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### Between Evangelism and Multiculturalism: The Dynamics of Christianity in Indonesia

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# Between evangelism and multiculturalism: The dynamics of Protestant Christianity in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Christianity has experienced rapid growth in Indonesia, particularly the Evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic movements, which find fertile ground among the urban middle class. This phenomenon has given rise to fears of Christianisation among the Muslim majority, who perceive the Christian growth as a moral threat. Tensions between Christians and Muslims have been part and parcel of religious developments in Indonesia. The author addresses the ways in which Protestant churches in Indonesia negotiate between evangelism (to fulfil the ‘Great Commission’) on the one hand, and multiculturalism (peaceful coexistence with difference) on the other. The article will examine how Christians in Indonesia navigate through the multicultural environment of otherness, and how they negotiate plurality within Christianity. By highlighting the diversity and dynamics within Christianity, this article provides a new perspective on Indonesian Christians, beyond the popular Muslim perception of Christians as a monolithic and homogeneous group.

## Keywords

Christianity, evangelism, Indonesia, multiculturalism, Protestantism

## Résumé

En Indonésie, le christianisme connaît une expansion rapide en raison notamment de mouvements évangéliques pentecôtistes et charismatiques qui trouvent auprès des classes moyennes urbanisées un terrain particulièrement fertile. Ce phénomène nourrit beaucoup d’appréhension de la part d’une majorité musulmane qui perçoit une menace sur le plan moral. Les tensions entre chrétiens et musulmans sont partie intégrante

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de tout développement religieux en Indonésie. L'auteur montre comment les églises protestantes négocient entre l'évangélisme (pour accomplir le « Grand Envoi ») et le multiculturalisme (pour coexister pacifiquement dans le respect de la différence). Il examinera comment les chrétiens indonésiens évoluent dans l'altérité multiculturelle et comment ils se situent dans la pluralité chrétienne. Dépassant la perception musulmane classique d'un groupe qui serait monolithique et homogène, cet article apporte un nouveau regard sur les chrétiens indonésiens en soulignant la diversité et les dynamiques.

### Mots-clés

christianisme, évangélisme, Indonésie, multiculturalisme, protestantisme

Indonesia's cultural and linguistic diversity encompasses more than 300 ethnic groups and 700 languages, making it one of the most diverse countries on earth. To accommodate such diversity, Indonesia's 1945 Constitution adopted 'Unity in diversity' (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) as the national motto. The national ideology of *Pancasila* was also enacted to unite Indonesia's diverse populations. This ideology upholds five principles: belief in One Supreme God, humanism, nationalism, popular sovereignty and social justice. Respecting the need to accept a spectrum of different religions, the Constitution grants 'all persons the right to worship according to their own religion or belief'. Nonetheless, there are only six officially recognised religions in Indonesia, namely Islam, 'Christianity' (read Protestantism), Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. According to the 2010 census, 87% of the nation's 238 million people identify themselves as Muslims, 7% as Protestants, 3% as Catholics, 1.7% as Hindus, and a smaller percentage as Buddhists and Confucianists. Although an estimated 20 million people practise animism and other types of traditional belief systems, these traditions are not officially recognised by the state (Oslo Coalition, 2008).

While 'Unity in diversity' is hailed as the pathway to ethnic and religious harmony, such an aim remains difficult to achieve in reality. During Suharto's rule (1966–1998), also known as the 'New Order', Indonesia's approach to accommodating ethnic and religious plurality may largely be described as having pretended that diversity did not exist. Assimilation was the dominant discourse, and the discourse of multiculturalism only came to the fore after the fall of Suharto in 1998. After the seemingly interminable 32 years of New Order government, various episodes of ethnic, religious and communal violence erupted across Indonesia. There were attacks on the Chinese in several towns and cities, ethnic violence in Central and West Kalimantan, and religious or communal conflict in Poso, Lombok, Halmahera, Ambon and elsewhere (Sidel, 2007).

