



Religion: a source for
human rights and
development cooperation



Preface

This reader contains lectures held and reports written on the conference on religion, a source for human rights and development cooperation, organized by ICCO, Cordaid and ISS in Soesterberg in September 2005. We hope that this reader will provide you with insights into the way in which people and organizations, especially of non-western origin, find the inspiration and the drive for their day-to-day activities in their religion and spirituality. During the conference some attention was paid to the dark side of religions. Yet since the positive contribution religions make to the promotion of human rights and development is often neglected, the organizations behind the conference wished to focus on this aspect in particular.

We hope that the conference has contributed to a greater appreciation of the importance of religion as a vital force in people's lives. It gives meaning to life and provides one with a sense of identity and it is a source of community and inner strength. It offers values and moral guidelines that serve as a touchstone along the path travelled by both individuals and societies as a whole: human dignity, justice, solidarity, loyalty, compassion, fellowship and stewardship. This spiritual potential can be an important positive power in development cooperation, provided it is acknowledged and used. This by no means implies a denial of the value of non-religious philosophies of life. All we wish to do is point at the necessity of a well-balanced approach of non-western civilisations by western actors active in the field of development cooperation.

In years to come, the organizers will further probe the issue and they will dedicate themselves to organizing follow-up conferences, publications and debates. They will do so in collaboration with the already existing Knowledge Centre Religion and Development, a joint effort of social and scholarly organizations, in which in addition to Cordaid and ICCO, Oikos, the Seva Network and the Islamic University of Rotterdam participate as well. ISS has joined forces with the Centre as well. It pleases us that, at the conference, Minister van Ardenne launched the Knowledge Forum Religion and Development Aid. This strengthens the foundation for the promotion of religion as a crucial dimension for human rights and development aid.

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1. Introduction

Religion: Source for Human Rights and Development Cooperation

Background of the conference

For a long time, Western development organizations have given scant attention to the ways in which religion relates to human rights and development. However, both the upsurge in religiously inspired conflicts and man's search for meaning and connection in a rapidly changing world once again make religion an important factor. Cordaid and ICCO have been thinking about this for quite some time, as shown by the special chair in 'Religion, Human Rights and Social Change' which they established in 1998 in conjunction with the World Conference on Religion and Peace. The chair is linked to the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in the Hague and has been held since its inception by the scholar of religion Gerrie ter Haar.

To stimulate exchanges between science and practice, and to gain more insight into the role of religion, ICCO and Cordaid decided in 2003 to organize an expert meeting and an international conference in collaboration with the ISS. The expert meeting took place in 2004. On the basis of the experiences of this meeting, the following starting points were decided on for the conference:

- emphasize the positive contribution of religion to human rights and development; the negative impact is recognized, but does not assume a central role;
- Give Christianity and Islam a central role, with participants from both religions; other religions are not discussed, because that would make the conference too complex;
- emphasize the interaction between science, policy and practice; compare the input of scientists with the practical experience of Southern partners and employees of ICCO, Cordaid and ISS and other participants.
- invite representatives of immigrant communities in the Netherlands as an expression of the fact that 'North' and 'South' are no longer separate regions.

Main goals

The international conference took place in September 2005 in Soesterberg. The main goals of the conference were: (1) to give Cordaid, ICCO and participating organizations more insight into the positive contribution of religion to human rights and development; (2) to obtain practical recommendations for the policy and practice of development cooperation.

In the programme, these goals were translated as follows:

- day 1: Concepts: clarification of core concepts,
- day 2: Practice: lessons from practical experience in the South
- day 3: Actors: action agendas for donor organizations, NGOs, religious organizations, science and government.

To the around 115 representatives of development organizations, religious organizations and academic institutions from many parts of the world and from Dutch politics and government, the conference offered a varied programme of plenary keynote speeches and workshops in which more in-depth discussions were held on the following subtopics: Religion and civil society building, religion and democratization, religion and economic justice, religion and HIV/AIDS, religion, peace and reconciliation, interreligious dialogue and cooperation.

In reaction to these selected subjects, the Southern partners indicate that we should not only reflect on the role of religion in the non-Western societies where ICCO and

Cordaid work ('outreach'), but also the role of religion within the organizations themselves and in the Netherlands ('inreach'). Religion is not just a question of knowledge, but also one of belief and community. The partners asked that we:

- a. become more closely linked to our own faith-based and semi-faith-based grassroots constituency
- b. examine how this is reflected in the current practice of our Christian belief
- c. give more space and attention within our own organization to discussing what inspires and motivates us in this work.

The dialogue with Southern faith-based organizations requires that Cordaid and ICCO possess a clear vision of their own organizations. What are our guiding values and how do we implement them?

Inreach: reflections about faith-based identity

The impact of secularization in the Netherlands

The importance of these issues became clear from the opening speech of Ineke Bakker, General Secretary of the Council of Churches in The Netherlands. She conveyed a good picture of the process of secularization in the Netherlands. According to her, religion is becoming less and less prominent in the public domain and increasingly a strictly personal matter. She spoke of the 'religious illiteracy' of many Dutch people, including the civil servants who formulate policies. Bakker quoted the Global Civil Society Report 2004: "There is no way we can understand the logic, strategies and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the Third World, unless we bring the transcendental dimension back into our analysis. Religious devotion is a fundamental motive for many social movements ..."

She addressed ICCO and Cordaid as follows: "If you do not take into account religion and its dynamics, if you do not have sensitivity towards religious devotion, you simply cannot understand the mechanisms and strategies of the social movements nor the motives of the people who are your partners in development."

She asked us to pay particular attention to the following four points:

- a. The contribution of religion to a more integrated vision of human rights and development.
- b. The recognition of the intrinsic value of religion as a source of power, meaning and well-being in the lives of millions of people.
- c. The recognition of the uncertainty and confusion felt by many of our own colleagues regarding their religious inspiration and identity and that of our organizations; the need to do our homework in this field.
- d. Our responsibility as religiously inspired institutions to speak out about the oppressive and extremist use of religion and attempt to put an end to it as far as possible.

Outreach: about the role of religion in the South

Religion, Human Rights and Development

In her keynote speech on the concepts of Religion, Human Rights and Development, Gerrie ter Haar argued that religion in many non-Western contexts has a different nature and emotional charge than in the West. She emphasized the notion of 'spiritual power', contact with the spirit world, as a form of empowerment that is particularly important for poor people with no other way of exerting control over their lives. From this viewpoint, Gerrie ter Haar made critical footnotes to a strictly secular legal interpretation of human rights approaches. The moral and spiritual integration of human rights is essential in order to anchor human rights in local cultures and achieve the right balance between rights and responsibilities.

The Western concept of development is, according to Gerrie ter Haar, a secular



Bob Goudzwaard and Ineke Bakker.

translation of the ancient Christian notion of the Kingdom of God, but now to be created on earth instead of heaven. Characteristic of this development approach is firstly the aspiration to banish all evil – in contrast to the recognition of human imperfection in a religious worldview – and secondly the belief in progress as predominantly material progress.

A religiously inspired vision of development is not primarily focused in economic development. Economic progress cannot be achieved without also having created the right spiritual conditions for it, believes ter Haar. She concluded: “Many religious believers consider that inner transformation is a necessary condition for social transformation, or even an actual source of it... Development, in such a view, is not only a material matter, but also a spiritual one, and without spiritual progress there is no material progress.”

For Western development organizations which must ask themselves what they can do to mobilize the religious and spiritual resources of mankind for human development, this means that: “Human development must build on people’s own resources.” There is absolutely no reason, according to ter Haar, to fail to consider these sources as we perform our development work.

Islam and social development

The Islamic theologian, Farid Esack, reflected on the different ways Muslims are responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. He recognized the dark corners of religion surrounding this subject, such as denial, silence, or the creation of scapegoats, but he mainly focused on the positive aspects of mercy, responsibility and justice:

- Mercy: The Arabic word for mercy, compassion, is ‘raham’, womb, uterus. That is the location, the intimacy of God’s relationship with use, a radical vulnerability.
- Responsibility takes shape in the recognition that I see myself in others (‘I am seeing me’). Can you recognize yourself in the mirror, in the faces of others? That conviction underpins the Islamic duty of ‘zakat’, giving away part of yourself to others. As a result, you also work for your own transformation.
- Justice: although Esack noticed that Islam is often spoken of rather simplistically as a religion of justice (compared to Christianity as a religion of love), he recognized that justice is a core aspect of this belief. He quoted the Koran, which summons people to stand up as witnesses before God – not only where one’s own rights are on the line, but also for the rights of others, even when it goes against your own self-interest. He referred to the Islamic (and Judaeo-Christian) idea that people, as creatures of God, are on the way back to God. The

recognition of this means that development must consist of more than just economic development.

Esack finally asked for the perspectives of people on the margins of society. Religious prophets of whatever tradition have shown themselves to be especially concerned about marginalized groups. For those who are in the centre, which is where Western development organizations are in a certain sense, the question is: "How can we decentralize the centre?"

The Egyptian religious scientist, Nasr Abu Zayd, captivated a large group of participants of the conference, both Muslims and non-Muslims, for a whole evening with his explanation of the history and current dynamics of exegesis in Islam, and in particular the application of this to social issues. The discussion with him uncovered some of the great depth and wealth of ethical-theological thought within Islam and the starting points this offers for the current development debate. In particular, his advocacy of the re-reading and reinterpretation of old sources in a contemporary context found much resonance among the assembled conference-goers.

The argument of the Turkish Minister for Religious Affairs, Mehmet Aydin, later in the conference, was a good example of Abu Zayd's thesis that Islam, in every time and place, must always be concerned with its interaction with its surroundings. Turkey was unique with its modernization process in the last century, which led it to its own interpretation of the separation between religion and state.

Christianity and social development

The Kenyan theologian, Fred Nyabera, presented the speech in absentiae of Agnes Abuom, lay African president of the World Council of Churches. From his own experience as director of an East African faith-based peace network, Nyabera illustrated how Christian churches and organizations in Africa interpret their task as being to work for peace, justice and development.

Their work for social development is motivated by 'core Christian values of love, justice, sharing, serving and good stewardship'. Many African faith-based organizations active in service delivery are driven by these values. Their strength is that their presence often extends throughout the entire country, even to the smallest villages. A good example of this is the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK), which works at both national and local level for human rights, peace and development.

Through the moral weight of its voice, the Church is more capable than any other organization to make prophetic statements about human rights violations committed either by governments and large corporations or international organizations. Churches therefore give a voice to the suffering of the people. That they are taken seriously is clear from the fact that they are very often invited to the discussion table by governments and international bodies such as the World Bank and the IMF.

Religion and development policy

The Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Agnes van Ardenne, advanced a personal argument about the importance of religion as a positive force in society. She asked, among other things, for monitoring of the space for religion in the Dutch public domain. She announced the creation of a knowledge forum on Religion and Development Policy, in which the Ministry intends to reinforce its knowledge and policy in the field, in collaboration with non-governmental development organizations. From 2008, she wants to make it compulsory for Embassies and non-governmental organizations to give attention to the role of religion and religious organizations in their policy planning and annual plans.

The Philippine anthropologist, Melba Maggay, asked for more consideration to be given to the personal transformation of people and the values which guide their lives as a source of progress. She emphasized the need for development organizations to

look more deeply into the informal and underlying structures of a culture, the so-called infraculture of software – in addition to the hardware of structures, institution building and the like. Her thesis was: ‘culture is the mother, institutions are the children’. And her advice was: look at what actually works well in a culture at the informal level, and connect to that.

In addition, she asked for the naming of the idols of our era: the convictions and ideologies which have acquired absolute, uncontested status, such as economic progress and the power of the state. She recollected that all true change starts from within, with a change in people, a shift from resignation and hopelessness towards hope and action. She called it ‘the movement of the Holy Spirit among us’, a process that occurs outside the logic of logframes, in its own way and its own time. She sees paying attention to this as one of the challenges facing Western faith-based organizations.

Conclusions and recommendations

The conference produced a rich harvest of insights, experiences and proposals for action. The most important among them included:

1. No outreach without inreach:

The conference participants recommend that Cordaid and ICCO, as faith-based organizations, clearly set down what they stand for and how they relate to the Dutch context and grassroots constituency. What are the values and language that bring us together? How do we view ourselves? Do we want others to regard us as Christianity-inspired organizations? One partner expressed it as follows: “You have to find your core spirit and inner motivation if you want to survive.”

2. Paradigm criticism:

The participants deconstructed development as a Western, secular project. They advocated developing a more holistic concept, where space is given for the fact that all change starts from within. This does not mean that Western development organizations need to abandon their professionalism, but that they widen their definition of development and adjust their working methods, by developing unorthodox means of measuring results, among other things. On this point, faith-based development organizations can differentiate themselves.

3. Religion as a positive force for human rights and development:

The participants recommended that ICCO and Cordaid develop strategies for using religions as positive sources of power for human rights and development. The partners indicated the following overall guidelines for this:

- a. Showing solidarity with people and their organizations at the local level (accompaniment, practical forms of aid and cooperation);
- b. Advocacy, prophetic pronouncements at higher levels from the religious core values of justice, mercy, compassion and freedom. Emphasis is placed on the importance of seeking universal values to which all religions and humanists can subscribe.
- c. Giving spiritual sustenance to individuals and groups working for transformation, recognition of the relationship between individual and social processes.

It is recommended to continue to make a clear-cut distinction between religion as a system of ideas and religious organizations as the communicators of these ideas. Organizations do not always succeed in acting in line with what they stand for. The responsibility of Cordaid and ICCO is to examine, together with these organizations, how we can best turn our missions into reality.



2. Reports of the Workshops

Introduction

The workshops were an important part of the conference. They concretized the complex relationship between religion and development by breaking it down in six different subtopics where religion can and does have an impact:

- Religion and civil society building
- Religion and democratization
- Religion and economic justice
- Religion and HIV/AIDS
- Religion, Peace and Reconciliation
- Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation

Objectives of all the workshops were:

- To deepen our understanding of how religion at various levels – ideas, practices, social organization and religious or spiritual experiences – can contribute positively to the abovementioned subthemes;
- To learn from practice through the combined knowledge and experience of the participants in this conference;
- To make recommendations on how development agencies could effectively support a positive role of religion in addressing these subjects.

2.1 Religion and Civil Society Building

Chair: Elly Rijnierse.

Resource persons: Alejandro Angulo (Colombia), Abamfo Atiemo (Ghana), Carlos Giebrecht (Paraguay), Andreas Subiyono (Indonesia), Chaider Bamualim (Indonesia).

Report: Dick Bouman.

Background

Civil society is crucial for development and a vital agent of social change. The notion of civil society was *en vogue* in the 18th and 19th centuries, had long fallen into disuse, and became a term of interest of the developmental cooperation sector some 10 years ago. For too long, we have held in our developmental thinking preconceived notions of 'the' market and 'the' state that were seemingly independent of local societies and cultures. The debate about civil society ultimately is about how culture, market and state relate to each other. A useful description of civil society is given by the London School of Economics:

Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, religious movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.

Thus, civil society is often seen and recognized as an important countervailing power to government, business and other societal powers and interests that may go against the identity, needs, rights and interest of particular groups, often minority groups. Civil societies and civil society organizations and movements exist at various levels, from the local to the national to the international. Cordaid and ICCO perceive religious institutions as civil society actors.

Many civil society organizations, including influential and resource-rich charities and foundations, are faith-based and have strong religious roots or are religious in nature. These organizations and their supporters can bring at least five strong assets to the efforts to build a sustainable world: the capacity to shape cosmologies (worldviews); moral authority; a large base of adherents; significant material resources; and community-building capacity. The capacity to produce strong community ties by generating social resources such as trust and cooperation can be a powerful boost to community and civil society development. Many political movements would welcome any of these five assets. To be endowed with most or all of them, as many faith-based organizations and religious institutions are, is to wield considerable political power. Religion is an important source of change within individuals and across societies. It is considered along with education, business and government, to be one of the major drivers of societal change in the world. Major societal changes of recent decades support these assertions. The Nicaraguan revolution (which was strongly backed by proponents of 'liberation theology'), the US Civil Rights movement led by the Reverend Martin Luther King and energized by thousands of religious supporters and the Shiite-inspired Iranian revolution are just a few societal-level changes in the twentieth century that were strongly influenced or led by religious institutions and people of faith.

Interestingly, many progressive, liberal, feminist and leftist civil society organizations still shy away from collaboration with faith-based organizations or religious institutions. Equally, many development agencies have not been fully able to engage these groups in their work. It is time to recognize that culture is central to local, national and regional development – and that religion is central to most cultures.

Workshop report

Day one (about concepts) started with presentations by two resource persons:

- **Abamfo Atiemo (Ghana): What religion can contribute to civil society**

Contributions of (Christian) religion in Ghana to civil society: Vision; capacity to alert for injustice; spirit of volunteerism and social responsibility; inculturation of valuable ‘foreign ideas’ and introduction the global perspective; mobilization capacity for social movements; provision of a value system as a countercheck, away from self-centredness; non-confrontationality in the promotion of change instead of Western style confrontation.

Needs (to better fulfil expectations): leadership skills, more exposure to global ideas; include HR interfaith and planning in formal education; facilitate interfaith encounters; projects should be given a longer time horizon.

- **Alejandro Angulo (Colombia): Some concepts of civil society building**

In ‘feudal Colombia’ (an oligarchy of 6 rich families), civil society organizations – including religious organizations – should be working from bottom up; work from human rights; emphasize relations (love); work on inner growth (acceptance, respect, love) and start from human dignity (children of God). The task in civil society building is to bring back religion into politics (meaning political ethics) and start peace and development at the grassroots level based on a system of rights, human economy, cultural focus and democratic decision making. Huge inequality demands the empowerment of ‘minorities’. How to bring good governance? Religions should encourage the spiritual fabric and responsible citizenship. Changes via international institutions, leaders of social movements, influencing youngsters of rich families and via the Catholic Church have failed. Start at the grassroots level and via traditional religious leaders who work close to politics.

General issues addressed after the presentations:

- Element of power needs to get attention. Also for religion, power is a factor.
- In formerly colonized countries, sometimes Human Rights still have a ‘colonial’ connotation.
- The theory that development leads to secularization is only observed in Western Europe; this is exceptional. In other countries, religion is still a dominant factor.
- Western donors are afraid to support religious social movements. In Turkey, for example, this meant that only secular ‘Elite NGOs’ were supported, who were not agents of change.
- Advantage of religious organizations can be their deep rootedness in society.
- Religion was already globalized in early days.

The second day (about practices) started with introductions by:

- **Carlos Giesbrecht (Paraguay - Indigenous Community work)**

PCI works with indigenous people in the Chaco in Paraguay, an area where settlers have occupied most of the fertile land. The organization PCI is non-religious, but has discovered the importance of religion in working with indigenous people. Until then Mennonite organizations, among others, had tried to impose their development model on the indigenous people. PCI started with interfaith dialogue in which indigenous groups and traditional authorities rediscovered the value of their own heritage. This created self-esteem and pride and encouraged their

creativity. They retake the initiative for their own well-being, instead of dependency behaviour towards the former charity. Interfaith dialogue proved to be the essential start for self-development.

Central in the discussion about the Paraguay example was that interreligious dialogue can often not remain neutral. The traditional elite or leadership is not always the best entry point. Too often, they are not open for change.



Gerrie ter Haar.

- **Chaider Bamualim (Indonesia - State Islamic University)**

Chaider Bamualim explained how Islamic Civil Society developed itself during oppressive colonial times and was neglected after independence, probably due to being regarded as conservative. He recognized the important role of Islamic (and Christian) civil society institutions and had 5 recommendations for their performance:

1. Religious freedom should be in place: each religion should have the right to express faith and practice;
2. Maintenance of independence of religious institutions by being dependent on own (non-state) resources only;
3. Role of promotion of social cohesion and integration to be highlighted; in most conflicts religion is not a starting factor;
4. Maintain role of provision of basic services (education and health) as addition to the State;
5. Prevent the danger of orthodoxy by modernization of religious institutions through human resource development and Institutional Development/Organizational Strengthening.

The discussion about these inputs led the group to a number of **conclusions:**

1. Religious organizations are considered as part of civil society, with the following observations:
 - Do we consider churches that are not active apart from charity outreach to be part of civil society?
 - Do we consider a state religion with political power/influence to be part of civil society?
 - Modernization influences the way in which religion has social involvement: away from denominational hierarchy and increased professionalism; this does not by definition lead to secularization.
 - Religion does not always come in the form of an organization but also as a belief, a spiritual medium, a sacred book, a moral force.
2. The group agreed that religion contributes to civil society in the following ways:

- **Spiritual capital:**

meaning in life; contribution to inner growth; providing motivation/ inspiration; moral force/values; recognition of identity; 'tool' for exchange on world views and interpretation; mobilizing force and organizational power (including volunteers); channel of communication, extend into the most remote areas (including the use of

symbols); social action (and services); linking levels (local - world); legitimacy (in advocacy); notion of enduring/patience; notion of non-confrontational change; notion of option for the poor; consistency in views and political opinions (Tutu). Many of these are related, interlinked and positive.

As a negative implication, the group noted that orthodox wings do not always recognize Human Rights; they emphasize God's grace and our duties.

- **Driver of Change potential**

Social change: role of churches powerful and often non-violent with moderating influence; capacity to mobilize people in oppressed situation, analysis of context, timing and methods (examples of Berlin Wall, Martin Luther King, Philippines); role of mediator; strengthening identity and self-confidence.

2.2 Religion and democratisation

Chair: Jan Nielen / Fulco van Deventer.

Resource persons: Rifat Kassis (Switzerland), Melba Padilla Maggay (Philippines), Huynh Cong Minh (Vietnam), Rose Mary Amenga-Etego (Ghana).

Report: Aad van der Meer.

Background

In many parts of the world, especially in Latin America, the question of the sustainability of the (so-called) democratic process is becoming increasingly relevant. It seems obvious that this sustainability is related to the problem of unbalanced economic development and limited social mobility. For the people, growing democracy means having more possibilities to influence their own future and lives. Growing differences between rich and poor, stagnation in the redistribution of resources and power and the feeling of being 'stuck' in society, will finally lead to new tensions in society, and – in reaction – new dominance from the leading classes to protect the interest of the wealthy and powerful.

In the Latin American continent, religions clearly play an important role in society, be it at the top level - traditional churches have structures that are connected to the highest circles of the state, or at the grassroots level – young charismatic churches are powerful because of their strong impact on the attitudes of their members (alcohol consumption, family values). The same patterns can be found in other continents and countries.

This means that, one way or another, religions can use their position to strengthen democracy through education, lobby and support for the struggle for more social responsibility and less corruption. By working to achieve more social justice and mobility, democratic development will become more sustainable in the long run.

Values play an important role here. Should religions use their 'religious' values to promote 'secular' justice and fight corruption in order to promote democratic development and, if yes, in what way can religions and their organizations be most effective in the fight for stronger democracy? Are the internal structures of religions exemplary of the kind of democratic development that is needed?

Workshop report

The meeting started with a reflection on the speech of the South African Muslim theologian Farid Esack, delivered in the plenary session just before the workshop started. Esack's conclusion 'Democracy is inadequate, but now it is the only currency we have' was found to be very true and supported by the group.

A general discussion developed regarding the concept of democracy and how it is applied in various national contexts. Group members agreed that in many places democracy exists in words but not in reality. Religion can play a role in criticizing that situation and promoting real democracy. Religion, as a spiritual and binding element in societies, should influence the way governments govern, protect the rights of citizens and give space for people's participation.

Examples from Palestine, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Ghana helped the group to identify critical issues and highlight the relationship with religion:

- In Palestine, people feel that the concept of democracy is abused. 'We can vote for our leaders, but at the same time Palestinian people don't have the possibilities to develop a free, peaceful and strong society where human rights are respected and people count'. In such a situation, religion can and should be the voice of the people.
- Also, in Ethiopia people feel that genuine democracy is far away. People are not central in the thinking of the government. There is not enough respect and



human rights are being violated. The corrective and prophetic answers of the religions are insufficient. Religions should speak for and advocate people who are being oppressed. Too often, however, religions are silent.

- In the Philippines, the democratic system is seen by many people as an American creation. The hardware for democracy is there (like elections), but the software is missing (connection to the needs of the people). The people and the government of the Philippines need to revive their internal values. Religions are best placed to initiate the discussion about these new values, but so far they only do that in a limited way.
- In Ghana, like in so many other African countries, democracy is reduced to elections. There are indigenous democratic structures (e.g. National House of Chiefs) which could be developed and revitalized.
- In Vietnam, the concept of democracy is being abused by the socialist government which has adopted free market thinking as its economic model. Ideally, in the socialist form of democracy, people should be masters and the party the servant. But now people are asked to be the servant, which means that democracy is being abused.

The second day of the discussion about practices started with inputs from three resource persons.

Father Huyng Cong Minh from Vietnam shared his insights from Vietnamese reality. The communist government thinks that development is the same as economic growth. While the economy is growing fast (with 10% per annum), many people are poor and a big gap exists between the rich and poor. The government speaks another language than the people. The church should challenge the government about the social cost of its free market thinking, but it doesn't do that. The church leadership

seems to be happy with the new freedom and not in the mood for new action. They concentrate on building new churches. Only small local church communities are actively working for change towards a more progressive Vietnam.

Rose Mary Amenga-Etego from Ghana challenged the idea of global democratization. According to her, 'the global village' is not one village. Democratization in Africa is different from elsewhere. In Ghana, the traditional chiefs continue to play an important political role next to the national government. The two systems are conflicting, yet also complementary. The key question is: whose religion and whose democracy are we talking about?

The issues that have to be dealt with as a matter of urgency are mass illiteracy, poverty, access to information, education, gender and sustainable development. The challenge for Ghana is to develop its own form of democracy and not import Western democracy principles.

