spain. Actually, at the end of the last century, the need to conquer the Muslims was dictated more by the fear that the Muslims would make common cause with other European powers who were casting covetous eyes over the Spanish colony.

But all the destruction was not one—sided. The depredations caused by the Muslims on Christian settlements were violent and fearful. Some of them disrupted all economic life. Tens of thousands of Christians were captured for the slave market in Sulu or Makassar to end up in Dutch and other plantations. More often than not, the Christian natives were prevented by the Spaniards from bearing arms for fear that they might be used against the Spaniards. Thus they were normally left defenseless and helpless. Whereas, during the seventeenth century, the Muslims in the Philippines were at intervals aided by Borneans and Makassar warriors, by the nineteenth century, these allies had fallen under the control of other Europeans. This situation forced the Muslims in the Philippines to depend solely on their resources and to do their best to maximize them.

It can thus be understood how and why the above series of wars, where the religious motive had played an important part, had left a legacy of hate, suspicion, mistrust and mutual disdain between two communities belonging to the same racial stock and having a common cultural matrix older than Islam and Christianity.

However, the above conflicts as well as their relative isolation from the rest of the Islamic world led the Muslims in the Philippine South to develop their native, as well as reinforce their Islamic, institutions. True enough, their isolation from the orthodox centers of Islam prevented the further enrichment if not the development of their religion along more orthodox lines. But noteworthy was that their Islamic consciousness was intense enough to serve as an element of identity and a sort of pre—nationalism. Islam, as it were, sanctified their patriotism and struggle.

IV.

Unlike those of the Spaniards, the results of Portuguese missionary activities in the Malay Peninsula and elsewhere in Southeast Asia were limited. Initially, missionaries under Portuguese patronage were successful in establishing a mission in Malacca and in the Moluccas. In the latter, however, the greed and rapacity of Portuguese officials nullified the missionaries. This was evidenced when enraged Muslims captured the Portuguese Ternate fort in 1574. Missionary activities in Brunei also failed.

In Malacca, the fall of the city to the Dutch in 1641 spelled the persecution of the Catholic faith there. The public worship of Catholics was prohibited first and then the very religion itself. Many Portuguese families were constrained to sail away to Java or India. Yet even if the Dutch had brought their Protestant antipathy to Catholicism from Europe to the Indies, they, themselves, had no interest in propagating their version of Christianity in Malacca. They simply wanted to hold the famed city to prevent it from becoming a rival to their principal port town of Batavia.

In 1795, the British occupied Malacca, which, after a brief occupation by the Dutch, was then returned to them in 1824. The British primacy in the Peninsula during the nineteenth century, however, did not witness any vigorous Christian missionary activity. Nevertheless, earlier, in the last two decades of the preceding century, there were a few private schools run by missionary societies of the Church of England. They were then followed by Catholic missionary sohools. Not a few Chinese who studied in such missionary schools became Christians. This is one explanation why it is calculated that about eighteen out of every thousand Chinese in Malaya are Christians. But in general, the Islamic manifestation and its steady development in Malaya were left untouched by the British.

V.

The arrival of the Dutch in the Indonesian islands and the establishment of their headquarters and chief trading post in Batavia in 1619, signalled the beginning of the intertwining of the economic life of most of the Indonesians with that of the Netherlands. Although the Dutch presence initially spurred some acceleration of Islam among some Indonesians, they, the Indonesians, slowly found themselves cut off from relations with other Muslims. Moreover, the Dutch, in places where they wielded coercive powers, prevented the implantation of Islamic institutions, especially on the political level, which would have more or less ensued, had the Indonesians been left alone. Thus was the deepening of Islamic values obstructed.

Initially, the Dutch, to some extent, supported Christian missionary activities. Indeed, there was a genuine antipathy to Muslim rites and practices as revealed by a Church order in 1643 which demanded that Islamic rites and schools as well as the practices of the Chinese and pagans be prohibited, However, Christian missionary activities were not allowed to operate freely. It was only as late as 1890 that Christian missionary schools got some government support. Dutch colonial administrators were not as interested in religion as they were in commerce. Actually, they were often irritated by clerical demands at home as to what they ought to do, The East Indian Church was the only officially recognized church for many years till 1927 when other religious bodies got their recognition. One reason why Protestant missionary activities were viewed with some neutrality by Dutch administrators was that they feared that missionary activities would inevitably attract a resurgence of Muslim fears and a possible counter—fanaticism. Possibly, this fear explains why missionaries were not allowed to proselytize in traditionally strong and conservative centers such as Acheh and Banten. In other areas, the missionaries needed official permission. Moreover, the Dutch government saw to it that Protestant and Catholic missionaries labored in different areas to prevent sectarian conflicts between them. Significant was that Dutch missionary activities were normally successful among pagan tribes like the Bataks of Sumatra and, later on, the Torajas in Celebes. In brief, Dutch missionary activity among the Indonesian Muslims was generally as unsuccessful as Spanish missionary activity among the Muslims in the Philippines.

VI.

The Philippine Revolution in 1896 and 1898, which was initiated in the Tagalog region of the Philippines and which then spread to other regions was, to a large extent, motivated by liberal ideas first enunciated in Europe. These were secular in character and direction.