Although post-Suharto Indonesia is a much more open and democratic society, the multiculturalism that prevails today is circumscribed by restrictive governmental regulations and rising religious intolerance. Although the nation has long been characterised by plurality, discourses of multiculturalism are still often viewed with suspicion. Several radical Islamist groups have used the new democratic space to promote their agendas and to attack marginalised minorities such as the Ahmadiyya community,

Christian churches and homosexuals. Rising conservatism within mainstream Islam is also increasingly evident. For example, in 2005, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) prohibited Muslims from praying with non-Muslims. In the same year it issued a *fatwa* forbidding Muslims from marrying non-Muslims, and outlawing the Ahmadiyah Islamic minority sect. On top of that, the MUI also condemned pluralism, secularism and liberalism (Gillespie, 2007). The increasingly intolerant religious landscape in Indonesia has a significant effect on the country's growing Christian community.

In the past few decades, Christianity has experienced rapid growth in Indonesia. Despite the missionary activities carried out during the colonial period, most conversions came only after Indonesia had become independent (Van den End and Aritonang, 2008: 173). For instance, mass conversions – also known as the ‘Great Harvests’ – occurred in Java during the purging of the alleged communists and sympathisers of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in the mid-1960s (Roxoborogh, 1995).<sup>1</sup> Christian conversion continued to rise during the New Order, as the Suharto administration actively promoted religious affiliation to prevent the re-emergence of Communism. In recent years, newspaper headlines such as ‘Megachurch Opens in Muslim-majority Indonesia’ (Nathalia and Katyal, 2010) and ‘Christianity’s Surge in Indonesia’ (Beech, 2010) point to the rise of Christianity, in particular to the formation of Evangelical and Charismatic mega-churches, which find fertile ground among the urban middle class. However, the spread of Christianity in Indonesia has raised anxiety among the hard-line Islamists, who fear ‘Christianisation’ due to the aggressive proselytising by Evangelical Christians in Muslim majority areas. The effect of ‘clashing fundamentalisms’, as they are described by the International Crisis Group, has involved a backlash of religious intolerance manifested in ‘mass mobilisation and vigilante attacks’ carried out by radical Islamist groups (ICG, 2010).

In fact, Christianity in Indonesia has had a long and troubled history. The Muslim majority has persistently perceived ‘Christianisation’, be it real or imagined, as a moral threat. In the process of constructing Christians as the ‘Other’, some Muslims have reified and homogenised the various churches as a unified, monolithic group. Through either choice or genuine ignorance, the Muslim majority remains largely unaware of the diversity in Indonesian Christianity. With the recent rising popularity of Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic movements, tensions between Muslims and Christians have become increasingly marked. To understand the continuing presence of Christianity within the largest Muslim country in the world, one has to appreciate the nation’s Muslim-Christian relations and the state’s policies on religion. Since the founding of the nation, the Muslim nationalists have attempted to promote an Islamic state through the Jakarta Charter. Although this ambition failed when the Jakarta Charter was abrogated, some Islamic groups continued to lobby for Islamic ideology in the government.

This Islamist lobby effort has made some progress, as can be seen from the passing of several controversial laws. These include the Joint Decree No. 1/1969, issued by the Minister of Religion and Minister of Home Affairs to control religious activities and the building of places of worship (later replaced by the Joint Ministerial Regulation on Places of Worship, 2006), and the Marriage Law No. 1/1974, which recognises only marriages registered with the Civil Registration Office, and not those registered with religious institutions. This law made inter-religious marriages increasingly difficult from

the 1990s, as the Civil Registration Office would refuse to register them. The Joint Decree of 1979 prohibited religious propagation, and restricted the reception of foreign aid by religious institutions. The Education Law No. 2/1989 (replaced by Education Law No. 20/2003) required religious education teachers to be from the same religion as the students, which posed a particular challenge to Christian schools. Then the Law No.7/1989 on the Religious Court (to deal with Muslim legal matters) was seen by the Christians as step towards realising the Jakarta Charter and Islamic State (for detailed discussions of the controversies surrounding these laws, see Mujiburrahman, 2006; Crouch, 2007, 2010; Van den End and Aritonang, 2008).

This article will address the ways in which Protestant churches in Indonesia negotiate between evangelism (to fulfil the ‘Great Commission’) and multiculturalism (peaceful coexistence with difference). The ‘difference’ that is dealt with within the framework of multiculturalism extends beyond inter-religious (i.e. Christian and non-Christian) relations. As M Frederiks (2009: 4) reminds us, Christianity is a plural religion, and ‘pluralism is not a marginal phenomenon in the Christian tradition, but something that belongs to its core’.

