

## INTERVIEW

# Interview with Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama

PETER A. LILLBACK

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*Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, also known by his Hakka Chinese nickname, Ahok, was born on June 29, 1966. He received his Bachelor of Engineering from Trisakti University, Jakarta, and his M.B.A. from Prasetiya Mulya, Jakarta. From 1992 to 2005, Ahok worked in corporate business. He was then elected to be Regent of East Belitung (2005–2006) before becoming a legislator in the Indonesian People’s Representative Council (DPR; 2009–2012), Deputy Governor of Jakarta (2012–2014), and Governor of Jakarta (2014–2017). He was appointed in November 2019 to be chief commissioner of the state-owned oil and gas firm Pertamina.*

**PETER LILLBACK:** *It is my honor to talk with you, Basuki. Thank you so much for letting me be with you today. Tell me, as we begin, a little bit about your journey to the Christian faith. Where did you become a Christian and how did that happen?*

**BASUKI TJAHAJA PURNAMA:** *Actually, I became a Christian through my grandparents on my mother’s side, but I learned more about real Christianity when I moved to Jakarta in my high school years. Especially when I joined reverend Dr. Stephen Tong’s annual seminar: *Seminar Pembinaan Iman Kristen* (SPIK, Christian Faith Edification Seminar). There have been several series for years. So, I learned deeper theology and Christianity, especially Reformed theology, so I became a member of the Momentum*

bookstore in Tanah Abang, which is also a part of the Reformed Evangelical Church of Indonesia (Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia, GRII). Dr. Tong published many videos and recordings and books on all kinds of topics. Then, when I moved back to my hometown and worked in a mining company, I had time to learn more through these.

**PL:** *Where is your hometown in Indonesia?*

**BTP:** My hometown is a very small place called Belitung Island, which is about a fifty-minute flight away to the north of Jakarta and is a part of the province of Bangka Belitung. If you ask, “Where is Bangka Belitung?” It is between Sumatra, Singapore, Java, and Borneo.

**PL:** *While you were there, you entered into the political realm. How did that happen?*

**BTP:** Actually, I am from a business family, but I learned many things about theology, especially from Reformed theology. I learned from Dr. Tong’s sermons about the European Reformation and Switzerland. He would always say, “Do you know why the most accurate watches are made in Switzerland? Because they had a Reformed movement there and did everything for God’s glory.” From him I learned that we need to move to the public square, and all our history is based on change because many people from the church who are informed by God’s Scripture move into the open that is like a marketplace, especially in politics. I realized that I had to be an example to others how to be a public servant.

**PL:** *How old were you when you decided to apply that faith to the public square?*

**BTP:** It was a long time ago, after three to five years of heart searching. I was afraid to join politics because my grandfather was a businessman, and being of Chinese descent, we have certain values. He would always say, “Having a thousand friends is not enough, for if you make a single enemy, you will have trouble.” So, you can imagine that if you got into politics and were to go against the common current in politics, you are likely to have many enemies. That made me feel uncomfortable, but after several years of being unable to help poor people, I remembered my father’s advice before he passed away. He said, “If you have one billion rupiah and divide it into five hundred thousand rupiah monthly [a basic salary for the common people at that time], you can only share with two thousand families. But, if you become a regent or mayor in our city, you control all the budget for the poor and the needy.” I still thought it was impossible. I reasoned, we are of Chinese origin and I am a businessman and I had a good business and we

would always fight with corrupt officers. However, after my father passed away in 2003, I resigned from serving the church [Gereja Kristus Yesus] where I had been a sort of chairman [*ketua majelis*] for thirteen years and decided to join a political party.

**PL:** *And what position did you pursue then?*

**BTP:** At first, I just thought that I wanted to become a mayor in my hometown to help poor people so that they would not need to come to me because even if I had wanted to help them all, I could not. That is why I just thought of becoming a regent—we call it *bupati*—so I could help poor people. After working a while there, I was already providing free education, free healthcare, and much more. I then realized that they need a retirement fund, like a pension fund for the senior citizens, so I asked my governor to provide social security to help them.

The governor then said, “If you want to do that then you will have to fight me to become the governor. You have a smart and clever idea.”

