

THEOLOGY OF THE MARGINS: Christian Experience in a Multicultural Context¹

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Abstrak

Artikel ini mengajak mencermati kedudukan orang-orang Kristen dalam Negara multikultural seperti Indonesia sebagai kelompok yang bukan hanya marginal secara geografis tetapi juga secara sosial politis. Bagaimana posisi ini dilihat dari perspektif teologis? Umumnya kelompok-kelompok marginal memiliki keutamaan-keutamaan lebih yang dapat membantu meningkatkan kualitas hidup mereka, seperti kerendahan hati, kesabaran, kesederhanaan, kasih, pengampunan, pelayanan, pengertian, dll. Itulah siasat hidup kaum marginal, yang berguna bukan hanya untuk memperjuangkan eksistensi kelompoknya tetapi lebih-lebih untuk meningkatkan kualitas kehidupan itu sendiri. Selanjutnya artikel merujuk kepada sejumlah referensi biblis dan teologis yang mendukung nilai-nilai ini. Yang menjadi persoalan sekarang, apakah orang-orang Kristen marginal ini sungguh-sungguh mampu memberikan bumbu penyedap bagi bangunan suatu 'kebudayaan kehidupan'? Yang jelas, tantangan teologis ini merupakan pergulatan yang tidak kunjung selesai.

Keywords: margin(s), multicultural society, violence, mystery of incarnation, culture of life

1. Preliminary Remarks

Once St Paul, the scholar from Tarsus wrote: "For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing walls of hostility between us....So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to you who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2: 14-18). Could this remark be taken as a possible response to our decades of 'cultural domination', conflict, war and violence?

The 20th century is identified as the most violent time in human history, while in the 21st century there is no sign for the end of violence and

¹ It is a revised and adapted article from the working paper presented at the ASPAMIR international symposium in Mumbai, India, 15-19 October 2001.

terrorism. Indonesia has also undergone such decades of difficult time: ethnic conflicts, communal clashes and mob violence, etc. Most of them were usually reported '*bernuansa SARA*' (had nuances of SARA). The acronym SARA is for *suku, agama, ras dan antargolongan* (ethnicity, religion, race and social division) which indicates the primordial bonds (identities) of the people who have been 'forced' to live in the one 'locality' called Indonesia. A series of bomb blast such as the Bali bombings in October 2001, the bombing of the J.W. Marriot hotel in Jakarta in August 2003, the bomb attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in September 2004, etc. are just a few examples of our perplexing time. What is the response of the Christians to this culture of death?

Our concern here is how to formulate a (new) theological basis that might be appropriate for the Church in our multicultural settings. We put it this way because we believe that theology always begins with happenings rather than with ideas. The goal of this article is to examine the Christian possible response to this multicultural context and to the undesirable conflicts across the country. Referring to some theological considerations the paper will try to articulate the Christian collective consciousness, which may hold the people together and preserve the multicultural image of the country. In the first place we will describe the positive and negative aspects of the multicultural society. In the following parts we show the Christians as the Margins and their theological response to the fact.

2. Multicultural Society

Since its independence (1945) Indonesia has developed its national identity as a society which is transethnic, transregional, and transreligious. People of different backgrounds (ethnicity, religious affiliation, race, social class, etc.)² throughout the archipelago are 'forced' to interact and live under the shared view of national self-image. Everybody has to adapt him- or herself to this national identity.

In the course of time, urbanisation and migration have gradually changed the face of the Indonesian society. The cities have become very complex in terms of the diversity of their population. People from rural areas come in mainly for economic, educational and recreational reasons. Their presence has a direct impact in (re)shaping the face of the cities. Religion has no more the monopoly on 'identity' since religious affiliation is simply one among many social identities that the people have.

2 According to Parsudi Suparlan (2000), an Indonesian anthropologist, the Republic of Indonesia, which stretches from Sabang, Sumatra, in the north-west to Merauke in the Papua Province on the border of Papua New Guinea, is a multicultural society of more than 500 ethnic groups, cultures and various religious beliefs.

All this indicates that for a long time people in this country have been quite mobile for good or for bad – to become part of the local community or to experience being strangers (outsiders), to enhance cultural contact or to trigger communal conflict.