Hence, in examining how Christians in Indonesia navigate through the multicultural environment of otherness, this article also explores how they negotiate plurality within Christianity (i.e. intra-religious difference). In so doing, the article explores the dynamics of Protestant Christianity in Indonesia through a delineation of the three largest Christian movements in the nation. Instead of designating neat and watertight categories, this typology of the Ecumenical, Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic movements highlights the intricate and porous nature of the boundaries between these movements.

## Mapping the heterogeneity of Christian movements in Indonesia

Protestant Christianity in Indonesia is extremely diverse. The three largest Christian movements in the nation are the Ecumenicals, the Evangelicals and the Pentecostals. The Dutch Reformed Church (a particular version of Calvinism dominant in the Netherlands)<sup>2</sup> traditionally formed the largest denomination in Indonesia, owing to the legacy of missionary activities during Dutch colonial rule (Goh, 2005). Many of the other so-called ‘mainline’ churches<sup>3</sup> (which are predominantly ethnic-based), such as the Batak Christian Church, Protestant Church of Maluku, Javanese Christian Church, Toraja Church and the Protestant Church in Papua, inherited their theology from the Dutch Reformed denomination. The Dutch Reformed tradition in Indonesia was influenced by Pietism – a Christian movement that originated in the 17th and 18th centuries, was imported by Dutch missionaries and emphasised individual piety. However, Octavianus (2007: 443) argues that most of the ‘Calvinist’ characteristics in mainline Indonesian churches today have disappeared, except for the Reformed traditions of church governance and discipline.

Most of the ethnic-based mainline churches joined the Indonesian National Council of Churches (*Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia*), which was established in 1950 with the objective of forming ‘One Christian Church’ (*Gereja Kristen yang Esa*) in Indonesia (see Aritonang, 2008). The National Council of Churches (DGI), which

changed its name in 1984 to the Communion of Churches (PGI, or *Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia*)<sup>4</sup>, is regarded as the epitome of the Ecumenical movement in Indonesia and is part of the global Ecumenical movement promoted by the World Council of Churches.<sup>5</sup> Since the founding of the DGI, the organisation has made efforts to contribute to nation building and to 'solve various social-political-economic-legal-cultural problems' (Aritonang, 2008: 842). According to an executive committee of the PGI, the government sees the organisation as the representative of Protestant churches in Indonesia and gives it the same status as the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI), which represents the Catholics, and the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, the two largest Muslim organisations in Indonesia (interview, 16 June 2009). Indeed, the PGI plays an important role in representing the Christian voice on various policy matters, including the debates on legislation discussed in the previous section. Until the middle of the New Order period, the government invited a representative from the PGI (usually the chairperson) to become a member of the People's Assembly (MPR) (Mujiburrahman, 2006).

The second major Christian movement in Indonesia is the Evangelical movement, represented by the Indonesia Evangelical Fellowship (PII, or *Persekutuan Injili Indonesia*). This organisation is also known as the Communion of Evangelical Churches and Institutions of Indonesia (PGLII, or *Persekutuan Gereja-gereja dan Lembaga-lembaga Injili Indonesia*). The PII was established in 1971 with the objective of promoting Christian fellowship and spreading the Gospel (see PII website at [www.pglii-net.org](http://www.pglii-net.org)). The organisation was inspired by the World Evangelical Fellowship (which was renamed in 2002 as the World Evangelical Alliance).

Due to the broad connotations of 'evangelism', defining the term 'Evangelical' is no easy task. This word has been taken to encompass different meanings in different countries. In Germany, for example, *evangelisch* is broadly understood as Protestant (vis-à-vis Catholic) and is applied to the Lutheran church. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the word Evangelical indicates a reaction against the 'high church' theology, and is characterised by 'low churchmanship, high view of Scripture, and evangelistic zeal' (Carson, 1996). In Indonesia, some mainline churches use the term 'Evangelical' (*Injili*) in their name but do not belong to the Evangelical movement. Following Aritonang and Steenbrink's (2008) use of the term, this author identifies 'Evangelical' with conservative churches in Indonesia that are closely associated with the fundamentalism emerging in the United States since the early 20th century. Most of the Evangelical churches in Indonesia were established by US missionaries, although some were founded by European missions and evangelists from China. These churches are theologically influenced by Pietism and Revivalism.