Melba Padilla Maggay from the Philippines added that the development of democracy in a Western context has put people in the South and East in a disadvantaged position when it comes to internalizing it. There is often a combination of traditional and modern structures. In both, structures for accountability and responsible leadership exist. Nowadays, however, traditional values and structures are under pressure. They are often submerged but have not disappeared. What is important is to negotiate how traditional structures can be valued and formalized. Processes of integration are necessary and religions can play an important role in that. Also within religions, and for instance Bible reading, contextualization is important. It is the responsibility of the church to get people at the grassroots level involved in mainstream society. The core business of the church is to link the text of the Bible to the needs of the people. That stimulates a real form of democracy. "Only when we are faithful to the best we believe in are we liberated."

The group arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Democratization is a continuous, comprehensive and contextual process of empowering people to participate in the struggle for freedom, dignity, equality and peace.
2. Religious organizations from various religions should work together for justice, mercy and reconciliation. They should embody and promote the core values of respect, solidarity, compassion and shared responsibility as the guiding principles on the road to peace, development and democracy.

2.3 Religion and Economic Justice

Chair: Govert van Oord.

Resource persons: Josef Widyatmadja (Hong Kong), Jorge Atilio Silva Iulianelli (Brasil).

Report: Peter Das.

Background

In many countries with strong economic growth, people question the rationale behind this growth and express the need for renewal of values. They experience that globalization is not only an economic paradigm about market and growth, but includes the import of distinct cultural values which are often alien to them. Visions of development from religions (which are often seen as belonging to ‘traditional culture’) may differ significantly from the vision of globalized economic development. To religious groups, development experts may seem like ‘one-eyed giants’ who ‘analyze, prescribe and act *as if* man could live by bread alone, *as if* human destiny could be stripped to its material dimensions alone’. Sometimes, new values and ideas are perceived as positive when they strengthen human rights and condemn corruption. In many cases, however, people feel overwhelmed by new values alien to their own culture and value systems. This makes them resist globalization and open-market policies.

Central to this discussion is whether it is possible to maintain and develop cultural identities in a globalizing world, and what role religions can play in a more open and balanced process of economic globalization. Religions like Christianity and Islam focus on the ‘road’ to fullness and balance, rather than on the final stage of perfection. Economic paradigms and criteria tend to emphasize a ‘final stage’ of economic development that justifies today’s sacrifices and injustice (for certain groups). These are two different approaches and visions that make fruitful dialogue between religious organizations and economists difficult and hampered by prejudices and negative images. The challenge is to determine the form in which dialogue between religions and economic actors and government can take place. What makes religion an interesting partner for international institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, but also for local employers or labour unions?

Workshop report

After some brainstorming and reports from Asia and Latin America, the workshop attempted to systematize the issue. The role religion can play in the economy was divided into four levels: *paradigms*, *values*, *prophecy* and *actions*. For each of these four levels, the group identified a list of instruments for religious movements and organizations.

Paradigms	Values	Prophecy	Actions
Theological reflection	Ethics	Public debate	Direct action
Definition of the problem	Conditions: Transparency, participation, anti-corruption	Denounce and announce; prophetic voice	Research, study, dialogue
Choice for the poor, just distribution, sustainability	Free access to Information	Participation in formulation of policies	Mobilization of the poor
The problem is not poverty but wealth	Consumer awareness	Awareness raising with the poor	Dialogue with the rich. Finding allies in the economic sector
Critiquing the economy of efficiency and money. Opt for an economy of ‘caring and sharing’	Support the values of solidarity and caring	Advocate for Corporate Social Responsibility and new international relations	Start pilots of solidarity and examples of ‘caring and sharing’. Get rid of trade barriers for the poor

1. At the level of **paradigms**, the workshop concluded:

Theological reflection is needed on the economic policy of countries. To what extent is the policy just according to the Bible/the Koran and according to the conviction of religions about economic practices? Based on that reflection, *problems that need to be resolved can be defined*. The outcomes of these reflections can be articulated by the religions in economic terms. A crucial message is that it is *not the poor, but the rich who are the problem in this world*. This implicates that change should start in the rich countries, not (only) in the poor countries. There should be a *preference for the poor*, the preferable economic system is an *economy of caring and sharing*, not a system where efficiency and money have the last word irrespective of the effects on the poor and vulnerable.

2. At the level of **values**, the workshop concluded:

This is about the *ethical debate* regarding what values should be articulated by religious movements. How to identify the right way for economic actors to act on the market? The elementary values are *openness and transparency*. People should be aware not only of the price of goods, but also of *the origin of products* (we buy not only something, but also from someone). *Are people and planet treated with respect?* It is important that *'old' values of solidarity and caring* will be taught again to young and old.

3. At the level of **prophecy**, the workshop concluded:

Paradigms and values have to be articulated by religious organizations in a prophetic way. This means that churches and other religious organizations should not necessarily speak the language of politicians and economists, but the *language of justice and freedom*. A long-term perspective is important in a world that is focused on quick gains and four years periods for politicians. Some ways for that have been suggested in the table are: understanding the needs and desires of people, the ability to articulate these needs to decision makers and to challenge economic actors like enterprises to take *Corporate Social Responsibility seriously*.

4. At the level of **action**, the workshop concluded:

Prophecy should be followed by action varying from *dialogue with the rich and influential*, to *mobilization*, addressing economic and political actors. *Pilots and examples of just economic development* are important to show that justice and solidarity work.

The following macro issues should get attention at all four levels:

- I a fair system of trade;
- II reform of international financial institutions (IMF, WB);
- III defence of intellectual property rights;
- IV more focus on ecology: sustainable economy and attention on future generations;
- V a holistic concept of security, including the struggle against poverty and injustice.

Micro issues that should be supported are:

- I small-scale fair trade initiatives
- II an active role of religions in concrete economic issues
- III dialogue/lobbying with economic and political actors

2.4 Religion and HIV/AIDS

Chair: Karin Willemse.

Resource persons: Philomena Mwaura (Kenya), Alexis Danikuu (Ghana), Hugo Hinfelaar (Zambia), Geertje van Mensvoort (Cordaid), Willeke Kempkes (ICCO).

Report: Gerrie ter Haar.

Background

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has become a major threat to development. In particular, in Sub-Saharan Africa, India and China, a whole generation will be wiped out as a consequence of this still deadly disease. The vast spread of the HIV infection is, among others, caused by unequal gender relations, cultural beliefs and practices surrounding sexuality, fertility and procreation, inadequate systems for awareness raising, education and information sharing, stigma, an attitude of denial, accusation and indifference by political and moral authorities and sheer poverty.

The linkage between the protection of human rights and effective HIV/AIDS programmes is apparent, since people will not seek HIV-related counselling, testing, treatment and care if lack of confidentiality, discrimination, stigmatization, restrictions to freedom of movement or other negative consequences exist. It has become increasingly apparent that a comprehensive response is needed to handle the consequences of the pandemic. An essential component of such a response is the facilitation and creation of a legal and ethical environment which is protective of human rights.

It is fundamental to develop multisector and multipartner approaches, because HIV/AIDS is not just a health issue. It affects the sociocultural fabric, human rights and long-term economic well-being, in particular of the most vulnerable people, such as women, children and young people who live in economically destitute circumstances or amid violent conflicts. Working in close partnership with various national, regional and international actors is a prerequisite for the establishment of effective programmes.

Religions play a key role in the way a society can handle the systemic causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS. We can differentiate between various religiously inspired reactions to the disease:

- Promoting exclusion and stigmatization, which undermines effective and adequate action aimed at handling the disease and supporting those infected by it.
- Caring and supporting, based on empathy and sympathy.
- Contributing to a discussion on unequal gender-based power relations, cultural notions of sexuality, fertility and faithfulness, education and morals.

Increasingly, religious leaders and faith-based organizations are joining forces with civil society organizations and developmental agencies to publicly speak out against the discrimination and stigmatization of HIV-infected people and AIDS patients. While development organizations and donors are particularly interested in the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS policy and programmes, religious and faith-based organizations address the underlying causes of the disease and the exclusion and stigmatization that accompany it.

Religious leaders and faith-based organizations focus on the underlying causes of the disease and their public expression of empathy and sympathy with those infected has significantly contributed to a more effective approach to fighting HIV/AIDS. We witness a change from stigmatization of those infected to a concerted effort to take care of and work with them and their families in order to overcome their vulnerable position in society. However, the issue of prevention is one many religious leaders and organizations are still struggling with.

Workshop report

Concepts

The discussion on concepts aimed at clarifying some of the underlying ideas relating to both theory and practice of the HIV/AIDS debate. To facilitate the discussion on the first day, Philomena Mwaura made the initial presentation in which she highlighted the relation between HIV/AIDS and the overarching theme of the conference: religion, human rights and development. The following points stood out in the presentation and following discussion.

- The gap between theory and practice. In Kenya, there is a remarkably high degree of awareness about HIV/AIDS (99%), but this does not seem to affect people's behaviour in any significant way.
- The ways in which religion, or religious belief, influences health-seeking behaviour. In Africa, this also brings up the issue of witchcraft.
- The importance of the way people think about human sexuality. Abstinence cannot be the solution. There must be an acceptance of human sexuality, combined with an awareness of harmful or life-threatening cultural practices, such as circumcision, widowhood rites, etc. The need for a theology of sexuality addressing issues of sexual ethics and conduct was emphasized.
- The importance of understanding the global context in which HIV/AIDS programmes operate: one of poverty and economic injustice.
- The importance of understanding the local context requires consideration of specific worldviews. It was stressed that a technical or medical response to HIV/AIDS, which does not take people's worldview into account, is bound to fail. Linking up with people's worldview will allow for a discussion of morality as understood by the community concerned. It is on that basis that people may be convinced to act differently. Ethical values are rooted in local cultures. It further appeared that much work done on the ground is not known among Western donors. A good example is the volumes produced by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians on HIV/AIDS (and other social issues).

Geertje van Mensvoort and Willeke Kempkes made a joint presentation in their capacity as policy officers of Cordaid and ICCO respectively. In their presentation, they stressed gender as one of the most important concepts in the HIV/AIDS debate. Issues concerning exclusion mechanisms, stigmatization and self-stigmatization came into the discussion. It was further emphasized that AIDS is not so much a health issue as a *development* issue, with structural causes driving the AIDS pandemic. A human rights approach to the problem of AIDS, that recognizes people's social and economic rights, would be required.

In the discussion, a number of points were brought to the fore:

- The importance of people's *worldview* or cosmology was once again stressed. A plea was made for reclaiming moral resources from people's 'own' culture and tradition.
- The notion of *agency* was brought in, notably in the case of women and girls: AIDS victims are not only victims.
- The need for *self-reflexivity* on both sides: aid donors and recipients of aid. This includes reflection on notions of good and evil. It also includes serious attention for local perceptions of gender. The question of power relations was also raised.

During the discussion, a point was made regarding local perceptions of AIDS (American Invention to Discourage Sex), the connection made between AIDS and aid, or the disastrous combination of Attitude, Ignorance, Denial and Silence.

In summary, in view of the discussions in the working group, the following concepts emerged as being of vital importance: sexuality, worldview, ethics, gender, culture, contextualization, agency, and (self-)reflexivity.



Practices

Day 2 focused on practices. The underlying idea was to learn from the experiences of partners in the South about the situation regarding HIV/AIDS and relevant policies. Resource persons Alexis Danikuu (Ghana) and Hugo Hinfelaar (WP missionary to Zambia) facilitated the discussion with a short presentation, copies of which were made available during the conference.

Regarding Ghana, the following points were made (between the brackets is a link to the concepts discussion):

- The context of economic decline [contextualization]
- The need for a balance in the ABC approach (not just C) [sexuality, culture, ethics]

It was noted how much money is apparently available to the advertising industry to advertise condoms. And what about their distribution? Hugo Hinfelaar observed that, in Zambia, the price of condoms goes up as the price of petrol rises...

- The availability of policy documents produced by local churches [reflexivity]
- The importance of leadership training [contextualization, worldview]
- The need for inclusive language [self-reflexivity]
- The importance of empowering vs. stigmatization [agency, gender]

Regarding Zambia, the following points were made (between brackets a link is made with the concepts discussion):

- The need for capacity-building from within [agency]
- The impact of marital taboos [culture, sexuality]
- The effects of international trade [contextualization]
- The responsibility of young men and women [gender, ethics]
- The importance of initiation rites [worldview, culture]
- The specific character of cultural practices [culture]

In conclusion, it was recommended for donors not to present themselves as prophets of doom (with devastating statistics), but to concentrate on the 'beauty' that is left. Secondly, local research and an open debate on harmful religious or traditional customs should be encouraged.

In summary, it appears that the importance and relevance of the concepts identified during day 1 were confirmed in the contributions made by the partners from the South. Urgent attention to local contexts, local initiatives, and local cultures and traditions in the fight against AIDS was one of the clearest results of the two working group sessions.

2.5 Religion, Peace and Reconciliation

Chair: Roel Aalbersberg.

Resource persons: Rashied Omar (South Africa), Mario Higueros Fuentes (Guatemala), Shirley DeWolf (Zimbabwe), William Docherty (Israel).

Report: Feije Duim, Eelco de Groot.

Background

Since the end of the Cold War, marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the world has witnessed an upsurge of violent conflicts, which are now often of an intrastate nature.

While the background and dynamics of these violent conflicts are diverse, a helpful distinction can be made between ideological, factional and identity/secession conflicts. In *ideological conflicts*, armed movements attempt to change the nature of the government on the basis of political or religious ideals. *Factional conflicts*, by contrast, are about inter-elite struggles or violence of warlords or criminal gangs aiming to usurp, seize or retain state power to further private interests. In *identity/secession conflicts*, the relative status of groups or communities and their relation to the state is at stake. This can involve struggles for both autonomy and access to the political process. In this respect, a frequently used label is 'ethnic' or 'religious' conflict, but this overemphasizes the ethnic/religious dimension. While claims of a common ethnic or religious identity indeed often become a central issue in the mobilization of groups, contributing to the tension and polarization, the core issues are often of a political, economic or territorial nature.

On a global scale, terrorism has entered the stage as a new form of violence using religious language and symbols as inspiration and justification. In the corresponding 'war on terror', religious language is not shunned either. As a net result, religion and violence have become inextricably linked in the eyes of the general public.

Religion, on the other hand, can also be seen to play important positive roles in contexts of violent conflict. In war-ravaged countries and so-called 'failed states', religious institutions are often the only functioning social structure that keeps society together. Likewise, religious values and ideals inspire many people to become a force for good by working for justice and peace, often at great personal risk. Religious leaders at different levels frequently play key roles as mediators in reconciling inimical groups. There are many examples, such as the recent terrorist attacks in London, where religious leaders took their responsibility by calling on their constituencies to avoid the trap of blaming and attacking 'the others'. The growing interest in the study of religion as a result of these realities has helped to clarify the dual nature of religion and the conditions that make it susceptible to abuse. For the purpose of this conference, namely to look at religion as a source for human rights and development cooperation, we propose to focus on religion's positive potential to contribute to peace and reconciliation.

Workshop Report

The first day, **Rashied Omar**, resource person from South Africa, emphasized the importance of location. We are not empty slates, but are conditioned by our culture, language, class, sex. He further emphasized the need to discern between:

- weak reconciliation: affective realm only. Often overstressed, and in fact often legitimating fraud processes. Revictimizing the victims. Culprits had to be set free if they 'confessed', but without justice being done or compensation being given.
- strong reconciliation: based on justice that is done.

He challenged Western agencies by stating that reconciliation processes are often imposed on the Third World and on the victims, whereas different standards are followed in the First World. "Would you force Jews to forgive what you did to them in the 40's? Could the Dutch demand to be forgiven by the Indonesians?" He pleaded to work on reconciliation in a consistent and inclusive way, looking at our own societies too.



Agnes van Ardenne and Bob Goudzwaard.

Mario Higuera Fuentes, from Guatemala, shared his personal experiences as a second-generation evangelical. His work as a preacher in indigenous communities which were hit by a major earthquake opened his eyes for the causes of poverty and injustice. He realized that charity is not enough for a change and, together with others, started to voice the concerns of the voiceless. He learned the value of solidarity and the meaning of peace in an environment of injustice. This deeply influenced how he later came to lead the seminary. He emphasized the need to open our eyes to see the suffering and what our belief has to say. He has come to see development as a concept imposed by the North. The dominant economic paradigm is not helping the poor to respect and well-being.

Based on these inputs, the group discussed the following topics:

- Location often means the conditioning of people into narrow concepts and ideas. Examples are apartheid in South Africa, or the segregation in Israel-Palestine. Policies are made to segregate communities from each other, which leads to conditioning them for conflict and takes away the space for reconciliation and peace. Often the alienation of communities from each other is the result of deliberate policies.
- When conditioned like that, suffering and incapable to give words to the pain and injustices inflicted, local communities are often not ready for major things like dialogue and reconciliation. They have to be empowered to give words to the pain and so start sharing pains over the boundaries of their group and community. In Zimbabwe, for example, this happens in the streets, the buses and the shops. Religions can help people find words for their suffering. Not only in Zimbabwe, but also in Guatemala, where religious stories help people to detect and share the pain, and find a way to start processes of reconciliation.
- Dialogue and reconciliation are often imposed by the West. Sometimes untimely reconciliation is forced on communities. Peace initiatives, truth and reconciliation commissions with a lot of money available are forced onto communities. It is important to promote and support local ways of peace-building and reconciliation in combination with justice. No cheap forgiveness, but incorporating justice and repair, rightful compensation. Reconciliation never can replace justice, but it can complement justice.
- It is questionable whether local justice is helpful in all cases to fight impunity. The fight against impunity is part of the fight for justice and reconciliation. It should also be performed in the international arena, using international instruments like

- the International Criminal Court. Religious communities can support that.
- Dialogue can help. But it may also obstruct, when not sharing your pain, but talking from positions. The dialogue of leaders can bring about solidarity and reconciliation if they want to work for peace and uplift suffering, speak up together against injustice, deploy joint strategies for fighting together for justice and peace, and help communities get to know each other and overcome their differences (Mindanao, Papua New Guinea).
 - The added value of religions in this process is in their prophetic role. Religious leaders should not be involved in political conflict resolution, but rather in social reconciliation, transforming conflict. Sometimes it is more important to side with the victims, strengthening them in voicing their pain, than to force cheap reconciliation on behalf of the powerful. The prophetic voice from religions becomes meaningful when it takes the risk of calling for justice and real reconciliation.

The second day, the discussion continued with a deepening of the issues raised on the first day:

- Religion should not be studied merely as a 'strategic tool' in development cooperation. The West also needs to look into its own lack of religion/spirituality. And the impact of the pseudoreligious Western belief in progress and science should be investigated critically.
- Religion may give strength to endure injustice, but this can lead to weak reconciliation, only addressing the affective level and not the structural injustice. One participant's observation in Sierra Leone is that 'strong religion leads to weak reconciliation'. The mosques and churches are full, the leaders preach about forgiveness, but structural injustice is not addressed.
- This observation led to a debate about the tension between justice and reconciliation. In various post-conflict areas, one can see 'the little fish' confess publicly about what they did and why and do some form of penitence for the community. The big fish, however, often escape justice. Real reconciliation, it was stressed, includes penitence and compensation in some way. Religious leaders should be challenged not to accept cheap reconciliation.
- The timeframe is also important. The European experience with the Holocaust was mentioned as an example of how long it can take to get over this kind of atrocity. The third generation is still full of anger; many have not been able to truly come to terms with the past. All agreed to the wisdom that peace is not a state, but an organic process. It occurs step by step. Like in the example of the Mozambique farmer who described peace as the possibility to take up your hoe and plant your field. It happens through concrete activities, in little stages and continues to grow.
- The same is true for reconciliation. "The moment you decide to take the first step, reconciliation begins." It is often a long-term process, with a beginning but not a real end. It makes it more doable by understanding how it accumulates, by accepting that falling back is also part of that process. It requires a context where people are able to take up their daily lives again. This means a minimum level of services, schools, security. It also requires a readiness of the people, for which healing is a precondition.
- To illustrate the difference between weak and strong reconciliation, Desmond Tutu's 'bicycle theology' was mentioned: you can forgive the thief of your bicycle, but what happens if the thief does not return the bicycle? The objective conditions are still the same, nothing really changes.
- The ability to relate to 'the other' is a key element of true peace and reconciliation. This is part of all religions, but is often blocked by conflicts when people put barriers between 'us' and 'them'. Religions have developed 'tools', such as rituals and prayers, to help us to get through the experience of reconnecting to the others (and to ourselves).
- This is also true of interstate conflict, where the role of religion can be to

promote human contacts between people of the two states as a starting point for reconciliation. It is very important that people come to understand each other and acknowledge what has been done.

The working group ended by putting together some practical guidelines for peace and reconciliation by faith-based and secular actors at various levels:

International faith-based/ secular organizations	Local faith-based/ secular actors	Religious leaders
1. Being, listening, acting in solidarity with individuals and groups	1. Being, listening, acting in solidarity with individuals and groups	1. showing escalating injustices to regional and national authorities
2. support local peace networks	2. establish forums	2. building bridges between different (religious) groups
3. provide protection for human rights activists	3. telling stories	
4. advocacy on Justice/ Impunity	4. articulate visions	
5. criticism and debate on war on terrorism	5. create and affirm faith-based network organizations at the grassroots level	
6. encourage processes of reconciliation, stimulating acts of reparation	6. encourage and execute processes of reconciliation and acts of reparation	
7. peace as a process, difficult to measure quantitative results à implications for donors	7. advocate strong reconciliation, including justice, address impunity	
8. lobby with dept. of development cooperation to support restoration of justice system	8. mediation & trauma healing	
	9. celebrate small steps	
Local faith-based / secular actors, international faith-based organizations and religious leaders		
1. Determine the root causes of the conflict and inform all stakeholders at local, regional, national international level		
2. Develop and execute a critical theology of Peace, Justice, Reconciliation & development, use/reflect on what's already there		
3. Lobby the recipient authority level for the restoration of the justice system		

2.6 Interreligious dialogue and cooperation

Chair: Maria Lorenza Palm – Dalupan

Resource persons: Musha Shim Arquiza (Philippines), Fred Nyabera (Kenya), Elga Sarapung (Indonesia), Muslim Abdilla and Kiswara Santi Prihandini (Indonesia).

Reporter: Susan Muis

Background

Religion is a powerful force in the lives of millions of people around the world. In the face of social upheaval caused by economic and cultural globalization, impoverishment, conflict and massive migration and dislocation of people, religious tensions and extremism have also grown. Acts of violence and injustice towards ‘the other’ are often justified with an appeal to religious beliefs or sacred texts.

As an antidote to this divisive dimension of religion, numerous interreligious dialogue initiatives have been started, involving religious leaders and believers from the grassroots to the highest level. The underlying assumption is often that dialogue will help to overcome prejudice, mistrust and fear of ‘the other’, and consequently to bridge gaps and foster cooperation between people of different faiths.

As one of the bodies that has been active in facilitating interreligious dialogue, the World Council of Churches recently (June 2005) held a conference about “Critical moment in interreligious dialogue” with religious leaders, academic specialists and grassroots activists from 10 world religions. As the title of the conference indicates, the Council felt the need for a critical reflection on what has been achieved so far and what needs to be done in the years to come.

The conference reconfirmed that ‘more than at any other time there is a great awareness of the need for a credible and relevant interreligious dialogue’. It acknowledged that dialogue has helped to challenge fundamentalism and divisive ideologies and to foster trust-building among religious leaders.

The conference also concluded, however, that dialogue alone is not enough. Dialogue needs to transform into peaceful coexistence and into common action grounded in shared values such as tolerance, dignity, equality and just peace. In the midst of the perceived ‘moral vacuum’ of today’s globalized world, values - not interests - were emphasized as the guiding principles of interreligious collaboration.

Another conclusion was that much more grassroots participation is needed, especially from women and youth, and that concrete cooperation should be the main goal. The conference ended by expressing the conviction that interreligious cooperation should be pushed to new levels of relevance for a world in crisis. It saw an urgent need for involving more people in more creative ways to overcome divisions that threaten humanity. A ‘post-conversion spirit’ and a ‘new missionary impulse’ were called for to recover our common humanity.

Workshop report

In the first session, the participants reflected on and discussed the various dilemmas of interreligious dialogue in relation to justice, peace and development. Interreligious dialogue is defined as both interfaith and intercultural dialogue. In real life, these two dimensions cannot be easily separated. Dialogue should include talk and action. The purpose of the dialogue should be clear to all involved. A genuine contribution to social change, justice and conflict transformation must start from real-life problems such as HIV/AIDS, sexual violence against women and poverty. These are issues that concern people from various cultural and religious backgrounds. Dialogue should go far beyond ‘bringing Muslims and Christian (leaders) together so they can solve violent conflicts or negotiate justice for those affected by violence and exclusion’.

A critical question is who initiates the dialogue, whose agendas are being put on the table and why? Equality of participation in the dialogue is crucial if it wants to

succeed as a mechanism to further development and justice. Participants need to know the context in which problems can be solved through dialogue.

It is recommended to work through the following dimensions when engaging in interreligious dialogue:

Content:

- Awareness of the differences between the different parties
- Sensitive issues need to be included
- Awareness of various religious doctrines
- The need to have a clear link to daily-life problems and challenges

Participants:

- Religious leaders, elite groups, but certainly representatives at the grassroots level. The latter should be involved if the dialogue is to succeed. There needs to be a mechanism for downward accountability.
- Most successful interreligious dialogue has been between moderate parties. There is, however, a clear need to approach more orthodox or extremist representatives. Intrareligious dialogue can be as important as interreligious dialogue, particularly when aiming to communicate with extremist factions.

Constructive and Destructive dialogue:

- Dialogue can be constructive when it is rooted in the daily-life problems and dilemmas of local populations and when it is contextualized. It can then build bridges between these groups.
- Dialogue is destructive when it is not transparent who is behind the dialogue and for what purpose, and when it is not aimed at resolving the root causes of social injustice, but at achieving an external political agenda.

