The Ministry of Religion and the Rights of the Minority: The Witness of Protestant Christianity in Indonesia

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Abstract

The practices of the Ministry of Religion in Indonesia that discriminates against and disregards the freedom and rights of the minority are contradictory to the aspirations of the founding fathers of the nation as declared in the Indonesian Constitution. In order to bridge this gap it is essential to have a critical and reflective study on religion-state relations and the existence of the Ministry of Religion. The study presented in this article will deal with this problem from a historical standpoint and will be based on the underlying principles of Christian witness and thought in Indonesia. It will also recommend some practical strategies in protecting the freedom and rights of the minority in Indonesia.

I. *Introduction*

Democracy and the rights of minorities are correlated and closely linked. For this reason, the United Nations issued a Declaration on Minorities in 1992, stating that "a positive approach to the rights of a minority" is one of the important requirements in the formation of a democratic society.[1] A

[1] David Beetham and Kevin Boyle, *Introducing Democracy: 80 Questions and Answers* (Cambridge: UNESCO Publishing/Polity Press, 1995), 56.

country that suppresses the rights of its minority citizens will have its democracy threatened.

When a country disregards the rights of a minority and accommodates only the agendas of the majority, then a tyranny by the majority will arise.[2] Western nations, rooted in the tradition of democracy, have attempted to curb this tyranny of the majority religion by separating religion from the state, in the hope of founding a just state in which the state seeks to accommodate the agendas of all religions and not to give preference to a select few.

As Indonesia is pluralistic in terms of religion, the founding fathers of the nation had early on fully realized the danger of the rise of tyranny by the majority religion and had accordingly paid careful attention to the problem of religion and the state.[3] Their concern was expressed in chapter 29 of the 1945 Constitution or *Undang-Undang Dasar* (UUD), which states that "the State is founded on the principle of One Lordship," and "the State guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace his/her own religion and to worship according to his/her religion and belief." This statement contains three basic thoughts. First, Indonesia is not a theocratic state since no religion is explicitly mentioned in the Constitution. This means that the State will be fair to all religions and not take sides with any one in particular. Second, being founded on the principle of One Lordship, the State appreciates and encourages the contribution of diverse religions in the life of the nation.[4] Third, the Constitution must guarantee the freedom of each individual in changing his or her belief or religion.

However, in reality Indonesian politics have not conformed to this ideal. The formation of the Ministry of Religion has put Islam in a special position

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[2] A disregard for minority rights that causes the rise of tyranny by the majority group usually happens in religious and/or ethnic contexts, hence the importance of religion and ethnicity in social conflicts that caused many people to fall victim. See Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Minds of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts, eds., *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); and Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Religion, Ethnicity and Self-Identity: Nations in Turmoil* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997). See also Stefan Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Scott Strauss, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); and Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[3] With regard to religious life, all of the major world religions are represented in Indonesia, along with a wide range of folk and animistic beliefs. Among these faiths, Islam embodies approximately 87% of the population, making it the largest religious group in Indonesia. The 2010 Indonesian census recorded 87.18% Muslims, 6.96% Protestants, 2.91% Catholics, 1.69% Hindus, 0.72% Buddhists, 0.05% Confucians, and 0.13% listed as "Others." Badan Pusat Statistik, *Sensus Indonesia 2010*, www.sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel? tid=321&wid=0.

[4] See Benyamin F. Intan, *"Public Religion" and the Pancasila-based State of Indonesia: An Ethical and Sociological Analysis* (New York: Lang, 2006).

in this country. At the outset, the Ministry of Religion was intended to manage the affairs of Islam only. Although subsequently its duties were broadened to undertake the affairs of non-Muslim religions as well, the Ministry of Religion has remained orientated towards the agenda of Islam.

Its focus on Islam has induced the Ministry of Religion to issue many regulations that are discriminative in nature, putting the minority non-Muslim religions, especially Christianity, at a disadvantage. The discriminative regulations have impacted non-Muslim minorities as well as minorities within the Muslim belief itself, such as the Ahmadiyah and Shia sects, so much so that in the author's opinion, the intolerance and violence betrayed by Islam towards the Muslim minorities are even more severe than that towards non-Muslims.

It should be noted that the discrimination and violence against religious minorities in Indonesia has become increasingly problematic. Early in 2009, in his reflection essay entitled "The Re-shaping of the Indonesian Identity" ("Merajut Ulang Keindonesiaan"), Syafii Anwar, from the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP), reported that in 2008 the rate of violence and violations of the freedom of religion or belief towards religious minorities had increased by a hundred percent, reaching a total of 360 violations. The violation of religious freedom and tolerance directed toward religious minorities in Indonesia still exists today. The Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace notes that in 2012 there were 264 cases of violation against the freedom of religion or belief, with 371 types of acts of violence. The highest number of violations of religious freedom included those committed against Christian congregations (50 cases), apostates in minority religious beliefs (42 cases), the Shia and Ahmadiyah congregations (34 and 31 cases, respectively).[5] Religious violence and violations against religious minorities resulting in many human rights issues in Indonesia were highlighted in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council under the United Nations on May 23, 2012.

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[5] Out of the 371 acts of violence, 226 were perpetrated by Indonesian citizens and 145 by the state, involving state officials as its initiators. The most conspicuous of the 226 violations committed by Indonesian citizens comprised 169 cases of criminal offense, 42 cases of religious intolerance, and 15 cases in which violence was condoned. Out of the 145 violations committed by the state, 117 were actually perpetrated by the state and 28 were not prevented by the state. The state institutions involved in the highest number of violations of religious freedom included the police (40 cases), the District Administrator (28 cases), the City Administrator (10 cases), the Ministry of Religion (8 cases), the Subdistrict Administrator (8 cases), and the Office of the Attorney General (6 cases). Bonar Tigor Naipospos, ed., *Presiden tanpa Prakarsa: Kondisi Kebebasan/Beragama Berkeyakinan di Indonesia 2012* (Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara, 2012), 31–49.

The problem then lies in the question of how one should bridge the gap between the "freedom" aspired to by the founding fathers of this nation and the reality of religious violence and violations against religious minorities in Indonesian politics—between "what ought to be" and "what is." In this article, the author attempts to bridge that gap by referring to the threads of Christian witness in Indonesia. Taking on this role has never been easy for Christians in Indonesia, due to the 350 years of Dutch colonialism in its history, although it was also the Dutch who brought Christianity to Indonesia. History has proved that for the sake of freedom and the upholding of human rights, Indonesian Christians have stood up against the Dutch colonialists in spite of the price they had to pay. They lost not only their comfort zone, but even their own lives.

It is the hope of the author that in this way the principles that founded the Christian witness in Indonesia will bring a normative lead to the realism of Indonesian politics ("descriptive") in order to align them to the aspiration of the founding fathers ("prescriptive") as expressed in the Constitution. To achieve this purpose, the author will first elaborate on the difficult struggles the Indonesian Christians have gone through in fighting for freedom and the defense of human rights, drawing a connecting line between them. Secondly, the author will elucidate the various discriminative regulations issued by the Ministry of Religion in order to restrict the freedom and rights of non-Muslims as well as Muslim minorities. Next, the author will present a critical and reflective evaluation of the Ministry of Religion's discriminative attempts from the perspective of Christian witness in Indonesia. And lastly, the author will summarize the discussion by recommending a number of practical strategies for protecting the freedom and rights of minorities in Indonesia.