The third-largest Christian movement, and notably the fastest growing one, is the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement.<sup>6</sup> Dutch missionaries introduced Pentecostalism to Indonesia as early as 1910. As Pietism already had an enormous influence on Indonesian Christianity, Pentecostalism found a good fit there, because several aspects of Pietistic spirituality, such as an emphasis on otherworldliness, individual experience and biblical authority, had much affinity with Pentecostal practises (Wiyono, 2005: 310). Then the arrival of the Charismatic or the Neo-Pentecostal movement from the United States revitalised the movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Aritonang and Steenbrink,

2008). Although hindered by various schisms, the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement continued to grow explosively. By 2002 there were an estimated 12 million Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians in Indonesia (Robinson, 2005). The Pentecostal Council of Indonesia (DPI, or *Dewan Pentakosta Indonesia*) formed in 1979 and in 1988 changed its name to the Communion of Pentecostal Churches in Indonesia (PGPI, *Persekutuan Gereja-gereja Pentakosta Indonesia*).<sup>7</sup>

Today there are hundreds of Pentecostal-Charismatic ‘churches’ across Indonesia, many of whose congregations assemble in restaurants, hotels, conference halls or private buildings. A majority of these churches have no permits (Koning, 2009). As official permits to build churches have become increasingly difficult to obtain (since the Joint Decree No. 1/1969 and the Joint Ministerial Regulation on Places of Worship 2006), some Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have circumvented the regulations by building large ‘multi-purpose’ buildings or conference halls, and using them as places of worship. One such gigantic building was built in Surabaya in 2000, by Gereja Bethany, one of the largest and fastest growing churches in Indonesia. This church facility can accommodate 20,000 worshippers and is the largest in Southeast Asia (Andaya, 2009: 2). The same church had planned to construct the Jakarta Tower (also known as the Jakarta Revival Center), which aimed to be the tallest tower in the Southern Hemisphere. However, Andaya (2009: 29) argues that such ‘conspicuous display’ may foster apprehension of a potential Christian ‘take-over’ of Indonesian society.

Several observations can be made regarding the three different streams of Christianity mapped out above. First, it is important to note that these Indonesian church movements are all closely associated with international Christian movements and organisations. The differences among the three streams are but local manifestations of the larger schisms within global Christianity. Hence, although there are local particularities that define the Indonesian churches, especially after undergoing processes of indigenisation, the reading of these different Christian movements in Indonesia cannot be detached from the global scheme of Christian experience. In fact, the reading of Christianity through a global lens has become the dominant paradigm in the study of Christian movements today (see Anderson, 2004; Miller and Yamamori, 2007; Jenkins, 2007; Noll, 2009). As Keane (2007: 40) argues:

No Christian community is purely local in nature. Behind this sense of potential commonality lies a long history of texts, doctrines, institutions, and practises in which as much is shared, circulated, or reinvented as is distinguished and differentiated. To focus entirely on the local case may lead us to miss some crucial aspects of the religion.

Second, memberships in organisations of the three different movements in Indonesia are dynamic and not mutually exclusive. When the Communion of Churches of Indonesia (PGI) was established in 1950, its membership was limited to mainline churches. The PGI excluded most Pentecostal and Evangelical churches – especially those with an Anglo-American background (Titaley, 2008). The reasons for such exclusion could include the following:

- 1) Doctrinal differences – mainline churches, among others, have reservations concerning Pentecostal-Charismatic doctrines that emphasise certain spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, healing, miracles and prophecy.

- 2) Differences in opinion about the nature of the Gospel – there are major differences in understandings of mission and evangelism between the Ecumenical churches on one hand, and the Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches on the other. These differences will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.
- 3) Liturgical differences – mainline churches generally adopt a more traditional liturgical worship style compared with the modern, lively ‘praise and worship’ services that the other two church movements offer.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the recently emerged Charismatic churches have attracted non-believers and Christians from mainline churches alike by offering a fluid organisational structure, practical preaching based on health, a wealth and prosperity theology, lively worship, a therapeutic healing ministry, warm fellowship and comfortable venues (Wiyono, 2005; Andaya, 2009; Koning, 2009).