The lesson learnt is that interreligious dialogue has not always been successful. We see that Muslim - Christian dialogue has become the menu of today. The leaders of these religions have become the main actors in interreligious dialogue. However, this dialogue is not supposed to be exclusive. Other religions, and marginalized groups in particular, need to be included, e.g. women, indigenous people, youth and children. Sometimes interreligious dialogue has become a political action towards solving a problem in society by policy makers. Also, interreligious dialogue can be misused for the promotion of religion (as a strategy to convert people). The dialogue should be more transformative.

Recommendations

The second session summarized the following recommendations concerning interreligious dialogue:

- It is important to be aware of the type of dialogue the involved parties are aiming for: **intercultural**, **interfaith** and **interreligious** dialogue. Community leaders and religious leaders must start a discussion in order to understand which type of dialogue they aim to engage in. There must be flexibility and good understanding of the terms used, which should be culturally appropriate. Interfaith dialogue has a more open and inviting character, and includes all types of beliefs. This is particularly important in polarized and fragmented societies. Interreligious dialogue has too often become the remit of patriarchs of official religions who engage in politically loaded dialogue (though a few participants disagreed on this).
- The methodology to engage in dialogue is not always well-chosen. A 'Do no harm approach' is strongly recommended here. NGOs/donors must be sensitive

to the role of various beliefs and religions among local populations. A clear conflict analysis/assessment should be included alongside a Do No Harm perspective prior to intervening through dialogue. It is vital that donors and implementing organizations have a clear understanding of the context and the issues at stake. They need to be aware that, although political repression and economic exclusion often are the root causes of conflict in communities, religious groups or resentments worsen the manifestations of such conflict.

- Attention must be given to the process of interreligious dialogue. The beginning is often a small-scale issue of shared concern among various belief and religious groups. Self-criticism should be part of the dialogue. It is recommended to approach extremist individuals and groups and make an effort to involve them in the dialogue. When you let them talk for themselves, you will discover that they do share similar concerns, such as violations of human rights or economic and social exclusion. A self-reflective attitude does help to cross the divide between extremist voices. It also helps to facilitate debate within the same religion or belief. Ultimately, it is about an open, self-critical attitude which is the basis for building mutual trust.
- The experiences and lessons learnt, including failed efforts, should be documented, and better tools for linking and learning and mutual reflection should be developed. These are the key to refining policies and strategies.
- The process of interreligious dialogue must be owned by all the participants. Power relations are a clear dimension. Who sets the agenda, who controls the flows of information, who decides on the parties to be included or excluded? In other words, who has ownership? There is a clear need for accountability mechanisms, particularly downward accountability.
- Northern agencies, such as Cordaid and ICCO, should promote the positive aspects of interreligious dialogue and engage in an open dialogue on its negative aspects (based on the lessons learnt and linking and learning). These agencies should also look at their own dilemmas and problems with respect to the role of religions and religious institutions in social change and human rights. This will give them leverage and greater legitimacy to engage in this type of dialogue.
- The implementing agencies should know the intentions of donors and international agencies to engage in interreligious dialogue. They should also develop clear indicators to monitor interreligious dialogue processes (particularly those focused on human rights). They must promote the positive aspects of interreligious dialogue within their own societies, and be open about failed efforts.

Final conclusion: Interreligious dialogue is mutual, verbal and action-engagement of people of different faiths towards common issues and/or ideas guided by respect, tolerance and self-reflection.

3. Actors

Introduction

On the last day of the conference, the working groups were formed according to different categories of actors. These working groups went through the results of the first two days and the plenary contributions of day three and formulated recommendations for each of the categories of actors. The following recommendations and results were reported.

3.1 Religious actors

Chair: Hielke Wolters

Reporter: Aad van der Meer

The group started by summarizing the outcomes of the working groups on the various subthemes. Based on this rich material, a discussion about implications and possible approaches followed.

The group reconfirmed that religious actors have an important role to play in the field of human rights and development through the combination of their spiritual capital, provision of meaning and identity, moral force, mobilizing force and organizational power, social action and services, etc.

Some areas for improvement were also noted, in particular the need for more knowledge among religious actors about the functioning of economics and society, and the need to take more responsibility in defending and promoting people's human rights.

The group made the following recommendations to religious actors and faith-based organizations:

- ICCO, Cordaid and ISS are asked to continue to give the issue of religion and development their long-term and intensive attention. It is key for better interaction and understanding of relations with their partners overseas;
- Spirituality (God) should be central to the thinking and decisions of religious actors and FBOs;
- Communication among churches, mosques and other religious organizations must improve;
- FBOs must continue to advocate that human life is in danger – respect for life must be key in their agendas. We all must affirm life.
- Religious actors must be spiritually equipped – this may lead to criticism of dominant economic systems (power of refusal);
- What kind of society are the Dutch FBOs and religious organizations dreaming of in the Netherlands and what is their attitude towards migrants?
- Self-criticism has influenced the self-esteem of the Northern FBOs; they seem to have lost spiritual power and drive. Mobilizing spiritual resources is necessary. Overseas partners can assist;
- Faith-based MFOs must channel resources into spiritual growth (“inreach”).

3.2. Non-Governmental Actors

This is an integrated report of the results of two working groups consisting of donor NGOs and Southern NGOs.

Chair: Fulco van Deventer (S-NGOs), Annet IJff (donor NGOs)

Reporter: Lisette van der Wel (S-NGOs), Lia van Broekhoven (donor NGOs)

Both groups started with a round in which the participants reported their experiences in the working groups during the previous days.

The following issues and opinions were stated, which were considered relevant to the discussion irrespective of the particular workshop:

1. Faith-based NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) share a concern about global imbalances and injustice. The hegemonic concepts of development and the imbalance in power relations from the global to the local level require that our work with local populations go hand in hand with taking positions, lobbying and advocacy (the prophetic role). Accompanying the poor, oppressed and vulnerable and working for justice are both necessary. *Helping others to be instead of causing them to be* should be our motto. But we also need to be helped ourselves.
2. Many donor NGOs tend to work with development elites, both at the national and international levels. The pressure they feel to produce tangible results and be accountable to their backdonors leads to working with those who speak a similar development language. Faith-based NGOs should be firm in their choice for those who are vulnerable in processes of social, economic and political change. And be open to language, rituals and living practices that are not commonly understood. Our own spiritual and faith-based roots should drive us in our work and in our communication with developmental actors.
3. There is a need for common values beyond old religious and national boundaries. This implies a rethinking of theologies. As Abu Zayd said: “we have to go back to our own scriptures and read them in the modern world”. As faith-based NGOs and networks, we should improve our capabilities to effectively communicate our specific worldview, mission, goals and strategies to the larger development world. Consider development as a “blossoming society” instead of merely in economic, social and political terms.
4. There is a need for new strategies. These must address both the local CSOs and populations through accompaniment, facilitation and reflection in a contextual manner, and at the national, regional and global levels through collaboration and networking. We also need to engage different partners, churches, religious institutions and actors, theologians and others to enter into a social movement based on shared values. The spiritual dimension of change should be recognized.
5. Faith-based donor NGOs need to continue to provide longer-term and institutional support to their partners. They should resist the pressure to work from a short-term project frame. They also need to value partnership in terms of commitment, empathy, self-esteem and inner growth. Mutual sharing and learning are key. Channelling funds and supporting capacity building must be complemented by linking and learning, and a self-reflective way of working. A marriage or friendship is a nice metaphor to express our partnership.

The following remarks were made about the role of donor NGOs and NGOs regarding the subthemes of the conference:

a. Religion and Civil Society

1. The need to understand local cosmologies and perceptions of change, justice and injustice and perceive them from the framework of universal concepts of Human Rights and development paradigms.

2. The need to advocate the independence of CSOs, including churches and religious institutions, from the state.
3. Balancing awareness and knowledge on the misuse of religion and the weaknesses of religious institutions with the positive force of commonly shared values on solidarity, justice and love.

b. Religion and Democratization

1. Caution in exporting “our Westernized style of democracy” as a model. Change starts from within.
2. The need to focus on minorities and to help facilitate space for their lifestyle, living practices and worldview. This requires taking a stance on the possible tension between the inclusivity of the concept of democratization and the exclusivity of certain religious views, practices, institutions and actors.
3. “Walk with people in their joy and sorrow, respect their own time.”

c. Religion and economic justice

1. Advocate the need for a new paradigm on economic development and globalization, and a theology of economics which focuses on human-centred development and a preferential option for the oppressed and vulnerable.
2. Emphasize prophecies that focus on stewardship, solidarity and subsidiarity. Stimulate religious actors and leaders to be more outspoken on the damaging effects of the neoliberal growth model, the need to redistribute wealth, and to respect the entitlements of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands.
3. Be clear on our position in relation to developmental elites, such as the World Bank, IMF, WTO and the business sector, and our rules of engagement with them. Play a more visible role in the events of the World Social Forum.



d. Religion and HIV/AIDS

1. Support a theological reflection on sexuality, which may lead to a new theology on sexuality and evil in which HIV is seen as a punishment of God is being contested.
2. Support a seminar or conference in which the wider developmental community, religious actors and theologians, such as the Circle of Concerned African Female Theologians, can reflect on this new theology in relation to the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic for development.
3. Avoid seeing HIV/AIDS infected people as victims only and understand the wholeness of a human being and his/her (sexual) relationships, including the beauty of these.

e. Religion and peace and reconciliation

1. Advocate “Strong Reconciliation”, which is based on justice and must include compensation (restitution) and penitence (genuine remorse). Ultimately, it should lift up victim and perpetrator into another phase of life, which is a shared life.
2. Advocate against a culture of continued violence and impunity.
3. Advocate that peace and reconciliation processes require small steps and a long timeframe. These small steps must be celebrated at the various levels involved. Help facilitate forums in which people tell their stories and articulate their visions and expose these to the international arena.

f. Interreligious dialogue and cooperation

1. Go beyond interreligious dialogue as an end in itself. It is a communication tool and a means to an end. It may be better to use interfaith or intercultural dialogue instead.
2. Help connect living dialogue and communication among local populations with more formalized forms of interreligious dialogue.
3. Recognize the importance of intrareligious dialogue for addressing tensions between extreme and moderate factions within various beliefs

Other significant issues that were discussed:

- Faith-based NGO donors must start to change from within. The obvious struggle we have in grappling with our special role within the changing developmental context must be seen as a challenge. We need to find a way forward by actively seeking to bring back spirituality into our own organizations and European networks such as Cidse and Aprovev and by opening up to partners and other actors who can help us in this inreach.
- We must change our working practices in order to create more time for moments of reflection.
- We must invest in alternative instruments and indicators to show the significance of spirituality and religion in existing development parameters, such as economic development, governance, social and political participation, and social cohesion.
- The uneasiness we feel in relation to the growth of charismatic and Pentecostal churches. How do we perceive the growth of these churches cum social movements? They should not only be seen as a study object. The same goes for migrant churches and religious institutions in Western societies. We must work on overcoming prejudices and understand their role in human rights, development cooperation and social change.

3.3 Governmental Actors

Chair: Dennis de Jong

Reporter: Govert van Oord

The working group first recommended that political actors accept the following starting points for the relations between religion and governmental actors:

- recognize the separation of ‘church’ and state;
- at the same time recognize the role and social and political force of religion (in North and South);
- governments should have an open attitude towards learning from religious organizations;
- there should be a balance in policy making between ‘outreach’ and ‘inreach’; also in this respect policies should be consistent and coherent;
- there can be no democracy without civil society, including religions and religious organizations.

The group then made the following specific recommendations for political actors:

a. On dialogue:

- The relation between religions and their representatives and the public sector and its representatives should be strengthened by dialogue and, in some cases, cooperation.
- Utmost attention should be given to address negative images of religion that hinder an open dialogue and reinforce a gap between religious leaders and politicians.
- Religions can be challenged by the public sector to take responsibility for stability and peaceful development. Initiatives from them in this field should be welcomed. If necessary, the public sector should encourage and facilitate interreligious dialogue and practical interreligious cooperation (including nontheist and atheist organizations).
- The public sector should have no taboos when it comes to supporting local initiatives of religious organizations.
- One of the areas where a dialogue between religious organizations and political leaders is recommended is about the desired economic paradigm: in brief, a profits/growth orientation versus a sharing and caring economy.

b. On critical development issues:

- The security issue is high on the political agenda. The working group is worried that the ‘special treatment’ of Islam does not resolve the tensions but rather widens the gap with Muslims. A different approach should be considered that integrates rather than alienates Muslims from the society they live in.
- HIV/AIDS has become a dreadful plague. It is important to choose for a realistic approach which involves religious organizations. This can take many forms, be it a critical dialogue or a joining of forces. Religious institutions can play an important role in e.g. education, prevention and the discussion about reproductive rights.
- In the struggle against violence and war, justice is a critical dimension. Governments and political leaders together with religious leaders should look for ways to work together on the promotion of justice as basis for durable peace.

3.4 Academic Actors

Chair: Bob Goudzwaard

Reporter: Gerrie ter Haar

Starting points

The group started with a discussion round in which each participant reported from their own experience in the working group of their choice during the last two days. What type of contribution could be made by the academic actors concerning the specific workshop theme? This was related to two spheres: the academic sphere (what contribution can academics make?) and the social sphere (how can academics contribute to influencing society?), which were often interrelated in the discussion.

Some **general issues** were raised, which were considered relevant to the discussion irrespective of the particular workshop:

1. the importance of academic freedom
2. awareness of the dominant paradigms of the discussion
3. attention to the language of the poor: often symbolic language
4. how to frame the discussion, both in terms of the language we use and the way we (can) access meaning.

The role and tasks of academics were summarized as follows:

- the world of academia can act as a resource centre for development
- academics can act as intermediaries between NGOs and states
- academics can provide information for use in politics, meaning that policies will be informed by objective and relevant information.

The following observations were made concerning the conference themes. It was agreed that there is a need for:

a. Academic actors and interreligious dialogue and cooperation

1. greater contextualization ('reading the context');
2. investigation and research in an organized and systematic manner; provision of data that can inform programmes and funders: this will have the effect of mutual information as academics will encounter the grassroots level in this way;
3. exploration of the conditions under which interreligious dialogue can take place.

b. Religion and HIV/AIDS

1. better understanding of the specific culture and worldview; conceptualizing the pandemic and people's responses;
2. more research with a view to using 'appropriate' language and avoiding stigmatization;
3. developing new theologies, such as a theology of sexuality, or a theology of evil;
4. identifying local research: who is doing what in the countries concerned?
5. linking HIV/AIDS with other issues, such as gender or poverty.

d. Peace and reconciliation

1. studying/elaborating 'strong' and 'weak' reconciliation.

e. Religion and democratization

1. contextualization: 'indigenization' of democracy
2. putting the human person and their welfare at the centre: emphasis on service to the human person; this includes: incorporating values in the study of democracy, and democratizing religious structures;
3. studying the role of 'dominant' religion: serves as an ideology for all; need for a research agenda including the issue of exclusion; issue of individual/collective rights.

f. Religion and civil society

1. studying and investigating 'spiritual capital' (financial and social capital)
2. critiquing values: old and new, e.g. grace, compassion
3. including Religious Studies Departments in the South in development cooperation (academics as part of civil society).

g. Religion and economic justice

1. studying the structural roots of economic justice;
2. investigating possible alternatives, e.g. an economy of caring and sharing

The following points/areas were proposed for elaboration by academic actors:

1. Contextuality

What do we mean by 'contextuality'? What is 'contextual reading'? Issues such as personal and social positioning, economic conditions and the issue of universality versus particularity should also come into the discussion. Contextuality also implies critiquing Western development, both theoretically and in practical terms.

2. Value orientation

Value orientation is related to pathways. The key to this discussion is in the place one makes for the 'other' ('my right is your duty, your right is my duty'). The relational element is crucial, both horizontally (fellow human beings) and vertically (religious). A value-centred view on democracy allows for a pluralistic society. A value orientation in the economy leads to 'stewardship': a careful administration of what has been given to you. It provides a normative background for economists.

3. Academic freedom

Academic freedom is crucial, generally, but also in view of the economic and political interests concerning the issues under discussion. But there is also another aspect to the debate that deserves attention: the power of, and the possible abuse of power by, academics, who may 'hide' behind the language they use, or may misrepresent the facts. Ethics in academia, therefore, should be an important aspect of their work.

Finally, the following concrete recommendations were formulated:

- a. To investigate the possibility of establishing an academic resource centre, both in the North and in the South;
- b. To encourage North-South cooperation;
- c. To facilitate South-South cooperation: academics from the South need to meet on own ground;
- d. To investigate the possibility of staff rotation between institutes in the North and South.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

At the end of a report containing such a wealth of insight and information, we will try and draw some general conclusions in view of the main objectives as defined at the beginning of the report. To remind the reader, in short these were formulated as follows: 1) to highlight the positive potential of religion for human rights and development; and 2) to make practical recommendations for development policy and practice. In the workshops these broad objectives were broken down into three categories: a) concepts; b) practices; and c) actors, which were discussed in that order.

Below, we will follow that same order as it reflects the logic behind the proceedings: participants in the workshops started with a critical reflection on the basic ideas underlying current development cooperation, they then moved on to consider these theories in the light of practice, and they concluded their deliberations by making more or less concrete recommendations to the various actors in the development arena. It should be understood in this respect that human rights is considered part and parcel of development.

In summary, the following issues raised in the workshops are thought to be as in need of critical reflection or serious (re)consideration. They may therefore also be read as a statement of recommendations:

In the field of:

I Concepts

This was linked to the **first objective** of the workshops: how can we deepen our understanding concerning the positive contribution of religion to human rights and development?

- I There was general agreement on, and concern about, the almost exclusive economic approach to development on the part of Western development agents. The dominance of the economist paradigm in development cooperation was considered one of the major obstacles for religion to develop its potential for human development, other than through service delivery. Its inherent potential - also referred to as *spiritual capital* - is not mobilised.
- II To mobilise this potential, a different and more encompassing approach to development is needed, which Southern partners frequently refer to as a 'holistic approach', taking the indivisibility of the human person as a point of departure. The need for *new paradigms* in development was stressed.
- III Hence, the *concept of development* itself is in dire need of redefining in such a way as to express the fullness of humanity, incorporating both the material and the immaterial dimensions of human life. The same applies to the concept of human rights.
- IV The concept of change, which is often seen as crucial in development, should be linked to the *idea of transformation*, which acknowledges the importance of inner change for social transformation. This has also a clear bearing on human rights.
- V The concept of *inculturation* was deemed of great importance and relevance at various levels of development cooperation, requiring thorough reflection by actors. A connection was frequently, in varying ways, made with the concept of identity.
- VI The need was felt to develop a better understanding of the *concept of dialogue*, not just in relation to issues of conflict and peace (as is normally the case), but also with regard to other types of interaction in the field of development cooperation. 'Dialogue' has, or should have, a transformative quality.



In the field of:

II Practices

This was linked to the **second objective** of the workshops: what lessons can we learn, particularly from Southern partners, regarding development practice (including human rights)?

- I There was a widely shared concern about the lack of *contextualisation* in development cooperation. The importance of considering local contexts for effective development practice was stressed.
- II There appeared to be consensus that there is a need for a *renewal of values*, with a view to incorporating 'traditional' values - values derived from the local context - in development practice. This must also have a bearing on Western donors' priorities such as democracy and good governance.
- III The notion of *agency* must have more prominence in development practice, as recipients of aid are not only objects but also subjects of development cooperation. This also implies a greater attention for local initiatives in development cooperation, also referred to in terms of self-development. This should have implications for (development) agenda-setting.
- IV A need for *self-reflexivity* in development practice was identified, on both sides: Western donors and the recipients of aid. This was captured in the phrase: 'No outreach without inreach'. The latter was deemed particularly important for faith-based NGO's (such as Cordaid and ICCO). There was a clear warning that religion should not simply become another tool or instrument in development practice.
- V The use of *language* is crucial in development cooperation. The language we use is indicative of the way outsiders may shape other people's reality or,

conversely, deny other people their own views of reality.

- VI The economic paradigm is detrimental in development cooperation if not balanced by alternative views, such as an '*economy of caring and sharing*'.

In the field of:

III Actors

This was linked to the **third objective** of the workshops: what recommendations can be made to the various development actors – governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations, as well as academics - to strengthen the religious potential in development cooperation? In general, action was recommended along the following lines:

- I Start from *people's self-understanding*, of which the spiritual dimension is an integral aspect. This will lead to or strengthen a bottom-up - rather than a top-down - approach in development.
- II Develop *new strategies* in development cooperation that take the spiritual dimension into account. This may include, for example, supporting faith-based organisations working at the grass-root level: not just as service deliverers but affirming them in (the positive aspects of) their spiritual vision.
- III Develop *methodologies* to achieve particular aims and objectives, notably in the field of human rights. Documenting 'lessons learned' should be an important part of that. Mutual learning should be imperative.
- IV Create *longer time-frames* in development cooperation that shift the attention from the final results to the paths to achieve these. This is also important in human rights matters, notably concerning issues of peace and reconciliation.
- V Look into the spiritual potential of religion as a way of *relating to the 'other'*: this can be applied not only in situations of conflict, but also in 'normal' times and in the relation between Northern and Southern partners. 'In-reach' is part of that process.
- VI Recognise that different actors can make different contributions: faith-based NGOs have a different contribution to make from governmental organisations or academic actors in the development arena. None of these are exclusive, they are *complementary approaches*. Religious Studies departments in the South can help bridge the gap.

Appendixes

Conference Programme

September 5	Arrival from 16.00 hrs
16.00 hrs.	Registration international guests in Soesterberg
September 6	<i>Conceptualising religion, human rights and development</i>
9.00 hrs	Registration participants
9.30 hrs	Welcome by Prof. Bob Goudzwaard Conference Chair
10.00 hrs	Opening of the conference by Ms. Ineke Bakker General Secretary of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, Amersfoort, The Netherlands
10.15 hrs	Keynote speech Prof. Gerrie ter Haar Chair in Religion, Human Rights and Social Change, Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, The Netherlands
	<i>Religion: A Source for Human Rights and Development Cooperation</i>
10.45 hrs	Reaction of participants on speech
10.55 hrs	Coffee/Tea break
11.25 hrs	Keynote speech Dr. Farid Esack Besl Family Chair of Ethics/religion and society Xavier University Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
11.55 hrs.	Reaction of participants on speech
12.05 hrs	Creative Effort
12.35 hrs	Lunch
14.30 hrs	Working group session on Religion and civil society building Religion and democratisation Religion and economic justice Religion and HIV/Aids Religion, peace and reconciliation Interreligious dialogue and cooperation
17.00 hrs	Plenary panel discussion
19.00 hrs	Dinner
20.30 hrs	Informal discussion with Prof. Nasr Abu-Zayd Ibn Rushd Chair of Humanism and Islam

Conference Programme

<i>September 7</i>	<i>Religion as an agent in development cooperation</i>
08.30 hrs	Registration new participants
09.00 hrs	Opening by the Chairman
09.30 hrs	Keynote speech Ms. Agnes van Ardenne-van der Hoeven , Minister for Development Cooperation, The Hague, The Netherlands. Title speech tba
	Response Mr. Hans Brüning , International Director ICCO, Utrecht, The Netherlands
10.30 hrs	Keynote speech Dr. Agnes Abuom , TAABCO Management and Development Consultants, Nairobi, Kenya. Title speech tba
11.00 hrs	Reaction of participants on speech
11.10 hrs	Coffee/Tea break
11.40 hrs	Continuation working groups Religion and civil society building Religion and democratisation Religion and economic justice Religion and HIV/Aids Religion, conflict and reconciliation Interreligious dialogue and cooperation
13.00 hrs	Lunch break
14.30 hrs	Continuation working groups Religion and civil society building Religion and democratisation Religion and economic justice Religion and HIV/Aids Religion, conflict and reconciliation Interreligious dialogue and cooperation
17.00 hrs	Plenary panel discussion
19.00 hrs	Dinner
20.30 hrs	Musical programme

Conference Programme

September 8	<i>Allies in development: religious and secular actors</i>
09.00 hrs	Opening by the chairman
09.30 hrs	Keynote speech H.E. Mr. Mehmet Aydin , Minister of State, Turkey. Unchaining the “forces” in religion for development and human rights
10.00 hrs	Reaction of participants on speech
10.10 hrs	Keynote speech Melba Padilla-Maggay Ph.D , President Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture (ISACC) Quezon City, Philippines <i>Spirituality, Human Rights and Development Cooperation: Some New Wineskins.</i>
10.40 hrs	Reaction of participants on speech
10.50 hrs	Coffee/Tea break
11. 20 hrs	Continuation working groups Religious actors Governmental actors NGO actors Academic actors
13.00 hrs	Lunch break
14.00 hrs	Finishing working groups
15.00 hrs	Plenary reporting of recommendations
16.00 hrs	Plenary panel discussion with Directors ICCO, Cordaid, ISS and Ministry of Foreign Affairs
17.00 hrs	Closing statement by the Chairman
17.15 hrs	End of the conference

Appendix 1.1

Welcome by the chair Prof. Bob Goudzwaard

A wholehearted word of welcome to all of you! I sincerely hope that these days will be enriching for all of you, not at least because of a lot of personal interaction and communication.

What brought us here together, what was the reason to invite you all here in Soesterberg? This meeting was organised, as you will know, by Cordaid, ICCO and the Institute of Social Studies. What would they see as a fruitful outcome of our meeting?

The best entry point to these questions in my view is the turbulence of the present world in which we all are living and working. Strong, sometimes even heavy changes take place in as well the technological, economic, political as socio-cultural realm.

Globalisation, supported by modern technology, brings with it many possibilities of increased communication and fruitful cooperation, also between people of various cultural backgrounds. But it is also the scenery of a growing number of identity-based conflicts and is accompanied by a sometimes frightening degree of persistent poverty. What does such a rapidly changing world imply for the possibility, or perhaps even the increased urgency of true development cooperation? And what chances does it offer for an ongoing implementation of human rights? Several forms of development cooperation lie now under critique because of a lack of appealing results, and that may indeed be partially due to elements of short-sightedness and deficiencies in fruitful cooperation.