2.2. National ideologies

The society has been held together under a ‘dominant way of thinking’ which to some extent can build a ‘common sense’ where citizens regard themselves as invested in the state’s perpetuation – a united nation of Indonesia (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*). This social construction is supposed to promote a so-called ‘culture of harmony’ with its tolerant values towards differences. The myth of ‘national identity’ or ‘Indonesianness’ covers three main concepts, in which the people see themselves as belonging to the ‘same world’ (*wawasan nusantara* or archipelago horizon), sharing a common ideal of ‘unity in diversity’ (*bhinneka tunggal ika*) and living in the same social and religious principles called the five principles (*pancasila*).

First of all, *wawasan nusantara* or the archipelago concept is a transethnic, transregional and transreligious identity, which prioritises the national interests over those of the groups. The primordial identities of the people have been successfully incorporated into the state’s archipelago concept. The identity is not the property of one particular ethnic or religious group. It covers the whole population, citizens of the archipelago.

Secondly, under the enlightened slogan of *‘bhinneka tunggal ika’*³ the people have become ‘a new creation’. They have been liberated, not only from the colonial powers but also from their regional, ethnic, and religious captivity in order to create a ‘single free nation’. Regardless of all their differences the people have been born into one united nation – ‘the old order is gone and a new being is there to see’ (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).

Thirdly, the Five Principles or *pancasila*,⁴ namely the state philosophy that appeals to all Indonesians, despite all the differences (their religion, ethnicity or regional origins) makes individuals legally equal. The social value of *pancasila* is also tolerance, the best possible *modus vivendi* in the

3 The Indonesia’s national motto of *‘bhinneka tunggal ika’* is taken from the *Kakawin ‘Sutasoma’*, an epic poem of Mpu Tantular (14th century) from the Majapahit Empire, East Java. It was also known as *‘Purosadasanta’* and partly it mentioned that the two religions of Mahayana Buddhism and Shaivite Hinduism could live side by side and that both had an essential sameness. The poem says: “The one substance is called two, namely Buddha or Siwa [Shiva] / They say it is different, but how can it be divided by two / Such is how the teaching of Buddha and Siwa [Shiva] became one / It is different, but it is one, there are not two truths.” (Eiseman 1996: 41; Lombard 1996: 24).

4 The *Pancasila* state ideology consists of the principle of monotheism (*ketuhanan yang mahaesa*), humanitarianism (*kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab*), nationalism (*persatuan Indonesia*), democracy (*musyawarah untuk mufakat*) and social justice (*keadilan sosial*).

multicultural Indonesia. In the case of religion, the state does not endorse any particular religion. The thing is how to maintain the state's tolerance of religious diversity and guarantee participation of all ethnic groups. To confess the first principle of *pancasila* – that God is One – religiously speaking, the whole population should recognise themselves as 'being God's family'. It may correspond to the largely recognised *azas kekeluarga* (family principle) in anything people do. The principle regards the nation as made up of families, of very particular families – not 'traditional' extended families, but modern families in which every citizen is a child and the state is a father.⁵

2.2. Primordial authoritarianism

In the last few decades, however, we observe that national identity has very likely given ways to various social and religious groups to work out their particular sense of identity. Every group has increasingly elaborated and established a deep bond to its identity on the lines of ethnicity, religion, race, regional, social division, etc. Referring to the conflicts in the last few years with their strong ethnic and religious sentiment, which have shattered the harmony of the whole country, one may indicate that some primordial groups should be responsible. We can easily mention the serious problems, conflicts and violence throughout the archipelago from Aceh in the west to Indonesian Papua on the border of Papua New Guinea in the east. It is the national tragedy in this modern Indonesia.

Some provinces consolidate their regional identity based on the numerically dominant community – e.g. the 'Thousand Temple' of Bali is for Hindus, the 'Thousand Mosques' of Lombok is for Muslims (we will discuss below). Minority groups in urban areas are being discriminated and mostly became victims of the social upheavals and communal clashes. Waterson⁶ for example puts his findings in South Sulawesi as follows:

"At the present time, I observe that there is a heightened sense of anxiety on the part of Toraja [Christians] about their safety in Makassar. It is not without some justification. Students say they frequently experience harassment in the University, and the consciousness of being a minority has become enhanced as the issues surrounding provincial autonomy come to the fore."