II. *The Witness of Protestant Christians in Indonesia*

We mentioned already that it had not been easy for Protestant Christians to exist and bear witness in Indonesia due to 350 years of Dutch colonialism. The question arises as to how the Protestant churches that used to be regarded as a "colonial church" could change and become an "ethnic church" and eventually an "Indonesian church." The following account will show that it is only by the grace of God that the Indonesian Protestant churches have been able to turn the country into a mission field in which they could bear witness to the gospel and struggle for the fulfillment of their calling.

1. *Paradigm Shift*

Christianity first came to Indonesia in the sixteenth century A.D. through Portuguese missionaries who promulgated Roman Catholicism in certain parts of the country. They were followed by Dutch missionaries who introduced Protestantism at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[6] At that time, Islam was also at the peak of disseminating its teaching in Indonesia, forcing the Hindu religion to move from Java to the island of Bali.[7] Thus, before Islam's influence spread all over Indonesia, Christianity was already present and taking root in regions yet unreached by Islam, such as Moluccas (Maluku) and Timor in the eastern part of Indonesia. The Dutch had succeeded in removing Portuguese power in those regions and converted its inhabitants from Catholicism to Protestantism.[8]

The propagation of the Protestant mission through Dutch colonialism in Indonesia comprised two stages: first, through the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC, United East-Indies Company) in 1602–1799, and second, through the Dutch East Indies in 1800–1942. The presence of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia through the VOC was motivated mainly by their interest in spices. At the outset, the contract between the Dutch government and the VOC did not mention Christianity, but since 1623 the VOC was constrained to involve itself in the propagation of Christianity.[9] Thus, Christian missions was included in the VOC's organizational structure, first as part of the Department of Trade and Colonies, and later as part of a new department called the Department of Education, Worship and Industry.[10] The VOC's commercial motive had accordingly been inseparable from evangelistic mission, since at that time the Dutch government embraced the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (wherever you conquer, your religion should reign). Article 36 of the Dutch Statement of Faith stated that the government was obliged to "preserve the holy Church, oppose and eradicate all forms of false religion and idol worship, abolish the kingdom of the

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[6] See Th. Müller Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia*, 2nd ed. (Jakarta: Badan Penerbit Kristen, 1966).

[7] Islam first entered Indonesia around the thirteenth century. When Marco Polo visited Aceh at the end of the thirteenth century, he observed the presence of Islam at some trading centers. T. B. Simatupang, "Doing Theology in Indonesia Today," *CTC Bulletin* 3.2 (1982): 22.

[8] T. B. Simatupang, "Dynamics for Creative Maturity," in *Asian Voices in Christian Theology*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 91.

[9] Karel Steenbrink, "The Arrival of Protestantism and the Consolidation of Christianity in the Moluccas, 1605–1800," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, ed. Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 99–100.

[10] Gerry van Klinken, *Minorities, Modernity and the Emerging Nation: Christians in Indonesia, A Biographical Approach* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003), 9–10.

antichrist and advance the kingdom of Jesus."[11] Consequently, the unification of the church and the state at that time had brought about the establishment of a state church in Indonesia during the VOC era.[12]

Existing under the shadow of colonialism, the Protestant mission had no intention of contextualizing its theological teaching. The theology being taught was fraught with a western-oriented way of thinking. "Thought patterns brought by European missionaries or by the western church," as John M. Prior and Alle Hoekema have put it, "were considered normative. Missionaries were often afraid of heterodox thinking by indigenous believers and suppressed their ideas."[13] In other words, the Protestant mission rejected the various attempts for an "indigenous theologizing."[14] It is unsurprising that until the year 1800, although Christianity had existed in Indonesia for about 200 years, it had not been owned by the churches in Indonesia. Th. Müller Krüger, the first dean of the *Hoogere Theologische School* (HTS),[15] called Indonesian Christianity of the time "the Church of people under age."[16]

After the VOC went bankrupt on December 31, 1799, the Dutch government took over all of its territories and placed them under the authority of the Dutch East Indies while continuing the propagation of the Christian mission.[17] Starting to govern Indonesia at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Dutch East Indies, following its predecessor, adopted a state church policy. However, a fundamental difference existed between the two. During the VOC era, the mission of the state church was part of one of the departments of the VOC and therefore remained under colonial power and depended fully on it. But in the era of the Dutch East Indies, the state church was more independent and self-reliant in carrying out the Protestant mission. By the decree of King William I, the Dutch East Indies established the state church under the name "the Protestant Church of the Netherlands Indies," in which various Protestant denominations, including Lutherans, came together. The self-reliance of the Protestant Church was reflected in its openness and freedom to invite various missionary societies

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[11] Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia*, 30.

[12] Ibid., 31.

[13] John M. Prior and Alle Hoekema, "Theological Thinking by Indonesian Christians, 1850–2000," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, ed. Aritonang and Steenbrink, 749.

[14] Ibid.

[15] HTS was established in Bogor in 1934 and was moved two years later to Jakarta. In 1954, the name of the school was changed to Sekolah Tinggi Teologia (STT, Higher Theological School). See Ibid., 757.

[16] Th. Müller Krüger, ed., *Indonesia Raja* (Bad Salzuflen: MBK-Verlag, 1966), 99. Quoted in Simatupang, "Dynamics for Creative Maturity," 91.

[17] See Thomas van den End, "The Colonial Era: 1800–1900," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, ed. Aritonang and Steenbrink, 137–40.

from Europe to assist local churches.[18] From the year 1800 to 1900, fifteen missionary societies had started working in the Netherlands Indies.[19]

The independence of the Protestant Church was also reflected in its main mission to create independent local ethnic churches by pioneering the formation of what the eminent Protestant T. B. Simatupang calls "proto-churches."[20] Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century the Protestant Church opened up itself to "indigenous theologising" by allowing Indonesian Christians to get involved in ecclesial offices as *assistant pastors* or *evangelists*, and then as *pastors*.[21] Although the Indonesian Christians holding ecclesial offices remained subordinate to the European missionaries, their presence, which Simatupang deems as "proto-theological awareness," was significant for the establishment of self-reliant local ethnic churches in the Netherlands Indies.[22] History notes the self-reliance of the local ethnic churches in the twentieth century when the Minahasa Evangelical Christian Church (*Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa*) was founded in 1934 in North Celebes, the Protestant Church of Moluccas (*Gereja Protestan Maluku*) in 1935, and the Timor Evangelical Christian Church (*Gereja Masehi Injili Timor*) in 1947. Other ethnic churches such as the Chinese-speaking churches, the Javanese churches, the Borneo Evangelical Church (*Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis*), and the Batak Protestant Christian Church (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*) were also founded during this period.[23]

Nevertheless, the founding of the Protestant Church by the colonial government that was represented by the Dutch East Indies had made the former's independence and self-reliance limited. Although the Protestant Church refused to accept aid from the colonial government for evangelistic work, the colonial government bore all of the operational costs of the Protestant Church. This situation caused concern among the missionary societies.[24] Another problem that also caused their concern was the large number of Protestant ministers who adopted liberal theology that basically neglects mission work.[25] This situation resulted from the composition of the founders of the Protestant Church, which comprised many denominations that were

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[18] John Titaley, "From Abandonment to Blessing: The Theological Presence of Christianity in Indonesia," in *Christian Theology in Asia*, ed. Sebastian C. H. Kim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 75.