As it were, the Christian natives wanted to form themselves into a national community that was neither religious in spirit nor colonial in character. It is a belief of many historians that one of the causes of the Revolution was the abuses of the friar religious corporations or the eccleciastical predominance over affairs of the colony. However, the revolutionary leaders, many of whom were strongly anti—clerical and members of Masonic lodges,

had to contend with a population that was loyal, not to the Spanish character of the Church, but to their own Christian religious principles and rituals. Thus it was expedient for these leaders to encourage the formation of a National Church that was to remain Catholic but divorced from the control of a Spanish hierarchy. The constitution approved by the Revolutionary government in 1899 originally provided for the principle of the separation of Church and State. But so bitter was the opposition of the native clergy as well as that of many of their parishioners that this provision was temporarily suspended, and one which provided for the maintenance of parish priests by municipalities requiring their services was added. In effect, regardless of the secular bias of many of the intellectual leaders of the Revolution, it was not easy to entirely disregard the religious sentiments of a great part of the ordinary supporters of the Revolution.

The leaders of the Revolution, too, failed to get the support or even the verbal sympathy of the Muslims in the South. From their perspective, the Muslims inferred that the elimination of the Spaniards would only signify their substitution by a Filipino Christian government. More than ever, they were determined to keep their traditional way of life, political and social system, and Islamic religious beliefs. In any case, their historical contacts with the Christians of the North had been invariably one of conflict and antagonism. Both groups did not have an immediate common element for discussion.

The Americans, after a series of bloody wars, were finally able to pacify the different Muslim groups in the Philippines, but not without guarantees of religious freedom and a program of reconstruction, education, and sanitation. But in common with the Spaniards, they did not encourage the Muslims to maintain intimate contacts with other Muslim groups either in Southeast Asia or the Arab world. In spite of some pressure from clerical groups at home. American official policy was not to get involved with any Christian missionary activity among the Muslims. It was under the American regime that many settlers from Christian provinces were encouraged to migrate to Mindanao. This policy was pursued with greater energy by the succeeding Commonwealth established in 1935. This policy which to Muslims constituted an intrusion into what they claimed to be their traditional lands became an ingredient, among others, for a great deal of trouble in Muslim areas up to the present. Although at the beginning Christian and Muslim communities had lived in amity together, succeeding political and economic rivalries were to cause tensions if not actual conflicts between them. It is this situation that the present government of the Philippines is trying to solve by bold programs.

VII.

In the last few decades of the nineteenth century, Dutch colonial policy was to encourage the application of **adat** or customary law among the various Indonesian groups while limiting the further implementation or away of Islamic religious law. Yet, certain religious activities like the establishment of Qur'anic schools and the **haj** were allowed to increase that kind of orthodoxy that was believed as not representing a threat to colonial rule. Clearly, these policies were meant to limit Islam's institutional hold over the rural areas while regulating the contacts of the local Muslims with the outside Muslim world. But it was not possible to completely prevent Islamic modernist ideas from filtering into the colony. The **haj** itself became the very vehicle for the entry of such ideas. Moreover, methods of communication with different Islamic countries became more accessible. From all these, a reaction to Dutch official policies emerged. Many religiously inspired Indonesian societies were formed. One of the earliest of these was Sarekat Islam which was founded in 1912. This organization aimed to purify Muslim doctrines from indigeneous religious accretions, upgrade the teachings of Islam, and

adapt them to the needs of a modern world. On account of its program and the dedication of its organizers, it was able to greatly stimulate religious thinking and activity. In time, it began to represent Islam as a force against Dutch rule, the economic power of the Chinese. the increasing activities of Christian missionaries, and local practices that were alien to Islam. Whereas Christianity was posited as the religion of the foreign colonizers, Islam was offered as an instrument of solidarity for Muslims and for welding diverse peoples of different regions and languages and even with diverse historical developments into one cohesive group. Although in 1925, Sarekat Islam lost large segments of its membership, on account of Dutch reaction, poor administrators, internal bickerings, and sympathy of many of its members with the rising Left, its mark on other organizations and the nationalist movement was indelible.

Another organization, the Muhammadiyah, which was non—political in its conception, was founded in 1912. It aimed to intensify Islam among the Indonesian Muslims while bringing its message to others. Learning effectively from Christian missionary techniques, it established orphanages, schools, clinics, ets., while propagating simultaneously ideas of a pure and progressive Islam. It took a firm stand against Communists and Christian missionaries that could not help but generate political implications. More specifically, in asserting its principle that Islam was superior to Christianity, towards which it had a pronounced antipathy, its members could not help but resent Dutch colonial rule which was administered by Christians.

The Nahdatul Ulama, founded in 1926, although an Islamic movement, was established precisely to moderate what it considered the too dangerous modernistic tendencies of the other Islamic organizations. Propounding an Islamic way of life, in accordance with its own lights, it was led to go against government policies which appeared to it as sheer interference in Muslim family life and law. In some way, its existence prevented the formation of a united Islamic front.

Persatuan Islam established in 1923, noted for some of its fundamentalist teachings and polemics against Christianity, also had its influence on Indonesian Muslims. Like other Muslim organizations, it stood for the preservation of Islam while considering the missions as a grave threat to Islam.