Considering all such difficulties, this multicultural society in fact cannot promote an intensive interaction and productive cultural contact of its

5 Boellstorff, Tom, "A Nee Archipelago Concept for the Era Reformasi?", *Antropologi Indonesia*, 63 (2000) p. 113.

6 Roxana Waterson, "Holding Back the Mountain: Historical Imagination and the Future of Toraja-Bugis Relations", *Antropologi Indonesia*, 63(200) p. 78.

people. Even worse, Indonesia has become 'the field of *kerusuhan*' where violence after violence broke out that made Indonesia the real '*tanah tumpah darah*' (lit. the soil on which one sheds one's blood). How can it happen? How can we explain it? The answer to this question is not simple. Since the conflicts and violence are mostly characterised as '*bermuansa SARA*', the answers automatically go to primordial loyalties, a ghetto mentality.

During the former New Order of the Suharto's regime (1966-1998), in order to suppress and prevent mass activities, the SARA issues were made taboo in public discourse. The people are not allowed to discuss such issues, because they could provoke some inter-group tensions and religious antagonism. On the other hand, triggered by the so-called religious reform such as 'Islamic reform' across the country, the problems of the state is aggravated. Tule gives an example of the so-called 'Islamic reform' throughout the archipelago, which affects Muslim communities in *Nusa Tenggara Timur* (the Eastern Lesser Sunda Islands). He argues:

"To some extent, such a concept of Islamic Reform has grouped the Muslims in NTT into the 'real' (*sejati*) and the 'deviant' (*sesat*). In the eyes of the immigrant Muslims, most of the indigenous Muslims should be labelled as deviant Muslims since they still carry out local traditions and collaborate with Christians in daily life."⁷

The conflict in Palu, Poso, Ambon and throughout the Moluccan islands was initially sparked by the politics of identity. In the case of Ambon, the offensive and abusive term of *BBM* for the migrants (*suku perantau*) Bugis, Buton, and Makassar was raised among the native Moluccans.⁸ Politics of identity is enough to split up the people in two opposing groups (*pendatang* versus *asli*, the migrants versus the natives).

3. Christians as the Margins

Christians are minority in Indonesia, except in some regions which are geographically the margins of the country such as on the islands of Flores, Timor, North Sulawesi, and North Sumatra. When John Paul II describes 'the church in Asia: past and present' in his apostolic exhortation 'Ecclesia in Asia' (1999), it seems also to apply for Indonesia. He puts it thus: "While some particular Churches carry out their mission in peace and freedom,

7 Philip Tule, "Religious Conflicts and a Culture of Tolerance: Paving the Way for Reconciliation in Indonesia", *Antropologi Indonesia*, 63 (2000) p. 97.

8 Kathryn Robinson, "Ketegangan Antaretnis, Orang Bugis, dan Masalah 'Penjelasan'", *Antropologi Indonesia*, 63 (2000) p. 46.

9 M.P.M. Muskens, *Partner in Nation Building. The Catholic Church in Indonesia*, Aachen: Missio Aktuell Verlag, 1979: 198.

others find themselves in situations of violence and conflict, or feel threatened by other groups, for religious or other reasons" (EA 9).

3.1. From the margins to the centre

Prior to and after the independence of the Republic of Indonesia (1945) the Catholics wholeheartedly involved in the nation building. I.J. Kasimo,⁹ one of the outstanding lay Catholic leaders at that time, gave his opinion:

"The Indonesian Catholics welcome the Republic as the realization of their own ideal: a free independent motherland, which had its own national government, and which was provided with legal authority. Therefore, the Indonesian Catholics devoted themselves to the Republic of Indonesia and remained loyal in the field of politics, too, firmly convinced as they were and fully aware of their duty as Indonesians and as members of the Catholic Church, the more so since the basis of the republic was the Panca Sila, as had been laid down in the 1945 Constitution, a full guarantee for the freedom of religion."

The late Msgr Sugijapranata of Semarang was also a leading figure in those days. Once in 1947, when he delivered a speech on the national radio, he confirmed that the Catholics should be grateful to the Republic of Indonesia, which had been unilaterally proclaimed. He was quoted as saying: "I promise to work together with people of all social classes to realize a permanent and prosperous independence".¹⁰ The Catholics and other citizens had (and have) a single goal to pursue, namely, *Masyarakat Indonesia yang adil dan makmur* (Indonesian society which is just and prosperous). The same vision and mission is highlighted again by the Jesuit Mardiatmadja¹¹ when he mentions that the church, as an integral part of the Indonesian society, should fully involve in the multi-dimension of societal development.