[19] Van den End, "The Colonial Era: 1800–1900," 141.

[20] Simatupang, "Dynamics for Creative Maturity," 92.

[21] Prior and Hoekema, "Theological Thinking," 751.

[22] Simatupang, "Dynamics for Creative Maturity," 92.

[23] Titaley, "From Abandonment to Blessing," 75.

[24] Van den End, "The Colonial Era: 1800–1900," 159.

[25] Ibid.

united by the colonial government, as discussed above. The fact that many of its ministers adopted liberal theology had caused the Protestant Church to function basically as "a government agency for the fulfillment of the religious needs of its Protestant subjects. As such, it was not supposed to do any missionary work." Thomas van den End adds, "Even if the government had allowed it to do so, the leadership of the church would not have felt an inner urge towards mission."[26] So it was the missionary societies that were most engaged in evangelism and the founding of churches. The German *Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft*, for example, pioneered mission work in South Borneo from 1835, and in North Sumatra among the Batak tribe since 1862, and founded churches in those places.[27] Similarly, the *Zending der Gereformeerde Kerken* (ZGKN), the mission of the Dutch Reformed Church founded by Abraham Kuyper, pioneered mission work and founded a church on the island of Sumba.[28]

Overall, the Protestant mission, being guided by the power and interests of the VOC, was deemed not only ineffective but also contra-productive to Christian mission itself. By remaining silent in the face of the ruthlessness of Dutch colonialism, evangelism had become a large stumbling block to those who embraced the Christian faith, particularly when it was carried out with an orientation towards political and economic gain for the Dutch colonial government. Furthermore, most converts of Protestantism were not true Christians but only nominal ones. Krüger wrote that in 1615 the Reverend Wiltens, one of the first pastors stationed in Maluku, had complained about the huge number of Protestant Christians who were "Christians in name only."[29] In turn, nominal Christianity then produced syncretism. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the Moluccas a so-called *Ambon religion* appeared that was "a mixture of Christianity … and traditional religion."[30] It should be noted that nominal Christianity had in turn brought about not only a syncretism of beliefs but also hypocrisy, both of which were dangerous to the Christian faith. In short, the Protestant mission under the VOC was in fact committing suicide.

The Protestant mission being carried out during the Dutch East Indies era was far better compared to the one during the VOC era. The Protestant churches, identified previously as "a colonial church," had changed into "an

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[26] Ibid., 138.
[27] Ibid., 141.
[28] Thomas van den End, "The Last Decades of the Colonial Era: 1900–1942," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, ed. Aritonang and Steenbrink, 167.
[29] Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia*, 31.
[30] Steenbrink, "The Arrival of Protestantism," 109.

ethnic church"—also known as a group of protochurches. By engaging in "indigeneous theologising," Christian mission had focused its attention on efforts to gain an understanding of the religion and culture of its target people. This understanding is important not only to enhance the effectiveness of evangelism, but also to lead those evangelized to a genuine conversion. The Protestant mission during the Dutch East Indies era believed that genuine conversion could not be achieved without conversion in the heart of Christian individuals. Aside from the work of the Holy Spirit, in order to have genuine conversion of the heart of Christians, it is extremely important for the gospel to be proclaimed, as the Third World Missionary Conference in Tambaram (1938) has put it, "in terms and expressions that make its summons intelligible in the context of life as actually lived."[31]

In addition, during the Dutch East Indies era the Protestant mission was more independent and self-reliant, whereas during the VOC era it depended completely on colonial rule. This change happened not due to the transfer of power from the VOC to the Dutch East Indies, but because a change in political climate had occurred in the Netherlands. It was previously mentioned that the unification of the church and the state by the Dutch colonialists followed a policy that applied in the Netherlands. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, in line with the increasing pluralistic nature of the Dutch society, there was a shift in church-state relations from "unification" to "separation," particularly during the administration of Abraham Kuyper as Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1901–1905).[32] In spite of the better position the Protestant Church was in as compared to that during the VOC era, its condition as a state church still created problems. As a state church, the Protestant Church and the Dutch colonial government were taking advantage of each other in the process of the *politization of religion*, in which religion was used to legitimize the state's political agenda, and in the process of the *religionization of politics*, in which the state was used to legitimize the agenda of religion. But eventually, based on what the Protestant Church had experienced, it was religion that was most disadvantaged from those processes, and the state benefited most. In the end, the Protestant Church had become not only "a government agency," but also refrained from its mission to engage in evangelism and the founding of churches.

The Protestant mission in Indonesia only truly freed itself from colonial rule when the Dutch colonialism of the Netherlands Indies ended with

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[31] John Bolt, James D. Bratt, and Paul J. Visser, eds., *The J. H. Bavinck Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 117.

[32] Klinken, *Minorities, Modernity and the Emerging Nation*, 9–10.

the Japanese occupation of Indonesia in 1942. The three-and-a-half year Japanese occupation became a blessing in disguise for the development of the Indonesian churches. In order to pursue their agenda of establishing "the Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere," the Japanese administration expelled the Dutch and replaced the European leadership of the churches with that of local Christians.[33] Simon Marantika, for example, was appointed Chairman of the Synod of the Protestant Church of Maluku in 1942.[34] The transfer of church leadership into the hands of local Christians made them aware of their responsibility to the faith they embraced.[35] This experience, in spite of the difficulties, in fact became a blessing for the churches as it increased their fighting spirit in preparing them for self-reliance later on. After Japan was defeated and the Second World War ended, the Indonesian churches had to deal once again with their European counterparts. However, this time they did not treat their fellow European pastors as masters but as equals. The realization of becoming a self-reliant church, freed from colonial rule, reached its peak at the proclamation of Indonesian independence in 1945.

2. *The Nationalist Movement*

After Indonesian independence was declared, the Protestant churches underwent a drastic change: they no longer depended on overseas mission organizations, but became independent and self-reliant with a national profile. During this independence era, the main struggle of the Protestant churches was to get themselves involved in the nationalist movement. Whereas the Catholic churches had participated in the nationalist movement almost without obstruction, the Protestant churches, being ethnic-based, had to find a common solution to the problem: in what way could the Protestant churches—such as the Protestant Church of the Moluccas, the Minahasa Evangelical Christian Church, and the Batak Protestant Christian Church, to name a few—become an Indonesian church that viewed "the whole of Indonesia" as "one field for the common calling of all churches to witness and service"?[36]

History notes that from the very beginning, Protestant Christians had played a pivotal role in the nationalist movement. During the pre-independence period, they already participated in promoting national unity in several

[33] Thomas van den End, "Indonesian Christianity during the Japanese Occupation, 1942–1945," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, ed. Aritonang and Steenbrink, 179.

[34] Ibid., 182.

[35] Titaley, "From Abandonment to Blessing," 76.