It is difficult to deny that the above organizations and their like helped not only to generate a more suphisticated Islamic consciousness, at least among its members, but also influenced the nationalistic movement in Indonesia. It is enough to recall that the Muhammadiyah, and Persatuan Islam to some extent, provided recruits to the Masjumi party, and that the Nahdatul Ulama still claims today a large membership. The fact is that there are still many Muslims today who believe that Islam had provided for some of the elements that contributed to the nationalistic struggle and had initially served as a rallying point for independence. Others even insist that Sarekat Islam was the first genuine nationalist organization. All of this is not to deny the fact that not a few Christians helped in the formation of the Republic, But it is equally true that the Christian population of the Moluccas had suplied many of the recruits for the Dutch Army that resisted the Indonesian movement for unity and independence.

VIII.

Much had been written by some Western scholars regarding how superficial Islam is among a great majority of Muslims in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. But this view is itself superficial. As long as individuals consider themselves Muslims, feel that they belong to the Muslim **umma** or community, believe that Islam still has a function in solving social problems, contend that Islam had enriched their lives, and consider that they are different from non—Muslims, who can say that they are not Muslims?

taking advantage of their weakness is an un—religious if not an antireligious activity. This point, I take it, does not cover those cases where an individual, by means of his studies or an intellectual approach, comes to see that Light which Allah in is Mercy had seen it proper for him to see,

The Islamic attitude here is clear : The People of the Scriptures, that is, those with sacred texts. are not subjects for Islamic conversion in a manner involving any form of coercion. The Qur'an asserts explicitly that salvation is not the sole monopoly of Jews, Christians or Muslims. Thus, regarding the Christian and Muslim communities, what might be necessary is that they should not put obstacles on each others way for an intensification of their own religious beliefs and practices. Indeed, a truly religious spirit manifests itself when different religious communities provide opportunities to make each other delve deeper into their own religious resources.

In concluding, allow me to repeat the view that all religions are like the different spokes of a wheel with a common hub from which they all radiate. This hub, symbolically speaking, represents the belief in Allah or a primodial covenant where Man accepts Allah as his Lord and Master. The historical accretions to this belief or covenant, theological elaborations, differing or elaborate rituals and, above all, the power structures or organizations that accompany or justify all these is what leads the spokes to become more distant from each other. As it were, in developing a direction further away from the hub, they alienate themselves from their Source as well as from each other. What is imperative is to return to the hub, for this is what is shared by all religions. Whereas the unsympathetic eye can only see the differences among them, the eye of love perceives the common core of them all.

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CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR MUSLIM NEIGHBOURS

By Prof, Dr. M. A. Ihromi
(Indonesia)

On Christmas Eve of 1974, twelve days ago, I found germ guidelines for this short introduction to our exploration from His Excellency the Minister for Religious Affairs of Indonesia, Professor Mukti Ali. For the purpose of the present dialogue between Muslims and Christians from Southeast Asia, it is most gratifying for me as a Christian to be inspired by a prominent Muslim scholar and leader in the course of the preparation for my present task : to present a theological perspective on Christian attitudes for relationships with Muslim neighbours.

Our theme ("Muslims and Christians in Society : Towards Good—will, Consultation and Working Together in Southeast Asia") has been planned one year ago by Muslims and Christians together, and now I find myself receiving "feed—back" for this plenary paper from my Muslim fellow—citizen, who is in charge with religious affairs in my country.

In his Christmas message, broadcasted nationally, the Minister quoted from the Bible the famous passage of Love from St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13. I do not believe I would be able to find a better passage or more suitable formulations in our quests for Christian attitudes than those biblical guidelines cited by Professor Mukti Ali.

For every Christian it should be an eventful reminder of the precious apostolic words, that Love must be the driving force for his attitudes, as it is conveyed now in all goodwill by his eminent Muslim fellow—man. At the same time the same pronouncement of Love might be innovative at least in two ways, that it is conveyed by a Muslim and that it could lead towards a common basis for reciprocal attitudes.

I believe that so much could be explored and be discussed from the experience in Southeast Asia in particular, what Love is and what it isn't, what it doesn't and what it does, when I listened to the broadoast in Indonesia on Christmas Eve. Many of us do not feel, that the quoted biblical passage is theoretical or irrelevant to our situation:

"love is patient and kind"
"love is not jealous or boastful"
"it is not arrogant or rude"
"Love does not insist on its own way"
"it is not irritable or resentful"
"it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right"
"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things"
"Love never ends".

I do hope that we would be able to discuss freely and frankly in what way the message is relevant to the societies in Southeast Asia.

Perhaps one also might feel the vacuum in talking about Love, so that one might feel in so doing the critique in the words of St. Paul: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels" (e.g. **about** Love), "but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal". (I Corinthians 13 : 1)

In our dialogue, it also would be commendable. I think, to elucidate, whether this concept of Love belongs to the monopoly of Christendom, like an authoritative document securely deposited in the succession of that rich and durable corpora, which in real life ought to be rediscovered, re—membered, re—enacted.

It never ceases to surprise many people, when they are made aware that in many areas of Southeast Asia Muslims and Christians have been living together for about three hundred years. In what ways are they neighbours to each other? I propose we discuss at length what our respective understanding of the word "neighbour" is.

The expression "their Muslim neighbours" we use here in its relatedness to the Christians implies decisive theological perspective on Christian attitudes. The use of the word "neighbour" in the Bible according to me is more adequately rendered by the Indonesian translation with **"sesama"**, which literary means "one's equal". We also can compare our notes, that one of the Hebrew words in the original Bible for "neighbour" is **"qarob"**, wich for the Indonesian ear sounds like "the one very near, very close, intimate", i.e. **karib** (qarib), **akrab** ('aqrab), loanwords from Arabic.