This expansion by Charismatic churches has invariably raised concern within the mainline churches, as the growth of the newer movements often correlates with a loss of members by traditional churches. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is not peculiar to Indonesia. Globally, mainline denominations are also dwindling in membership, while the Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are experiencing an explosive growth (see Anderson, 2004; Oden, 2006; Miller and Yamamori, 2007; Jenkins, 2007; Noll, 2009).

Despite the marked differences and ‘competition’ between churches from the different streams of Christianity, membership of the PGI has opened up in recent decades to include the Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. This is arguably in line with the Ecumenical spirit and a move towards the realisation of ‘One Christian Church’ in Indonesia. To date, the PGI claims to include 88 church synods, which have more than 15 million members across Indonesia (see PGI website at [www.pgi.or.id](http://www.pgi.or.id)). However, this does not mean that all the member churches subscribe totally to the Ecumenical ideals promoted by the PGI. A number of member churches have exclusive beliefs and competing objectives. It is not unreasonable to speculate that some of these churches joined the PGI for protection, given the stature of the organisation in Indonesian politics. In the same vein, the Indonesia Evangelical Fellowship (PII) also accepts members from both mainline and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches that profess the Fellowship’s objectives, although more members come from the latter than the former, due to their similar views on evangelism and mission. Finally, it is also important to note that there are churches that for various reasons choose not to join any of these organisations, although they may display features that could fit into any of the three streams.

## **Between evangelism and multiculturalism**

A key difference between the Ecumenical movement on one hand and the Evangelical or Pentecostal-Charismatic movements on the other is in their interpretation of the call by Jesus ‘to make disciples of all nations’, otherwise known as the ‘Great Commission’. This involves their different understanding of the nature of the Gospel, and the role of the church in carrying out ‘evangelism’. This understanding directly affects the ways in which the churches interact with their local environment or position themselves in the multicultural society of Indonesia. Despite having some fundamental differences in



theology, especially on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, the Evangelicals and Pentecostal-Charismatics share many features. For instance, they both believe in the 'five fundamentals of faith' (Ellingsen, 1988): 1) 'the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible; 2) the deity of Christ and his virgin birth; 3) the substitutionary atonement by Christ's death; 4) the literal resurrection of Christ; and 5) the second coming of Christ' (Ellingsen, 1988: 49). The Evangelicals and Pentecostal-Charismatics also have similar worship styles, and place a heavy emphasis on mission and evangelism. Such similarities cause US journalists to use the terms 'Evangelical', 'Fundamentalist', 'Charismatic' and 'Pentecostal' interchangeably (Anderson, 2004: 258). The same is true in the context of Indonesia. As Andaya remarks, 'it is difficult at times to distinguish Pentecostal from Evangelical churches' (2009: 23).

In fact, the previous section has also shown that the cross-organisation memberships shared by Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches make the distinction impossible, if not artificial. Therefore, this section will focus largely on the juxtaposition between Ecumenicals and Evangelicals.

Both Ecumenicals and Evangelicals recognise that the church has a mission to bring the Gospel to the world. However, their understandings of what constitutes the Good News and how it should be spread differ significantly. The Ecumenical churches have been accused of neglecting evangelism (see Octavianus, 2007). Indeed, they do not hold massive Gospel rallies to convert non-believers, as many Evangelical churches do. The Ecumenicals believe that Jesus has accomplished salvation for all people, and the role of the church is to bring the 'shalom' of God to the world, so that everyone can experience justice, freedom and peace. However, the Ecumenical movement deemphasises the 'fundamentals of faith', which focus on the fall, atonement and judgement to come. Instead, they emphasise the commitment to proclaim salvation in relation to the world and in the present life. To Ecumenicals, salvation is not just limited to the soul. Rather, salvation involves all aspects of a person – spiritual, physical and psychological. Because of this understanding, Ecumenicals place much emphasis on social concerns and justice. The focus of mission is thus to liberate the poor and the oppressed, and not to Christianise unbelievers (Konaniah, 1995).