[36] Simatupang, "Dynamics for Creative Maturity," 108.

ways. One way was to involve themselves in regional fights against the Dutch colonialists, such as done by Thomas Matulessy, also known as Pattimura (1783–1817), who led an insurgence against the Dutch in his hometown of Saparua in the Moluccan islands. Simatupang notes that when Pattimura was hunted down by the Dutch soldiers and had to flee from Saparua, he managed to leave a Bible on the pulpit of the church, opened to Psalm 17, which begins with this ringing sentence, "Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry!" He thereby intended to convey a message to the invading Dutch commander that he was fighting for justice.[37] In this sense, Simatupang considers Pattimura, who was later honored as a national hero, one of the "early Christian nationalists."[38]

Another significant measure in promoting national unity was pioneered by the younger generation of Christian Protestants. While each of the Protestant churches at the time maintained its ethnic identity, their younger generation—naming themselves ethnically Young Batak, Young Minahasa, Young Ambon, and Young Timor, for example—had participated in a national Youth Congress held on October 28, 1928.[39] In this meeting, representatives of the Indonesian youth unanimously pledged allegiance to Indonesia known as the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge), in which they acknowledged that they belonged to One Nation, Indonesia; to One Motherland, Indonesia; and to One Language, Indonesian.[40] However, the Protestant churches responded negatively towards this pledge, since at that time these churches were still under missionary leadership that was, to some extent, protected by the Dutch colonial government. Those who took part in the nationalist movement were "alienated from their churches"[41] and "regarded by the church as no longer good Christians."[42]

Nevertheless, the ambiguity between Christianity and nationalism ended with the establishment of *Christen Studenten Vereniging* (CSV, Student Christian Movement) in 1932. It was CSV that made it possible for students to be both nationalist and Christian at the same time. CSV was the pioneer of *Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia* (DGI, Council of Churches in Indonesia), which appeared later in May 1950, with the intention of founding the

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[37] Simatupang, "Doing Theology in Indonesia Today," 23.

[38] R. A. F. Webb, *Indonesian Christians and Their Political Parties, 1923–1966: The Role of Partai Kristen Indonesia and Partai Katolik* (North Queensland: James Cook University, 1978), 24.

[39] October 28 has been nationally commemorated as *Hari Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge Day).

[40] Simatupang, "Dynamics for Creative Maturity," 93–94.

[41] Simatupang, "Doing Theology in Indonesia Today," 24.

[42] T. B. Simatupang, "This Is My Country," *International Review of Mission* 63.251 (1974): 315.

Gereja Kristen yang Esa di Indonesia (the Single Christian Church in Indonesia). One of the reasons for founding DGI, says Simatupang, was the growth of "a national consciousness, in the sense that the ethnic churches were seen as being called to grow into one church in order to express together the Christian presence in the nation."[43] CSV was also the pioneer of *Hoogere Theologische School*, founded in 1934, "with the clear purpose of preparing leadership for the churches of the future in Indonesia."[44] In short, nationalism and the church were then reconciled.

The Protestant Christians also founded *Partai Kristen Nasional* (PKN, the National Christian Party), later renamed *Partai Kristen Indonesia* (Parkindo, the Indonesian Christian Party), on November 10–11, 1945. According to Martinus Abednego, one of its founders, *Parkindo* as "an organisation of the Protestant Christians from various Protestant churches" functions as "a working communion to struggle on the calling and responsibility of the Protestant Christians to the nation and the country."[45] Thus, the presence of *Parkindo* disclosed the commitment of Protestant Christians to contribute to the nation and the state.

Furthermore, Protestant Christians had also participated in the reconciliation process between Indonesia and the Netherlands to end the war. Johannes Leimena and Simatupang were among the Indonesian delegates meeting with the Dutch at the Dutch-Indonesian Round Table Conference in The Hague in late 1949 to finalize the settlement of the war and to achieve constitutional acknowledgement of Indonesia's independence (1949).[46]

The pinnacle of the Protestant Christians' contribution to national unity could be seen in the strategic role they played in the formulation of *Pancasila*, Indonesia's national ideology, whereby a united Indonesia could be accomplished. From May 29 to June 1, 1945 *Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (BPUPKI, the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence) met to discuss the formulation of Indonesia's ideological basis of the state (*Weltanschauung*). The discussion reached a deadlock due to the ideological confrontation between *golongan Islam* (a Muslim nationalist group), who wanted Islam to be the ideological basis of the state, and *golongan kebangsaan* (a secular nationalist group), who wanted Indonesia to be a secular state in which religion would be

[43] Simatupang, "Doing Theology in Indonesia Today," 25.
[44] Simatupang, "This Is My Country," 315–16.
[45] Martinus Abednego, *Suatu Partisipasi* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1976), 39. Quoted in Jan S. Aritonang, "Independent Indonesia (1945–2005)," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, ed. Aritonang and Steenbrink, 190–91.
[46] Simatupang, "Dynamics for Creative Maturity," 100–101.

separated from the state. Sukarno's address to the meeting about *Pancasila* on June 1, 1945 was well received by both parties and succeeded in breaking the deadlock.

However, on June 22, 1945 *Pancasila* was reformulated in a document known as the Jakarta Charter (*Piagam Jakarta*). In this document the first principle of *Pancasila*, namely, the principle of Lordship, was reformulated by adding the clause "*dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*" (with the obligation to carry out the Islamic law by its adherents) after the word "Lordship." Although it has been repeatedly asserted that the clause known as "the seven words" would apply to Indonesian Muslims only and not to other religious groups, it soon attracted rigorous objections, especially from the Christian side. Latuharhary, a strong Protestant figure and member of BPUPKI, expressed his objection by stating that the seven words "could have considerable consequences regarding other religions, and moreover could lead to difficulties in connection with the *adat-istiadat* (customary law)."[47]

On August 18, 1945, one day after the Proclamation of Independence, in the first meeting of *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (PPKI, the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence),[48] the Jakarta Charter was abrogated. Shortly before the opening of PPKI's formal meeting, Muhammad Hatta, who later became the first Vice-President of Indonesia, proposed changes to the draft of the Preamble of the Constitution. Hatta had been informed by a Japanese navy officer that in the eyes of Christians, the seven words were "discriminatory against all minority groups," since these words served only part of the Indonesian people.[49] If these words remained, Christians living predominantly in the eastern part of Indonesia would not join the republic. Their agreement then resulted in the removal of the seven words from the preamble and the body of the constitution. In short, through the Christians' contribution, Pancasila treats Indonesian citizens with equal rights without prejudice to religion, race and ethnic background.

The persistent struggle of the Protestant Christians against Dutch colonialism and in materializing Indonesian independence should be appreciated. Their immense sacrifice had primarily cost them their comfort zone since at the time Protestant Christians received special privileges from the

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[47] B. J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 28.

[48] PPKI was founded on August 7, 1945 to replace BPUPKI and was led by Sukarno and Muhammad Hatta as its chairman and vice-chairman, respectively.

[49] Deliar Noer, *Partai Islam di Pentas Nasional, 1945–1965* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1987), 40.

Dutch colonial government. And aside from putting their lives at stake, they were criticized for not being good Christians by their churches because they dared to oppose the colonial government who had brought Christianity to Indonesia.

The Protestant Christians' persistence in materializing the independence of Indonesia was attributed to their conviction that independence is a gift of God, and as such Indonesia has to treat all of its citizens equally without differentiating between people according to their religious background.[50] For this reason, the Protestant Christians insisted on the removal of the seven words from the *Pancasila*, otherwise they would separate themselves from this republic. For them, Indonesia should not allow any discrimination against certain citizens and must guarantee the freedom and rights of the minority. They would therefore prefer the leadership of a Muslim president who upheld freedom and human rights to that of a Dutch governor-general who was a Christian but did not resist violence and violations against freedom and human rights.