I think the biblical theological use of the word "neighbour" is very specific and does not give much room for varieties of meaning. It is in this connection and in that of the Hymn of Love we have already recited, that one actually feels too high a command to a human being, when every time in the Church services two great commandments are read:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind".
"You shall love your neighbour as yourself",

Here the word "neighbour" is used very specifically in the sense, that it does not exclude the people next door one denpises. I would like to add, that not only non—Christians find it hard to accept the biblical radicalism in St. Matthew 5 : 44 : "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you".

In Christian ethics we are taught, that one's spouse is the nearest "neighbour". The word for "brother" in the Bible is often used in parallel with or in the same sense for "neighbour". But isn't noteworthy that in the very first accounts in the Bible of Man's attitude towards his closest fellowman is his inaptitude ? The sad story of Man (**'adam**) and his wife is followed by the account of the tragic murder of Abel by his brother Cain,

In the light of that inaptitude I can understand more what St. Paul said in his letter to the Romans, that the ability of the believer for Love is given by God Himself: ". . . God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit". (Romans 5 ; 5)

It is God Himself Who **inspired** Love into our hearts. God Himself "so loves the world", we read in the Gospel (of St. John).

The Christian right attitudes towards their Muslim neighbours are derived wholly from the loving acts of the living God, and thus: **charismatic** in the Biblical sense of the word (i.e. guided by the wisdom and the power of the Spirit of God). And God's love never ends.

There is a condition on the human level for the relationships between Man and his neighbour: Man's ability to relate to himself and to the neighbour depends on his neighbours' equalitarian attitude.

(Cf. "Der Mensch kann sich nicht zu sich selbst und zum anderen Menschen verhalten, wenn nicht andere Menschen gleichursprunglich zu ihm sich verhalten"—Eberhard Jungel).

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And you will find among the People of the Book the closer to you those who said that they were Christians; for many of them are priests and ascetics and are humble (Qur'an 5 ; 82)

For whoever is not against us is for us. Remember this! Anyone who gives you a drink of water because you belong to Christ will certainly receive his reward. (St. Mark 9 : 40—41)

'CONSULTATION' AS A FEATURE OF MUSLIM – CHRISTIAN RELATION

A Working Paper Drafted By
Peter G. Gowing

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Contents

1. Consultation Defined Literally and Contextually

1. 1 The English noun "consultation" means "council" or "conference" or the act of consulting or conferring. It connotes the action of asking the advice or the opinion of others, or of referring a matter to others, or of deliberating on a matter together with others. In common English usage, "consultation" is equivalent to the word "dialogue". Though in some circles the latter term also has a more technical connotation, it is nevertheless regarded as at least a form of "consultation". For our purpose in this paper, we will use these two terms "consultation" and "dialogue" interchangeably.

1. 2 The practice of consultation (or dialogue) is natural to man and in some societies it is defined and formally lifted up as a social value. This is true in the Malay World where, for example, **mushawarah** (meeting, conference, discussion, deliberation) in Indonesia is regarded as an "Indonesian way" of dealing with matters of common concern. **Mushawarah**, as practiced in Indonesia, is characterized by the avoidance of hard or inflexible positions, thus precluding "loss of face" or embarrassment on the part of any of the participants. **Mushawarah** is expected to issue if possible in **mufakat**, or consensus, which enables the participants to come to the conclusions necessary for action. An important feature of **mushawarah/mufakat**, says Estrella Solidum (p, 83), is that "there is no division of the house nor a register of votes for or against. There is no concept of 'opponents' in such a discussion and dicision—making".

1. 3 **Mushawarah/mufakat** have their equivalents in word and practice in Malaysia (**mushawarah/mupakat**) and the Philippines (**pulong/usapan**). It is significant that the shortlived MAPHILINDO alliance of the three Malay nations in the early 1960's regarded **mushawarah** as a form of cooperation and as a necessary ingredient in an "Asian solution to Asian problems". **Mushawarah** consultations — and there were several under MAPHILINDO — enabled Southeast Asian leaders to crystallize issues, ventilate their thinking and arrive at a consensus (Solidum, p. 54). While MAPHILINDO foundered for various complicated reasons, the "**mushawarah spirit**" which it engendered was carried over into the more successful Association of Southeast Asian Nations — ASEAN — and remains characteristic of that organization to this day (**ibid.**, p. 65).

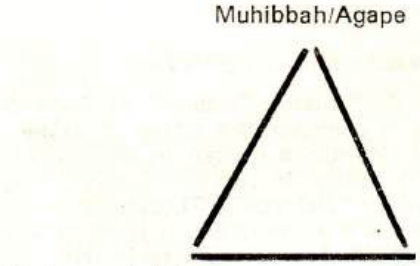
1. 4 In the context of inter—religious dialogue, it is worth noting that two such consultations in recent years offered brief experiential definitions of their endeavor. The multi—lateral dialogue held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in April 1974 declared :

> By dialogue we understand a relationship and an interaction between people, not between beliefsystems. We see in dialogue a means of sensitizing people of various backgrounds to each other and through this to the common concerns of mankind. (Colombo, 1974, p. 8).