As a matter of fact, the thing does not go that easy. Being minority and the Margins, the Christians are regarded as aliens, strangers, or foreigners. To give some examples, we take just two incidents: one is from Bali and the other from the neighbouring island of Lombok. In these two islands the Christians are minority among the Hindus and the Muslims respectively – where the culture of dominance is prevailing.

3.2. A tale from Bali

For many decades, Bali with its tourist industry has developed itself as

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 200.

¹¹ B.S. Mardiatmadja, "Gereja Indonesia menyongsong tahun 2000", in Penerbit-Percetakan Kanisius and Universitas Sanata Dharma, *Gereja Indonesia Pasca-Vatikan II. Refleksi dan Tantangan*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1997, pp. 46-50.

a friendly place that welcomes visitors as far as they do not disturb the harmonious life of its people. Since the first half of the twentieth century the Dutch colonials have treated the island in a very special way. Through the colonial policy of *Baliseering* (Balinization of Bali) and *isolatie politiek* (politics of isolation)¹² the island was protected from outside influences such as the spirit of Indonesian nationalism, Islamic propaganda and Christian mission. Constructed and patronised by the Dutch colonials, the Balinese had come to an attitude that was best formulated by Cokorda Gde Raka Soekawati (1924): “*Westersche infloeden, welke ook, zijn welkom, alleen de christelijke godsdienst niet*” (All Western influences whatsoever are welcome, but never Christianity).¹³

Due to the fact that the island was being protected the Balinese gradually become very possessive regarding the Balinese cultural patrimony. Since most of the people are Bali-Hindus, the island’s identity is then defined on the basis of Bali-Hinduism – island of ‘Thousand Temples’. The people have also developed a so-called ‘island mentality’ or ‘bunker mentality’ which means the other is to be avoided, feared or opposed. On the one side there are the *asli* people (indigenous, local, host, insider) and on the other side there are *pendatang* (new comer, incomer, guest, or outsider). The Christians, although they are Balinese by ethnicity, are regarded as incomers or outsiders. Consequently, they are not allowed to use the traditional cultural elements and religious symbols for their own purpose (church). During the first few months of the year 2000,¹⁴ for instance, there was a great tension between the two religious communities. The Christians were accused as thieves for using the Balinese cultural elements and

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- 12 The *Baliseering* policy was the colonial policy to protect and preserve Bali from outside influence and exploitation. In 1924 G.P. Rouffaer, a former director of the *Bali Instituut*, which was part of the *Koloniale Instituut* (1915), provided the classic statement of the preservationist position: “Let the Balinese live their own beautiful native life as undisturbed as possible! Their agriculture, their village life, their own forms of worship, their religious art, their own literature -all bear witness to an autonomous native civilization of rare versatility and richness. No railroads on Bali; no Western coffee plantations; and especially no sugar factories! But also no proselytizing, neither Mohammedan (by zealous natives from other parts of the Indies) nor Protestant nor Roman Catholic. Let the colonial administration, with the strong backing of the Netherlands government, treat the island of Bali as a rare jewel that we must protect and whose virginity must remain intact” (Robinson 1995:41).
- 13 Cokorda Gde Raka Soekawati later on became the President of the State of East Indonesia (NIT, Negara Indonesia Timur), established under Dutch auspices in December 1946, with Anak Agung Gde Agung as Prime Minister and minister of the interior. NIT collapsed in 1949-1950 with the downfall of Dutch power in Indonesia, and Bali eventually joined the Republic of Indonesia. “Educated in the Netherlands, married to a French woman, and having lived much of his adult life outside of Bali, he was regarded by many people at home as arrogant and excessively westernized (*kebarat-baratan*)” (Robinson 1995:171).
- 14 E.g. Putu Setia, “Om Swastyastu,” <http://www.balipost.co.id/BaliPostcetak/2000/3/4/bd4.htm>; Putu Setia, “Adat,” <http://www.balipost.co.id/BaliPostcetak/2000/3/18/bd3.htm>; Bali Aga, “Dinilai Rancangan Ajaran Hindu: PHDI Kecewa Sendratrari Natal di TVRI,” Bali Aga, Denpasar (29 December 1999); Bali Aga, “Kepala Siaran TVRI Denpasar Mengaku Kecolongan,” Bali Aga, Denpasar (29 December 1999); Bali Post (sut), “Tantangan PHDI, Inventarisasi Simbol Hindu,” Bali Post, Denpasar (23 January 2000); Bali Post (sut), “Mengantisipasi Penetrasi Simbol Hindu,” Bali Post, Denpasar (23 January 2000).

some particular terms for the Christian liturgy. They were accused of violating the cultural and religious symbols of the *asli* people. It was offensive to their religious sentiment – *pelecehan agama* ('religious harassment'). Therefore, it was a big sin, a sacrilege.