I thought, “How can I do that? I am just a regent and do not want to become governor.” But, in that situation, I also believed that this was God’s grace working. The fourth president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), provided me with a political platform and supported me to run for governor, but at that time I lost.

**PL:** *So, you lost the election. Did you decide to run again?*

**BTP:** Yes. After that, I thought of resigning and going back to doing business, but the people told me, “You cannot resign; you always said that you need power to increase our welfare and to administer justice.” They kept on saying such things, so I decided to run again. They suggested, “Please run again as a national parliament member.” I ran again and became a national parliament member and represented my province.

**PL:** *How many terms did you serve in that capacity?*

**BTP:** Not many terms. In fact, people say I am the only person in this country who has never finished a term. Later, I realized that it was a promotion from God, but at the time, I felt like I had failed. People accused me of being ambitious and stupid, and never putting thought into my actions. I served as a local parliament member for only seven months. Then, I ran as a regent and was regent for another sixteen months. After that, I ran for governor [of Bangka Belitung] and had to resign when I lost. Later, I established an NGO [nongovernmental organization] that became a party [Perhimpunan Indonesia Baru, the New Indonesia Alliance] in which I was

the secretary. Afterwards, I wanted to run as provincial governor [of Bangka Belitung], but people said, “How come?” In my opinion, if you are an Indonesian citizen, you can run for any position; it is the right of any citizen. However, people always say, “You are not one of us, you are not the same as us, you do not believe in the same religion as us, therefore you cannot run.”

But I said, “No! We can run everywhere we want.”

However, many political parties and my friends do not believe this; although they know that our law gives us the right to do this, they are always trapped with the idea that they are an inferior minority. They think, “I am a minority; hence I cannot do anything.”

I said, “No! My father always taught me that I am not a minority; I am a citizen like anyone. We believe in meritocracy, so why do you have to look at my eyes, color, and faith?”

After a couple of years my party fired me because I wanted to run in Jakarta as deputy governor [of DKI Jakarta Province], which was against the party’s regulations. So, I ran for election in Jakarta. When people asked me, “Why are you running? Can you become the governor of Jakarta?” I replied, “I do not care whether I could be a deputy governor or not, I just want to be an example for all of you to see that if someone becomes the deputy governor, then that person must do what they have to do, especially administer justice, provide free education, free healthcare, and help poor people to have the same opportunities to increase their quality of life. Even if they do not want to vote for me as their deputy governor, at least I have an opportunity to showcase how to be a deputy governor.” That was what was in my mind. [Ahok became a governor when Jokowi, his running-mate in the Jakarta provincial government, was elected as the president of Indonesia in 2014.]

**PL:** *What were the Christian values developing in your mind as you were moving up the political ladder?*

**BTP:** First, the Christian values in the Reformed faith include *sola gratia*, what I have today is by the grace of God; second, *sola fide*, I have faith in Jesus Christ. I do not know what I will become one day, but I know that I just want to trust and obey as God’s witness wherever he puts me because I do not know where he wants to put me. Like before, I would never have imagined that I could become a governor, although I prepared myself in case I would become the governor. I cannot say, “God, give me a divine vision,” or “Tell me if I should be the president,” neither have I ever received an illumination from reading a book that I would become a governor, a regent, or a president. But I know I have to fight and stand firm for truth, justice,

and humility. So, what robe do I have to wear? I must put on compassion, kindness, humility, righteousness, and patience, even though sometimes as a human being I fail to accomplish these things. And I thank God that I served in jail for almost two years and experienced a reconditioning. Although I was struggling and was stressed for a couple of weeks, I then realized that this is God's way to teach me.

**PL:** *Before we talk about your experience in jail, tell us how you became the governor of Jakarta.*

**BTP:** According to political calculation, becoming the governor of Jakarta was impossible. But I knew that if I wanted to become a showcase, it would be good to do it in the capital city. But I did not know how I could become the governor of Jakarta. At first everyone said it was impossible. I just thought and said that I wanted to be a governor. How? By depending on God, and I thought, "If God wants me to be a governor, he will provide a way." If not, I would have been fine with that.