Earlier, in July 1972, the Muslim—Christian consultation held in Broumana, Lebanon, described dialogue as follows :

> By dialogue we understood not only meetings such as this, also social collaboration, intellectual cross—fertilization, and, for some, vicarious patticipation in each other's devotional life. (Broumana, 1972, p. 5).

1. 5 It is perhaps self—evident that just as the sun cannot be separated from the light and heat it generates, neither can "goodwill" be separated from "consultation" and "working together". Integral to the ideal and ethic of love (understood as **muhibbah** in Arabic and as **agape** in New Testament Greek) are its manifestations in consultation (**mushawarah/pulong**) and working together (**gotong royong/bayanihan**). Or, to express it in simple diagram :



2. Motivations

2. 1 Muslims and Christians in the modern world perceive a wide variety of good reasons for coming together in consultation or dialogue, though none of them are more important than the one just stated : consultation is a natural and an inevitable manifestation of goodwill. The Muslim-Christian dialogue held in Legon. Ghana, in July 1974 spoke of "a natural meeting and sharing" which underlines "the spirit of cooperation and mutual caring that goes far beyond the attitude that each religion must look after its own self-interest". "It is against this background", says the Legon Memorandum, that the religious leaders of the two communities ought to come together and meet in a spirit of cooperation and sharing" (Legon, 1974. pp. 4 - 5).

2. 2 The Legon Dialogue noted certain common grounds for mutual recognition respect, cooperation—and, hence, consultation among Muslims and Christians. Both religions acknowledge and adore the One God. They have many points of theological and spiritual convergence, including a common reverence for Jesus. They are united in the common cherishing of a number of religious and moral values. They are one in their common experience of the challenges which materialism and modernism pose for their religious moral values today. "People of living faith, from both sides", declared the Legon Memorandum, "ought to share their concerns and understanding not in an attempt to forge an alliance against anybody but as a sign of their witness to God and of their responsibility for each other and the world" (ibid., p. 2).

2. 3 The challenges of modern life and change were also lifted up in the Singapore Muslim—Christian dialogue in September 1974 :

> It is important that we look at practical problems of life, particularly problems encountered in facing change . . . . What brings us together and gives us a real basis for dialogue is that we face a common set of problems. (Singapore, 1974, p. 1).

Among the specific problems mentioned as important subjects for dialogue were the allegedly growing moral laxity of youth ; the difficulties which Malays in Singapore have in coping with the demands and life—style of an industrializing society and the national ideal of "meritocracy"; and the encounter of old and new ways of thinking and doing often associated with the "generation gap" (ibid.)

2. 4 The Broumana Dialogue spoke of the challenge from the secular world to the religious communities in general "that they should never again prove to be instruments of mutual hatred and division in society" (Broumana, 1972, p. 2). Broumana also spoke of a "new feeling of interdependence which makes it urgent that we seek new ways of dialogue". Beyond this, the same meeting pointed to "a desire — belated for some of us — to honor together our conscious dependence upon God in a world that often seems to deny Him". Indeed, the Broumana participants felt that dialogue "is something we wish to contribute to the world and offer to God" (ibid., pp. 1,2).

2. 5 The Colombo Multi—Lateral Dialogue listed several features of dialogue which, taken together, provide considerable impetus for the enterprise (Colombo, 1974, p. 8) :

a) It is a proper mode for discourse with one's neighbors.

b) It is a profound means of mutual understanding between individuals and between communities.

c) It is a preferable way of preventing clashes and conflicts.

d) It is a mode especially appropriate for spiritual and religious discourse.

e) It is a mode which is not confined to religious men and women but may be accepted by people who are motivated by secular ideologies.

f) It is sober, charitable and rational, and allows both critical and appreciative approaches.

2. 6 The Ajaltoun Consultation in 1970 discovered that "full and loyal commitment to one's own faith did not stand in the way of dialogue". Rather, the participants found that "it was our faith which was the very basis of, and driving force to, intensification of dialogue and a search for common action between members of different faiths" (Ajaltoun, 1970, p. 1). Moreover, the Memorandum of the Consultation contained this important insight from a Hindu participant: "Dialogue can be effective, as perhaps nothing else can, in helping one recover from being lost, religiously speaking, to the sense of self—assurance or adequacy and completeness" (**ibid.**, p. 3).

2. 7 This last theme is found in the views on dialogue of the noted Professor of Islamic Studies at Temple University, Dr. Isma'il al—Faruqi. Professor Faruqi believes that both Muslims and Christians are intellectually and morally bound to concern themselwes with the religious beliefs of each other and of all other men. "To concern oneself with the convictions of another man", he writes, "is to understand and to learn these convictions, to analyze and criticize them and to share with their adherents one's own knowledge of the truth". This, in Professor Faruqi's view, is the proper mission of Islam and Christianity—but because of the equivocation involved in the word "mission", he suggests that it be dropped from our vocabulary "and the term 'dialogue' be used to express the man of religion's concern for men's convictions" (Faruqi, 1968, p. 53). Dialogue, for Professor Faruqi,

> . . . . . is the altruistic arm of Islam and of Christianity, their reach beyond themselves. Dialogue is education at its widest and noblest. It is the fulfillment of the command of reality, to become known, to be compared and contrasted with other claims, to be acquiesced in if true, amended if inadequate, and rejected if false. Dialogue is the removal of all barriers between men for a free intercourse of ideas where the categorical imperative is to let the sounder claim to the truth win. Dialogue disciplines our consciousness to recognize the truth inherent in realities and figurizations of realities beyond our usual ken and reach. If we are not fanatics the consequences cannot be anything but enrichment for all concerned. (Ibid.).