3.3. A tale from Lombok

Lombok, the neighbouring island of Bali, has developed its own identity as the island of 'Thousand Mosques'. It was historically a counter culture against the Bali-Hindus of the Karangasem kingdom who occupied Lombok in the seventeenth century. The Balinese imported their 'Balineseness' to Lombok, among other things, every single family had its own shrine (*sanggah*, *mrajan*) within the house compound and in every village they built *puras* (temples) for the whole community. According to Mahsun, a lecturer in the University of Mataram-Lombok, this was the Balinese 'cultural colonialism' over the local culture.¹⁵ The indigenous Sasak (Muslims) then developed their identity as a direct response to the Balinese (Hindus) occupation. To build mosques as many as possible was their main priority, and, so, gave (gives) Lombok its (new) identity as the island of 'Thousand Mosques'. Mahsun argues that this constructed identity was the 'symbol of religious and cultural resistance' of the *asli* Sasak against the 'cultural colonialism' of the Bali-Hindus.¹⁶

In the modern Lombok, its identity as the island of 'Thousand Mosques' is being irritated by the presence of Christianity. The *asli* people (*pribumi* or the sons and daughters of the soil) can hardly accept the presence of these incomers with their way of doing mission, which then brings about the Mataram tragedy (17-19 January 2000). Churches were demolished, Christian houses and shops were destroyed and looted. The Christians were forced to leave the island so that Lombok can be kept pure from pollution. People use violence to cure the society.

The verdict against the Christians is that they do not accommodate (can I say 'incarnate'?) themselves to the dominant religious group. The Christians are exclusive in their social life and demonstrative in religious attitude. They have violated the sacredness of other religions or insulted the religious feelings of the dominant such as Lombok and Bali, the island of 'Thousand Mosques' and the island of 'Thousand Temples' respectively. Therefore, violence against the minority and *pendatang* Christians is quite 'understandable'.¹⁷

15 Mahsun, "Tragedi di Pulau 'Seribu Mesjid': Konflik Agama atau Perlawanan Budaya", *Antropologi Indonesia*, 63 (2000) pp. 84-85.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., p. 89-90.

4. Christian Response

As it is mentioned above, people of the country are held together by a kind of collective memory and a national self-image – *wawasan nusantara*, *bhinneka tunggal ika* and *pancasila*. This visionary image, a ‘civil religion’ in its characters, promotes some common commitments based on a kind of ‘dogma’ that may help the people to proceed with *bonum commune*. The historical agreements mentioned above have given the people a great possibility to experience a common sense of brotherhood-sisterhood and to pursue some common ideals. This is an important aspect that the Christians can elaborate constantly as citizens of the Republic. The Christians have participated in this collective memory, namely in the historical events and agreement of the country, during the era of founding the Republic

Referring to difficulties and their story as incomers, what can the churches do or offer to the country? How do they carry out their mission and ideals? In my view, their faith, particularly the gift of incarnation could provide them a framework for doing theology. It may work, on the one hand, by elaborating the collective self-image of the country, and on the other, by highlighting mission as participation in God’s project to the world (*missio Dei*).

4.1. Elaborating the collective image of the country

As ‘incomers’, ‘guests’, ‘outsiders’ or whatever one may term the Christians, in my opinion, this minority group has only one option, namely, to promote persistently the collective memory and commitment as mentioned above – *wawasan nusantara*, *bhinneka tunggal ika*, *pancasila*. This is the goal of founding the Republic that gives the people a progressive movement. This is the vision that holds them together regardless of their primordial sentiments.

The archipelago concept (*wawasan nusantara*) is nothing less than a ‘neighbourology’ with a future-oriented spirit, in which everybody regards the others as his or her true neighbours who proceed hand in hand towards the same future. The spirit of ‘neighbourology’ such as love of peace, kindness, faithfulness, etc. is of great important to be elaborated. As the whole population was shoulder to shoulder struggling to expel the colonial powers from Indonesia, the Christians should maintain the same spirit to overcome the same evil of the present day Indonesia.