Nevertheless, Christianity's struggle for Indonesia to extend equal treatment of its citizens still had a long way to go. The state's policy declared through the Ministry of Religion in giving Islam a privileged status in fact disregarded the freedom and rights of non-Muslim minorities, especially Christianity, as well as Muslim minorities, as the following discussion will indicate.

III. *The Ministry of Religion and the Rights of Minorities*

In the early years of Sukarno's administration (1945–1965), Islam received various concessions from the government. In order to compensate Muslim nationalists for their legislative "loss" of the Jakarta Charter, on January 3, 1946 a special Ministry of Religion was established in the executive branch of the Old Order government, in spite of the criticisms raised against it. Latuharhary from the Protestant side argued that this ministry "might give rise to feelings of offence and dislike," and he suggested that "religious affairs be handled by the Ministry of Education."[51] Another sharp judgment came from J. W. M. Bakker, S.J., a Catholic writer, who thought that this ministry had from the beginning turned out to be "a bulwark of Islam and an outpost for an Islamic State."[52]

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[50] T. B. Simatupang, "Christian Presence in War, Revolution and Development: The Indonesian Case," *Ecumenical Review* 37.1 (1985): 81.

[51] Aritonang, "Independent Indonesia (1945–2005)," 190.

[52] J. W. M. Bakker, "De Godsdienstvrijheid in de Indonesische Grondwetten," *Het Missie-*

The Ministry of Religion was initially intended to administer the affairs of Islam only. Although it was later expanded by providing sections for non-Muslim religions—Protestant, Catholic, and Hindu-Buddhist—the ministry's existence, as Clifford Geertz has put it, "is for all intents and purposes a *santri* [devout Islam] affair from top to bottom."[53] Thus, by giving Islam special privileges, the presence of the Ministry of Religion had in the first instance discriminated against non-Muslim minorities and Christianity in particular by disregarding their freedom and rights, as denoted in the following discussion.

1. *Christianity (Non-Muslim Minorities)*

The state's concession to Islam as a majority religion that demands privileges has naturally caused discrimination against non-Muslim minorities, especially Christians. On September 13, 1969 the Minister of Religion, together with the Minister of Internal Affairs, issued *Surat Keputusan Bersama* (SKB, the Joint-Decision Letter) No.1/BER/MDN-MAG/1969 regarding the construction of worship places, in which it is stated that the construction of every worship place would require permission from the Head of the Local Government (Article 1), and prior to issuing the permission the official in charge may request the opinions of representatives of local religious organizations and spiritual leaders (Article 3).[54]The decree was issued in response to the large number of conversions from Islam to Christianity in certain areas of the country. Although it was supposed to apply to all religious groups, for the afore-mentioned reason the decree was, in reality, enforced to regulate only the construction of worship places for non-Muslims, especially Christians.[55] This decree, and particularly Article 3, has made it difficult, if not impossible, for non-Muslims and Christians to build their worship places in a community where Muslims are a majority.

The decree has also been used as an excuse for closing churches or even destroying and burning them. From 1969 to 2001, the number of closings, burnings, and/or demolitions of churches has increased yearly, from only two during Sukarno's presidency (August 17, 1945–March 7, 1967; averaging 0.008 per month) to 456 during Suharto's rule (March 7, 1967–May 21,

werk 4 (1956): 215. Quoted in Boland, *The Struggle of Islam*, 106.

[53] Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 200. The santri are Muslims who follow the Islamic orthodox teaching and practices more strictly and carefully. Intan, *"Public Religion" and the Pancasila-based State of Indonesia*, 36.

[54] Weinata Sairin, ed., *Himpunan Peraturan di Bidang Keagamaan* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996), 3–6.

[55] T. B. Simatupang, *The Fallacy of a Myth* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1995), 198.

1998; averaging 1.19 per month), and subsequently from 156 during the Habibie administration (May 21, 1998–October 20, 1999; averaging 9.18 per month) to 232 during Abdurrahman Wahid's presidency (October 20, 1999–July 23, 2001; averaging 11.048 per month).[56] The largest number of churches being demolished occurred during Wahid's presidential term because of the efforts made by certain groups to discredit his vision of a tolerant Islam.

In the Situbondo incident on October 10, 1996, known as "Black Thursday," 24 churches were demolished and burned by a total of 3,000 people. Among the victims was a pastor of the Pentecostal Church of Surabaya (*Gereja Pentakosta Pusat Surabaya*), who together with his wife, child, nephew, and an evangelist of the church died when their church in Situbondo was burned.

During the Reformation Era after Suharto, the SKB was revised in 2006 and renamed the *Peraturan Bersama* (*PERBER*, Joint-Regulation) of Two Ministers. However, there are basically no differences in the content of the *PERBER* as compared to that of the SKB. The new regulation imposes restrictions on religious freedom, particularly in the building of worship places. It requires at least 60 signatures of adults living in the proximity of the location where the new place of worship is to be built, indicating their approval of the building project. In addition to that, another 90 signatures of adult members of the congregation are required, indicating that they live in close proximity to the location of the new church. Following the implementation of the *PERBER*, the closing and destruction of worship places that belong to the minority religious groups still continue. A couple of days after the *PERBER* was promulgated an angry mob expelled Christians from a Pentecostal church in Bogor and then closed it.[57] The Jakarta Christian Communication Forum observed that 67 churches had become victims from March 21, 2006 to August 17, 2007.[58] Although the Ministerial Joint-Regulation proves to be counterproductive and controversial and has even instigated religious violence, astonishingly it is still retained.

It is certainly regrettable that the presence of the SKB and *PERBER* has created such a negative impact on certain groups within the society. These two products of the law have made the building of a place of worship in a religious

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[56] Paul Tahalele and Thomas Santoso, *The Church and Human Rights in Indonesia: Supplement* (Surabaya: Surabaya-Indonesian Christian Communication Forum, SCCF-ICCF, 2002), 1.

[57] N. Hosen, "Substantive Equality and Legal Pluralism in Indonesia: A Case Study of Joint Ministerial Decrees on the Construction of Worship Places" (paper presented at the Commission on Folk Law and Legal Pluralism International Conference, Depok, 29 June–2 July, 2006), 6. Quoted in Salim, "Muslim Politics in Indonesia's Democratization," 121.

[58] For a detailed discussion of *PERBER*, see Benyamin F. Intan, "Peraturan Bersama Kontraproduktif," *Seputar Indonesia* (21 September 2010).

country such as Indonesia far more difficult than the building of a massage parlor. Even more ironical is the fact that while churches can be built only with much difficulty, they can be closed, demolished, and burned with ease.