What happened seems to many people to be a coincidence, but I believe that it was God's providential control. When I was a parliament member, somebody asked me to run as governor. He wanted to use me to show that he was not racist towards the Chinese and Christians. We joined the Nationalist Party, which is now my party, PDI Perjuangan [Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle], and I was told, "You be the deputy governor of Mr. Jokowi." I did not care about being a governor or a deputy governor, or even only as a deputy governor candidate because according to political expectations, we would not win. The opposition candidate was rich, strong, of Betawi ethnicity—which means that he had grassroots support—and had worked as a bureaucrat from a young age. We came from another city, did not know anything, and had no money; so at that time, I thought that maybe God wanted me to be a deputy governor candidate only. We won the first round, but it was not enough (we needed to gain more than fifty percent to win). I thought maybe God only wanted us to reach the second round and lose there. But instead, we won, which was amazing. I thought again, maybe God just wanted to use me as a deputy governor until the end of the term. If it was God's will, I would run again for a second term as a deputy governor. Being deputy governor would be the endpoint, and that was good enough for me. At that time a radical group demonstrated every week against my inauguration.

**PL:** *Why would they be against you? What made them stand against you? Was it because you got there illegally?*

**BTP:** No, they protested because I talked about my belief in Jesus Christ as God. For them (Muslim people), Jesus Christ is not God but just a prophet.

**PL:** *So, the resistance was religiously motivated?*

**BTP:** Yes, this issue would then bring me to jail because they have a verse [in the Qur'an, *Al-Ma'id* 5:51] saying, "Never choose someone with a different faith to be your leader."

**PL:** *So, can you explain exactly the Muslim perspective and how you responded, as well as how that created a legal matter that caused you to end up in jail?*

**BTP:** Most of the Indonesian Muslims are moderate Muslims. Only about ten to twenty percent have a different perspective. They would never vote for me. That is why, when I quoted their verse, they tried to bring me into jail. But, for us, we always love everyone, and for me, what is most important is that I stand firm for truth, justice, and humility. I do not care about your faith; but, if you were to ask me about my faith, I will explain why I believe in Jesus. If you do not believe, that is your right. But, as Stephen Tong argues, we challenge them by asking, "Why don't you believe? You asked about my faith and I stood firm for my faith, as is my right."

**PL:** *But it is not against the law to be a Christian in Indonesia, so how did they put you in jail even though it is legal to be a Christian?*

**BTP:** They accused me of blaspheming their religion.

**PL:** *How did they say you blasphemed?*

**BTP:** Some guys that are in jail now looked at one of my videos that is almost 2.5 hours long and shared only fifteen minutes from the whole video. The video was shared with a written caption: "I think this is blasphemy."

In the video, I said, "Do not be fooled *by people* who use a certain verse in the Qur'an," *not* "Do not be fooled *by this verse.*" Most of them just shared the video clip from the press conference in Thousand Islands (the place where it was held) without even being there in the press conference area. A large demonstration followed demanding that I serve time in jail.

**PL:** *How many were in the demonstration?*

**BTP:** They claimed there were seven million people, but I think it was only about five hundred thousand to a million. Some of my friends jokingly said, "Only you, in our whole national history, could gather that many people together."

**PL:** *So how long was the trial?*

**BTP:** Every week, I would go on trial for about fourteen to fifteen weeks.

**PL:** *So, you were an active governor while on trial for blasphemy?*

**BTP:** Yes. Every Tuesday, I would go to court while I was still working in government, and they brought me to jail. This had only happened in Indonesia once during an act of military aggression by the Dutch government when they put an active governor in jail.

**PL:** *It would be fair to say that when you were an active governor, legally elected, you were misrepresented and accused of blasphemy falsely but found guilty and sent to jail. That is injustice, isn't it?*

**BTP:** The attorney only asked for me to be given a warning and said that if in one or two years I repeated the same offense I would go to jail for one year. Trial execution is like that, but three out of five judges condemned me in advance. We know that a judge has the right to make the decision, but it is uncommon just to make the decision according to the verdict from the attorney general. But this time they advanced it. That is just what happened.