That the future of development-cooperation stands at risk and needs renewal is clearly felt by the two Dutch faith-based development agencies, Cordaid and ICCO, which co-organized this conference together with the ISS. The answer, however, cannot be found in organisational and programmatic measures alone. What we all do really need, and to that opinion I fully adhere, is now primarily a deepened reflection on development and development-cooperation itself, with the indispensable help of scientific expertise.

This insight was one of the main reasons for these organizations to co-found in 1998 the new academic chair of prof Gerrie ter Haar on Religion, Human Rights and Social Change at the Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, with the full cooperation of the ISS itself.

This insight also led to a preparatory expert meeting in 2004 on Religion and Human Rights, which so to say paved the floor for this important international conference. Its basic theme is, as you know: Religion, a source for Human Rights and Development Cooperation. In my view, it is a well-chosen theme. For it makes not only clear from the outset that religion should be seen as a source, not as an instrument, but that Religion as source can indeed function as a basis for deepening our joint reflections on Human Rights and on Development Cooperation.

But what is the origin of this hope or conviction? I could refer here to a recent report of the World Bank, "Mind heart and soul in the fight against Poverty", in which a fervent plea is made for the recognition of Religion as a vital power in the life of human beings for their own social and economic development. But it may be good to formulate here also for ourselves three distinct reasons for the choice of Religion as the central focus of this conference. It could also serve as a possible leading thread in our conversations:

- a. Religion is about meaning, deals with questions of ultimate meaning. Religion is therefore seen and felt by many people, even most people in East and South, as an intrinsic part of their own life, as well in thought as in action. And that makes religion a part of reality itself, also of the reality of development and development-cooperation. You can of course try to ignore it, as is often done in secularized modern western thought and action, globalization included, but then

you miss an adequate insight in what really matters! We have therefore to gain or to regain this insight in a world of so many reduced and even distorted views on reality. Also in the field of development assistance they have too often led to approaches which are just functionalistic, too much instrumental, and also too much money-oriented.

- b. The preparatory meeting in the Hague also made clear that true development can never be separated from the spiritual wellbeing of people according to their own yardsticks. You cannot have outer growth without possibilities for free inner growth. Development is thus always more, and sometimes even different from, the promotion of the gross domestic product and its fair distribution. It presupposes shared human values and truly human rights, and the awareness that all these have an intrinsic significance for a person's life in dignity. Also here religion pops up as a crucial category.
- c. Religion has in practice a Janus-face. Deep religious attachments can obviously lead (and have led) to harsh practices of exclusion and even hatred and violence. But the great world-religions offer in principle also a deeply valuable positive insight. It is the insight that the primary orientation of human life is the orientation on ways to go and paths to walk on, more than to goals which have to be achieved at all costs and at any price. This primary value-orientation implies, that religions have an enormous spiritual potential to engage people as persons and in their communities for acts of justice, charity, stewardship and reconciliation. That spiritual potential can bring people together in motivated communities and can also be a source for positive change in development cooperation. Especially the religions of the Book contain several elements for positive empowerment of people in communal activities.

All this leads us to the central question of this conference, namely how to engage the positive aspects of religion in such a way, that they become a more visible and significant part of the efforts to promote human rights and development in each human society. So that the potential positive forces in religions are so to say opened up, further disclosed by the actors of development in the South and the North, with an open eye for the necessity of an ongoing internal discussion about their sometimes prevalent shadow sides.

Islam and Christianity are our main entry-points in this conference, but this choice is not meant to exclude other religions; it is mainly a pragmatic choice to preserve enough focus. From this over-all base also three separate themes follow for the three days of our conference:

1. The first day deals with the need for a clear orientation and a healthy conceptual framework for discussing the interrelationship between religion, human rights and development. It is important that possible differences should become visible in this early phase as well; for we are surely not heading for cheap artificial forms of unanimity!
2. The second day we will concentrate on religion as an agent in development cooperation. Here our basic discussion shifts to practice and we hope to learn from a variety of experiences as empirical evidence.
3. The last day is about being an ally and building allies in development. Here our basic focus is on religious and secular actors and their roles, now and in the future, in the context of a rapidly changing world. On this day we will also try to come to some concrete recommendations for Cordaid and ICCO and other development organizations.

I wish you a good time here and a fruitful outcome.

Appendix 1.2

Opening speech by drs. Ineke Bakker, General Secretary of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands

Mister chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

1.

It is a great honour for me to be present at this important and challenging conference on 'Religion as a Source for Human Rights and Development Co-operation'. I want to express my profound gratitude to the three organisations, ICCO, Cordaid and the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), that took the initiative for organising to this conference. I really appreciate the invitation to deliver the opening speech today.

As General Secretary of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, I extend a warm welcome to all of you and, particularly, to the participants who come from abroad. The Council of Churches is a fellowship of sixteen Christian churches, both historical churches with a long tradition in the country and new migrant churches. On behalf of the Council, I welcome you to the Netherlands: welcome to one of the most secularised and – at the same time – most developed countries in the world.

2. Secularisation and development

During the past decades many social scientists and others have argued that there is a strong relationship between the two phenomena, secularisation and development. Many predicted that religion and religious adherence would decline with the advent of economic, technological and social development. It was supposed that in societies with a high level of development and social security, people would have less needs to refer to and to fall back upon a 'transcendental logic' to survive the adversities and amenities of life. This country seems to be a good illustration of that relationship.

In the past 50 years after World War II, economic prosperity and the technological capacities of the Netherlands increased enormously and our social security system became one of the best in the world. But at the same time, church membership and church attendance declined dramatically, with nowadays less than 50 per cent of the population considering itself as member of a church, mosque or any other religious institution. The Netherlands is one of the most secularised societies in the world.

3. Religion as a strictly personal matter

In our country and some other countries in the Western world, the tendency towards secularisation is accompanied by another trend: the trend to consider religious adherence and religious faith as a strictly personal matter, that people experience and should express only in the privacy of their personal life, behind their front door, and definitely not in the public domain and broader society. In recent years, at least partly under the influence of fear of Islamic extremism, the emphasis upon the principle of separation of state and church has become stronger and stronger. Many politicians, civil servants and opinion leaders try to reduce the influence of religious elements in public life. To mention just a few examples: there are discussions on the restriction or even abolition of religious schools and broadcasting organisations, which have been typical for the Dutch society for many, many years. In two weeks, for the first time in history, the Prime Minister will not attend the inter religious service which will be held on the occasion of the opening of the parliamentary year. It is increasingly difficult for religious organisations to receive public subsidies for social projects, let alone for religious education or other more specifically religious issues and projects. In personal contacts with civil servants I found out that many of them do not have the slightest idea about religion

and religious institutions and how these function in modern times. At another occasion I criticised the 'religious illiteracy' of many of the Dutch civil servants, which leads to all kinds of complications in the dialogue between state institutions and religious organisations. Sometimes, it appears that religious leaders and state officials do not understand each other any longer, because they seem to live in different worlds and to speak different languages.

In the public domain, many opinion leaders and some politicians consider religion openly as an anachronism in the modern world or even an absurdity in the rational worldview of 21st century intellectuals. Not only Islam is criticised as stupid and old-fashioned, but also other religions, including Christianity and Judaism.

4. Resurrection of religion

Nevertheless, maybe surprisingly to many social scientists, opinion leaders and policy makers, the so-called secularisation thesis appears to become obsolete. Although official church membership and church attendance continue to decline in the Western world, everybody who looks around can see an outburst of religious expressions. This country is no exception. Many new religious groups, Christian and Muslim, New Age and others have emerged, young people wear religious signs like crosses and scarves, they confess to pray regularly in the privacy of their bedrooms, convents yearly attract thousands of visitors, pilgrimages have become a kind of national leisure activity, and marriage worship services of members of the royal family attract millions of television spectators. Everywhere in the world, religion has increased in numbers and visibility, with conservative branches of all religions particularly growing. Even in countries with high levels of economic development, like the USA and Switzerland, studies indicate that people still have strong religious beliefs. So, religion is still alive, probably even more alive than ever before. What does this mean for the theme of this conference?

5. Religion an important factor in social life and social change

At least, that the organisers had a good intuition for the continuing and enduring relevance of religion as an important factor in social life. Maybe it is relevant to quote here already a phrase from the Global Civil Society Report 2004/5: "there is no way we can understand the logic, strategies and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the Third World, unless we bring the transcendental dimension back into our analysis. Religious devotion is a fundamental motive for many social movements in the South, from Latin America to Africa to South Asia." For development organisations, that are mainly active in the civil society, this is of vital importance. If you do not take into account religion and its dynamics, if you do not have a sensitivity towards religious devotion, you simply cannot understand the mechanisms and strategies of the social movements nor the motives of the people who are your partners in development.

This year 2005 it is exactly a century ago that sociologist Max Weber launched his famous thesis on the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Although there is still much debate amongst scholars about the exact interpretation of what he really meant and about the correctness of the thesis, one may conclude that Weber at least indicated a relationship between the Protestant Reformation on the one hand and the emergence of modern capitalism on the other. The mental revolution which was triggered by the Reformation helped to create the conditions for modern capitalism and, we might add, for economic development in some parts of the world, and vice versa. You may like it or not, religion plays and continues to play an important role in social life and in social change. For good or evil, because it is clear that religion also can play a negative and destructive role, in the life of individual believers and communities and in broader society.

6. Positive aspects of religion

But before talking about the negative aspects, I would just like to give you some examples of the positive role of religion. Let me start with a personal experience, that convincingly showed me the liberating force of religion. Twenty years ago I worked as a professor at a theological seminary in Nicaragua, in Central America. And I volunteered in a women's project of the women's desk of the Council of Protestant Churches in Nicaragua. This project was dedicated to poor, rural women all over the country, many of them members of very conservative Pentecostal churches. These women were unreachable and unapproachable for representatives of all kinds of social movements and government organisations. Trade unions, neighbourhood groups, farmers organisations, social movements, all these organisations were considered with distrust and suspect by the women, and even more by their husbands and pastors. But the church based women's programme offered a safe and secure place for them, to pray together and to read the Bible, to talk together and to discover that God did not want their poverty nor their oppression, that Jesus Christ during his time on earth had put people on their legs and had liberated them from oppression, men and women. Simple and inspiring Bible reading was enough to start a process of consciousness raising and emancipation of these women. The only way to convince them of their own importance, their human dignity and their human rights, was through the reading of the sacred texts of the Bible. They themselves discovered the liberating forces in the Holy Book. And I remember that we, the members of the volunteers' team, could notice their growing self-respect by their body language. When they arrived many of them walked in, shy, silent, with bowed head and timid eyes, when they left, they walked right up, proud, laughing and courageous. I still remember the impact of the visible and enduring changes in many of these women. It made me very sensitive to the importance of religion as a liberating force.

But there is more and I am convinced that many aspects will be on your agenda these days. Let me just mention four issues you hopefully will discuss.

a. Vision of development and human rights:

Religions may contribute to a *more integral vision of development*, which differs from a merely economic vision. Within Christianity this may be clear from the reflections of the different Liberation Theologies, that have been developed since the seventies of the 20th century, in the Social Teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and in the Ecumenical Social Thought of the World Council of Churches.

Other religions have also made specific contributions to the reflection upon development and human rights. In the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) the areas of convergence among the faiths' visions of development are mapped and put on the agenda: the most important ones are the relationship of service and solidarity, harmony with the earth, and the vital but limited contribution of material progress. Concerning human rights, religions may emphasise the religious roots of human rights within their own traditions. For example, Jews, Christians and Muslims believe that the dignity of all human beings is derived from being created in God's image. Many Buddhist thinkers observe connections between Buddhist principles of human equality and more Western, initially secular, notions of human rights. It is interesting that in global encounters discussions have started between poverty-focused organisations like the World Bank on the one hand, and religious organisations, like the World Council of Churches and other initiatives on the other hand. Your chairperson is involved in these dialogues and may be able to witness the specificity and authenticity of the contributions from religious traditions. It would be interesting to hear from you what vision on human rights and development will come out of this conference.

b. Intrinsic value of religion:

Although religion may be an oppressive force in the life of people, at the same time it is true that religion is – for millions of people – *a dimension of human well-being*. Religious faith may open a pathway to sense, to meaning and serenity, not only in dangerous and conflictive situations, but also at moments of happiness, during rites de passage and during community activities. The contribution of religion to happiness is empirically studied by different scholars, including by experts of the World Bank, in their Voices of the Poor study. This study synthesised conceptions of well-being, articulated by app. 60,000 people in 60 countries. I hope that this type of empirical studies may be able to convince western atheists of the added value of religion for human happiness and well-being in the deepest sense of the word. I also hope that these studies can play a role in the reflections of development agencies on what their objectives and goals are and should be. If the goal of development organisations is to contribute to development, and if development aims to expand the freedoms people value and have reason to value, and if religion is valued by so many people, then religious freedom should be part of development (alongside tolerance and democratic practices), as the 2004 Human Development Report argues.

c. Religious organisations and religious professionals

Not only is the intrinsic value of religion important to development, but faith-based organisations themselves, like ICCO and Cordaid, also receive motivation, inspiration and part of their financial resources from their religious constituency. In the world there are many other *faith-based organisations* at a local, regional and global level, which contribute to human relief and human development. Just to mention the Aga Khan Development Network, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision and Islamic Relief, all organisations with enormous financial resources and with a vision on what to do and why to do it in their own way.

Within these organisations, as in other secular organisations, like UNDP or Amnesty International, *professionals* are active as workers, who are, at least partly, motivated by their religious convictions and who see their activities and engagement as a product of their religious inspiration and values. Particularly at the local level, many of these religiously inspired professionals work hard for low wages and are sensitive to the needs of respect and dignity of the local population. It is good to remember that once Mahatma Gandhi gave an explanation why he continued cultivating theism: belief in God ‘sustains people in times of failure’. As progress in development is slow and risky, as there are many failures and frustrations, religious faith may inspire people and give them force and endurance to keep going, where others would stop and abandon....

I already quoted the phrase from the Global Civil Society Report to put emphasis upon the importance of religious and transcendental motives for inspiring people and social movements. I would say that at this level, at least in the Netherlands, we have some homework to do in the churches and church-based organisations. The process of secularisation also affects the churches and many Christians in this country. Many people feel uncertain and confused about their own religious identity and inspiration. Therefore I welcome the position that the Council of Churches in the Netherlands should declare the open and creative dialogue between faith and science, between believers and secular society and culture, as one of its priorities. Dr. Anton Houtepen formulated it last January in the Ecumenics Lecture 2005 of the Council of Churches as follows: “It is important to bring God back into daily life and to demonstrate that believers are not stupid nor old-fashioned”. I hope that the outcome of this conference will bring forward arguments and practices that will help to demonstrate the positive aspects of religion.

d. The negative role of religion

Until now I emphasised the positive role and the liberationist aspects of religion. This positive story may not make us blind for the negative role that religions have played in the past and still play. It is true that some interpretations and some forms of religion represent a huge obstacle to development and hinder the promotion of human rights. It is alarming that especially the more conservative branches of religions are growing, that many poor people seem to find their personal identity in oppressive forms of religions, and that extremism is apparent in all religions in our days. This implies an enormous responsibility for religious leaders, scholars and institutions to condemn and try to prevent the influence of religious extremism, and above all, to condemn and try to prevent religiously inspired and motivated violence. War and violence are the strongest obstacles to development and progress. Religiously inspired oppression and religiously motivated limitation of human capacities harm the liberation and emancipation of many people, particularly women and members of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities. In the daily development work, religiously inspired organisations can make the difference.

So, I really wish that your reflections and dialogues during these days bring forward strategies to deal with and to halt religiously motivated oppression and violence. The most inspiring way to do so will be by demonstrating how religions can play a positive role in development processes. That might be very helpful, not only in developing countries, but even in the highly developed Dutch society, where criticism and fear of religion are growing. I hope you will be able to elaborate arguments that convince governments on the importance of religion in development and that you will discover practical tools that governments and agencies can use for making space for and to include the contributions from the religions in development processes and the promotion of human rights.

To conclude my speech, I wish you inspiring, creative and to-the-point reflections and discussions and above all, the blessing of the One who goes beyond all human efforts and inspires human beings to act beyond their own interests.

Thank you.

Appendix 1.3

[DRAFT ONLY. FOOTNOTES TO BE ADDED]

Key note speech by Prof. Gerrie ter Haar,
Chair in Religion, Human Rights and Social Change

Religion: a source for human rights and development cooperation

Introduction

The theme of this conference, which I have also taken as the title of my talk, is *Religion: A source for human rights and development cooperation*. Its aim is to provide a coherent framework for our discussions in the next few days on the role of religion in development cooperation. These take place at a time that the role of religion in the public sphere is much disputed, at least in the West, to the point that many Westerners have come to deny religion any public role at all, as a matter of principle and for practical reasons.

Understandable as this may be in view of the conditions pertaining in the West, yet it is an untenable position. It is untenable for a number of reasons, but notably since it denies the realities of most countries in the non-Western world, both developed and developing.¹

In those countries religion is part of the social fabric and fully integrated with other dimensions of life. This is a simple social fact, but with important consequences for development cooperation. Until recently, the religious dimension of the lives of individuals and communities has been largely ignored in development cooperation, or even dismissed as irrelevant or judged harmful. Irrelevant in the sense that it was widely assumed that secularisation is an inevitable by-product of the modernisation of societies that resulted from development activities. Harmful in the sense that the secular outlook of most Western donor countries and agencies has often given rise to the persistent, though historically inaccurate,² view that - at least in practice - religion is liable to give rise to violent conflict and can therefore best be ignored.

A policy of denial, however, no longer works at a time that religion has become a significant social and political force in the world, to the point that religion runs the risk of becoming the political language of the 21st century. Given its social and political significance, it is realistic to assume that in the present era the development of many countries in the non-Western world in particular will be shaped by religion. This requires a reconsideration of the role of religion in development.

Whether religion can make a contribution to development has been discussed for some years now in various circles, including by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. The contribution to development of religious institutions and their leaders has been recorded in many places and situations, both in past and present, notably in the field of education and public health. Far less is known, however, about the religious ideas that underlie religious communities' actual behaviour. Many of the major flaws in the development process, according to Wendy Tyndale during a conference last year, have arisen from a failure to come to grips with the metaphysical questions concerning human life, which provide the framework for any meaningful debate about the aims of development and how to understand and measure progress or the nature of the 'good life'.³

Hence, the question facing us today is how a spiritual vision can help to solve the complex issues of our day. The present conference is intended to try and find the beginning of an answer to that question in an exchange of views between partners from the north and south. But before we can proceed, it is vital to take a critical look at the three major concepts that frame this conference, namely religion, human

rights and development. This is necessary because unless we are prepared to look at these concepts from a different perspective, trying to put some of our cultural biases aside, there will be no real change in our development relations and any new policies will be no more than new wine in the same old bottles.

Religion, human rights and development: a critical analysis

1. Religion

One of the major obstacles to our understanding of the religious dimension in the lives of most people in the non-Western world is our limited knowledge of it. While this is partly due to the process of secularisation of our societies, it is largely the result of a lack of cultural understanding. What I mean is that the concept of religion takes on quite different meanings in different cultures and societies. Whereas in modern Western societies religion is primarily considered in terms of its ascribed ability to provide life, or human existence, with a deeper meaning (*zingeving*), in most other parts of the world it is the idea of a spirit world that defines people's religious thought. For the majority of people in the world [whether in Africa, India, South America, Central Asia or elsewhere], religion refers to the belief in the existence of an invisible world, that is distinct but not separate from the visible one, and that is home to spiritual beings that are deemed to have effective powers over the material world. The invisible world, in other words, is an integral part of the world as people know it, which is not reduced to its visible or material form only. Through the human spirit that is believed to be an inherent part of every person, the human world is linked to the spirit world, and a regular traffic may take place between them. In such a holistic perception of the world, it follows that people's social relations extend into the invisible world. That is, in the same way as they try and maintain good relations with their relatives, neighbours and friends for their own benefit, individuals and communities invest in their relations with spiritual entities to enhance the quality of life. People all over the world therefore enter into various forms of active communication with the spirit world in such a way that they derive information from it to further their material welfare or interests. [This can be observed in all religious traditions, including in Christianity and Islam, which will be the focus of our discussions over the next few days. Muslims and Christians in all parts of the world (including among migrant communities in our own country) call on the spirit world to enhance the quality of their lives].

Techniques for interacting with the spirit world may vary and also change over time, but the underlying idea remains the same: namely the belief that spiritual resources can be employed to sustain material life. Hence, spirit-oriented religious traditions of the sort just described create their own dynamics, that may be - and are in fact - employed for what we might call development purposes. One obvious example is the great variety of healing traditions in the world, in which methods are used that are based on an intimate knowledge of and regular contact with the spirit world. [Another example can be found in role religion plays in various countries in the resolution of ecological problems, highlighting the importance of the close connection between the human and the spirit world]. Spiritual technology, as we may call the elaboration of such methods of religious interaction, has a long history in human societies and continues to be practised in most of them. Spiritual technologies aim to awake and mobilise human faculties in reference to a spiritual world which people believe to be a source of real and effective power that they may use to improve their material life. Accessing such power is generally considered important, and even more so when people have no access to others sources of power. Through communication with an invisible or spirit world, people can get access to, and share in, a form of power that can actually transform their lives, both at a community level and at the individual level.

The South African theologian Allan Anderson has summarised African views on the matter by stating that ‘a person who is oppressed, who must daily face injustices and affronts to his personal dignity, is a person who lacks power’.⁴ This observation notably applies to the millions of poor of this earth. For them spiritual power is ‘enabling power’,⁵ that which gives people control over a situation they are otherwise unable to master. For example, in many societies women who may otherwise be powerless derive considerable social esteem from their ability to open themselves up to a powerful spirit that may take possession of them and make use of their body to convey messages that benefit the community. This is an interesting illustration of cultural differences in the appreciation of human abilities: whereas in most Western countries a high social premium is placed on maintaining self-control under all circumstances, in societies with a historic tradition of active engagement with a spirit world, the greatest esteem goes to those who are able to voluntarily delegate control to a spiritual power for as long as needed.

There is another cultural difference that is highly relevant to our discussion. While Christianity and Islam are typical book religions that - as a result of their possession of a sacred text - attach great importance to doctrinal aspects of the faith, this is not so in spirit-oriented traditions that stem from an oral culture. Hence, in many developing countries, even when people have converted to Christianity or Islam, the lack of dogmatic interest and the traditional spirit orientation remain prominent as the majority of Christians and Muslims in the world are either illiterate or semi-literate. Much of what they know and learn about the faith is through oral means, and the spiritual entities of Christianity and Islam can easily be incorporated in the religious framework that they are familiar with. This explains, for example, the world-wide interest in charismatic forms of belief. In Christianity, as many of us will be aware, this is due to the power ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

This exposition on religion as a form of active engagement with a world of invisible powers is important since it has a bearing on people’s views of the material world and the way they deal with it. Hence, religious ideas and the practices derived from these are of obvious relevance to development agents. Not only should they know about them with a view to adapting their practices - as they sometimes do already - but, more importantly, they should explore ways of delving into people’s spiritual resources for the sake of development. Spiritual empowerment, or empowering people through spiritual means, should become a serious option in development cooperation, alongside material forms of empowerment. [I lack the time to go into any detail here, but I suggest that exploring ways and means to do so will be part of the discussions in the workshops].

Before entering into a specific discussion of the concept of development, I will now first turn to the concept of human rights which has become central to much development thought.

2. Human rights

Human rights and development are generally considered to be closely related, as is manifested in the so-called rights-based approach to development that has been adopted by most governmental and non-governmental organisations in donor countries, as well as by international organisations. Yet, it is not altogether clear what precisely this may mean, to the point that some critics have warned that ‘rights-based’ has become the latest development fashion item to be seen wearing, that is being used to dress up the same old-style development.⁶ Others have argued that today’s rights-based development discourse needs to be critically interrogated in order to see where it is coming from, who is articulating it, what are the differences in the versions used by different development agents, and what are the shortcomings and what implications do these have for the practice and politics of development, compared to other approaches.⁷

While these are important questions, it goes beyond the scope of this talk to discuss them in any detail. Suffice it to say that much of the rights-based debate emphasises the use of legal or legislative instruments in development and the usefulness of a normative framework that has its basis in international covenants and conventions.⁸ This may be due, at least in part, to the fact that a rights-based approach is often identified with a human rights approach to development, neglecting the subtle differences between the two.⁹ As much as this debate concerns parts of the world known as the developing world, its terms are usually set in the developed countries, and often without any reference to local means and strategies that have a basis in the social and cultural conditions of the countries concerned. As others have also observed, there is a general lack of acknowledgement by advocates of the rights-based approach (however it may be defined by those who use it) of the various ways and means through which people make claims *outside* of formal legal instruments and institutions.¹⁰ This includes claims made on a religious basis.

Proponents of a secular rights-based approach to development, notably when it takes the form of a human rights approach to development, easily clash with those who do not base their concept of rights in the first instance on a human source, but locate its origins in some divine or supernatural, or spiritual power. Instead of becoming allies in the fight for human rights, they often end up as ideological enemies with seemingly different interests. In the following I will maintain that this can be changed if we are prepared to open ourselves up to different perspectives.

I have argued before, and on several occasions, that most human rights talk is in actual practice just 'rights talk'.¹¹ The phrase 'human rights' consists of two words: 'human' and 'rights', but in modern human rights discourse the 'rights' dimension is often exclusively highlighted, at the expense of the 'human' dimension that is integral to it. It suggests that the first element of the composite term 'human rights' is self-evident and self-explanatory, and thus needs no further elaboration. This is precisely where the shoe pinches from a religious perspective and where the issue of worldview comes into the discussion. In many cultures and societies, as I have just argued, people attach great importance to the spiritual dimension of a person in the belief that this is what makes him or her truly human. It is a person's spirit that is often believed to link the visible to the invisible world, or the material to the spiritual world.