As discussed in the previous section, most churches in Indonesia are influenced by Pietism, which has a narrow focus on personal salvation and the return of Christ. Hence, 'mission is primarily understood as a task to communicate the Gospel verbally, to invite individual conversion, to win souls, and to increase church membership' (Darmaputera, 1982: 435). Other social responsibilities in the areas of education, healthcare or socio-economic development are perceived to be secondary, or simply as tools of evangelism (Darmaputera, 1982: 435). Due to the influence of the World Council of Churches, the Ecumenical movement in Indonesia has adopted a 'holistic approach' to mission. This approach views mission as an inseparable unity of witness (*martyria*), fellowship (*koinonia*) and service (*diakonia*). Ecumenicals equate mission as Christianisation or conversion with a 'traditional' or 'colonial' approach. The holistic approach promotes an inclusive understanding of mission that encourages Christian engagement with local cultures, rather than shunning them as 'pagan' practice (Darmaputera, 1982: 439). Hence, rather than seeking to 'deculturate' (i.e. to eradicate 'pagan' culture) or to 'inculturate' (to establish itself at the centre of a given culture) (Roy, 2010: 33), 'the Church is sent to live within, and to do its mission through, the existing cultural system' (Darmaputera, 1982:

441).<sup>9</sup> This holistic approach to mission adopted by the Ecumenicals is more compatible with the state ideology of *Pancasila*, which espouses the spirit of solidarity and inclusiveness.

The Evangelicals, on the other hand, subscribe to the view that the church's mission is to proclaim the Gospel through evangelism. They believe that salvation is exclusive to those who accept Christ and repent from their sins (Konaniah, 1995). Although Evangelicals are involved in social action, they do not see any eternal value in it. The imperative is to save souls from eternal damnation, not to provide social or humanitarian relief. Moreover, Evangelicals are against the idea of the church becoming a political or social action organisation. The methods and strategies used by Indonesian Evangelical churches to spread the Gospel include personal evangelism, household evangelism (fitting in Indonesian society, which emphasises the family), mobilising the laity (equipping lay ministers), interfaith dialogue (as a point of contact to proclaim the Gospel), social responsibility, Gospel rallies or revival meetings, and teaching through Christian schools (see Konaniah, 1995; Aritonang and Steenbrink, 2008).

The Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, and some Evangelical ones, have been accused of being too aggressive in their mission – to the extent of upsetting the mainline churches as well as local Muslim residents. Some observers feel that the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have disregarded the boundaries of comity, and do not hesitate to invade mission fields where congregations of mainline churches are already established (Wiyono, 2005). Despite the government prohibition on proselytising, the Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatics have no qualms in organising massive Gospel and divine healing meetings that target non-Christians. In some Bible seminaries, one key requirement for graduation involves having the students convert people of other faiths to Christianity. To achieve this, some seminarians offer incentives like money, food or clothes to attract recruits (Aritonang and Steenbrink, 2008: 898). Such actions are also quite common among certain evangelists and missionaries.<sup>10</sup> The aggressive mission to win souls also shows a lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of the Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches as compared with the more ethnic-based mainline churches. Such aggressiveness shows that in these churches, other-worldly commitments take precedence over commitment to dealing with differences in the multicultural society of Indonesia.

One way to foster multiculturalism is through the introduction of interfaith dialogues. Such dialogues promote respect for and tolerance of differences, with the aim of reaching a common meeting point amongst members of various faiths. Nevertheless, it should be noted that members of the Ecumenical movement are generally more active in dialogue than those of the Evangelical confessional group (Mujiburrahman, 2006: 253). The Ecumenicals are keen on conducting dialogues with other religions in the spirit of religious pluralism. They take pluralism to mean respect for differences, without any party absolutising its truth. As Hans Ucko (1989: 27) states in an article entitled 'Dialogue is a real mission', 'My faith is not destroyed because I affirm the other religions. My witness is not affected because I also accept the other religions'. This hermeneutic of dialogue based on pluralism is built on the acknowledgement that God can be found in all religions, and that other faiths may possess the truth and the way to salvation (Konaniah, 1995: 105). In this pluralist spirit, dialogue can occur without the fear of competition in truth claims, debates on apologetics or expressions of cultural/religious superiority by any party.