Apart from the problem of church construction, the problem of religious propagation has become a very serious issue for non-Muslims, particularly Christians. The rapid growth of adherents to Christianity has caused concern on the part of Muslims, who in 1978 again urged the Ministry of Religion to issue the Ministerial Decision no. 70/1978 on "the Guidelines for Evangelism." Section (a) of Article 2 of the Guidelines states that religious evangelism aimed at people who already belong to a certain religion is prohibited by any means.[59] The decree does not specifically indicate which religions are involved, but obviously it is targeted at Christian evangelists. Moreover, in order to tighten the state's control on evangelistic activities, the Minister of Religion issued the Ministerial Decision no. 77/1978 concerning "Foreign Aid to Religious Institutions in Indonesia." This decree is implemented to ban foreign missionaries from working in Indonesia (Article 3, section 1). Any foreign aid in the form of workers, materials, or finance must receive prior approval from the Minister of Religion, who will also adjudicate on granting the permission for it (Article 2).[60]

In their response to the decrees, DGI (the Council of Churches in Indonesia) and *Majelis Agung Wali Gereja Indonesia* (MAWI, the Supreme Council of Indonesian Bishops) queried the Ministry of Religion's decision to promulgate the decrees before discussing them with all religious groups, if indeed the Ministry was intended to serve all religions. They submitted strong objections to the Minister of Religion, the Vice-President Adam Malik, and even to President Suharto, asking that the regulations be revoked, based on the fact that they contradict Article 29 of the Constitution, in which religious freedom is guaranteed. Moreover, any elaboration of Article 29 of the Constitution has to be conducted by the legislature arm in cooperation with the executive arm of the government, namely, the *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (DPR, the People's Representative Council) and the President, not by Ministerial Regulations with guidance from the President. On the basis of these considerations, the regulations had, in their opinion, no legal basis at all.[61] The Christian daily newspaper *Sinar Harapan* expressed this concern in its editorial: "We do not have to become an expert on the comparative study of religion in order to know that every major

[59] Simatupang, *The Fallacy of a Myth*, 202.

[60] Ibid., 204–5.

[61] Ramlan Surbakti, "Interrelation between Religious and Political Power under New Order Indonesia" (PhD diss., Northern Illinois University, 1991), 153.

religion cannot accept becoming a religion which is not universal. … This means that the freedom for propagating religion to all persons is an intrinsic part of the universality of religion."[62] In response to the concerns of DGI and MAWI, the government later issued the Joint Decision of the Minister of Religion and the Minister for Home Affairs no. 1/1979 concerning "the Guidelines for Evangelism and Foreign Aid to Religious Institutions in Indonesia," which reinforces the Ministerial Decision no. 70/1978 but without section (a) of Article 2 and made the application of the Ministerial Decision no. 77/1978 less restrictive.[63]

The presence of the Ministry of Religion apparently poses problems, not only to Christians or non-Muslim minorities but also to Muslim minorities.

2. *Muslim Minorities*

Towards Muslim minorities, the Muslim majority has used the Ministry of Religion to promote their idea of the Islamization of Muslims. "It is not yet necessary," Boland comments, "to call non-Muslims to Islam (*mendakwahi*). First call the Muslims to Islam, so that they do not use the term 'Muslim' too lightly, but will become true Muslims."[64] With the purpose of forcing *abangan* (nominal) Muslims[65] to recommit themselves to the Islamic religion, Muslims attempted to use the Ministry of Religion to prohibit the religious practices of the *abangan*, known as *kebatinan* (mysticism).[66] In 1961, the Ministry proposed a minimum definition of religion which contains the following necessary elements: "A holy scripture, a prophet, the absolute lordship of *Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* (God), and a system of laws for its followers."[67] These requirements automatically exclude various mysticisms. Niels Mulder observes that not a single criterion of the requirements can be fulfilled by the religious sects and mysticisms. This proves that they are the main target of those who set the criteria.[68]

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[62] *Sinar Harapan*, 1978. Quoted in Surbakti, "Interrelation between Religious and Political Power," 354.

[63] See Sairin, ed., *Himpunan Peraturan*, 63–68.

[64] Boland, *The Struggle of Islam*, 191.

[65] Nominal or *abangan* Muslims know very little about Islam, but still consider themselves Muslim. Their religion is actually based on a mixture of different religions, including Islam, Hindu-Buddhism, and animism. Intan, *"Public Religion" and the Pancasila-based State of Indonesia*, 36.

[66] *Kebatinan* is the indigenous religion of the Javanese, mostly in Central Java, who practice mystical beliefs based on a mixture of different religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and animism. Cf. Howard M. Federspiel, *A Dictionary of Indonesian Islam* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1995), 124.

[67] Niels Mulder, *Mysticism and Everyday Life in Contemporary Java: Cultural Persistence and Change* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1978), 6.

[68] Ibid., 4–6.

Initially, the involvement of Muslims in the definition of religion was intended to gain control over the *abangan* and to coerce them to submit to Islam as a religion. It is important to note that during the eradication of the followers and sympathizers of *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party) after September 30, 1965, more than 500,000 victims were killed, and many of the *abangan* who supported PKI or PKI-affiliated organizations, in spite of their need for protection of their lives, did not recommit themselves to Islam.[69] "The slaughter of the suspected 'communist' *abangan* in 1965–1966, and the pressure to show that one had become an obedient Muslim," as Niels Mulder has put it, "boomeranged on Islam."[70] Instead, the *abangan* were converted to Christianity and even to Hinduism. In early 1969, the World Council of Churches reported that from 1965 to 1968, 2.5 million *abangan* Muslims had converted to Christianity.[71]

Another way the Muslim majority uses the Ministry of Religion could be inferred from the Ministry's prohibition of religious false teachings or heresies (*bidat*), particularly those that contradict Islamic mainstream teaching. Associated with Islam, the beliefs and practices which have been banned by the Ministry since the 1970s include, among others, Islam Jamaah, Darul Hadits, Jamaah Qur'an Hadits, Bantaqiah, Islam Alim Adil, Inkar Sunnah, Isa Bugis and Jam'iyyatul Islamiyah, JPID and JAPPENAS. The ban on these beliefs was recommended by *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI, the Council of Indonesian Ulamas) which represents mainstream Islam at both national and regional levels.

The Ministry's prohibition of Islamic heresies has unfortunately tempted certain Islamic leaders and their followers to resort to violence as a means for preserving their own existence. It is sad indeed to observe that whenever violence is used in dealing with religious heretics, the government has often remained silent and refused to get involved. This was obvious during the violent attacks perpetrated towards the Muslim sect of Ahmadiyah, which culminated in the incident in Cikeusik on February 6, 2011. Three members of Ahmadiyah died and five were seriously injured when about 1,500 people attacked their village.[72]

The bitter fact of the absence of the government's involvement in protecting Islamic minorities labelled as "heretics" was also seen in the attacks

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[69] Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 6.

[70] Mulder, *Mysticism and Everyday Life*, 6.

[71] *Angkatan Baru*, January 23, 1969. Quoted in Allan Arnold Samson, "Islam and Politics in Indonesia" (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1972), 237.

[72] Previous attacks against Ahmadiyah had targeted mainly buildings, including their mosques, but the Cikeusik incident involved direct attacks on the community and even murder.

perpetrated by the Sunni Islamic group towards the Shia Islamic group in Sampang, Madura, on August 26, 2012. Thousands of Sunni followers attacked the Shia group who lived in the village of Karang Gayam in Sampang. Two Shia members died, six were injured, 205 fled from their village, and 37 houses were burned.[73]

These incidents indicate that violence towards religious minorities has happened because of the government's failure to act and its lack of stringency in establishing law and order in the settlement of religious disputes. In short, violence in the name of religion has been perpetrated openly, not only by individuals and existing religious groups, but also by the government—indirectly by allowing it to happen, and to a certain extent, directly, by initiating or encouraging it.