Hence, there is a general need to look closely at the role of religion in regard to human rights, since an exclusive rights approach that fails to take into account the question of what a human being actually *is*, will not yield the desired results. Such an exclusive approach suggests the monopolisation of human rights by legal experts, which, in my view, implies a limitation of the issue. On earlier occasions I have referred to this problem as the juridification of human rights.¹² It suggests that all that is needed is to establish a juridical framework that guarantees human rights, for the implementation of which governments (or nowadays also others in territorial control) are responsible and can be held accountable. [My argument is that vital though the law may be, it is not enough]. While the moral-*legal* structure is of obvious importance for the protection of human rights, also in the context of development, in countries marked by a religious outlook on the world this must be matched by a moral-*spiritual* approach to the subject.¹³ This might also lead to a greater attention for the balance of rights and responsibilities in the human rights debate, which religious people often feel strongly about.

Religion and human rights thus share common ground that can be successfully explored. For many religious believers the moral-spiritual approach takes priority over the moral-legal one that is characteristic of secular organisations. The moral-legal structure of the secular and the moral-spiritual commitment of the religious

should not be seen as in opposition to each other but as complementary. For a successful human rights policy that is an integral part of development strategies, the two dimensions must be in balance. This can be done by applying cross-connections on both sides, with secularists being prepared to tap into existing spiritual resources, and religious people being prepared to appreciate and link up with secular approaches.

The incorporation of the moral-spiritual dimension of human rights would be an important step towards what I call the inculturation of human rights; that is, it would contribute to the rooting of human rights in local cultures. For a successful inculturation of human rights in all parts of the world, we have to give serious thought to the role played by religion as an integral part of people's existence, inseparable from the social and moral order. For religion is not only about relations between human and spirit beings, it also defines people's relations with fellow human beings, which is central to the concept of human rights.

There is one other important point to make in this respect. The history of human rights is closely connected to the historical circumstances of Western Europe. Human rights as they evolved in the West do not have their origins so much in processes of cultural evolution, but are the result of often violent conflicts and sharp breaks with the past, in which the power of the State prevailed over the power of the Church. Put differently, human rights in the West have 'catastrophic origins'.¹⁴ Hence the idea that rights have always to be fought for (we speak of the 'struggle' for human rights etc.) The question, which is also a challenge, is how to combine such a conflict-based human rights model with a human rights model that is based on cultural evolution, implying a consensus about human rights that is embedded in, and reflective of, specific cultures?¹⁵ Whereas the first model (conflict model) implies a denial of the old order and an active remaking of a new one, the latter (based on cultural evolution) is built on a continuation of the existing order, with necessary adaptations.

3. Development

I now come to my third point, development. In view of my earlier observations on religion and human rights, the question arises what role religion - in the described sense - might play in development cooperation and how this can be done without submitting to specific religious or cultural notions that undermine human rights.

But first, I will say something about the notion of development. Development is inextricably tied up with politics, national and international. In particular, the separation of religion and politics is crucial, as it is central to the secular outlook of donor countries in the West. Obviously, a distinction between religion and politics can only be made by those who believe that these constitute fundamentally different spheres. This is not the case in most parts of the world where the concept of *power* brings the two together, material power on the one hand and spiritual power on the other. In that sense, what we see today is the non-Western world, especially, *re-connecting* with its own past in a variety of attempts to reintegrate spiritual power with material power.¹⁶

The intellectual and institutional separation of religion and politics in its contemporary form has undeniably emerged from the history of Europe. This separation was a consequence of the unique role of the Catholic Church in medieval Europe, the Reformation, and the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries. Europeans brought this experience with them when they settled in other parts of the world, including in North America. In their colonies, Europeans imposed a separation of Church and State, or religion and politics. In many such places, religion - in its different manifestations - had traditionally played a role in governance. If we want to

understand the new interactions between religion and politics, therefore, we have to take into account the specific histories of various parts of the world. During decolonisation, the belief in separating the spheres of religion and politics for a successful life remained persuasive to the new nationalist governments. Today the world is witnessing a fundamental rethinking of this assumption and of the institutional arrangements that accompany it. The modernist vision of politics has not brought to all societies in the world the welfare and prosperity they had expected at the time of independence. Nor has the orthodox vision of development. Hence, many people in the non-Western world are now reconnecting with their own history and relying on their own traditional resources, including spiritual ones. Moreover, the new wave of democratisation of the 1990s made space for the re-emergence of religious ideologies. In other words, the current resurgence of religion in many parts of the world is a modern attempt to harness traditional resources for contemporary use.

In contemporary Europe politics and states have taken over the ideas of perfection that had previously been related to the spiritual sphere. In the 20th century this has led to a great variety of political projects that some have described as 'coercive utopias' that aspired to create a model society.¹⁷ With hindsight we may consider that 'development' was one of the many coercive utopias of the 20th century, that inherited some of the ideology and techniques of religion. In short, the idea of development has a genealogy in Western-Christian religion and can be seen as the secular translation of a millenarian belief, by which the kingdom of God is no longer projected in heaven but can be created on earth. Inherent in this thinking is the aspiration to eliminate evil in all its forms from the earth and the belief that human beings will - eventually - be able to achieve that. This stands in rather sharp contrast with a religious worldview that recognises human imperfection and therefore generally accepts that life will never be perfect either. The real challenge in life is then to balance the powers of good and evil, in such a way that evil will not prevail. Typical of much secular thought is also the belief in progress that is so characteristic of modern development theory. It equally reflects the Christian idea of humankind as pilgrims on the road to their final destination, where life will be as originally intended by its creator. In recent times, this religious notion of progress has become secularised and limited to material progress only. The idea that humankind is bound to progress on a way to a materially better world is central to the project of development. Development experts, one commentator already observed 25 years ago, seem to religious believers as 'one-eyed giants', who 'analyse, prescribe and act as *if* man could live by bread alone, as *if* human destiny could be stripped to its material dimensions alone.'¹⁸

It is important to consider the theory and practice of development in the light of these observations. Development cooperation, as has been frequently observed in previous meetings, often pays too little attention to the road to development, which is at least as important as the goal that is desired. In one of these meetings, Prof. Goudzwaard has identified a number of significant differences between secular and religious approaches in development cooperation, contrasting a mechanistic with an organic view of society. While a secular worldview places its main emphasis on goals and objectives, a religious worldview tends to emphasise the ways to achieve these. A secular approach stresses the role of the individual, while a religious approach is more likely to emphasise the importance of the community. Other contrasts between the two types of approach, in his opinion, concern an emphasis on competition versus an emphasis on cooperation, and the importance attached to the output of economic activities versus the importance attached to the input required.¹⁹

It shows that religiously inspired views of development are not primarily concerned with questions of economic development. The spiritual dimension precedes the

material one, in the sense that from a religious viewpoint economic prosperity cannot be achieved without creating the spiritual conditions conducive to that goal. Hence, many religious believers consider that inner transformation is a necessary condition for social transformation, or even an actual source of it. Charismatic Christians, for example, generally believe that to improve a country's condition, one has first to work at changing the hearts and minds of its leaders. Development, in such a view, is not only a material matter but also a spiritual one, and without spiritual progress there can be no material progress.

This begs the question whether there is an insurmountable divide between a spiritually-driven approach in development and the more material approach that Western organisations are familiar with. The latter often doubt that models based on religion will be able to respond to the material needs of people in developing countries. It is widely agreed, however, that human development must build on people's own resources. In view of that, we must ask ourselves what can be done to mobilise people's religious or spiritual resources to realise human development in the broadest sense. There is neither a good reason nor a rational argument, in my view, that can justify the neglect of one important human resource for development purposes where it is available. Religious and spiritual resources, too, produce knowledge that in many cases can be made beneficial to the community and may be explored for its development potential.

Policy implications

Up to now I have tried to provide a - necessary - theoretical framework for our discussions over the next few days. I want to end this talk by making some policy suggestions that fit within the framework that I sketched. I start with a few warnings.²⁰

First, it is important to realise that an appreciation of religion as a resource for human rights and development does not mean that policy-makers can simply add 'religion' to the range of policy instruments at their disposal, as just another technical instrument that can be mechanically applied. Second, much development thinking is very short-term. Projects are often intended to last for four or five years, and judged to be a success or a failure after that time. For a policy approach that includes the spiritual dimension a much longer time-frame will be needed. Third, policy-makers must be prepared to change some of their own bureaucratic procedures if they are serious about incorporating religious or spiritual ideas into their work.

I come now to my policy suggestions. I mention five important areas that need urgent attention, in my view.

1. Religious resources, I have argued elsewhere, can analytically be distinguished into four vital categories: religious *ideology* (content of belief), religious practice (ritual behaviour), social *organisation* (religious community) and religious *experience* (psychic attitudes).²¹ Each of these can be explored for their development potential. So far, it is mostly the organisational structures that religion produces which have received attention, notably for service delivery purposes. While this is of obvious importance, given the basis of trust that usually binds people belonging to the same community in economic and social activities, it is not enough. It is notably the inspiration that people derive from their religious ideology that needs to be exploited. To delve into that mine of ideas, policy-makers should expand their collaboration networks to include departments for the study of religion and theological faculties. The deliberate combination of academic insights in religion with community practice that takes place in many developing countries has yielded

fruit that is largely unknown to development agents in the Netherlands. Many academic programmes in religious studies departments have actually been designed on the basis of their social relevance.

2. The role of religion and development should become an important area for (theoretical and practical) research. The government in particular, in cooperation with other agents of development - including for example my own institute, the Institute of Social Studies - could play a pro-active role by stimulating this type of research (as is already done, for example, in the UK). Such research should be done in close collaboration with partners in the countries concerned, and by engaging 'religion' at the four levels that I identified (ideology, practice, organisation, experience).

3. Due to the rapid secularisation of Dutch society in the latter part of the 20th century and the particular way in which Dutch society in general interprets church-state relations, there is a shocking lack of knowledge about religion among policy-makers in the Netherlands. Hence, there is an urgent need for development agents to fill that vacuum. That can be done in several ways and some important initiatives have already been taken. One of them is the foundation of a knowledge centre on religion and development, in which a number of NGO's (Oikos, Cordaid and ICCO, Seva) and academic institutions (ISS and IUR) have taken the lead. Another initiative, about which you will hear more tomorrow, comes from government circles. But universities, too, have a role to play, for example by introducing the subject of religion and development into their curricula.

4. A specific policy suggestion in this regard notably concerns the Dutch government, but could with little adaptation also be implemented by other development agents. Dutch embassies and local offices of development agencies could appoint religious attache's to follow religious developments and trends in a particular country and engage with practioners for policy reasons, pretty much as cultural or defence attache's also do. This would enhance both their networks and their knowledge, to mutual benefit.

5. An active policy should be developed to involve religious migrant communities in development activities. Migrant involvement is already - to some extent - on the development agenda, but so far without explicitly engaging religious communities. The new knowledge centre on religion and development appears the first to make such an engagement an integral part of its policies. Religion forms one of the most important channels that link migrant communities with their countries of origin. This has also an important economic aspect, since remittances are often sent through religious networks or networks that have been formed in a religious context or on the basis of a religious inspiration.²²

The proposed policy suggestions would all open new avenues for practical elaboration in important areas, including those that have been identified for discussion in the workshops during this conference.

Conclusion

I come to two general conclusions.

First, as I have argued, development cooperation often does not have the desired or expected results or effects, because it is not built on, or takes no account of, the worldview of the people concerned, which is often a religious one. Instead, efforts have been made to change people's outlook, since religion has long been seen as a stumbling-block, rather than a building-stone for development. Yet, many people in the world attach great value to religion as a positive resource in their lives, that both

further their individual progress and helps them to build society. It is at this point, where individual and social interests meet, that religion may become an important resource also for policy makers.

Second, the agents of development must first change some of their own perceptions for the religious dimension to become effective in development cooperation. Hence, it is important for secularists not only to work together in practical terms, but also to engage in an intellectual debate with religious believers. Up to now, the necessity of dialogue is usually seen as pertaining to adherents of different religious traditions. In my view, the dialogue between religions should be replaced by a dialogue between worldviews, which comprise both religious and secular perceptions of the world (if not replaced, it should at least be extended to include secular worldviews). One positive result would be that secular ideas might gradually find their way into religious communities, while on the other hand secular groups or organisations may get rid of some of their prejudice against religious believers and see the validity of some of their views.

I wish all of us a fruitful conference.

Soesterberg, Kontakt der Kontinenten
6 September 2005

Appendix 1.4

Key note speech by Dr. Farid Esack, Besl. Family Chair of Ethics/
religion and society, Xavier University Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Islam, Human Rights and Development – Some underlying Issues

I shall be telling two stories to reflect on the challenges approaching the subject of Islam, Human Rights and Development. First the background to my stories, the story of how I get to be invited to tell my stories

This is on the one hand....

Global Summary of AIDS Statistics

- Number of people living with HIV or AIDS: 64 million (August 2005)
- Number of people newly infected with HIV in 2004: nearly 5 million
- AIDS deaths in 2004: 3.1 million
- 95% of all people living with HIV or AIDS live in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- An estimated 25.4 million adults and children are living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Of the 3.1 million AIDS-related deaths in 2004, 2.3 million occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.

I come from a country where, at end of 2003, an estimated 5.3 mill were infected with HIV, the largest number of individuals living with the virus in a single country. In 2005, 1034 times the number of people who dies on September 11th 2001, dies of AIDS ...

And this on the other

The human rights and Islam project has acquired a feverish desperation after the events of September 11th 2001... I am astounded that, notwithstanding my own commitment to working with those living with HIV and dying with AIDS, that it is not the reality of millions of deaths on this continent and millions more dying that gets me speaking invitations from all over the world. I am instead overwhelmed with invitations to address the wounds and fears of the empire and the desperation to turn the Muslim world upside down-inside out to make it more 'decent', more compliant with 'civilization'. The following is an edited excerpt from a letter that I recently received from someone in Europe.

Dear Prof. Esack, as-salâm ʿalaikum,

We would like you to contribute as a plenary speaker to our conference [...] on theological arguments from the Islamic tradition in support of the human rights as laid down in the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). For instance, in our discussion with Prof. [...] last Sunday, he argued that the Qur'an does not contain an injunction to institute slavery where it is not there, but that slavery was a matter of fact when the Prophet s.a.w. embarked upon his mission and that he humanised and improved relations to the extent possible under the circumstances. Similar arguments might be brought forward in other areas, without having received sufficient expression from those believing in non-contextual theology, presenting the shar'ca as the only possible expression of Islamic values and norms in law. In fact, we even wonder if it is possible to give Islamic references to each article of the UDHR and each paragraph of its preamble...

Now, I do believe in the UDHR, notwithstanding its Western origins or its anthropocentric bias. The UDHR, for all citizens of the world, including Muslims, is one of the most significant foundations for co-existence and pluralism in the world today. Muslims cannot have their cake and eat it. The one option is to embrace this document as the basis for both our claims against those who are withholding our rights from us as well as the basis to correct our own wrongs against all those on the edges of Muslim societies – the impoverished, political dissidents, women, ethnic, linguistic and sexual minorities etc. The other option is to abandon international instruments of rights and obligation, carve out our own space wherein our God whispers confidential stuff to us... And we end up walking over the lands and lives of others – ethnic or gendered others - because of those Divine whisperings and promises, the kind of thing that we have seen in Palestine under Zionist occupation for more than fifty years and in Afghanistan under the Taliban.

So, here I am, an African scholar of Islam and - because of my credentials as a veteran of the South African liberation struggle - regularly being called upon to do my thing on “Human Rights and Islam”. How do I ensure that my deeply authentic experience as part of the oppressed, my sincere belief that Islam spoke to my existence under apartheid and my understanding of Islam as a faith that sustained resistance to it are not sold out to the highest bidder?

The First Story

Let me use the story of Mukhtar Mai, the Pakistani survivor of gang rape who has so courageously used her ordeal to focus on the oppression of women in her society. Using that story I want to draw out some of the challenges that Muslims face in this flurry of ‘Islam and human rights are really two sides of the same coin’ activity. Mai, in an interview with the *Christian Science Monitor*, said: ‘I had three choices; either to commit suicide by jumping in a well or shed tears all my life like any other victim in such cases, or challenge the cruel feudal and tribal system and harsh attitudes of society.’

Now, and all of this is entirely conjectural, suppose she is being called upon to speak at women’s rights rallies in the United States. And suppose that these rallies are sponsored by a cosmetic company desperate to push the rights of women to use any of their three hundred shades of lipstick. Somewhere there is a connection between the right of women to use any kind of lipstick – and, indeed, the freedom of men also to do so – on the one hand, and the right of women to not have their bodily integrity violated. If I were Mai, I would not be so sure if the struggle to let a thousand shades of lipstick or nail polish bloom would be where my energies are best invested in.

Question one: Where are the priorities for Mai and those who genuinely identify with her in this struggle for human rights? Actual engagement with people on the edges of society, or with those who are pretty comfortable and only trying to get more comfortable?

But suppose, further, that the cosmetic company promises Mukhtar Mai a substantial honorarium – even better, a share in their profits - if she spoke at the “freedom for women” rallies which they are sponsoring or if she wrote an article in defense of women’s rights to use lipstick and singling out the “Muslim fundamentalists” as the enemy because they bitterly oppose these rights?

Question two: Do we have a responsibility to critique our underlying motives for accepting the invitation or do we gloss over them in the deliberately hasty conclusion that ‘it is good for Muslims to be seen out there defending human rights? More directly, how much of all of this ‘Islam is compatible with human rights stuff is really about Islam and human rights and how much of it about the Muslim middle classes struggling to find a lucrative space at the banquet of power?

Finally, to wind up my conjectural dilemmas, suppose that that same company a) is engaged in unethical experimentation with animals to research their beauty enhancement products, b) has a record of opposing women's rights in some situations when it turns out that the newly liberated women decided to buy lipstick from another company or not to use lipstick at all and c) in some well-documented situations was, and continues to be, the chief instigator of gang-rape?

Question three: Where is our Islam in all of this when the only matter worthy of consideration to us is whether the kickbacks that we get from the company will help advance us in life, and worse, when, in pursuit of this advancement, we are prepared to collaborate with those whose historical and current record is a war against an Islamic value system that places people before profit?

I do not wish to trivialize the universality of human rights, nor rubbish all forms of beauty enhancement. (Some may even suggest that I could personally do with some!) All of my life I have fought for a society founded on the principles of justice, freedom and equality. Perhaps, I regard human rights as too sacred to be messed around with by those who created Guantanamo Bay and their lackeys in the Muslim world who are largely silent about it. Perhaps I value gender justice too much to allow its agenda to be hijacked by those who are destroying women's rights locally while preaching it abroad for the Muslim world, by those who preach peace for Muslims while they arrogate violence, state terrorism and war to themselves.

There is indeed something that binds all of humankind together. This is a sacredness originating in the breath of God blown into us at the time of creation. Like all the preceding generations we struggle to realize the various implications of what this means in contemporary terms. An earthquake strikes in Kashmir and we raise funds in Cairo or Cape Town. A dissident is imprisoned in Iran and we write letters of protest to that government. One of the words to describe this commonness is 'universal' as in the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'. Part of our struggle for universality is to ensure that it does not become mere code for the empire in the way that 'international opinion' has become code for the policies of any current United States administration and its allies in Europe.

After Mukhtar Mai's courage became well known and she became a bit of a celebrity, she even got the attention of some of the men in her country with, to put it mildly, rare offers – of their willingness to marry her, a survivor of gang rape. 'But most of them' she says, 'were probably under the impression that I was awash with dollars ... , 'I could see dollars flashing in their eyes. I tell them if you want to marry me then live with me in the village and serve the people. Then they don't return.'

In the context of this battle for the souls of Muslims, this is our challenge; to pursue a relentless struggle for freedom (including the freedom to use or not to use lipstick) and justice, to incessantly critique our own motives and to embrace an uncompromising suspicion of the powerful.

The Second Story

Between Sam and Osama

About the need for all societies to become more decent I have no doubt. This need also includes those societies whose able populations flee when a hurricane strikes and abandon their elderly to 'just die' in hospitals. What troubles me is the relentless march of a wounded empire and determination to shape all questions and responses of Muslims to the challenges of their being in the world... a march so overwhelming that it crowds out our story of millions of other deaths and threatened lives – disproportionately not Caucasian and from the South.

Our story is only in small part related to what Osama and his recruits got up to; in larger part it is about who we really are and who we desperately want to become ...

One fine morning Osama, a classmate of ours, did something dreadful in our teacher's favourite beer mug. Now this guy was a bit of a bully whom many of us hated, feared or admired. (And who some of us simultaneously admired and hated) He did, after all, offer a certain kind of respite from other bullies. He claimed to come from a religious tendency called 'Salafism' or 'Wahabism' although many of us did not know much about it until that day. It distressed him to no end that some of the girls in our school were frequently molested by other bullies. Yet, and this was somehow related to his religious beliefs - he hated the idea that girls should go for karate classes - or engage in any kind of physical exercise really. Osama instead offered a semblance of protection by promising to keep them under wraps, *chadar aur chardiwari*, it was called (behind the cloak and inside four walls). Girls will be girls - always in need of our protection and boys will be boys - always doing the protecting.

This was not the first time that Osama was in Mr Sam's class. Some years ago, when Osama was somewhat younger, Mr Sam had to deal with another difficult student, Brezhnev, who was openly challenging his authority. Mr Sam fell into an old habit of turning one student against another and strengthened Osama's hand against Brezhnev. Mr Sam never really quite understood Osama and his own dreams of becoming bigger and more powerful than Mr Sam; all that mattered at that time was that Osama and his crowd could be helpful in containing Brezhnev. 'Osama could also be dealt with much later, if he got too big for his boots, perhaps just bought out as a last option; that always works', Mr Sam reasoned. For now, he encouraged Osama to do body-building and even supplied him with steroids. It all worked out well, Osama, his steroids and a couple of buddies that he collected from the hood developed something called 'muscular salafism' and that really scared the hell out of Brezhnev and sent him packing. (The last we heard was that Brezhnev had since dropped out of school and become a bit of an alcoholic. It was also widely known that he was that he was regularly abusing his former Muslim girlfriend, Chechnya, who is desperate to get rid of him. Someone also spotted Mr Sam visiting the same girlfriend with dubious interests, endlessly proclaiming his noble intentions to limit Brezhnev's abuse.)

But I digress.

So on this particular day in September 2001, Osama did what he did in the teacher's extra deluxe super grande size beer mug. (Mr Sam has much difficulty dealing with ideas of smallness - he insists on calling a small cup of coffee 'tall' - and only the biggest is good enough for him.). Some of us had seen it coming. We hated Mr Sam for his authoritarian ways, his favoritism, his use of corporal punishment, the way he treated darker skinned students, his nasty habit of opening student's lunch packs and confiscating whatever caught his fancy It was really just a matter of time before some 'nutter' in class had enough. During the breaks we often heard Osama spitting fire about Mr Sam and how he was going to 'sock it to him one day'. And we marveled at how the teacher's pet had been transformed into nasty pit-bull terrier. Many of us were caught between our hatred for Mr Sam and a shared victimhood as well as the promise of a glorious reign of the students. There were, however, a couple of clever guys, mostly lighter skinned, who watched and kept quite. "Osama, you can do the talk' they muttered to themselves', at the end of the day, Mr Sam is the one who is going to do the grading and our primary responsibility is to ensure that there is an apple a day on his desk and that he knows where it comes from.

Then Osama did what he did... All of us remember that moment when all hell broke loose. For some of us whose whole world comprised of that classroom, it seemed as

if “the world” changed. For people in the villages that we come from, nothing really changed – the same grinding poverty, the same struggle to survive or to find a way of burying their dead with dignity. But those folks do not count when we talk of the whole world’. We are the world, we are the ones ...

Some classmates were caught on closed circuit TV giggling at Mr Sam’s nightmare. Their giggles, however, were quickly transformed into mournful sniffs when the extent of Mr Sam’s fury became evident. Several continued to rejoice in the injury inflicted on him during the break whenever they were confident enough that his blue-eyed boys weren’t within hearing distance. (The little noticed thing was that many students from other classes were also rejoicing. Some of these students had first hand experience with Mr Sam as a teacher on previous occasions and others just heard about him from his students.)

Now Mr Sam has had quite a number of run-ins with other folks over the years and he has not exactly emerged in the best shape after these run-ins. This was, however, the first time that someone had done this to him in his own classroom, where he had until now imagined himself to be invincible – and then in his drinking mug! While one slightly over the top student described Osama’s deed as “the greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos,” the affront, humiliation and pain that Mr Sam had to endure were simply unimaginable and very real.

He pulled out his not insubstantial cane. (Remember, everything about him had to be super-duper large).

When Osama realized the extent of Mr Sam’s fury he took to the forests in flight where he still seems to be. Ever so often there are stories of his second in command being captured but he then he seems to have an unlimited supply of second-in-commands.

Meanwhile the entire class was lined up and subjected to collective punishment. And so, ever since that fateful day all of us had to write – and it would seem that our writing is never legible enough – slogans such as “I shall behave’, ‘I shall be peaceful’, ‘I shall respect human rights – especially Mr Sam’s’, ‘Wahabism is bad, Salafism even worse’, ‘Properly interpreted, my Sacred Book is identical to Mr Sam’s’, (or his to mine, or something like that).

And we are still writing – and some of us faster writers are making careers out of writing for the slower ones. Perhaps one of the reasons why our writing is so difficult to decipher is that, I forgot to mention earlier on, this is a remedial class for ‘slow learners’, who are eternally on probation.

(Some other buddies of mine were also initially in this class but they have made a successful transition into a much smaller but ‘real’ class next door where they also have air-conditioning). They have all converted to Sam-ism, a new belief that ‘There is no God but Green Paper and that Mr Sam is his Last Prophet who heralds the end of history’. They say Sam-ism is really very compatible with their earlier faith called Islam, - it has even have a few corresponding sounds - but for old time’s sake they are holding on the label ‘Muslim’. Sometimes they add ‘moderate’ as a prefix to distinguish themselves from their other classmates.