3. The How and Who of Consultation

3. 1 Professor Faruqi stresses that dialogue must have rules if it is to be truly a dialogue and not a diatribe between contrasting religious traditions. "Dialogue according to rule", he says, "is the only alternative becoming of man in an age where isolation—were it even possible—implies being bypassed by history, and non—cooperation spells general disaster". Faruqi then suggests a few, simple, critical rules (ibid., pp. 54—60):

1) No religious pronouncement is beyond the reach of criticism.
2) Internal co—herence must exist.
3) Proper historical perspective must be maintained.
4) Correspondence with reality must exist.
5) There must be freedom from absolutized scriptural figurization.
6) Dialogue should be carried on in areas where there is a greater possibility of success, e.g., the field of ethical duties.

3, 2 As to who might be most usefully engaged in dialogue at this point in time, Professor Faruqi, speaking from the viewpoint of a Muslim, feels that it should be limited to the intelligentsia:

> By their abuse, the Crusades and the last two centuries of Christian mission have spoilt the chances of the Muslim masses entering trustfully into such common endeavor. For the time being, the grand dialogue between Muslims and Christians will have to be limited to the intelligentsia where, in the main, propaganda does not convince and material influence produce no Quislings, This limitation is tolerable

only so long as the Muslim World is underdeveloped and hence unable to match measure for measure — and thus neutralize — the kilowatts of broadcasters, the ink and paper of publishers and the material bribes of affluent Christendom. (**Ibid,**, pp. 54 — 54, note 6).

3. 3 The Singapore Dialogue also touched on the question of whether inter-religious consultations should be for a select group or given a wider base of participation. While no conclusion was reached, there was a general agreement with the views of the Chairman, Dr. Yusof Talib, that "what starts among us should be, by us, then shared with others" (Singapore, 1974, p, 2),

3. 4 The Legon Dialogue suggested certain concrete steps in promoting a dialogical climate in Muslim—Christian relations; 1) offering joint prayers for the welfare of the whole community; 2) exchanging goodwill messages on the occasion of annual religious observances such as Id al—Fitr, Christmas, etc.; 3) exchanging important information about events in each part of the community. In addition, the Legon Dialogue urged that national pastoral institutes, theological seminaries, National Christian Councils and their Muslim counterparts, should work together in such areas as:

> (a) research into practical possibilities for collaborative schemes (b) joint setting up of centres for dialogue and informal meetings (c) exchange of information about, and joint action in, situation of communal need and (d) taking an active role in conscientization and spreading interest in dialogue at various local levels so that dialogue does not become, or appear to be, a specialist oreserve. (Legon, 1974, p. 5)

4. Themes and Issues

4. 1 In the opinion of Professor Faruqi, the pursuit of dialogue on the level of theological doctrine is "marred by such radical differences (between Christians and Muslims) that no progress may be here expected without preliminary work in other areas". He suggests that priority be given to matters which concern the living of our lives in a steadily shrinking world. "The Muslim—Christian dialogue should seek at first to establish a mutual understanding, if not a community of conviction, of the Muslim and Christian answers to the fundamental ethical question, What ought I to do ?" (Faruqi, 1968, p. 59). Muslims and Christians may not now be ready to appreciate each other's theological idea concerning the divine nature but "they may yet attempt to do the will of that nature, which they both hold to be one".

4. 2 Professor Faruqi then goes on to suggest three possibly fruitful themes for Muslim—Christian dialogue **ibid.**, pp. 60—62):

> **First, the modern Muslim and Christian regard themselves as standing in a state of innocence** . . . . Gone are the sordid obsessions with the innate depravity, the intrinsic futility the necessary fallenness and cynical vacuity of man and of the world. Modern man affirm his life and his world. Recognizing the imperativeness as well as the moving appeal of God's command, he accepts his destiny joyfully and presses forth upright into the thick of space—time where he is to make that will real and actual.
>
> **Secondly, the modern Muslim and Christian are acutely aware of the necessity and importance of recognizing God's will, of recognizing His command** . . . . The act of faith, of acknowledgment, recognition and acquiescence, is the first condition of piety, of virtue and felicity , . . . The act of faith neither justifies nor makes just. It is only an entrance ticket into the realm of ethical striving and doing. It does no more than let us into the realm of the moral life . . .

Thirdly, the modern Muslim or Christian recognizes that the moral vocation or mission of man in this world has yet to be fulfilled, and by him; that the measure of his fulfillment thereof is the sole measure of his ethical worth : that in respect to this mission or vocation all men start out in this world with a carte blanche on which nothing is entered except what each individual earns with his own doing or not doing.

4. 3 Muslim and Christian perticipants in the Singapore Dialogue found that they had no sentiment for a conscious focus on theological Matters and they found themselves drawn to ethical problems and questions of values. Mention has already been made (2.3) of some of the problems suggested for discussion at future inter—faith consultations. Indeed, the second in the series of Singapore dialogues, held on September 14, 1974, concentrated on the role of the Malay community in Singapore national development (under the inspiration of a paper by Mr. Ahmad Elahi) and the third session of the series, on November 3, involved the participants in visiting a Singapore Malay **kampong** (village) and seeing at first hand some of the problems and achievements pertaining in that sector of the society.