In the following discussion, the author will present a critical and reflective evaluation of the various discriminative actions taken by the Ministry of Religion from the perspective of Christian witness in Indonesia.

IV. *Christian Witness on the Rights of Minorities*

As mentioned before, when Christianity first came to Indonesia, it spread and became rooted in regions unknown to Islam, such as the Moluccas and Timor in the eastern part of Indonesia. Being previously unreached, the churches founded in those regions were often called "folk churches." Christians in those areas "felt themselves to be *the* people." They are the majority, and "there is no minority feeling among them."[74] It should be noted that since the Japanese occupation and the end of Western dominance over Indonesia, Protestant churches on the whole have become strongly rooted in the nation. Christianity is thus not "a foreign religion in Indonesia."[75]

Furthermore, from the very beginning, Protestant Christians have become part of this nation in view of their involvement with the nationalist movement and the strategic role they played in the formulation of the *Pancasila* since the founding of this republic. As Simatupang has put it,

> The war for independence was also a great experience for Christians in Indonesia. It was their participation in it which gave Christians the acceptance and recognition they now enjoy. Everybody knew, and we knew ourselves, that we were really a part of this nation. If it had not been for this period the position of Christians in the nation would

[73] The village had previously been burned on December 29, 2011.
[74] Simatupang, "This Is My Country," 313.
[75] Ibid., 313–14.

> be very different. … No nation can understand its own life except in terms of its own historical experience.[76]

It is important to note that Christian participation in the Indonesian independence war and revolution was primarily based on "national motivations."[77] This would mean that Christians were not exclusive in their struggle. They fought for the sake of the nation, not for their own agendas. In fact, they would always put their Christian agenda under the national agenda. When the Protestant Christians attempted to eliminate the seven words from the *Pancasila*, for example, they did it not only for their own sake but for that of the nation. W. J. Rumambi, a Protestant leader who was later appointed minister in Sukarno's Dwikora II cabinet, describes this as follows:

> We view it [*Pancasila*] according to our confidence as Christians. We do it because we are also responsible for the salvation and the happiness of Indonesia. That responsibility is firstly to our Lord and then to our fellows. … Our task as Christians in Indonesia in the political field is to join to attempt to secure the welfare, peace, justice and orderliness for the whole people of Indonesia and not only for the Christians, by words as well as by actions, based on the salvation plan of our Lord as evident in our Holy Scriptures; Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and the saviour of Indonesia as well. That is our confidence.[78]

Since they fought for the nation, even though being a minority in terms of number, the Protestant Christians did not consider themselves a minority.

The above discussion has elucidated that, from the experience of the Protestant churches during the Dutch colonial era and the experience of the minority groups under the Ministry of Religion, it is obvious that the religion-state relation is the key factor in deciding on whether or not freedom and minority rights are guaranteed. In the next part, the author will explain how a proper relation between religion and the state should look in order that freedom and minority rights are not neglected.

1. *The Proper Relationship between Religion and the State*

From the above discussion, we learn that unifying religion with the state has resulted not only in the abuse of freedom and minority rights, but has also proved to be contra-productive to religion itself. For example, the SKB and *PERBER* regulations regarding the construction of worship places have made it difficult not only for Christians to build a worship place in a

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[76] Ibid., 316.
[77] Simatupang, "Christian Presence in War, Revolution and Development," 81.
[78] Aritonang, "Independent Indonesia (1945–2005)," 198.

community where they are a minority, but also for Muslims in areas where they are a minority, such as in Timor, where Christians are the majority, or in Bali, where Hindus are the majority.

The unification of religion and state has a negative impact on the state as well. To date, the SKB and *PERBER* have caused the closing, demolishing, and burning of more than 1,500 churches with the effect of disruptions in public order and safety, which are the state's responsibility to maintain. A more serious effect arises from the regulation to collect 60 and 90 signatures as prerequisite for the building of worship places. Since the lot of the intended site for the worship place must be purchased before the building permit can be secured, in whichever religious majority area it is located, this regulation has caused the local community to be divided on the basis of the religion of its members, and has resulted in the existence of religious enclaves. Internal religious relationships have become more dominant than inter-religious relationships. This condition will eventually weaken the overall unity and harmony of the nation, and will potentially become a destructive force.

In sum, religion and the state must never be totally fused. Both the *politicization of religion* and the *religionization of politics* are counterproductive and are counterproductive for all concerned. Kuyper uses the term "sphere sovereignty" to designate the theological impossibility of unifying religion and the state since each has its own autonomy, identity, and responsibility.[79] But as both spheres receive their authority from God, Kuyper concludes that there should be "a free [religion] in a free state."[80] Without this freedom, the *politicization of religion* and the *religionization of politics* are inevitable. Because unifying religion and the state is problematic, it is not surprising that in the meeting of BPUPKI Indonesia's founding fathers rejected the idea of an Islamic state that unifies religion and the state as proposed by Muslim nationalists.

However, this does not mean that religion and the state have to be segregated. It has been mentioned before that from the very beginning, the growth of Indonesian nationalism, for example, has been inseparable from the involvement and participation of Protestant Christians as well as Islam. Its status as the majority religion has made Islam one of the most important contributors to the growth of Indonesian nationalism by promoting a national unity in opposing Dutch colonialism.[81] Thus, religious contribution and participation in Indonesian nationalism are clearly undeniable. For Kuyper

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[79] Abraham Kuyper, "The Antirevolutionary Program," in *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society,* ed. James W. Skillen and Rockne M. McCarthy (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 242.

[80] Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 99.

[81] George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952), 38.

an "irreligious neutral standpoint" as proposed by the French revolution is simply unrealistic.[82] Nicholas Wolterstorff describes Kuyper's view on this matter: "Kuyper's holistic understanding of religion … led him to reject the liberal's *separation* view of how government should be related to religion, and to espouse the *impartiality* view. It's not possible, Kuyper believed, for school education as a whole [for example] to be neutral with respect to the diversity of religious and philosophical perspectives."[83] Consequently, it is impossible to make an absolute separation between religion and the state. For this reason, Indonesia's founding fathers also rejected the idea of a secular state by secular nationalists in which religion and the state are separated.

The above discussion has shown that both the theocratic state and the secular state are incompatible with the Indonesian context. The solution for Indonesia is that it should be neither a secular state nor a theocratic state, but a *Pancasila*-based state. Being a non-secular state means that Indonesia acknowledges the role of religion in the life of the nation. On the other hand, being a non-theocratic state implies that in Indonesia religion does not have the right to control the state. Nevertheless, the state acknowledges the social role of religion since the various religions in Indonesia have made significant contributions to the nation's fight for independence. By virtue of the first principle of *Pancasila*, "The Principle of One Lordship," the state recognizes unequivocally that it will be based on religious beliefs, and that the Indonesian society believes in "the Lordship." This "religious state," according to Sukarno, should promote what he calls "the interests of religion."[84] In the words of Simatupang, a *Pancasila*-based state is responsible "not only for ensuring religious freedom, but also for promoting the role of religions in society."[85] In this religiously accommodating state, religious communities not only maintain their autonomy, but are also encouraged to make an indispensable contribution to the nation's public life in accordance with their particular beliefs.

In short, within a *Pancasila*-based state, although religion and the state are separate from each other, they have a mutual responsibility for one

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[82] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 106.