Now, desperate to get into Mr Sam’s good books to present ourselves as worthy of his affection, as different from the Wahabi-Salafi barbarian who did what he did, we are fully engaged in the task of writing our lines of contrition. Too absorbed are we in our quest for acceptance, our urgency to acquire the coveted Green Card that will make us eligible to get into the class next door – gosh, so near, yet so far – that we

prefer to not see the many who are dying of malnutrition, impoverishment of AIDS in my village - or even around me.

Besides the immediate reality of the kids dying around me, there are, of course other realities around me including coercion, the irony of violence being used to imposed a language of peace, the larger context of education and schooling which pretends to be ideologyless, (the elite or elite wannabees of our generation, so desperate to 'succeed' within the system, have never had the courage to deal with the implications of the works of thinkers such as Paul Goodman and Ivan Illich, the promise of entry into the club of the white boys if we behave without interrogating the inherent injustice of a white boys club, the demand for uniformity, the reduction of human beings to empty vessels to be moulded to serve a particular kind of society with particular economic needs, the transformation of insan in to *homo economicus*).

Reflections

Can one speak of political participation and human rights of the social majorities when their voices are de-legitimized by asking them to speak a discursive language of rights that may not be something that resonates with their cosmovision and when human rights and development are constructed in purely economic terms?

Human rights are only two hundred years old. The ideology and the institutional arrangements of human rights were born after unprecedented forms of social and personal deprivation took root among the "developed" peoples of the world. The regime of the nation-state fusing nationalism and statehood, was constructed at this same time, to keep the social order in a society exposed to forces of the modern market reducing the human condition to that of homo economicus. The notion of Tawhid, (the absolute unicity of God) the basis of a Muslims comovision, and the ideal of Tawhidi society, and other religious and cultural ideals are quite obviously irrelevant, ineffective or even counter productive for societies designed towards economic development or 'progress'.

Human rights are, in fact social constructions. They are cultural inventions, and not natural discoveries. Human rights are but the formal, juridical expression of a specific mode of being and living. It is defined by the kind of man, woman and child who appeared on the earth only very recently; Homo economicus, the possessive individual. First born and brought up in the West, this modern 'person' - the individual self - is threatening the whole world with the plague of endless needs, legitimised under the moral mask of human rights.

The dilemma I am raising isn't an absolute cultural relativist position but rather one of how does one escape from a human rights monoculture and engage communities in ways that take cognizance of their cosmovisions and is this possible when are trapped in a class room where others have designed the curriculum and the school - and use resort to violence to 'make us understand'.

Human rights emerged at a particular historical moment in the Western history. Initially legitimised by Natural law, these were later justified through the social contract theories. The issue is two fold. Firstly how does one speak of ethics within one's own tradition in the wake of human rights. This is an issue of cultural affirmation. Secondly, what is the nature of the individual in the liberal rights discourse and what are its problems. Both of this has to be addressed in the context of Islam. This is especially important in the context of the human rights discourse almost smacking of cultural imperialism in the way it is deployed to invade countries and subjugate people. At no point is there ever any discussion of what are the Islamic conceptions of ethics or the Mohawk position on war etc. It is assumed that there is one standard and that standard will be applied by the dominant.

My problem is also that no matter how committed a Human Rights activist is, she also collapses into this framework of superficially judging other cultures and peoples without ever seriously engaging with their theological and cultural universes.

Muslim scholars too reflect this when they try and translate human rights directly

into Islam. Especially when a question is posed as are there human rights within Islam? This is a trick question and most well meaning Muslims respond saying yes 'Islam was the first human rights charter ever'.

I am not saying that there can be no cross-cultural conversation. All I am saying is that we have to guard against cross- cultural conversations that become shallow translations in the name of dialogue. True dialogue is about entering the other's world while yet holding on to yours. It isn't a trade where deals are struck, particularly not when you are waving a big stick.

Appendix 1.5

Text of discussion by Prof. Nasr Abu Zayd, Professor of Islam and Humanism at The University of Humanistics, Utrecht.

1-In order to reach an appropriate answer to the question whether or not religion in general, and Islam in particular, can provide a source for Human Rights and social development, I have to start with the question ‘what Islam is all about?’ Islam in its historical and social context, the 7th century Arabia, was meant to introduce a solution to the critical socio-historical situation of the world as represented in the Arab Peninsula. The world was divided into two conflicting powers, i.e., the Roman and the Persian empires. The Arab Peninsula was controlled at its north boundaries by two semi-Arabic states, each of which was affiliated to one of the two great powers. The major aim of these states was, first, to keep the Arabs inside the Peninsula boundaries in order to avoid any threat to the boundaries of the two empires. Secondly, it was to control the trade route between the north (Syria) and the south (Yemen and the Indian Ocean). Being forced to absolutely depend on their internal primitive resources of life, the Arab tribes gradually started entering into severe bloody conflict over the water sources. In order not to completely destroy human life and to keep trade traffic going they agreed to stop fighting for three months every year. This was the “sacred months” recognized and respected by Islam. In this context Islam can be looked at as a new system of belief, ethics and social order that was meant to change the life of the Arabs in order to enable them to solve the critical situation in which they were trapped and to *develop* into one unified entity.

On the level of belief, Islam presented the notion of “one transcendent god” to replace the tribal deities, i.e. the idols, in order to *free* the individual from worshipping his own hand-creation. On social order, the “*community of believers*” was created to substitute the social tribal order. On the level of ethics, individual “*rational conduct*” was supposed to be the norm instead of the absolute commitment to the tribal code of conduct, which Islam labeled as “*jShiliyya*” Social justice was introduced in the form of obligatory alms giving and the repeated command to treat fairly and help the slaves, the poor and the needy. On the intellectual level, Islam insisted on opening the gate for free “thinking” and argued for rational reflection and condemned blind “following” of tradition or copying the past.

Trying to accomplish such a new social order Islam did not start from scratch; it rather developed the positive values of the Arab society by eliminating the negative regressive soci-cultural elements. Islam integrated to its own system most of the social and religious institutions founded before its emergence. *Hajj*, pilgrimage to Mecca, became an Islamic institution and one of its five pillars, and *Ka`aba* became “the house of God” not “the house of idols”. The mosque became gradually the Muslim congress place instead of “*dar ‘l-nadwah*”, the place where the chief of tribes used to meet.

As for history and tradition, Islam reconstructed all the oral narratives of antiquities in order to put its message as the higher, final and the most complete of the serial of God’s messages to humankind since the creation of the universe. In brief, Islam was not meant to be only an ideology of understanding or explaining the world or a mere spiritual conviction, but it gradually emphasized its nature as an ideology to change the world. It did not take long after the death of the prophet before Muslims started their great invasion of the world.

Islam had to readapt itself with the different cultures that confronted the early Muslims in different territories. As Islam advanced in Asia, Africa and the Middle

East, territories with very rich pre-Islamic cultures and civilizations, it is not likely to think of Islam as monolithic tradition. The process of re-adaptation leads usually to increase the process of rationalization inherent already in Islam's foundational documents.

2-Islam, as any religion, has more than one dimension that should be considered here. One is the historical dimension, which presents its particular teaching concerning social interaction in the 7th century context. The other dimension is the universal one that presents the more common and human values that transcends time and place, this the spiritual ethical dimension. Those two dimensions of Islam, which are intrinsically interwoven in the Qur'an, have been subjects of interpretation and re-interpretation. I will leave the second dimension and concentrate on the first one, because this is the dominating and wide-spread dimension among ordinary Muslims all over the world because of its obvious legal and practical significance.

Not only ordinary Muslims see Islam from its legal perspective, but also some traditional thinkers, *ulama*, would emphasize the historical dimension, and consider it the essential dimension of Islam. With upheaval of Islamic fundamentalism in the last five decades, the cry for Islamization concentrated only on the legal aspect disconnecting it from the spiritual and universal aspect. If the spiritual and universal presents the vertical dimension, the legal presents the horizontal dimension, both are intrinsically bound. The new Islamism movements pay more attention to the horizontal than they pay to the vertical; this is what is meant by the politicization of Islam.

Traditional jurists, contrary to modern Islamists, were able by way of deduction and induction to formalize the essential utmost objectives of Islam without sacrificing the vertical in favor of the horizontal. They expressed the result of their complex method by summarizing these utmost objectives of Islam in five as follows:

1. Protection of life;
2. Protection of progeny;
3. Protection of property;
4. Protection of sanity;
5. Protection of religion.

It is not difficult, however, to explain that most of these objectives are deduced directly from the legal punishment of certain crimes mentioned in the Qur'an. Others are later deduced by way of analogy. The first one is deduced from the penal code for illegal killing because retaliation, according to the Qur'an, is in fact, to maintain 'life' itself (Qur'an, 2: 178-179.) The second objective is mainly taken from the punishment against committing fornication or adultery whether it is the 80 lashes mentioned in the Qur'an, and explained later to be applied only for the unmarried or the, the stoning penalty for the married (which has no Qur'anic ground.) As for the third objective it is taken from the theft penalty to cut the hands of a thief. What is meant by the fourth objective has to do with the prohibition of consuming alcohol product for which no penalty is introduced in the Qur'an but was introduced later after the death of the Prophet by analogy. Protecting religion is the death penalty for an apostate, which is deduced by analogy also, because there is no Qur'anic basis; no worldly punishment is mentioned in the Qur'an for those who turn their back to Islam after accepting it. What is mentioned is a punishment in the life after (Qur'an, 3: 90 and 4: 137.) It was later that the death penalty was introduced for mainly political reasons as protecting the political authority was identified with protecting Islam.

3-Nevertheless, these five objectives could be expanded beyond the boundaries of the legal rules from which they originated, by way of re-contextualization of the historical dimension in the light of the spiritual dimension in order to attain a more

sustainable interpretation. But it is up to Muslims to acknowledge such interpretation as valid. This interpretation can be attained by another reading of the Muslim holy texts, a reading that would suggest different, and more general and inclusive utmost objectives of Islam. For example one would say, firstly, that the doctrine of one transcendent God versus polytheism and the worshipping of idols, man's handmade creations, was intended to free man of paganism and to open the gate for rational thinking. *Freedom* is a major and a very important objective of Islam. Second, the creation of a community of believers to replace the tribal community based on tribal kinship opened a new gate of ethics based on *rationality*. The tribal code of conduct which is labeled in the Qur'an as "*jahiliyya*", literally to be submissive to the tribal code of conduct. The Qur'an, in fact, insists on emphasizing human rational thinking and argues for reflection instead of blindly following tradition and copying the past. It could be also said, thirdly, that within the community of believers, *social justice* was introduced in the form of giving 'alms' and the constant command to help the needy.

4-If one, furthermore, contextually examines the majority of the Qur'anic legal stipulations such as the penalty for fornication, of robbery, and causing social disorder as well as killing, it is reasonable to ask: were these penalties basically initiated by Islam, and thus Islamic? The answer must be a definite 'no'; all were generally pre-Islamic. Some penalties originate from Roman law and were adopted from the Jewish tradition, while others belong to an even older tradition. In our modern times of human rights and respect for the integrity of the human body, the amputation of body parts or execution cannot be considered divinely sanctioned religious punishments. Other aspects of *shari`a*, such as those dealing with the rights of religious minorities, women's rights, and human rights in general, also need to be revised and reconsidered. Contextualization of the Qur'anic stipulation, and examination of its linguistic and stylistic structure - as discourse - would reveal that the jurists' work was basically to unfold the meaning of such stipulation and to re-encode this meaning in various social contexts. The Qur'an is not in itself a book of law; legal stipulations are expressed in discourse style, and these reveal a context of engagement with human needs in specific times. This, in turn, opens up the appropriation of the intended 'meaning' into every paradigm of meaning. As a discourse, the Qur'an provides multiple options and a variety of solutions, as well as an open gate of understanding.

To claim that the body of *shari`a* literature is binding for all Muslim communities, notwithstanding time and space, is simply to ascribe divinity to the human historical production of thought. If this is the case, there is no obligation to establish a theocratic state claimed as Islamic. Such a demand is nothing but an ideological call to establish an unquestionable, theo-political authority; this would recreate a devilish dictatorial regime at the expense of the spiritual and ethical dimension of Islam. The issue of *shari`a* and the call by political islamist movements for its immediate implementation has sparked many debates and disputes across the Muslim world. These debates peaked after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran and the efforts of many governments in Muslim-majority countries to compete with the islamists' claim's to Islam by amending existing legislation.

5-One of the issues that is connected to *shari`a* in modern Islamic debate is the issue of democracy. The *shari`a*-oriented discourse of the islamists has reduced this to the classical concept of *shura* (consultation). Again by contextualization we realize that the Qur'an addressed a traditional environment, where *shura* was the only mean of communal consultation. Today, Muslims live in modern or modernising environments that are very different from that of the time of the Qur'an. Their societies are characterised by a plurality of outlook, identity and interests. How to cope with pluralism in the political sphere is one of the key problems of the modern

world. Some Qur`anic verses state that the head of the community should consult with the community (42: 38). In a traditional environment, this implies something very specific, namely consulting vertically, from the top down, but not too far down. Obviously, such consultation is not democratically structured; it forms part of an authoritarian or autocratic set-up. So what does *shûra* mean in the present environment - in a pluralistic world faced with the problems of mass political participation and of broad-based consultation? What sort of 'shûra' are we actually talking about? How does one bridge the gap between old concepts and a modern, pluralist and politicised world? This is only possible not by abandoning tradition, and thus uprooting our identity, but by critical engagement with our tradition and cultural heritage. Such critical engagement would provide us with intellectual courage to reread our holy scripture in order to grasp the meaning addressed to our modern time.

In such rereading the values of justice, freedom, and equality will be revealed to our conscience as essential as they are. The concept of *justice*, for example, is so permeating the Qur`ân with all its dimensions, social, economic, legal as well as cosmological, physical and metaphysical. Human equality is based on the Divine Justice, where there is no discrimination whatsoever. The principle of 'quality' is one of the major, essential, and basic teachings of Islam. It is clearly stated in the Qur`an that God created all man-kind "from one single soul and created its mate from the same soul and spread from both of them too many men and women." (4:1) Humankind, thus created of male and female, has been made tribes and nations in order to come to know each other (49:13.) This equality is not then a matter of choice; it is constituted on the Divine honor bestowed on human.²³

Equality is not meant to be an abstract principle; it has to be manifested in social strata such as sharing power and wealth. It could be said that Islam is not unique in condemning any ill-treatment of the poor, the needy, the helpless or the handicapped; this is to be found in all scriptures and it is an essential component of any religious piety. This is absolutely true. Nevertheless, the Qur`an has more to add; it stipulates as a religious duty the rights of the poor to have their own share from what belong to the rich people, thus creating probably the first social welfare system in the history of human communities. It is mentioned in the early Mecca revelation that the believers should recognize that in their wealth and possession there is "certain right" for the needy and the unprivileged. (51:9) But in an early Medina chapter alms (Arabic *zakat* or *sadaqat*) was stipulated as one of the basic five pillars of Islam.²⁴ Here, there is no religious discrimination in this social welfare system. In the same chapter the Qur`an goes further to condemn severely the accumulation of wealth. (9:34-35) More than that, the Qur`an clearly indicates that one of its objectives is to justly distribute wealth. So alms was stipulated "in order that wealth may not (merely) be circulated between the wealth among you." (59:7)

Does the stipulation of alms establish by itself a system of economic justice? It certainly does, especially if we think about the social context of its stipulation, and if we add the other measures introduced in the Qur`an to sustain the major objective of justice. The great opposition of the Qur`an and its harsh criticism of the practice of usury, *riba*, stands, furthermore, as a basic ground for attaining socio-economic system of justice. The two issues alms and usury are remarkably connected to each other and compared with each other in the Qur`an. The image of the charity givers, who carefully and in a very decent manner spend helping the needy without exposing them to any kind of embarrassment, is compared with the image of those who practice usury; the later is that of a blood-succor. (2:273-280)

The corner stone of the Islamic concept of "justice" is its ethical significance. It is very clearly stated in chapter 16:90, where 'justice' is associated with *ihsan*, which

means doing the utmost possible good and fine human behavior towards the self as well as towards others. It is remarkable in this verse that the order to do justice and to do the best is not addressed to any addressee not to man nor to the believers, as is the case in other verses, which signify an overall comprehensive, or rather cosmological, ordinance. The absent of a specified grammatical object provides a wide scope of semantic infinity to the verb 'ordain'. Ordaining justice and *ihsan* is followed in the verse by forbidding *fahisha*, shameful deeds, *munkar*, all unaccepted behavior, and *baghy*, exceeding the limits by being unjust dealing with others. More detailed examples are provided to explain *fahsha*, *munkar* and *baghy* in 17:26-30, which summarize the entire Qur'anic ethics interwoven with the concept of justice. Ethics covers the domain of just and unjust actions, up from being self-unjust in associating other with God down to do self-justice by being moderate in personal expenditure. The correlation given between 'justice' and *ihsan* in 16:90 is to find its full significance in the definition given to *ihsan* by the Prophet where he says, "It is to serve God as if you were (physically) able to see Him. But realize if you cannot see Him, He sees you."²⁵ Such a prophetic explanation obviously places *ihsan* on the highest grade of God's service, even higher than the ordinary rank of faith. If *ihsan* and justice are so associated, the position of *ihsan* should semantically be attributed to justice. The command of doing 'justice' is associated with forbidding all wrongdoing, the opposite of *ihsan* (7:28-29.)

Divine Justice which secures equality secures freedom as well. The destination of man in the life-after is not pre-decided randomly by God; it is, indeed, decided by man himself according to his success of realizing and recognizing the eternal pact made between him and God. Such a realization and recognition is, according to the Qur'an, nothing but the realization and recognition of his own inner nature (*fitra*).

This Divine justice is permeating the whole universe from top to bottom, because it is only He, God, who is firmly standing on justice: God, His angels, and those endowed with knowledge, testify that there is no god but Him standing firm on justice. There is no god but He the Exalted in Power the Wise." (3:18)²⁶ 'Standing firm on Justice' signifies one of God's attributes, which allowed rational theologians, the *Mu` tazila*, to consider 'Divine Justice' one of their major five principle. It is placed in their system second to the Divine Unity (*tawhid*), even though they argumentatively base the later on the former.²⁷

The scope of God's justice in the Qur'an is conveyed by the clear statement repeated that He gave everything He created its full and best quality. It is according to His Divine Knowledge and His Divine Wisdom that perfection is manifested in the whole universe from top to bottom. (15:16-25) If the whole universe is created in the best and most perfect order, man also is created in the most perfect image, God's image as Muslim Sufis maintain. He is, therefore expected to act according to his image reflecting God's attributes.²⁸ If man is always closely watched by God's agents to have all his deeds, bad as well as good, recorded, it is God watching his own image. If man acts in a way that does not confirm the image, punishment in the life-after is not only justified but will also be applied to man's deformed image (82:6-19.)

It is important here to analyze, in conclusion, the image of 'scale' (*mizan* in Arabic), which symbolizes the multi-semantic levels of 'justice' expressed in the Qur'an. There is, first of all, the repeated order of God to avoid committing fraud measures in dealing; a chapter is named *al-Mutafifun*, (those who deal in fraud), in which they are severely condemned and threatened of great tutor in the life-after. "Woe to those that deal in fraud, those who when they have to receive by measure from men they have the exact full measure. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men they give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account? (83:1-6) In 26:181-183, *Shu` ayb*, the prophet of Median, is arguing his people to weigh

with scales true and upright. There are more examples in 13:35; 55:9; 6:152; 7:85; 11:84-5, where the concept of justice in measures and weigh is metaphorically alluding to the cosmological concept. The metaphoric image of 'scale' is also employed to convey justice on the Day of Judgment. Deeds, which are recorded by God's agents at the spot in this life, will be scaled and measured in the life-after, good deeds vs. bad deeds. "We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed We will bring it (to account): and enough are We to take account." (21:47) "Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy they will attain salvation. But those whose balance is light will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell will they abide" (23:102-3, see 7:8-9; and 101:6-8.) But the image of *mizan* symbolizes, furthermore, the Divine measures embodied everywhere. It is, first, embodied in the creation of Earth, which is "spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance." It is also embodied in the way God sends down subsistence from His treasury to man on Earth: "There is not a thing but its (sources and) treasures (inexhaustible) are with Us; but We only send down thereof in due and ascertainable measures." (15:19,22) In chapter 55 *mizan* is related in a poetic style to raising high of the sky in order that people may not transgress due balance (v.7-8,) which is followed by the order to establish weigh with justice and not to fall short in the balance. The implication in such a poetic style is that *mizan* does not symbolize only justice on earth, but it could also symbolize Divine Justice manifested in everything. This implication is explicitly unfolded in the portraying the Book of Revelation as *mizan*. "We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong) that men may stand forth in justice." (57:25)

The Divine Justice is thus manifested in the whole universe and expressed in the book of revelation. Justice is the scale that keeps everything in balance with the exception of man, who has the freedom to disobey, thus, bringing the imbalance in this world. In the story of Adam and Eve, the imbalance caused by their act of disobedience was re-balanced by the Word of God revealed. This is exactly the mission of the prophets; it is now the Word of God we all have. And it is to all of us, all human nations, to keep the balance or to cause an imbalance. In all cases, it is we who determine our destination here on Earth or in the life-after.

Appendix 1.6

**Key note speech by Ms. Agnes van Ardenne-Van der Hoeven,
Minister for Development Cooperation.**

The outstretched hand

(During the speech, a photograph was projected showing the outstretched hand of white missionary, holding the hand of an emaciated Ugandan child).

Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. The Old Testament says “You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in the land”. In development cooperation, the world is the land. This photograph is called “Hands” and it goes to the core of what we do: human hands as a symbol of the poverty that divides the world. But these hands are also a symbol of the compassion that can unite us, that can make us reach out and lend a helping hand. In this case, compassion flows from a religious source. The helping hand is the hand of a missionary. When I was a child development cooperation had the face of a missionary. Every once in a while, missionaries would visit my parents’ house and tell us about the poor and needy far beyond our borders. They would tell us how we could reach out, so that they could live their lives in dignity, and what I, a child living in a small village in the Netherlands, could do for children like the one in this photograph.
2. But the truth is that the helping hand in this photo could just as easily have been the hand of a Muslim. “There is a key for everything, and the key to paradise is love for the poor,” said the Prophet Mohammed. In fact, all religions share a deep concern for the poor, the dispossessed and the weak. “Clothe the naked, visit the sick, comfort the mourner, bury the dead,” we read in the Talmud. The Buddha once said, “If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of selfishness overcome their minds.” And in the Hindu Rig Veda we read, “Let the rich man satisfy one who seeks help: and let him look upon the long view: for wealth revolves like the wheels of a chariot, coming now to one, now to another.” These days, we only hear about war in the name of religion. But anyone reading a sacred text, will find that there is something else at the heart of religion: our sacred duty towards each other.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. Unfortunately, in the current climate, religion is more often seen as part of the problem than as part of the solution. So I want to compliment Cordaid, ICCO and the ISS for organising this conference about the positive force of religion. It is my firm belief that religion is development cooperation’s blind spot. In its recent report, the Advisory Council on International Affairs also stressed the importance of the subject. So I am pleased that today we are launching a knowledge forum on religion and development. I hope that this new forum will advance our knowledge in this area.
4. Africans express the religious inspiration to perform good deeds with the following proverb: “when you pray, move your feet”. But development cooperation is not just about moving your feet. All our actions, projects and

programmes will fall short without a meaningful dialogue to find common ground. There are no mutual interests and mutual responsibilities without mutual understanding. Religion is an essential part of the equation. There can be no mutual understanding without learning about each other's beliefs and rituals. Are we, as secular westerners, capable of engaging in a dialogue on this subject? I will return to this question later.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. Before I talk about my high hopes for the knowledge forum and how it could contribute to a dialogue between cultures, I want to reflect briefly on two basic relationships that are of interest here: first, the influence of religion on development and second, the influence of development on religion.

How religion influences development

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. Many people might think that any discussion of how religion influences development is bound to be esoteric and free floating. That is why I will start by citing a *fact*. In Sub-Saharan Africa, faith-based organisations provide more than 50% of all health and education services, including care for the victims of HIV/AIDS. Where the state fails, religious organisations pick up the pieces. Clearly, these organisations are capable of mobilising society in a way that the state is not. We should not forget that in our own country many schools and hospitals were originally founded by religious organisations and in many cases are still being run by them. You need only look at their names.
7. In poor countries, marginalised people might feel a stronger bond with religious organisations that care about them than with a state that doesn't. This is a reality we should take into account when working in these countries. Extremist organisations certainly take advantage of this reality, although I believe that most religious organisations provide health and education services with the best of intentions. In any case, I see a clear role for development cooperation here. For instance, by working with reliable governments and religious organisations, development agencies can keep children out of schools that teach hatred. This is a much more efficient way of combating terrorism than fighting the graduates of those schools on our own streets.

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. In 2001, the year the Twin Towers were attacked, a third of the world's population was at war. Thirty countries around the world were fighting in thirty-seven armed conflicts - usually internal in nature and usually without a TV camera in sight. Many people blame religion for the world's wars. This is unfair. For instance, the Darfur conflict is mainly about resources - all the combatants are Muslims. Even when people say they are fighting for their religion, more worldly interests are often at work. And when the most holy words are abused as an excuse for the most unholy deeds, people of faith need to speak out. When the Liberian war criminal Charles Taylor says that he considers himself to be a devout Christian, I, as a Christian, take offence. Some Muslim clerics have distanced themselves from terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists. Unfortunately, very often their voices are not loud enough and the group is too small. Let's not overlook the positive signals: this Monday, for example, the President of the Aya Sofya mosque in Amsterdam signed a protocol against radicalism, in the presence of our prime minister. Muslims

around the world should unite, raise their voices and tell the preachers of hate: “you don’t speak for us”.