The Ecumenicals engage in dialogue generally with an intention to learn about other faiths and to work with members of other faiths to solve common societal problems. In contrast, the Evangelicals either avoid interfaith dialogue for fear of compromising their faith or attempt to use dialogue as a tool for proselytising. For example, DA Carson (1996: 509), a famous confessional Evangelical scholar in the United States, argues that it is necessary to insist on the proclamation of the Gospel when engaging in interfaith dialogue; otherwise, it would be a betrayal of the Gospel. Another renowned American Christian scholar, Thomas C Oden (2006: 63–64), criticises dialogue as a ‘chimerical dream’ and ‘an instrument of manipulation’ by liberals, whom he refers to as ‘ecumeniacs’. It can be seen that the Evangelicals are generally sceptical towards interfaith dialogue. The main reason for such scepticism is the postulation of religious pluralism that underlies interfaith dialogue. Viewing themselves as the sole custodians of the absolute truth, the Evangelicals reject the premises of moral equivalence or equality of religion assumed in interfaith dialogue. While the Ecumenicals continuously seek to contextualise the scripture to better address local needs, the Evangelicals uphold the authority and inerrancy of the text. Evangelicals are also wary of the threats from relativism and syncretism that might follow when the floodgates of pluralism are opened.

The gulf between the Ecumenicals and Evangelicals is primarily caused by their polarised views on Christian mission. The Ecumenicals emphasise the ‘horizontal’ dimension of mission, characterised by the struggle for freedom, liberation, social justice, solidarity among humans and prosperity of the world. On the other hand, the Evangelicals accentuate the ‘vertical’ dimension of mission, which features the preaching of repentance or conversion, and the establishment of a personal relationship with God. The Ecumenicals are criticised for abandoning the vertical dimension and for becoming like social organisations, whereas the Evangelicals are seen as being over-zealous about the vertical dimension while ignoring their social responsibilities to the world. Indeed, these intra-faith problems can appear more complex than interfaith ones, and it could be more difficult to bridge the divide between Ecumenicals and Evangelicals than that between liberal Christians and liberal Muslims. Darmaputera (1982: 437) argues that the vertical and horizontal dimensions of mission are two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated, let alone seen as contradictory. However, the chasm between Ecumenicals and Evangelicals is so profound that it is doubtful that any rapprochement can be reached in the near future.

## **Conclusion**

The dynamics of Protestant Christianity in Indonesia are complex. To appreciate such complexity, one has to acknowledge that Christians are not a homogeneous group. Although inter-religious differences are a continuing challenge, the intra-faith differences within Christianity are no less challenging. The typology of the three major Christian groups in Indonesia highlights the heterogeneity and the schisms within the church. Intra-faith differences within the Christian churches, especially those associated with the differing interpretations of what constitutes ‘mission’ and ‘evangelism’, are hard to erase. The Evangelical and Pentecostal-Charismatic

movements do not share the same conviction concerning evangelism as their Ecumenical counterparts. The main difference lies in their interpretations of the 'Great Commission', which affect the ways they interact with their local environment and position themselves in the multicultural society of Indonesia. This was illustrated in this discussion by the contrasting approaches taken by the different church movements toward activities such as interfaith dialogue. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the boundaries between the three movements are not watertight, but are porous and interacting. There is a spectrum of positions among those who identify with each of these movements. Moreover, memberships of the organisations of the three movements are dynamic and not mutually exclusive.

The relations between Christians and non-Christians in the multicultural environment of Indonesia are increasingly fragile. Past religious violence in Indonesia was mostly caused by clashes between different social classes and ethnic groups rather than by religion itself, except in recent years, when religious hardliners have committed crimes in the name of God. The Christian minority continues to battle controversial legislation and to cautiously navigate the treacherous waters of rising religious intolerance. While the national motto 'Unity in diversity' (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) is a laudable aim, its actualisation remains an uphill task. This is due in no small part to the difficulties associated with Indonesia being a Muslim majority state. Although the Protestants are a minority of less than 7% of the population, some Muslims have perceived their presence as one of the foremost threats. This is largely due to the (mis)construal of Christians as a highly organised and homogeneous group, armed with a mission to Christianise Indonesia. For people of different faiths to live together, they need mutual understanding and respect. Although dialogue between Christians and Muslims is important, it is also imperative that Ecumenicals, Evangelicals and Pentecostal-Charismatics reconcile their differences through intra-faith dialogue. The aim of such dialogue is not to achieve a unified position for all, but rather to find a common ground. Only when different religions respect and value each other's differences, and unite in their diversity, can the ideal of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* become a reality.