[83] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Abraham Kuyper's Model of a Democratic Polity for Societies with a Religiously Diverse Citizenry," in *Kuyper Reconsidered: Aspects of His Life and Work*, ed. Cornelis van der Kooi and Jan de Bruijn (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1999), 198 (Italics his).

[84] Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 124. Cf. Sukarno, "Lahirnya Pantja Sila," in *Pantja Sila: The Basis of the State of the Republic of Indonesia* (Jakarta: National Committee for the Commemoration of the Birth of Pantja Sila, 1964), 29.

[85] Robert Lumban Tobing, "Christian Social Ethics in the Thought of T. B. Simatupang: The Role of Indonesian Christians in Social Change" (PhD diss., The Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver, 1996), 166.

another. The issue is then of how religion should fulfill its responsibility towards the state and the state towards religion without being trapped in the discourse of the politicization of religion and the religionization of politics. The author suggests that this is where the Ministry of Religion should function, as discussed below.

2. *The Ministry of Religious Affairs*

Before discussing the role of the Ministry of Religion, we should first be clear about the vision and structure of the Ministry. Above, we mention that despite the added sections provided for non-Muslim religions, the presence of the Ministry remains oriented mainly towards the agendas of Islam. As Arskal Salim notes,

> The minister has always been a Muslim, and the Islamic section of the ministry the largest. At present each religious section has one director-general, except for the Islamic section, which has two—one for Islamic affairs and one for Islamic institutions. For decades the ministry has been the locus of the internal strengthening of Islamic institutions, the Muslim community and the spread of Islam (*dakwah*).[86]

Therefore, the Ministry of Religion needs to be transformed in its character and structure, from initially serving mainly one religion to becoming a *Pancasila*-oriented Ministry that serves all religions equally and objectively. If this substantial aspect could be handled, then the name "Ministry of *Religion*" (Kementerian *Agama*) should be changed to "Ministry of *Religious Affairs*" (Kementerian *Keagamaan*),[87] and the position of Minister of Religion should be open to non-Muslims as well.

The main task of the Ministry of Religious Affairs regarding the religion-state relationship is primarily to create freedom for religion and the state and to attempt to prevent efforts to *religionize politics* and *politicize religion*. Accordingly, the Ministry must revoke all Ministerial Decisions that have been problematic—such as the prohibition of religious mission, the redefining of religion, the prohibition of heretics, the construction of worship places—and cease the issuance of such regulations. Speaking from a Christian background, Kuyper wrote on this matter,

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[86] Arskal Salim, "Muslim Politics in Indonesia's Democratization: The Religious Majority and the Rights of Minorities in the Post-New Order Era," in *Indonesia: Democracy and the Promise of Good Governance*, ed. Ross McLeod and Andrew MacIntyre (Singapore: Institute of South-East Asian Studies, 2007), 116.

[87] See Simatupang, *The Fallacy of a Myth*, 206–7.

> [the] Churches flourish most richly when the government allows them to live from their own strength on the voluntary principle. And that therefore neither the Caesaropapy of the Czar of Russia; nor the subjection of the State to the Church, taught by Rome; nor the "Cuius regio eius religio" of the Lutheran jurists … but that only the system of a free Church, in a free State, may be honored from a Calvinistic standpoint. The sovereignty of the State and the sovereignty of the Church exist side by side, and they mutually limit each other.[88]

When dealing with the responsibility of the state towards religion, the Ministry must retain the state's primary task to establish public order, which includes public justice and public morality. Whenever the Ministry applies its regulative function towards a certain religion because its religious manifestations disrupt public order, then the Ministry must realize that its existence, while always dominant "at" the boundaries of the spheres, must never be dominant "across" the boundaries and "within" every sphere.[89] This means that when dealing with disrupting religious manifestations, the Ministry is only allowed to prohibit manifestations or interpretations of that religion and not to prohibit the religion itself. In other words, it should be noted that such a regulative function of the Ministry should be based not only on considerations of public justice and public morality, but mainly and primarily upon the requirement that the Ministry must secure the fundamental rights and freedom of human life. For this reason, when different religions clash, then the Ministry, in Kuyper's words, has to compel "mutual regard for the boundary-lines of each; [and] to defend individuals and the weak ones, in those [religions], against the abuse of power of the rest."[90] In this sense, the Ministry's intervention might not be imposed permanently and should be removed as soon as possible in order for the larger measure of freedom to be assured.

On the other hand, when dealing with the responsibility of religion towards the state, the Ministry has to realize that whereas religions have no intention of interfering in the state's internal affairs, they have to play an important role in the nation's socio-political life. This means that the framework of a social role does not build upon the contribution of one sole religion, but has to be collectively provided by the various religions. Therefore, in their social role, religions should attempt neither to dominate nor trivialize or eliminate each other. The relationship between religions should go beyond a mere peaceful coexistence. An ideal relationship between religions would be a creative pro-existence, in which religions realize the need to care for each

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[88] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 106.

[89] Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 15, 282.

[90] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 97.

other because of their mutual dependence. Simatupang plainly affirms that a *Pancasila*-based state does not merely acknowledge the diversity of religions. "A *Pancasila* state does not emphasize only coexistence, but also cooperation among religions based on their mutual responsibility in developing culture, society and the state."[91] Cooperation between religions has become a necessity, particularly in the application of the Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31 NIV), similar versions of which can be found in other religions.[92] The application of the Golden Rule as common ground will generate pro-existence as its fruit. In such a condition, "passive religions" such as Hinduism and Buddhism are not left behind. In turn, they will give their contributions.

As mentioned above, the Ministry, by virtue of Pancasila's first principle, encourages religions to engage in the nation's socio-political life. Such a social role of religions, according to Sukarno, must be restricted "in a civilized way."[93] In other words, the social role of religions would be legitimate as long as it is addressed at the level of discourse that occurs in civil society. Civil society is the only channel for religion to make important contributions to the Indonesian society. In order for religions to make important contributions to civil society, they must be able to present persuasive arguments using reason as their tool. Their arguments should go through what the Protestant figure Eka Darmaputera calls the process of "objectivication," and by this he means "a process of translating religious (exclusive) categories into objective, inclusive, and general terms."[94] Through this process, people will accept or reject religions' arguments not primarily because these arguments originate from this or that particular religion, but entirely because they are right or wrong based on objective norms. It is only through this process that the Ministry can assure that any intermingling between religion and political power could be avoided.

V. *Concluding Remarks*

By implementing the thoughts and experience of Christianity in the life of the nation and the state, we hope that there will no longer be a gap between

[91] T. B. Simatupang, *Iman Kristen dan Pancasila* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1998), 169.

[92] For the interpretation of Golden Rule in other non-Christian religions, see John Hick, "A Pluralist View," in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 39–40.

[93] Sukarno, "Lahirnya Pantja Sila," 33.

[94] Eka Darmaputera, "The Search for a New Place and a New Role of Religion within the Democratic Order of Post-Soeharto Indonesia: Hopes and Dangers" (paper presented at the Third Annual Abraham Kuyper Award, Princeton, NJ, 1 December 1999), 20.

the aspirations of Indonesia's founding fathers as expressed in the Constitution and the realism of Indonesian politics. Through a proper relationship among religions and a foundational change in the character and structure of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, each citizen could enjoy his or her freedom and fundamental human rights. Without this, Indonesian democracy will face a threat. The reputation of being the third largest democratic country in the world will remain only in memory.