9. Many religious organisations and their leaders have tapped into the positive potential of their faith by mediating in armed conflicts. For example, in 1972, the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches brokered a ceasefire in Sudan’s civil war. In Nigeria’s civil war, British Quakers put their own lives at risk by travelling back and forth between the warring parties to deliver messages and keep them talking. I am pleased to announce that this autumn the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be organising a conference on the role of religion in conflict resolution. I look forward to continuing our discussion on this topic, since security is a prerequisite if any type of development is to occur.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. It is clear that religion can have both positive and negative effects on development. According to the Harvard economist John Landis, most historians now reject Max Weber’s thesis that sustained economic growth is mainly a Protestant privilege. In fact, in the period between 1961 and 1990, the fastest growing economies of the European Union were countries like Portugal, Greece and Ireland – all countries where John Calvin did not find much of an audience. And of course, Japan is an example of economic success far outside the Protestant part of the world and let’s not forget China and India. I won’t hide the fact that, as a Catholic, I am glad Weber was wrong. In any case, I trust that the knowledge forum will update Weber’s thinking on the influence of religion on development.

How development influences religion

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. Let me now briefly turn to the influence of development on religion. How do modernisation and globalisation affect traditional values and practices, including religious ones? Ever since the Industrial Revolution, when technology transformed the production process, “change” has been the only constant in the modern world. And change can be very threatening. Karl Popper spoke of “the strain of civilisation”. It has taken western countries many years to come to terms with the new human condition. As modern industry and modern science advanced, our identity and our religious beliefs came under pressure. At the end of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche even announced the death of God. Any naïve optimism about modern progress died when forces such as communism and fascism, which were in part a counter-reaction to modernity, made the twentieth century the most bloody in human history. Given the slow, painful emergence of modernity in the western world, we should not expect developing countries to modernise overnight. Like us, they need time to accept and adapt to changing conditions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. The history of Egypt provides a vivid example of the damage that modernisation can do when it happens too fast. In the early nineteenth century, Muhammad Ali tried to take Egypt from a subsistence economy to a complex industrial one within forty years. His methods failed. He swiftly disabled the old social system and violently imposed secular institutions and new production methods. He completely marginalised the religious

organisations that underpinned the old system by confiscating their sources of income. And he created a rift in Egyptian society between the modern military and governmental elite and the conservative masses who had experienced modernity only as a destructive force. Muhammad Ali modelled new districts of Cairo on London and Paris. Ordinary Egyptians, not used to this type of architecture and street plan, lost their way in their own city.

13. We need to make a conscious effort to prevent people in developing countries from losing their way in the city of modernity. It is a matter of life and death. In the Netherlands, for example, life expectancy has almost doubled since the start of the Industrial Revolution. Now, we need to spread the benefits of modernisation to every corner of the world, without compromising people's identities and their souls. There can be no doubt that the fear of losing one's identity is one of the forces driving fundamentalism. I believe that this is one of the major issues of our time: will modernisation and globalisation unite us or divide us? Our most valuable tool for preventing division based on poverty and alienation is dialogue at home and worldwide.
14. The first step towards that dialogue is finding common ground. For example, we expect our development partners in the South to respect internationally recognised human rights. In its recent report on culture, religion and development, the Advisory Council on International Affairs stresses that there are limits to any type of development dialogue. But let us be careful not to point the finger at developing countries. We also need to remain critical of our own attitude and our own role in the dialogue with developing countries.
15. We should ask ourselves the following question. Are we, as westerners, as Dutch development partners, capable of engaging in that dialogue? In the minds of many people in the Netherlands, religion has become a thing of the past. Churches are monuments and the Bible is world literature. Among these people are quite a few development workers. But if the development community is to engage in dialogue on identity and modernity, it will have to understand countries where religion plays an essential role in everyday life.
16. Sadly, in our own society, we have banished religion from the public domain. Many people were appalled at the suggestion that the European Constitution should contain a reference to our Christian heritage, even though it is a cornerstone of the European identity. Our news reporters covering the funeral of the late Pope John Paul the Second were surprised at the Roman Catholic rituals and the public outburst of emotion. More and more people are offended by an innocent religious tradition such as a headscarf. On Monday, the Dutch member of parliament Ayaan Hirshi Ali made a speech on culture and religion at the University of Amsterdam. Her recipe for scientific, economic and cultural progress is quite simple: get rid of religion and cultivate an attitude of curiosity. But this is too simplistic. Ms Hirshi Ali treats all religions and all religious organisations the same. And she forgets that, as the celebrated religious writer Karen Armstrong says, for many people, religion has been an indispensable spiritual anchor in times of rapid change and she also forgets that religion has often been a driver of that rapid change: in the eleventh century, Pope Gregory the Seventh introduced much of the legal and institutional infrastructure that later formed the foundations of capitalism.
17. Let me draw a historical comparison. In 1566, bands of men armed with hatchets and hammers stripped Catholic churches in the Netherlands of all their sacred symbols. Today, I see a risk that the same type of fury may return, with radical secularists trying to strip any sign of religion from the public

domain. This may sound unlikely, but a new string of Islamist terror attacks could easily trigger a backlash against religion in general.

18. Of course, the state should be secular, but the public domain is not state property: it belongs to society itself. The immigrant population in the Netherlands do not understand the new secular radicalism. People in developing countries understand it even less. Clearly, we need to regain contact with our own religious roots if we are to get in touch with the minorities at home and the majority abroad. At home, we could start by further stimulating dialogue between different religions. We can learn from Suriname, where there is a council representing Christians, Muslims and Hindus that meets to discuss the state of the nation. In the Netherlands, we need more consultative bodies for inter-religious dialogue. We have plenty to talk about.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. In the international arena, the Netherlands already supports organisations that try to use the power of religion for the good of mankind, such as the World Conference of Religions for Peace and the International Association for Religious Freedom. I am very pleased that we now have the knowledge forum as well, to enhance our dialogue with developing countries. A dialogue about the role of religious organisations in education and health care, about religious identity, modernity, globalisation and development. I have already said that I have high hopes for the forum. Let me tell you why.
 - First, it can generate new knowledge. The forum will deepen our understanding of religion's role in security issues, the activities of religious organisations in the fight against HIV/AIDS and the influence of religion on gender patterns. This knowledge will be spread and further developed through a website listing "good practices" and regular seminars. And our staff will be given training in these fields, just as the Advisory Council on International Affairs has recommended.
 - Second, the forum can help us draft new policies. It will translate our knowledge into a set of practical guidelines for our delegations in the field. It will identify blind spots in our current policies and come up with recommendations. In 2008, all the annual plans of our embassies in developing countries and all the policy papers of the civil society partners will have to address the role of religion and religious organisations. The forum will also look into the criteria for good governance, to see whether we can develop an indicator for social cohesion and community relations.
 - Third, the forum is a new partnership. Government and civil society will work together to make it a success. This is in perfect harmony with my policy on civil society, which is based on complementarity. As I have emphasised throughout my speech, religion and development interact in many important ways, in private and in public. This requires interaction between government and civil society. I commend ICCO, Kerkinactie, PRISMA, BBO, Cordaid and Oikos for their enthusiastic participation in this effort: we're in this together. I also hope that we can further strengthen ties with the academic world.

Concluding remarks

Ladies and gentlemen,

20. Religion is a delicate subject. It's easier to talk about practical things: roads, schools and hospitals. Religion is both a deeply personal matter for all of us and an integral part of the social fabric, especially in developing countries. More than in the past, development partners should make the role of religion a topic for discussion. That is why we on the western, secular side of the

dialogue should put religion back on the policy map. The knowledge forum is an important step towards a richer kind of development cooperation. Not to save souls, but to save lives. Because we cannot lend a helping hand without knowing the values that move the mind and heart of the person we want to help.

21. One final remark. Or, rather, a take-home question: are we really as secular as we think we are, here in the Netherlands? Young people seem very interested in exploring their religious identity. It was uplifting to see so many of them going to Cologne in August, including quite a few from the Netherlands. They were anxious to listen to each other and to a new Pope, who has taken some very positive steps towards a dialogue between religions. I have the firm belief that people will never cease to ask themselves questions about the origin of life and the meaning of our existence, and that they will often turn to religion for the answers. And, on a more emotional level: who can look at this photo without feeling the need to hold the hand of that Ugandan child, to protect the sanctity of life? And isn't that, in the end, a religious feeling?

Ladies and gentlemen,

22. I would like to wish you every success with the rest of this unique conference, which has brought together people from all over the world. I especially hope that tomorrow you will be able to specify concrete policy recommendations, which I await with interest.

Thank you.

Appendix 1.7

Key note speech by Dr. Agnes Abuom, TAABCO Management and Development Consultants, Nairobi, Kenya

(Ms Abuom was not able to attend the conference. This speech was therefore stated by Fred Nyabera from the organisation Fecclaha, Kenya).

Christianity as a source of development cooperation

The Millennium Development goals have gained prominence in recent years as a rallying call for mobilising persons, communities, institutions, organizations and nations towards achieving collective good for the world by eliminating poverty, diseases, violence, and other vices. In implementing the MDGs, the responsibility is being shared and obligations placed on not only governments, but also individuals and people's organizations and institutions world over. This is as a result of the realisation that to achieve sustainable development in the world, a holistic, all-inclusive, and multi-actor approach based on effective partnership working is essential. Development cooperation at local, national, and international levels has thus become increasingly recognised as vital in these endeavours. Development cooperation can be at the level of ideas and resources.

Recent years show that strategic partnership working relationships between different religious groupings in different regions in the world with other development actors has become a crucial development strategy. These emerging approaches and strategies underline the importance of development cooperation in pursuit of sustainable development in the world that is characterised by meaningful participation, dignity, equality, peace, full enjoyment of human rights.

Christianity is a strong source of development cooperation at local, national, and even international levels. This has been possible due to various positive elements of Christianity. First and foremost, Christianity is a universal phenomenon. At local levels, the Christian Churches provide a social infrastructure for mobilising and entry of development interventions thanks to their spread and closeness to the people. Christian Churches often use their cooperation with communities to collaborative effectively or to serve as entry points for development interventions by government agencies and civil society organisations. Because of this connectivity, Christianity has carved for itself a wider constituency in terms of its focus that goes beyond its tradition spiritual motivation to also include human rights promotion and development work. Many Christian Churches and organizations are today deeply involved in provision of basic services and supporting advocacy activities.

Development cooperation is also based on key Christian principles of resource sharing, love, giving, serving, and good stewardship. Christianity teaches that resource sharing is God's gift to humanity for the purposes of the latter's sustenance. Sharing of resources becomes necessary and possible where people practice the ideals of love and justice. Love compels us to recognise our potential to help those who are in need. The compelling force here is in the grace of God – God's grace makes us feel comfortable when we have to share what we have with others.

Today, Christians, their churches and church organizations are increasingly being involved in promoting global peace and development through dialogue, interventions, and as models. In recent years, governments and supra-nationals such as the World Bank and IMF have for example approached Christian churches to dialogue on issues related to peace, poverty, the economy and even governance matters. The church is therefore getting increasingly involved in what can be called matters outside its core

evangelistic mission. Different situations around the world continue to prod the church to come out and speak boldly, as well as provide direction on issues affecting people. The neo-liberal ideology being promoted principally by the World Bank and IMF, for example, is seemingly causing massive exclusion and sacrifice of human lives and nations in the name of economic growth through privatisation and the liberalised and de-regulated market. The church cannot therefore keep quiet as human life is reduced to arguments of economic growth that only benefits the powerful.

Christianity has a lot of lessons for today's development practitioners. The Bible teaches Christians to work in a successful mode noting that their strength is in their God who makes them strong. Success can be attained, however, by working in a harmonious relationship with others. This alludes to the importance of development cooperation between individuals, institutions, and nations. In development pursuits, many obstacles and failures may be encountered but the Bible teaches that people should be strong and firm, patient and tolerant always relying on God for guidance in their work. In development pursuits, individuals and organizations often seek protection from obstacles and failures from well crafted plans, systems, policies and constitutions. Whilst these are important, success comes only from God. God's law and guidance is most reliable in assuring successes in any development effort. Alliances or collaborative working relations between individuals, organizations and nations in pursuit of development can be fruitful only when God is put first.

The Christian value of sharing is also an important source and motivation for development cooperation. 2 Corinthians 8: 1-9 teaches Christians how they ought to approach this virtue. It implores that those who have been on the receiving end of God's grace in Christ ought to be on the giving end, showing grace to those in need, and without complaining. This underlines that while every person should help one another, from him much is given, much is required. Anyone who has material possession and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him is not therefore demonstrating the love of God be Him (1 John 3:14-18). For this matter, Christian Churches endeavour to teach the virtue of responsibility and sacrifice. This is an important lesson for individuals, organizations and nations from the developing and developing world as they attempt to work together in cooperation to meet the MDGs and other global aspirations. The Christian value of love and sharing is thus important foundation for development cooperation around the world.

Christianity as a strong force for peace promotion

Peace is an important element of development and has a strong connection with human rights; peace cannot prevail in a situation of injustice. Human rights abuse, especially of people's social and economic rights is indicative of injustices, which is noticeable in most parts of the world. Economic injustice, political injustice, social injustice, cultural injustice, racial injustices are truly evident within and outside boundaries of nations. Christianity teaches the importance of making acting and living justly. Events of recent years reveals that ending violence in one place or another may bring some peace, but complete peace cannot be attained until other forms of violence and injustices are resolved and reconciliation made a reality.

The Christian Church has also tried to promote peace and development through ecumenism. This refers to endeavours of various Christian denominations to promote mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation in the hope of promoting unity among Christian churches and individuals. The modern Ecumenical movement has sought to promote these concerns through structures such as the World Council of Churches based in Geneva, the All Africa Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) in Kenya.

Looking at the history of church organizations like AACC, one can clearly see the revolutionising role such organizations have in promoting understanding and unity among churches and peoples. Ecumenism has become an important practice for promoting peace, understanding, and cooperation not only among the Christian Churches, organizations and individual believers but has important lessons, which can be applied by others. Ecumenism is founded on strong Christian beliefs, such as the belief of a need to help build free, united, prosperous and peaceful communities among God's people. The vision is to build communities that are characterised by solidarity, and where people, regardless of their religion, convictions, language, culture, tradition and ethnic origin, may live together and feel at home united in diversity.

Dilemma and Challenges

Issues of peace, human rights promotion and development cooperation require a holistic approach. Sustainable development, moreover, is possible where it is informed by people's values and aspirations. Clearly, there are various positive aspects of Christianity that are noticeable and capable of contributing significantly to efforts to promote peace, human rights and development. Elements of Christianity such as the values and practises of modern day Christians and by the churches and church organizations can be focused on in order to strengthen the positive forces in development. However, despite its world presence and good values, Christianity faces several challenges and dilemmas in its mission to promote peace, human rights and development cooperation in the world today.

Much of the violence and abuse of people's rights in the world today are caused by greed, misuse of power, and other unrighteous acts or omissions. Christian believers themselves have committed some of these ungodly acts. Yet, the Bible is very clear that all human beings are God's creation and are supposed to live in harmony, perceiving one another as children of the same father and therefore heirs of the worldly and heavenly riches. How to reconcile peoples' attitude towards wealth and power has been a key challenge for the Christian Churches.

The abject poverty evident in the world today is yet another dilemma for Christianity and a challenge to Christian teaching of love and sharing. Poverty in a countries endowed with enormous natural resources is an indication that people have failed to exercise responsible stewardship of these resources, which belongs to God. The blame for this does not rest only on the governments, but also on the ministers of religion who could insist and convince the people of the true ownership of the earthly wealth.²⁹ Despite strong Christian teaching and firm biblical accounts, the spirit of sharing and giving is increasingly becoming scarce in the world today even among Christians. Instead we have greed, selfishness, jealousy, and violence on the rise. The values of love and sharing cheerfully is yet to penetrate deeply in the world, including among some Christian believers also.

Another challenge of Christian is how to root the core Christian value of good stewardship. Stewardship means to hold something in trust for another. But Christianity is facing several other challenges along the way in its pursuit to promote human rights and development cooperation in the world today. They include how to uphold one Christian voice and ethical code among the various Christian denominations; how to work closely with government and other stakeholders without comprising its stand; how to balance the Churches' spiritual and development roles; how to work effectively with other religious groups; how to deal with the forces and pushes of globalisation and draconian policies by supra-nationals and governments; and how to uphold good stewardship.

Conclusion

The Christian religion has continued to contribute to peace, human rights and development cooperation in the world in various ways and channels, importantly through the work of individual Christians, Christian churches and organizations. Efforts at peace, human rights promotion and development cooperation can learn and benefit a lot from the core Christian values, the life of Christ who remains the model for Christians, and from the Biblical teachings.

Generally, Christianity recognises that human rights not only enable people to live fully and meaningfully, but helps people to achieve capabilities, which they can use to take advantage of existing and emerging opportunities. Christianity endeavours to promote peace, human rights and development cooperation in the world through the work of the Christian based organizations. Organizations like the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) have for example not only engaged in ecumenical work, but also in development delivery through initiation and management of important social projects in various parts of Kenya.

Christian organizations involved in development intervention work, governance, advocacy and lobby activities among other concerns have also made remarkable contributions in peace building, human rights promotion and development intervention in their operational areas. They include faith-based organizations and NGOs like the Christian Children Fund (CCF), ICCO, and Bread for the World, among others. These organisations make efforts to share God's love with the less fortunate in society sometimes through initiation of development projects of various types in sometimes-remote locations where governments haven't reached.

The Christian church can therefore be said to have taken its social responsibility as an instrument of God called to radiate life in God's creation seriously. Instead of seeking to evade its social responsibility, the church continues to learn how to open its ears more widely so as to listen to the voice of the Lord who calls his people in every age to go out into the lost and lonely world (as he did), in order to live and love, to witness and serve, like Him and for Him.

Christianity and religion in general is increasingly emerging as important sources of human rights and development cooperation at local, national and international levels. The Christian Church has a duty to help in this mission beyond its core spiritual duty to bring people to the knowledge and believe in God. The Christian principles of dignity, justice, equality, peace, love among others are key virtues up which human rights are based. These virtues are based on the Teachings of Christ the founder of the Christianity, the Law of God as recorded in the bible and as taught by the apostles and Disciples of Christ. The universality of Christianity, its churches that are spread all over the world, and work of individuals Christians and organizations are also important foundations for development cooperation in the world.

It is within Christianity's core business therefore to promote peace, human rights and development cooperation in the world. Carrying that role is a reflection of true Christian discipleship.

Reaction on speech Ms Agnes Abuom by Fred Nyabera, Director Fellowship of Christian Councils and churches in the great lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA)

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to speak on the topic “The Role of Civic Education in Promoting Democratic Governance”.

I will speak from the standpoint of the Churches in Kenya with very specific reference to the experience in the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK).

Over the years, the National Council of Churches of Kenya has mounted a series of civic education programmes designed to enhance the knowledge base of the Kenyan citizens so that they are better able to understand their environment, their rights and obligations and to make rational choices and decisions based on sound knowledge. These programmes have applied a variety of approaches including publication of numerous materials, seminars, posters, videocassettes, drama, public debate etc. The ultimate purpose has been to promote the churches’ ability to identify, analyze and respond to local and national issues affecting the lives of the people.

2. Why civic education?

In Kenya the 1991 amendment of Section 2A of the constitution to allow for multi-partism ushered in an era of hope for the process of democratization. However, subsequent political experience took too long to help realize this hope. No major constitutional reforms to guide the country towards full democratization were allowed over a long time.

It called upon for excessive pressure from both within and without to force the government to enter into any form of dialogue in this respect. The country in the meanwhile continued to witness cases of human rights violation, the right to movement and the right to assembly as constitutionally guaranteed, political party zoning, harassment of the opposition leaders and the press.

It was imperative that Kenyans had to realize the nature of social contract between them and the bearers and those they the people are the government and can determine their destiny and that of their nation. It is only then that democratization would have had any meaning in people’s lives. A vigorous process of Civic education was necessary for this to happen.

Hence the churches spearheaded the democratization process in Kenya at a time when Kenyans were in a very repressive era that no other single organization would have raised any query on the governance process for fear of arbitrary arrest and detention. However, it was not until other forces joined up that the effect of civic education was realized. It is true that it was mainly the Churches that helped in the opening of democratic space to enable these other forces to come into being but their presence made a whole lot of difference in the acceleration of the process. The major lesson in this was that a vibrant civil society is necessary for democratization process. The Church has a role in nurturing the growth of such a civil society where it does not exist and cooperating with it where it exists.

3. NCK and civic education

The National Council of Churches of Kenya has in its history tried to respond to the concerns of the day. Although it has for a long time in its history been involved in democratization in Kenya, it has seen a lot of activities in this realm since the 1991 repeal of Section 2A transformed Kenya from a single party to a multi-party system as a first and very important step towards a new era of democratization. This development provided a strong momentum for a political change by bringing about high optimism and expectations in the majority of the people. The repeal of section 2A re-introduced multi-party politics in the country, established competitive politics however limited but did not lay the ground for sustainable process of democratization.

NCK felt that the prevailing atmosphere of euphoria in the country due to the introduction of multi-party politics needed to be harnessed into a lasting pluralistic political culture. In an effort to create awareness on its member churches and the public at large on matters pertaining to democracy, responsible citizenship and human right, the Council launched a programme on education for participatory democracy through which numerous workshops were organized to reach and educate the public on the importance of voting and the need to participate fully in the electoral process. Emphasis was laid on how to participate in elections as an important area of responsible citizenship. Although preparations were geared towards the 1992 general elections, there was an underlying need to have a long term strategy for sustainable democracy through continued provision of training and technical expertise to the churches, local grassroots organizations, local leaders and the public in an effort to strengthen and enhance democracy, justice peace and reconciliation issues. This has largely remained the background to our subsequent civic education programme.

One of the major lessons of the first multi-party elections of 1992 was that the repeal of a single clause in the Constitution was not adequate to transform the country into a truly multi-party democracy. The Constitution had through the years undergone many changes aimed at entrenching the ruling party in power against any kind of opposition and it did not hesitate to use those powers.

Thus, the repeal of the clause that proscribe other parties and therefore the opening up of registration of new parties did not bring with it the needed change in the political environment to allow the new parties to operate freely in selling their ideas to the electorate. They were restricted in terms of where they could take their campaign, freedom of speech and movement but worse still, the Provincial Administration and the Police had their allegiance to the ruling party which they did not see as being different with the Government. An overhaul of the Constitution was needed to ensure protection of all through the law and creation of a level playing ground for both the ruling party and the new parties which formed the opposition. It is for this reason that NCK concentrated its efforts on Civic Education around the question of the constitution. Although we were for all practical purpose the pioneers in the organized programmes around this concern, many other players. some of them very militant arose and put a lot of pressure to the Government to the extent that prior to the 1997 elections, the slogan in the country was “No Constitution, no elections”. This made the government to soften its stand against the constitutional review. Giving the reason that there was no time to go in to a total review of the constitution, we went into 1997 General elections with a promise that the Government would facilitate a constitutional review process immediately after the elections.

Under the circumstances described above, the second multi-party elections were no doubt a major national concern for all in Kenya. This explains why the Council alongside with the reform debate decided to concentrate on voter education as a vital component of the wider subject of civic education. The programme centered

mainly on election laws, purpose of voting, voters rights and responsibilities, role of candidates and other interested groups, monitoring of elections and other related regulations. The Council was committed despite all odds to ensure free and fair elections and kept calling upon individual member churches and other civil societies to join in this effort.

We can confidently say that the presence of the church on the ground long before the elections, on polling day and during the counting positively influenced the participation of voters in the exercise.

Networking in Civic Education is very important but it needs to be developed a nurtured to ensure that those working together agree in their ideas and goals. This is much easier when the churches work together but not necessarily when working with other civil society organization. However, even the Churches will need to have time to develop proper working linkages. One of the lessons of the joint election observation programme in 1997 was that the Churches were not cohesive enough at the grassroots to mount a truly united force. There were squabbles as the NCCK family on one hand and the Catholic dioceses staff at the ground struggled for supremacy. It took quite some time before some measure of working relations could be achieved. As a result of this, the two parties had to work out a mechanism that would bring about longer working relations between the two Church bodies and therefore bring about better understanding and cohesiveness at the grassroots. This helped the church to mount the most successful Civic education programme in 2001 to 2002 as a prelude to both the constitutional review commission data gathering and the 2002 General elections.

The 2001-2002 National Civic Education programme had very far reaching effect as was evidenced by the public turn out to present their views to the Constitution Review Commission, the voter registration exercise which for once exceeded the Election Commission of Kenya estimates and the December 27th 2002 General elections. The Country went into those elections more United than ever before. The church too observed those elections more united than the other two before. Led by the Faith based organizations which included the Catholic Church, NCCK, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims and the Hindu Council of Kenya, the faith based groups joined up with three Civil societies namely The Media Institute, Transparency International Kenya and Institute for Education in Democracy into what was known as the Kenya Domestic Observation Programme. Each of the three Civil Society organization brought unique contribution and strength to the exercise. Though with time the relationship between the Christians and the Muslims in this collaboration referred to as Ufungamano initiative has degenerated and the Muslims have pulled out this consortium was then able to monitor every polling station in the country with very successful result as now documented in the Kenya Domestic Observation Programme report.

Some of the questions and comments that are arising from the experience of the churches involvement in the democratization process in Kenya include:

- Seeing that most people who championed the reform process in Kenya are now in government, has the church in Kenya continued to play its prophetic role or has it abdicated its role since the change of regime?
- The church has to sit and identify its new role in the circumstances that the country has found itself in.
- The church will need to understand that it has a role to play at all times but that role need to change with time as needs dictate.

Appendix 1.8

Key note speech Prof. Dr. Mehmet Aydin, Minister of State, Turkey

Turkey: religion and democratic values

Turkey has a long history of cooperation between religion and state based on the concept and practice of secularism that have led to a fairly successful democratic transition. What are the major sources of this transition? Needless perhaps to say, the reasons are of many. Some of them are historical, and thus cultural, some are socio-political and some theological.