**PL:** *At the same time, your policies as a governor were highly honored. What were some of the things you did that blessed the city that would have been evidence that you should have continued as governor because you were making a positive impact on Jakarta?*

**BTP:** Before these accusations, about seventy percent of people were happy with my policy. I advocated that bureaucrats should be servant-bureaucrats, unlike a king served by the people. That is why we changed all the subdistrict offices in the city to become a one-stop service for every regulation they could make decisions on. Secondly, I created the software called QLUE, whereby people could report on everything through their phones, and this system automatically gave notifications to my subdistrict head. I was calling the subdistrict head, district head, and also the mayor [the Governor of Jakarta is the leader to whom five mayors in Jakarta—Central, North, East, South, and West—need to report] of the city to become like a caring father and mother to the people. They acted as an estate manager but also like a pastor caring for the people. I also provided for them good hospitals in the district area for poor people. If family members were hospitalized, the family could save the cost of cooking and caring for them. I also provided low-cost apartments. I knew that poor people with a low salary could not afford good education, health programs, and housing, or pay insurance.

But if we followed their desire for an increase in salary, production costs could not be met by companies; besides, their skills were too low to get a good salary.

So how to solve this problem? I talked with some businessmen and the labor force. I argued that laborers should not demonstrate for an increase in salary, because the companies would fire them as they employ too many people; rather, they should work hard with minimum salary, and I would provide them as government free transportation and scholarships for all their kids, and an ATM card, linked to a bank savings account, to buy subsidized food, and you would not have to rent a low-cost apartment but just pay the maintenance service charge. How much should they pay if they follow my policy of moving them from the riverbank?<sup>1</sup> Only under half a US dollar a day. So if you just pay five thousand rupiah, and your salary is above three million, you would have a free shuttle bus for the kid,<sup>2</sup> and your kid would get a scholarship, and you would get free hospital services; these policies would then make an opportunity to change their destiny and their kids could study.

Further, it never happened in this country that the capital city could control inflation. For the first time, we got a reward because we were the first city to control inflation. How did we accomplish this? We managed it because the subsidies were focused on the poor and I knew them because I had subsidized the people who hold this scholarship cards. That was the way I provided for them.

**PL:** *It is my understanding that while you were governor, the city stopped flooding. Is that true?*

**BTP:** Yes. Although the flooding did not stop in all parts of the city, it decreased by more than seventy-five to eighty percent. I asked the property companies to take responsibility. I said, “You do not need to bribe me. If you increase your building (make it higher, thus exceeding what is allowed in the government rules), you can pay by contributing in the infrastructure. You do not need to give me money [as penalty].”

**PL:** *So you were addressing problems by getting rid of corruption then.*

**BTP:** Yes, I always believe the main problem, the root of everything in

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<sup>1</sup> The people who lived in the poorer neighborhoods close to the riverbank have been relocated so that measures can be taken to prevent the yearly flooding. The government relocates them to apartments and even furnishes the apartments.

<sup>2</sup> The transportation is provided as a solution to the objection that the move forces children to go much farther to school.



Indonesia, is corruption. The way to combat this is by making everything transparent, including my policy. That is why I broadcast our plenary meetings every Monday using our YouTube channel. In this way, every citizen could know what happened, what decision I made, and why I made the decision, and nobody could arrange for kickbacks from businessmen. We made it transparent, including money matters. There was no cash under the table in my administration; all payments were made by bank transfers. I believe that using bank transfers provides good recording, which includes records of helping the poor and needy.

What if the poor did not have a bank account? I would open them a bank account before transferring money to them. We taught people how to use the card, which is why today in Jakarta, most people are starting to use cashless services. How do we control them? We have a bank which is controlled by the city provincial government. I asked permission from big private banks to lend to a person who would work in my government bank and the amount would be returned after the initial setup had been done. What I wanted was to teach people how to use their card and cashless services. They could pay using the ATM card, which made them very proud and convinced them that they are human beings with a future and a hope. That was most important for me. To help the poor have the same rights and opportunities as others. But there was a need for discipline in using money. So there was a system where they could not draw all the money at once, but at the end of the year if they had some savings, they could buy whatever they liked. Sometimes they bought bicycles, laptops, skateboards, but that was good. I also developed many public spaces [RPTRA, Ruang Publik Terpadu Ramah Anak/Child Friendly Integrated Public Space] that are friendly for kids and disabled people—a place for poor people to gather and talk with people of different backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, and tribes and to get to know one another.