4. 4 When the Planning Committee for the Hong Kong 1975 Dialogue met in Singapore in November 1973 and engaged in preliminary discussion about the 'Consultation' part of the overall theme, the Committee compiled a short list of subjects that might profitably be explored in consultations between Muslims and Christians. At least it was decided to enquire of the Hong Kong Dialogue, and of the preparatory national dialogues, whether these subjects (or others) might be usefully discussed :

1) Theological issues
2) Common interests in social and political contexts
3) Legal affairs pertaining to religious communities
4) Muslim and Christian encounters with changing values in society
5) Ethical concerns and ultimate values
6) Relationships with all neighboring religions and ideologies

5. Experiences and Difficulties in Consultation

5. 1 Most of those who have had experience in dialogue readily acknowledge its impact on themselves as participants. Thus the Colombo Memorandum reported :

> Our living together in community has strengthened in each of us the shared readiness to reach out beyond ourselves and our several traditions in the quest for a meaningful encounter with people of living faiths and ideologies. It has helped us to compare, criticize and correlate our visions of that aspired world community which was the subject of our deliberations. (Colombo, 1974, p. 11).

5. 2 Participants in the Muslim—Christian Dialogue at Broumana came to the realization that :

> Where Muslims and Christians meet together we are not only listening to each other, but we are listening for God. On occasion, therefore, Christian and Muslim individuals or groups may also express their mutual understanding and trust in opening themselves to each other's devotional idiom, notably of **dua**, of supplication and meditation. (Broumana, 1972, p. 4).

5. 3 From the Ajaltoun Consultation came an acknowledgment that the experience of intensive, probing discussions,

. . . . not only revealed many promising glimpses of agreements but also brought about and made clearer disagreements in understanding the world and man's place in the world . . . . The very disagreements were seen as points for further creative and intensive dialogue. (Ajaltoun, 1970, p. 2).

The Buddhists at Ajaltoun declared that the Consultation "made us participants act in a spirit of cooperation rather than in a competitive way" and also "made us break away from our self—made barriers and paved the way to establish sincere friendship at the secular and spiritual levels between men of living faiths" (**ibid.**, pp. 4, 5).

A Muslim participant at the same Consultation stated;

"We felt, as we went through our conversations, that we needed one another, to help one another to bring to each other the diverse modes in which God had spoken to man" (ibid., p. 7).

5. 4 Reference has been made to the series of Muslim—Christian dialogues which has taken place in Singapore. Significant Muslim—Christian dialogues have been held as well in Indonesia, and there have been both **ad hoc** and formal consultation between representatives of the two faiths in Malaysia in recent years (some under the auspices of the Institute for the Study of Religion and Society in Malaysia and Singapore). Unfortunately, reports of the meetings in these last two countries were not available for use in the drafting of this working paper, but it is hoped that Muslim and Christian participants from Indonesia and Malaysia present at the Hong Kong Dialogue will share something of their experience of dialogue with us. We are all aware or the existence of tensions between some groups of Muslims in both Indonesia and Malaysia, though the dinamics behind those tensions might not be so generally known or understood by those of us outside the situation, **Mushawarah** between Muslims and Christians of goodwill in Indonesia and Malaysia, therefore, take on special significance, especially if it is seen as a means of easing tensions.

5. 5 In Southeast Asia, the flashpoint in Muslim—Christian relations just now is the southern region of the Philippines where a tragic conflict has been raging for the past three years or so. It is the latest chapter in a centuries-long history of Muslim—Christian hostility in the Philippines, and the causes are quite complex. The Muslim—Christian Dialogue which was held in Zamboanga City in September 1974 under the leadership of Fr. Jose Ante (Christian) and Atty. Michael O. Mastura (Muslim), met in the context of this conflict, and the six Muslim and seven Christian participants felt very keenly the significance and urgency of their meeting. It is little wonder that, in contrast to the other dialogues we have mentioned in this paper, the Zamboanga Dialogue spent no time at all **discussing** dialogue but plunged right into it! Taking the theme of our Hong Kong Dialogue as a guide for discussion, the Zamboanga participants entered into a frank, open—ended discussion of the **causes** of the breakdown or goodwill between Muslims and Christians in the Philippines, and of the sad **consequences** of that breakdown (Zamboanga, 1974, pp. 2—11). Discussing the need for 'Consultation' the Zamboanga Dialogue noted the superficial character of past consultations and seminars between Filipino Muslims and Christians which had issued in no real understanding. "There is need, therefore, to eliminate or lessen this superficiality and move to greater depths of openness to really discover the person of the other" (**ibid.**, p. 11). Finally, the Zamboanga Dialogue went on to recommend some concrete ways in which Muslims and Christians might "work together" to lay foundations for a harmonious and constructive relationship between the two communities in the Philippines. These recommendations the Dialogue then summarized in a letter to the Roman Catholic bishops of Mindanao, who collectively enjoy a well—earned reputation for

progressivenees, with the expectation that they (the bishops) will support the recommendations and see that they are directed to the right channels for implementation (ibid., p. 14). One of the recommendations reads :

> Aware of the plight and destitution of refugees, both Christians and Muslims, whose farms, plantations and/or homesteads are now being occupied illegally by lawless elements enjoying the fruits and produce thereof, we feel that the Church can perform a truly vital role by acting as trustee of these abandoned farms, plantations and homesteads, thereby seeing to it that the owners receive a fair and just share of the produce thereof. We envision the Church to perform this role of trusteeship for Muslims whose lands have been occupied by Christians and the same role to be performed by Muslim organizations for lands abandoned by Christians in Muslim areas. (Ibid,, "Letter to the Mindanao Catholic Bishops", p, 1).