Bhinneka tunggal ika or unity in diversity is a collective desire which make the people to be ‘a new creation’, i.e. to be together in this plural and multicultural society. They should cultivate or develop the spirit of interdependence and cooperation, which is rooted in the experience of God-related to the world and a loyalty to a bigger entity beyond one’s group or

community. Based on the national ideology such as *bhinneka tunggal ika*, tolerance is more valued, and to some extent some accommodation and compromise may be needed. The 'national identity' rather than SARA identity is more appreciated, because the former is not the property of any one area or ethnic group. *Bhinneka tunggal ika* tolerates diversity even when one does not completely agree with some of that diversity. This is the precondition that guarantees the rights of the minority – in our case, the 'guest' Christians.

The same vision is true with regard to the Five Principles of the state (*pancasila*), which is more than a mere political compromise negotiated before the founding of the Republic. In principle, it promotes tolerance throughout the archipelago in which no one group imposes its belief and primordial affiliation on the rest.¹⁸ However, we should be aware that there is always a great danger and threat, particularly from the primordial sentiments, especially religion.

4.2. Participating in the bonum commune

We have seen that Christianity is in fact an integral part of the history of the Republic. The Christians have participated in the nation building and also have the same vision with other citizens, i.e. to pursue the common good. Let us put some basis for their efforts.

First of all, the theological basis should put its scope as global as possible, namely to participate in God's mission – the church is servant of God's kingdom.¹⁹ Participation in this mission primarily means that it is not our mission but God's. This understanding also means that all groups, the dominant as well as the minority should be regarded as participants in the public life to pursue the *bonum commune*, salvation of all and of everybody. In this way the people move forward beyond the reification of ethnic and religious differences and intensify the traditional practice of *gotong-royong* (co-operation) for the Divine Project, namely the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, responsibility of the churches is for humanity as a whole, people of this world (our neighbours), regardless of their primordial affiliation. Responsibility towards one's neighbours, particularly the weak and powerless find its basis on the idea that everybody was created in God's image (Gen 1:26; Gaudium et Spes, 12). To read our praxis of theology in this perspective could push forward the claim that all people, all things and all communities have to change. It also means that Jesus' missionary

18 Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia. Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 172.

19 Cf. Y.B. Mangunwijaya, *Gereja Diaspora*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999.

project has to be brought about, where the poor will get good news, the captives will get freedom, the broken will get wholeness (Lk 4:18).

Thirdly, our approach follows the way of incarnation. The incarnational model is a decisive one from the Christian point of view. This is what really means '*pendatang*' ('incomers'), who share the life of the *asli* or *pribumi* ('locals'). Due to be regarded as 'incomers', the Christians have no other choice except incarnate themselves in the midst of the '*pribumi*' (people of the soil, locals). This principle goes with the idea of 'being in the world, with the world and for the world'. In this case, Jesus's life, death and resurrection become imperative for every Christian and for the Christian incarnational mission, namely, mission from within a given culture. St Paul argued that Jesus showed his mission by emptying himself from his lordship and becoming one with humankind in everything but sin (Phil 2:7). This is what really means enfleshment that the churches have to follow.

These threefold aspects of our theological consideration could found their basis on the mystery of incarnation and the teaching of Jesus, particularly discipleship. At this point I would like to take Jesus' statement as John puts it: "You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last" (Jn 15:16). Theologically speaking, it is certainly not the choice of the Christians to be born in the multicultural Indonesia and to be part of this particular world, nor is it the choice of some Indonesian to be Christians. Rather, God wants them to be here as 'guests' or 'incomers' – in the world, for the world, and with the world – and then to bear fruit.

5. Concluding Remarks

The multicultural Indonesian society which has come into being for good or for bad should be taken seriously into our theological consideration. This plural society opens a great possibility to the dominant groups to maximise their power, even to a degree that imposes their values on the rest. However, the grand political approach of the government to keep the archipelago in unity despite all roots of possible conflicts is a great opportunity for every element and group of the society to offer its contribution.

On the other hand, all the verdicts against minority and the Margins have to be analysed considerably. From the viewpoint of the Church, an incarnation approach is a 'must'. This approach promotes inclusive attitudes, co-operative works, and the spirit of interdependence. It facilitates a shared sense of the common destiny of the same world. With respect to toleration and in the process of nation building, theology of the Margins offer friendship and other human values such as love, forgiveness, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control (cf. Gal 5:22-23).

All these pro-existent or non-violent values are needed to promote the culture of life to replace the prevailing culture of violence, the culture of dominance, and the culture of death.

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