We also had a good health care department. There was a hospital in every sub-district. The doctors and nurses have to “knock on the door, serve with the heart,” as we call it in Indonesia, making records of the common problems people have. So I could gather information and know the issues.

People ask me why I needed noncash transactions. Let me give an example. I could find out in my system why a student on scholarship would purchase diapers for the elderly every week. At first, I thought maybe he wants to sell it for money, but through my “knock on the door” program, I knew that it is because his grandfather was paralyzed. I also subsidized beef that we import from New Zealand: the market price was ninety-five thousand rupiah per kilo, I sold it to them forty-five thousand rupiah. I subsidized fifty thousand

rupiah. That was why our subsidy programs are very clear and focused on the right people. A student could buy one kilo to cook for their family. If they have three children, they can eat three kilos of beef in one month. That was how I increased their nutrition. That is the total program. I want it to be holistic. It starts with the pregnant moms; they have to do check-ups with the doctor and provide their kids with good nutrition. If kids under twelve years old have a bad nutrition program, we will have a problematic generation in the future.

**PL:** *Do these ideas flow from your Christian values?*

**BTP:** Yes. I read my Bible every morning and get illumination from what people did in the Bible, so I learn. It gives me strength and courage to stand firm for this. That is why I know that everything is from God's grace. I just need to put my faith in Christ and Scripture. The Scriptures are good for teaching and correction; they give a right path according to God (2 Tim 3:16).

**PL:** *OK, you were doing these things as a Christian leader, but apparently many Muslims liked what you were doing. They liked your policies.*

**BTP:** Yes. Most of my friends agree with me. They think it is good. We share the same values with them. I think we only differ about five percent, which is probably due to humanity reasons. We are almost similar ninety-five percent of the time. The five-percent difference is basically we believe that Christ is God and they do not. But this five percent is a very significant difference. But we could agree when we talked about humility, truth, and justice. I did not want to comment about their experience or history. I did not want to have too many arguments about what happened to their prophet. If you talk about that, they will send you to jail again. That is another problem. So I have to be very careful when I touch this part now.

**PL:** *So you have discovered that your Christian values made a significant impact but that the blasphemy charge part brought you to jail. You went to jail even though you were the governor. How long were you in jail, and tell us what it was like to be there.*

**BTP:** They sent me to jail for twenty-four months.<sup>3</sup> But it was good, just like a master's program: two years. And like you take a master's program or have a holiday, I got a remission for three and a half months and served in the jail twenty and a half months.

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<sup>3</sup> The name of the jail was Mako Brimob, which an abbreviation of Markas Komando Korps Brigade Mobil (headquarter command of the Special Police Troops, a paramilitary organization that handles counter-terrorism, riot control, etc., like SWAT).

At first, I felt maybe I was wrong. As a human, I did not understand why God allowed all this happen. I tried to find what I was guilty of. Why did God send me into jail like this. There are many examples like Nehemiah and Jeremiah. As I read, I realized that even Jeremiah said the same things. He did not want to talk the truth, but God asked him to talk. I am in the same situation; I am already here and said nothing wrong. But as a human, I was stressed.

I woke up every hour on the first day. Every hour of sleep felt like a deep sleep. We had to sleep at 10 p.m. every night, but I slept and woke up at 11 p.m. Only one hour, and so I slept again. And I woke up at 12 midnight, and slept again.

After two weeks, I woke up at 2 a.m. and suddenly felt like I had a heart attack. There was pain in my chest and my head felt very hot. I called the guards and cried for help and they came asking about what happened. I told him that maybe I have a heart attack. He only looked and could not do anything about it. He said I could take a run outside; it is very common for first timers that come to this detention center. But I thought, “If I run, this is a mobile police center—what if they shoot me?” I said, “No, I do not want to run,” so I went back again.

When I returned, I realized I had not had a heart attack. I felt OK but wondered why I felt the chest pains. I tried to find out. I prayed to God and asked him, but I did not get any answer. After two hours, I suddenly got an answer. It was hatred in my heart because I was angry that all this had happened to me. I did not believe it was because God gave his permission. Then I realized that without God’s permission, nothing can be done to me. So I prayed to God, “Give me your heart for forgiveness (to forgive others who have wronged me).” I prayed for half an hour from 2 a.m., and at 4:30 a.m. I fell asleep. After that I did not wish to appeal my case to the supreme court. I said, “I want to serve my time here. This is a good retreat in my life.”