5. 6 To be sure there are difficulties to be faced and overcome in the effort to bring Muslims and Christians togethar in consultation — quite aside from the difficulties inherent in the negative images of each other shaped by a sad history of animosity. One difficulty mentioned but not discussed at the Singapore Dialogue was concern over the fact that the two groups start with quite different ideas of what is "religious" and what is "secular". Muslims feel that their religion is all—embracing, and that there is no matter concerning man which does not have religious significance. Christians tend to a more narrow view of the application of the word "religion". The implications for serious dialogue of this divergence of understanding are important (Singapore, 1974, p. 2).

5. 7 Professor Faruqi joins many Muslims in feeling somewhat pessimistic that either Roman Catholic or Protestant Christians are yet ready to engage in fruitful dialogue according to an agenda not of their own making. The Roman Catholics, he feels, are still too condescending towards Muslims (Faruqi, 1968, pp. 48, 71—73) while the Protestants are still too prone to regard as "a given" in any discussion the figurization of God in Jesus (ibid., pp. 73—76).

5. 8 For their part, Christians who see the Vital importance and the promise of inter—faith consultation or dialogue are nevertheless some sometimes obliged to contend with many of their number who sincerely feel apprehensive that "dialogue may lead to syncretism" or who genuinely believe that "if the Gospel is true then those other creeds must be untrue" or who are fully persuaded that "the job of the Christian Church is to see these people (non—Christians) brought to Christ".

6. Expectations

6. 1 The results of inter—religious consultation, as of other worthy enterprises, are at least to some extent shaped by the expectations which participants carry into it. Buddhist participants at Ajaltoun doubtless spoke not only for themselves but for the representatives of the other faiths as well when they declared :

> While maintaining the integrity of upholding the faith to which each one of us is committed, we are of the opinion that dialogue can, and must, create and foster an atmosphere of tolerance and friendliness, wherein we can pool our common resources to work for the greater good of humanity. (Ajaltoun, 1970, p. 4).

6. 2 In that same vein, the Colombo Dialogue saw inter—faith consultation becoming a "means for promoting cooperation, mutual respect and tolerance for members of other communities". Moreover,

> Dialogue offers to concerned people a method for working together to achieve practical goals. It can also be utilized in committees, conferences, informal get—togethers and inter—faith discussions, focusing on concrete issues in society. Such encounters will enable us to bring together our various resources for dealing with particular issues, and at the same time may sensitize people to new areas of human concern confronting us. (Colombo, 1974, p. 10),

6. 3 As important as inter—religious dialogue can be in helping the different faiths to understand one another and work together for the benefit of society as a whole, other and equally important are to be hoped for in dialogue, Many hope for **conversion.** A Muslim participant at Ajaltoun declared :

> I do not agree with the view that 'solidarity' of one's own commitment to tradition, community or church should remain wholly unmodified to make the dialogue authentic. One should accept that commitment to one's own tradition might expand into a wider loyalty to the common humanity within us all, and to the common feeling of God or Infinite. (Ajaltoun, 1970, p. 8).

6. 4 The Legon Dialogue expressed a similar view and held that "dialogue sees conversion (not as a 'numbers game' or a crusade for a membership drive but) as growing mutual awareness of the presence of God in an encounter in which each becomes responsible for the other and where both seek openness in witness before God", (Legon, 1974, p. 8).

6. 5 In eloquent language, Professor Faruqi talks of conversion of another, though not unrelated sort.

> We must say it boldly that the end of dialogue is conversion ; not conversion to my, your or his religion, culture, mores or political regime, but to the truth. The conversion that is hateful to Islam or to Christianity is a conversion forced, bought or cheated out of its unconscious subject. Conversion as conviction of the truth is not only legitimate but obligatory—indeed, the only alternative consistent with sanity, seriousness and dignity . . . . To win all mankind to the truth is the highest and noblest ideal man has ever entertained. That history has known many travesties of this ideal, that man has inflicted tremendous sufferings upon his fellowmen in the pursuit of it are arguments against man, not against the ideal. They are the reason why dialogue must have rules. (Faruqi, 1968, p. 54).

"Tell me your beautiful Names of God and I will tell you mine", said a devout Muslim to a devout Christian. "Tell me what you think God wants us to be and to do in the world, and I will tell what I think". These sentences state what, in the final analysis is intended in consultations between Muslims and Christians and all other religious persons of goodwill. Consultation between friends is a value in itself, but its value becomes greater when it issues in sharing and caring and working together in life situations.

The proper disposition of participants at the conclusion of any inter — faith consultation was beautifully expressed by a Muslim representative at Ajaltoun : "We, in Beirut, have experienced a new opening, and wait upon God for His guidance and grace".

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