We may begin with the “Turkish effective history” and then proceed through cultural and socio-political and contemporary elements. The Ottoman State was not a “theocratic state,” and the religious scholars (*ulema*) did not have any theologically binding authority. In the Ottoman administration, in addition to the so-called religious law, there was a rich body of government legislation known as *kanunname* as well as a customary law known as *urf*; both may be described as a kind of secular law (See K. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 157). The mainstream interpretation of Islam represented by the religious scholars was largely non-political. So was the mainstream Sufi, i.e., mystical interpretation of the faith. The modern Islamist jargon that “Islam and state are one” was alien to the Ottoman idea of state and religion (*din-ü devlet*). With regard to the coexistence with other faiths, i.e., Christianity and Judaism, the *pax ottomana*, in other words, the *millet* system is too well-known to require a lengthy explanation here.

The Ottoman struggle for modernization with the “Tanzimat” (New Regulations) Reforms (1839 onward) and later the “Constitutional Period” were major steps in the direction of the establishment of the Republican administration, and later, of multi-party system. The constitutional administration, although, as it formally stood, was a Western import, said *fiyhu’l-Islam* Musa Kazım Efendi (1858-1929) but “it was also an Islamic requirement”, since “Muslims should carry out their affairs through consultation (*mesveret*)”, as the Qur’an explicitly states. Regarding people as a “political category” had a great impact on the later political developments. During the Republican period this Islamic approach, which I tend to call “an Islamic argument for democracy” was fully developed and used for the justification and defense of the New Republic. For example, Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, the well-known President of Religious Affairs fully supported the idea and the political practice of multi-party system, stating that this form of administration was more in keeping with the Qur’anic principle of consultation comparing with monoparty system.

The religious intellectuals of the Second Constitutional Period believed that religious thought in Islam and thus religious knowledge were desperately in need of renewal (*tajaddud*) in order to contribute to the struggle for scientific, technological and economic progress (*taraqqi*) and then social reform (*islah*). It seems to me that this was the first powerful wave of religious “modernism”, although this term was used rather hesitantly due to various ideological meanings that it has attained in the West. These intellectuals defended a kind of rationality that was open to moral and religious experience; they supported a critical approach that was necessary for the development of intellectual and communal life; they rejected narrow literalism and legalism in interpreting the religious texts; they emphasized a distinction between what is *Islamic*, and what is largely *traditional* or *historical*; they envisioned a personality, that combines cognitive, emotive, moral and religious experiences in a balanced way; finally, they insisted on the idea of a just society and on political constitutionalism.

Many of these intellectuals, whom I just mentioned, lived long enough to see the establishment of the Turkish Republic, and some of them served as members of the parliament in the Grand National Assembly which decided that “Sovereignty belongs to nation without any limitation and condition”. This was the major principle of the new Republic. As far as I know, no person in the Grand National Assembly, where there were many religious scholars and Sufi leaders, had any serious objection to this principle on religious ground. Some of them had clearly stated that the principle was political and not a *theological* one challenging the sovereignty of God over the universe.

Although there are still many people in Turkey who seem to defend some sort of *secularistic* (not *secular*) vision of state-religion relationship, secularism did not—and, as a matter of fact—could not be practiced in Turkey in this narrow sense. The Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs is as old as the Turkish Republic. As a matter of fact, it was established by Atatürk himself. The Republican administration saw—and still sees—religious service as a public service, like general education or health. Religious education and service were carried out in a very disciplined and modern way in Turkey. I believe now many people both in the Muslim world and in the West have come to appreciate what is sometimes called “the Turkish way” concerning religious education and service. There are twenty-three theological faculties, attached to universities in Turkey and education in these institutions is as modern as many European institutions with similar nature. Our mosques are places of worship, education, brotherhood, peace and security. According to many observers, Turkey is really an *exception* in many respects.

Turkish secularism is moving, step-by-step, towards an understanding and practice which do not differ much from the general practices of secularism we see in the West. It guarantees freedom of expression and faith, as it is clearly stated in all international documents. The legal and thus political reforms realized in the country within the context of Turkey-EU relationship are now in a position to guarantee what the American philosopher John Rawls calls “reasonable pluralism”. Despite certain shortcomings, Turkey is a democracy.

“Political Islam” in its narrowly ideological sense has never been strong in the Turkish soil. Those who may now consider themselves as politically motivated Muslims are not less favorable to democratic values than others. Values such as respect for human dignity, justice, rule of law, individual rights and freedoms, gender equality, transparency, accountability, reasonable plurality, tolerance on *religious ground* are well established in the minds and hearts of Turkish people. These are the values upon which both democracy and the European Union are founded, as it is clearly stated in the so-called European Constitution.

Democracy develops in a historico-cultural milieu. It may easily be supported and justified by different cultural, philosophical and theological arguments. But here “the universal principle of recognizability” ought to be fully functional. Everybody who knows what democracy is all about should be in a position to *recognize* a democracy if he or she happens to come across with it, despite the existence of various differences. Democratic values are “universal” or commonly shared, or just shared, values.

It is, however, important to notice that democratic governance as a shared value in the West itself is becoming somewhat fragile day by day. None of us has the right and luxury to deny the obvious and urgent fact that “security is a must”, since without human life democracy, or any political regime, means nothing. But every measure that we have to take for the sake of security ought to be taken not *in spite* of democracy but *with* it.

As far as the necessity of a constructive and peaceful coexistence is concerned, we have to gather around commonly shared values. Call them whatever you like: Copenhagen criteria, political values, universal norms or cognitively agreed values (J. Habermass), etc. But we should never call them *uniquely* Christian or Judeo-Christian, or Islamic values; or even “European values”. Because they are not. Let us not confuse the ontological and the epistemological orders with the practical order. We *know* (epistemology) that these values are (ontology). In the modern West, the values mentioned have had many convenient legal and socio-political climates to be put into *practice*. Hence, the importance of the Western experience and achievement in this regard. The problem concerning these values vis-a-vis the Muslim countries arises not at level of epistemology or ontology, but at the level of practice.

As for our differences, here we have to try to make a distinction, both theoretical and practical, with regard to “local” or “cultural” values in the narrow sense of the term. The values whose spirit is in harmony with the general meaning and significance of the commonly shared values ought to be treated with the virtue of tolerance without which we can easily fall into the trap of culturalism.

As for our cultural elements which have the tendency or characteristics to clash with commonly shared values, their power and influence have to be weakened as far as possible through education and all other relevant ways and means.

To achieve “unity in diversity” seems to be a distant ideal, but “to be in the way” and to approach, step-by-step, what is ideal is not so distant. Here collective virtue lies not in *full realization*, which is the difficult, but in *approximation*.

Appendix 1.9

Key note speech by Ms. Melba Padilla Maggay, Ph.D, President Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture (ISACC), Quezon City, Philippines

Religion, Human Rights and Development Cooperation: Some New Wineskins

Introduction

In the face of the resurgence of Hindu nationalism, an Indian writer puts to words the central concern pressing upon us : “There is now a peculiar double-bind in Indian politics: the ills of religion have found political expression but the strengths of it have not been available for checking corruption and violence in public life.”¹

This about sums up the task before us.

By way of moving forward, let me outline some perspectives already surfaced in this conference and reframe them, hoping that in doing so we can look at these things afresh and find some answers.

Some perspectives

The rise of political religions: imagining the past as future. The rise of fundamentalisms, – whether Muslim, Christian or Hindu – is perhaps best seen as a reaction to the perceived decadence of western liberal democratic values. The Two-Thirds World, particularly, feel the threat of homogenizing forces from today’s global centers. In the face of these we are rediscovering the power of the old religions as a buttress against unwanted modernizing forces. The more reflective elements in these societies do not wish to be trapped in the ‘iron cage of modernity’ – with its impersonal rules and bureaucratic systems and the social costs of unbridled economic rationality.

Most of these societies, while linked to the global economy, remain, at bottom, traditional. Culture pride and identity often supersedes the desire for material wealth. This can be seen particularly in those with memories of a lost civilization and feel a sense of present humiliation, like the Arab world with its history of the Ottoman Empire and its splendid caliphates in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The past is re-imagined and projected as a goal for the future.

Secularism as ideology and secularization as a cultural development process. We need to make a distinction between secularism, which relegates religion to a corner of life, and secularization, which is a process of cultural elaboration and differentiation from the once dominant hold of religion as an institution. Both are historical products of the Protestant Reformation, issuing from Calvin’s idea that the whole earth is ‘theatre of God’s glory.’ The sciences, politics and the arts were freed from the dictates of the church, gaining what the statesman Abraham Kuyper calls ‘sphere sovereignty.’ Unfortunately, in the two hundred years after the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment, it broke away from these moorings. It came to mean that religion is to be kept in the private realm, without relevance to public life.

In contrast, most of the cultures of the world are still religiously-based. The western concept of religion as a private and separate compartment in life does not exist in any of my indigenous languages nor in Indian and Chinese languages. All of life is lived within a religious worldview. There is no divide between the secular and the sacred. It is only the modern West which has secularized and is an exception to this.

This wholism is consistent with the biblical understanding that all of life is religion. Jesus' command to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and Luther's doctrine of the 'two swords' does not mean that the church is separate from society. Augustine's *civitas dei* and *civitas terrena* are both realms where God acts and is sovereign.

But then history tells us that the higher the degree of influence of religious institutions in civic life, the less progressive they tend to be. Orthodoxy and conformity are rewarded, whether in medieval papacy or in regimes ruled by ayatollahs. Hence secularization, the idea of the separation of powers between church and state, is a necessary and desirable evolution in political thought.

Minority rights within a context dominated by a majority religion. There is no escaping the fact that in any one culture, there is always a majority religion. This is due to the historical fact that all cultures are, at bottom, religiously based. As the missiologist Stephen Neill once put it, "There has never yet been a great religion which did not find its expression in a great culture. There has never yet been a great culture which did not have deep roots in a great religion."²

In today's global village, what this means is that migrant communities whose ethnic and religious identities are different from that of the mainstream culture will find themselves always at risk and vulnerable. In spite of all the talk about tolerance and civility, those in the majority religion will tend to press their entitlements or sense a threat to their culture and history, whether they be in pluralistic megasocieties or in multi-ethnic countries. In both pre-modern and post-modern worlds, identities are shaped, not by the sense of nation, but by more primal self-definitions based on ethnicity or religion. Where I come from, our Muslim minorities no longer identify themselves as 'Filipinos'. They are, I am told by one of their scholars, 'Malays', this ethnicity being synonymous with 'Muslim' in Southeast Asia.

Social integration in multicultural societies has always been a problem. What gives it a sharper edge in our day is that political conflicts are now seen as civilizational and given force and power by underlying religious convictions. Modernity once prophesied that religion will be replaced by science, tribes by individuals. Today, not only does religion persist, it has re-tribalized societies even as it goes global.

The question that now confronts us is this: how do we maintain cultural diversity and respect for minorities when a dominant religion tells us that its truth claims are universal and ought to be believed and lived by all?

Democracy and human rights. Alexis de Tocqueville, a young French aristocrat sent by his government in 1831 to investigate the prison system in the US, traveled for seven months all across America with this research question: why had the French Revolution led to the Reign of Terror and the rise of Napoleon, while the American Revolution led peacefully to constitutional democracy? The simple answer is that in the small townships and church congregations of Puritan settlements in New England, respect for individual freedom, supported by social and economic equality, nurtured the roots of what we now know as democracy. 'It was not democracy that paved the way for the freedom of worship, but freedom of worship that made democracy possible.'³

The Christian idea that all are made in the image of God, that there is something about each of us that is utterly valuable and precious and can not be violated, was the seedbed for the Bill of Rights. This much is acknowledged even by those who have difficulties believing in God. Says Jeffrie Murphy: 'the liberal theory of rights requires a doctrine of human dignity, preciousness and sacredness that can not be utterly detached from a belief in God or at least from a worldview that would be properly called religious....'⁴

It is this kind of religious sense which in modern times had been lost and which had led to the massive erosion of human rights in those societies where the state had been apotheosized. Much earlier, the novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky had already foretold what happens when we push human autonomy to its logical conclusion: with the downfall of the altar of God, we are left with the anthill, – that humless social machine where an individual is valued only in so far as he is part of the collective, an abstract human being defined as ‘a multitude of one million divided by one million’ as Arthur Koestler once put it – or the myth of the superman who becomes a law unto himself, to whom, as Raskolnikov argues, ‘everything is permitted.’ Past the experience of authoritarian states, we know where this kind of language leads us.

To me, religion is important not mainly because it contributes to the common good or fosters respect for law and order or can support the nation-building projects of the state. More critically, it relativizes Caesar. There is a Lord higher than Caesar. That the Vatican, for instance, as a sovereign state stands as a sign that there exists a realm outside the rule of temporal powers. There is the sphere of individual conscience, where the human spirit, against all constraints, asserts its will to be free.

Some proposals

Focus on faith and economic values. It has been a while since Max Weber linked a faith value – the ‘Protestant work ethic’ – as a causal explanation for the rise of capitalism in the West. Picking up from this are some studies like the *Soul of Development* which documents improvement in well-being and economic conditions among mostly poor Pentecostals in Latin America.⁵ While it is quite sweeping to stereotype whole cultures as either ‘development-prone’ or ‘development-resistant’,⁶ there is some empirical evidence that a genuine faith awakening leads to better life conditions.

Within the Christian tradition, this phenomenon has often been seen and documented and goes by the name of ‘redemptive lift.’ In a research our Institute did on the coming of American Protestantism in the 1900s, we noticed that many families of early converts climbed from poor to middle class in one generation. Today we see this again among urban and rural poor people who come to faith. A woman in an Indian village was asked what her newfound faith now means to her. She replied, “one brick at a time.” What she meant was that now her husband no longer drinks; the money saved goes to buying one brick at a time for the house that she was building. There are plenty of such stories about the economic gains from no alcohol, no gambling, and ‘righteous living’ that issues from a conversion experience. In a microfinance institution where I sit in the Board, scores of women report that because of their faith they have better relationships with their husbands, and their business gets better and more sustainable because of the consequent family support. Faith-based development organizations that are very intentional in their value formation are often able to do much good that is far in proportion to their resources.

While there is no evidence that spirituality necessarily leads to economic success, there is at least substantial witness that genuine faith transforms people into becoming more just and honest and better stewards of resources. This leads to a degree of social wellness over the long haul.

What this means is that donor organizations ought to pay a bit more attention on identifying and strengthening values within faith traditions that make for development, particularly those related to wealth creation. Some cultures may need to have changes in their mental sets regarding time and their attitudes towards the future, the use of resources, risk-taking and other such values needed for more efficient stewardship.

Engage the informal and deep structures of the culture. Development efforts seeking structural changes often deal only with the formal systems and structures – matters of governance, peace talks that mostly have the local elite and government leaders talking, official development assistance for roads, telecommunications and other such large investments on physical infrastructure. The fact is that in many of these initiatives, the level of engagement stays on the level of the elite, whether local or national. Also, only the surface structures are engaged. A law or policy may be put in place, but it is rendered unenforceable or dysfunctional for want of the necessary supportive norms that will make it work. We may, for instance, tie up funding to policy changes in gender practices. But if the culture has no ‘software’ of values to support those changes, but instead continues to have a compelling metanarrative that justifies, say, female circumcision, laws prohibiting this will simply die a natural death.

Changes in systems and policy structures must be backed up by a corresponding change in values. Mere ‘institution-building’ will not do without the appropriate infraculture. A country may have a democratic structure in place but the ‘software’ of totalitarianism may continue.

This means that we must engage the deep structures of the culture, and not just impose conditionalities. As Daniel Etounga-Manguelle puts it, what Africa needs is a ‘cultural adjustment program,’ not just structural adjustments. “Culture is the mother; institutions are the children.”⁷

Also, we need to look out for what actually works in the culture on the informal level, and simply formalize it. We have found, for instance, that a great deal more peacemaking happens when people work together. In our southern part of the country where most of our Muslims are, there is an organization called Al Hayat where Muslims and Christians discover each other as human beings as they organize communities together. Similarly, there is a common experience of bonding among those of us who belong to different faiths and yet work together for justice and other such concerns. On this note a remark made to me by a Catholic nun may be relevant: “It seems that we have no trouble working together for a cause. It is when we talk theology that we divide and break into conflicts. Why is this?”

Name the idols of our time. A perplexity that disables many of us is the reality that while there is no lack of religion in today’s world, this has not issued in justice nor a deeper ethical life in our societies. There are many complex reasons behind this. One helpful lead is to grasp that religion, when it is true to the best of what it believes, is liberating. When it is not it is most oppressing. The reason for this is the phenomenon of what in anthropology is known as ‘extension transference’ (ET). There is a tendency in all of us to confuse the Creator with the creature, to transfer our ultimate loyalties from an invisible, transcendent God to a visible and immanent representation of him. The old term for this is idolatry. In the place of God we erect a golden calf, and this is seen in a variety of contemporary social behaviour. It is seen in our tendency to absolutize our extensions, our cultural elaborations, of what God is all about. We absolutize our theologies, such that they become ideologies. We then sacrifice human beings to the altar of a fixed idea. Dogma and dead orthodoxy replaces a living and growing relationship with a God whose thoughts are not our thoughts, and whose ways are not our ways. Those of us who are not particularly religious idolize economic wealth or the state, or the tools, systems and procedures that give us a measure of control and order in our lives. This is particularly true with the West. Those of us in Asia tend to surrender all autonomy to authorities or the pull of social ties and clan loyalties.

How then do we engage these idolatries?

First, I think we must begin with the recognition that there has to be some critiquing element in all of our societies. Some things are universally bad and some things are universally good in whatever culture we find them. The caste system is bad, and so is materialism, authoritarianism or female genital mutilation. Cultural respect does not mean that we tread softly and do not engage each other on the roots of our failure as societies. This is paternalism. A genuine conversation begins with the mutual recognition that both sides have truth claims that may or may not be shared by the other. A theologian says that what we need is an 'ecumenism of conviction, not an ecumenism of accommodation.'⁸

Having said this, it is really quite wonderful that in spite of our differences, we do have common values. The right to life, for instance, is a value shared by most religions, finding justification from the Christian idea of the image of God in men and women or the Buddhist concept of *ahimsa* or non-violence towards all beings. We need to identify and discover those areas of 'overlapping consensus' that are critical to public order.

At the same time, we may need to ask if it is necessary to have a uniform civil code that should apply to all citizens of a country. We may need to allow a 'plurality of secularisms' to flourish, the look and shape of which should emerge, not from the influence of globalization or western-educated elites, but from dialogue with the defenders of tradition in our grassroots communities.⁹ Societies in transition must be accompanied, not towards the beaten path of western modernization as articulated by the likes of Walt Rostow, but towards their own development according to the peculiarities of their historical, cultural and political context.

We need to have a plural sense of the 'good life.' What is the people's concept of development? Often, the people's notion of the good life is not merely economics-driven. In my context, people define this as freedom from poverty within a context of social harmony. I suspect this is probably true with many cultures that put a premium on a high relational quotient. Capitalism and its excesses is not human nature as neoliberal economists believe.

Secondly, we need to name precisely the idols of our time, including the way our organizations are shaped. One of the ironies of the post-Marxist era is that we are now much more determined by economics. Donor agencies, simply by specifying their preferred projects, coopt the agenda of those in the South. I am told by bible scholars that Jesus talked more about money than about the Kingdom. I suspect that the reason is that of all possible idols, Mammon is the most seductive, most comprehensive rival to God.

Also, in a time when there is increasing conflict between human rights and citizenship rights, particularly in global centers, development agencies will need to serve as culture brokers. Most of you have experienced the vulnerabilities and complexities of living in other cultures. There is need to articulate, both theologically and sociologically, the rights and plight of the stranger and sojourner who has come to live among us.

Related to this is the difficult task of widening access to opportunity of minorities. Conflict begins when religious identity becomes synonymous with social status – in my country, to be Muslim is to be poor. I do not think that political mechanisms such as affirmative action is the answer to this. Those of us who live in soft states do not have high expectations from government in this regard. What should drive this is not politics but economics, an economic development that has at the center of its vision the poor and the just distribution of resources.

This was brought home with renewed force to me when an election commissioner told me that violence and vote-buying in our Muslim south and other such pockets of deprivation can not be stopped. The people are too poor. It is a perfectly rational choice to sell votes. Our Abu Sayyaf bandits recruit from among young people there who have no skills and no future. The only real industry in the area is the making and selling of home-made guns. Solve the problem of poverty and you solve as well the problem of political dynasties and bad governance.

Studies show that when people have no means for achieving the goals desired by a society, like wealth or success, people reject the rules of the game. They innovate or break the rules. Countries with a high achievement motivation but also a high level of inequality and narrow options, like Russia or the Philippines, tend to be corrupt and unstable. In these countries, there is a critical mass of highly educated and culturally sophisticated people who get frustrated and turn to crime and mayhem because they have no access to opportunities, either for leadership or the flourishing of their careers and gifts. It is not an accident that the latest suicide bombers are British in nationality.

Make a space for grace. By now, most of us who have been in development work for quite a while will have learned that it is not primarily structures, policies, or programs that spell change. There is a growing consensus, – from management gurus to grassroots community organizers, – that all change begins from the inside. It begins when something happens to people, in that place where God alone can go and where we move from resignation and helplessness to a sense of power, from despair to hope. Quite beyond our making, things come together and surprise us.

This, to me, is grace, – that margin of mystery where all our calculations collapse and we come face to face with something altogether wonderful and unexpected. These are movements of the Spirit that we do well to tune in and follow. We must keep the door open for unexpected outcomes, for processes outside our logframes and our usual measures of success or failure. We need to come up with new wineskins, new benchmarks for capturing the fresh work of the Spirit among us.

Through the years I have become convinced that a genuine work of transformation is often higher and deeper and messier than what can be contained within three-year projects. I have often wished that donor agencies would partner with us over the long term towards the kind of change that begins with movements of the small – those moments when ordinary people wake up to their own sense of purpose and potential and pull in their weight towards the growing good of the world – mustard seeds that take years to grow into trees. The yeast as metaphor for the Kingdom tells us that it works in quiet, hidden ways. Unlike conflicts and disasters, it rarely gets into the papers. Yet silently, steadily, it does its work in human society such that one morning we wake up and find that things have changed.

Notes

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2. Stephen Neill, "Religion and Culture: A Historical Introduction," *The Gospel and Culture*, John RW Stott and Robert T. Coote, eds., William Carey Library, Pasadena California, 1979, p. 1. Copyright by Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.
3. Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World*, London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1999, p. 157.
4. Jeffrie Murphy, "Afterword: Constitutionalism, Moral Skepticism and Religious Belief" in Alan S. Rosenbaum, ed., *Constitutionalism, the Philosophical Dimension* p. 248, as quoted by M.J. Perry, *The Idea of Human Rights, Four Inquiries*, Oxford & NY, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 41.
5. A.L.Sherman, *The Soul of Development: Biblical Christianity and Economic Transformation in Guatemala*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.
6. Mariano Grondona, "A Cultural Typology of Economic Development," in *Culture Matters, How Values Shape Human Progress*, Lawrence G. Harrison and Samuel G. Huntington, eds., Basic Books, NY 2000.
7. Daniel Etounga-Manguelle, "Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment Program?" *Culture Matters*, *ibid.* pp. 65-77.
8. Dr. Timothy George, Dean of Beeson Divinity School and executive editor of *Christianity Today*, commenting on the declaration, *Dominus Jesus* issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, as quoted by Richard John Neuhaus, "The Public Square", *First Things*, November 2000.
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- 22
- 23 “We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours above a great part of Our Creation (17:70.) Islam, according to the Qur’an, is the standard religion manifested in all scriptures and revealed to all the prophets. If the basic elements of faith are to believe in one God and in the life-after, it does not matter if the believer is a Jew, a Christian, a Sabian or belongs to any other religion. (Qur’an, 18:29; 5:54; 3:90 and 4:137.) In such definition of ‘Islam’ freedom of belief is guaranteed. There is no compulsion in religion. The freedom to convert to another faith after accepting Islam, even to convert back to polytheism or atheism, is left to man’s essential free choice. It is very logical: if freedom of belief is guaranteed and secured against enforcement, the individual’s right to change his or/her religion is protected. But it is also expected in a religious text like the Qur’an that such an act will be subject to punishment in the life after. There is no immediate worldly-penalty mentioned for such an act in the Qur’an. Such a penalty as prosecution or execution was later introduced by jurists and institutionalized as part of the faith
- 24 The stipulation of alms as compulsory duty defines the beneficiaries as follows: the poor and the needy and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of God; and for the wayfarer. (9:60)
- 25 It is reported as an answer to a question raised by some stranger, no one of the Prophet’s companions could recognize, but whose identification was revealed by the Prophet afterward. The stranger, who was in fact the Archangel Gerbil disguised in human image, asked the Prophet series of questions, among them, the question about what is ‘faith’ (iman) and that about ihsan.
- 26 Qayyum is one of the Most Beautiful Names, and it is an emphatic form of the verbal noun ‘qa’im (standing), meaning that God is the absolute sustainer of existence as mentioned in the well known ‘Chair verse’ (‘ayat ‘l kursi.) (2:255)
- 27 Cf. Abu Zayd, Nasr, *The Rational Trend in Exegesis, a study of the problem of metaphor in the Qur’an by the Mu’tazilites (Al-Ittihad al-‘Aqli fi al-Tafsir: ditasa fi qadiyyat al-magaz fi’l Qur’an ‘ind’l Mu’tazilah*, Beirut, 4th edition 1998, pp. 40-42.
- 28 Cf. Abu Zayd, Nasr, *Philosophy of Hermeneutics: a study of Muhiyi al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi’s Hermeneutics of the Qur’an (Falsafat al-Ta’wil: dirasa fi ta’wil al-Qur’an ind Muhiyi al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi)*, Beirut 4th print 1998, pp. 177-193.
- 29 Religion: a source for human rights and development cooperation

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