**PL:** *So you learned that hatred and unforgiveness is as painful as a heart attack but the gospel frees us and gives us peace when we forgive.*

**BTP:** That is described in Philippians. After I read the Bible, I got that verse—then you will experience God’s peace that exceeds your understanding, which will guard your heart and your mind (cf. Phil 4:7). That is very interesting. And every time I got stressed, I knew what to do, I prayed to God, “Please let your peace rule over my heart and teach me how to be thankful.” We should be thankful that God called us as one body. What am I thankful for after that? Every morning I saw the sun rise, I gave thanks to

God. This was the best doctor that I ever have had, because I had been too busy. From Monday to Friday I got to see the sun rise *every day*. Secondly, I could exercise. When we are too busy, we neglect exercise. Thirdly, I got to sleep at the same time every day. I never did that outside jail. Fourthly, I ate at the same schedule for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The most interesting for me is, my last meal for dinner was before 6 p.m. Then I fasted for almost twelve hours. When I slept at 10 p.m., my stomach was empty. That was a good diet. Fifthly, I had a lot of time, I wrote on A4-sized paper, 620 pages in total, about the insights I got from reading the Bible.

**PL:** *So you have a book going to come out based on that, right?*

**BTP:** I hope that in October it will come out.

**PL:** *What would the book be called?*

**BTP:** Call it *BTP*. Because my real name is BTP, you know. It is a personal journey. Ahok is too rough. I did not wear the good robe of righteousness before. I said I only have compassion and kindness, but I did not have humility, did not have gentleness, did not have patience. That is why it was a good retreat. And sixthly, I had friends. We could sing. I learned to sing in jail. Before in church, it was lip synching, that's all.

**PL:** *Tell me about the book that came out. It is by others who have written about your work.*<sup>4</sup>

**BTP:** This is an interesting book. I began to serve in the jail on May 9, 2017, and my birthday is in June. Most of my friends wanted to give me a gift. They wanted to write about what happened in this country, so from the former president, the media, artists, and culture enthusiasts, they selected fifty-one persons. Just like my birthday age, fifty-one years. So they prepared this book, and the publisher printed three thousand as a gift, with no need to pay. They brought it to the detention center. They gave it to me, and I read it very fast. I read fifty-eight books in jail. So after I read the book, I talked to my staff and said, "Maybe I am done. It is better to find a job for myself. I never think I will serve in the jail. All of you go back and find yourself another job. I will give you your salary or bonus."

Most of my staff said, "No sir, you are not finished yet. Your story has just begun." Sometimes I feel ashamed; they are more faithful than me.

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<sup>4</sup> Aditya Sani and Neneng Herbawati, eds., *51 Years of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama: Ahok Through Their Eyes* (Jakarta: Basuki Solusi Konsultindo, 2017).



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**PL:** *What would you think the next chapter will be?*

**BTP:** At that time, I was thinking, "Maybe I just want to find a job." [So I said,] "Regarding this book, how can I help you to pay your salary?"

[They said,] "We try to sell this book sir."

"How much you want to sell it for? How about 250,000 rupiah?"

They said, "We cannot, because you already sold the small book *A Man called Ahok* for 250,000 rupiah. If you sell this big one, the same price, then nobody will want to buy the first book or they will get angry with you."

"So how much do you think we should sell it for? I think it should be over one million."

"That is crazy sir, that is too expensive."

"No, I will write something for them. And the sales from this book will help me, help my family expense, and for you, for the company to set up the office."

"What if nobody wants to buy?"

"We will try."

In twenty and a half months, you know how many books we sold? Eighteen thousand. We never thought this could happen. I have always believed there are four big factors in my life: one, God's providential

control; two, we are specially chosen; three, nothing to fear; and four, needs will be provided for. That is what I always believed, and if this is God's path, we follow and have nothing to fear.

**PL:** *Are there still more politics ahead for you?*

**BTP:** I am in politics again. I am in a political party. My party is called PDIP (Partai Demokratik Indonesia Perjuangan). Its ideology is nationalist, established by the founding father, the first president. Now, the chairwoman of the party was our fourth president, Ibu Megawati.