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### **Notes**

1. The World Council of Churches (WCC) reported in late 1969 that from 1965 to 1968, 2.5 million nominal Muslims had converted to Christianity (Intan, 2006: 51). Furthermore, many ethnic Chinese also converted to Christianity after 1965 to avoid persecution, as China was implicated in the communist coup (Nagata, 2005: 113). For details on the anti-communist movements of 1965 in Indonesia, see Lane (2010).

2. It should be noted that the Dutch Reformed Church is not homogeneous. In The Netherlands, the Dutch Reformed Church is made up of two divergent branches: the orthodox *Gereformeerde* and the more liberal *Hervormde Kerk*. Like the Anglican Church with its spectrum of liturgical variants from 'high' to 'low', the Dutch Reformed churches also exhibit a range of religious diversity (Kipp, 1990: 27).
3. The terms 'mainline' or 'mainstream' churches are generally used to refer to churches that follow the orthodox Reformation teachings, such as the Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist) churches. In some countries these terms also designate other 'traditional' denominations such as the Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans and Mennonites. Borrowing from Aritonang and Steenbrink's usage, the term 'mainline' is used here to refer to the 'traditional churches' founded by colonial missions, as opposed to the 'new churches' founded by American missions (Aritonang and Steenbrink, 2008: 867; see also Oden, 2006).
4. There are two explanations for the change of name from DGI (Council of Churches) to PGI (Communion of Churches): Aritonang argues that the proposal for a name change started in the 1970s with awareness that the Ecumenical movement should avoid the dangers of institutionalism, uniformity and centralistic-pyramidal unity. The term 'Council' sounded too legalistic, while the term 'Communion' was seen as more ecclesiastical and biblical (2008: 836–837). On the other hand, Titaley (2008) provides a political explanation for the name change. He argues that religious organisations rejected Suharto's promotion of *Pancasila* as the sole basis for political and social organisations, because for them, God or the Scripture is the only basis. By changing its name to the Communion of Churches, the PGI argued that it was a religious and not a social organisation. As Titaley explains, 'A compromise with religious institutions resulted in the agreement that the implementation of the *Pancasila* would cover only the areas of societal life (*bermasyarakat*), nationhood life (*berbangsa*), and statehood life (*bernegara*), but it would not cover the area of religious life in Indonesia' (2008: 83–84).
5. For a theological definition of the Ecumenical movement, see Konaniah (1995).
6. For a description of what the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement entails, see Anderson (2004) and Miller and Yamamori (2007).
7. It is unclear why the DPI changed its name to DGPI. It is likely that it followed the example of the DGI, which changed its name to PGI in the 1980s (see note 4).
8. It is also important to note that not all Pentecostal-Charismatic churches desire to join the PGI. This tension between movements resembles the interaction between the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement and the Ecumenical movement (led by the World Council of Churches) in the global Christian scene. Anderson argues that the dialogue between the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and the WCC has been less developed than the Catholic/Pentecostal dialogue: 'Part of the reason for this has been the dominance of Evangelicalism in western Pentecostalism and the commonly held belief that the WCC, besides representing the dreaded 'liberal' and 'liberation' theologies (and, worse, possibly a sign of the 'apostasy' in the end times!) was a human organisation that did not represent true spiritual unity' (Anderson, 2004: 254).
9. However, Evangelical leaders like Octavianus (2007) perceive such cultural engagement as presenting a danger of syncretism of faith with local customs.
10. Ucko argues that 'The missionary history has plenty of stories about the so-called rice Christians, i.e. people who turned to the missionary churches or just received the Gospel because they were more interested in the material gain than the inner message of the church' (1989: 19).

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