**PL:** *So your faith has sustained you through all these times. What message of the Reformed faith would you like to share with people who will have the joy of reading this interview?*

**BTP:** If you have a Reformed faith and life view, wherever you are, you will be a patriot for your country. In the market place, you will work for reformation in every aspect in country and life. That is what I believe. As a teacher, doctor, or lawyer, you become a Reformed lawyer or doctor. You only need to read your Bible every day to get illumination from God. Do not misunderstand what I am saying; the Bible never tells you what you have to become. It never tells you like that, straight forward. Let me correct myself lest some people misunderstand what I am trying to say. Some people asked me, "What is your next chapter? What do you want?"

I replied, "To be a politician. I want to be a president, a start-up president."

"What do you mean start-up president?"

"There are millions of start-up companies, but only one or two percent become unicorn companies. That is the same; this is my hope for this country. A Chinese descendant, a Christian, shares the same rights and responsibility in this country, and we have the right to be president. Even if you do not want to vote for me, I do not care. This is just what I want. However, the Bible never tells me I can be a president. It teaches us how we can be certain, stand firm in our faith, make very difficult decisions with the illumination of this Bible."

**PL:** *You are now internationally famous because of your difficulties; news stories all around the world have been written about you. How do you see the responsibility of your new fame is going to be used in your life?*

**BTP:** Initially when I was in jail, I thought I would be a preacher or pastor. But I learned that that is not my calling. I want my life and my family to become like a showcase for God's transformative power—a showcase for people to see that we have a living God, to see that Jesus Christ is my

mentor and the Holy Bible is the most illuminative book in my life. That is what I want to share. When you face difficulties or problems, you have to use God's perspective. What you face does not defeat you but actually promotes you. My experience has become famous in the whole world because of my situation. That means it did not defeat me but promoted me. Secondly, we have to look at this not as pulling us back from our God-designed destiny but as pushing us forward. God has already tailor-made robes of righteousness for us, so they are suitable for us to wear. That is what I want to share with people.

**PL:** *Well, you have been very gracious to do this interview, and I am very appreciative. Are there any final thoughts you would like to share as we conclude?*

**BTP:** To the readers, I hope that when you read this you will always remember me in your prayers. I am also a human and need support from other children of God (brothers and sisters in Christ). This job is not easy. Also pray for my wife, my family, and my mother; they are my coworkers. We need that. Because I became a showcase, I hope I will not fail and displease or bring shame to God's name in what I do.

**PL:** *Let us conclude and let me pray for you. May I do that?*

Lord, I thank you for this opportunity to be with my brother Ahok. Thank you for Basuki's strength of commitment to be faithful to you in adversity. Thank you for his love for your Word and our risen Christ that has allowed him to love those who have opposed him, to love his neighbor, and to care for the poor. Would you anoint him in a mighty way. We thank you for the impact of Dr. Stephen Tong's ministry upon his life. We thank you for the role of the Reformed heritage. Would you use all these things for your glory and bless this brother, his family, and these next chapters of his life, including the impact of this book and as he speaks. We give it all to you and praise you for these things. In Jesus's name, Amen.

I want you to know I had the joy of visiting you in the governor's palace, I had the joy of visiting you in the prison, and now I have the joy of interviewing you today, and each time I have been blessed. Thank you so much.

*At present, since November 2019, Basuki has been appointed to be the chief commissioner of the state-owned oil and gas firm Pertamina. In fulfilling his role, he is assisted by two deputy ministers.*

*Some of Ahok's achievements:*

- 2006, Gold Pin from Fordeka (Democracy Forum),
- 2006, "Ten Figures Who Change Indonesia," *Tempo* magazine
- 2007, Anti-Corruption Figure of 2006, Three Pillars Award, The Three Pillars of Partnership Coalition
- 2013, Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award for integrity and innovation in campaigns to achieve budget transparency
- 2015, Gratitude Award, Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission, for success in controlling gratuities within Jakarta Provincial Government
- 2016, Gus Dur Award for brave, assertive anticorruption action
- 2017, "100 Global Thinkers," *Foreign Policy* magazine, for opposing Indonesian fundamentalism
- 2019, Roosseno Award for work ethic, high integrity, and creative ideas for the public