**Towards a Pancasila Society:**
the Indonesian Debate on Secularization,
Liberation and Development 1969-1989

In this study several originally independent issues have been brought under one common denominator. For a good understanding and by way of introduction each of these issues will be briefly presented.

A first stimulus came from the current research project at IIMO on the concept of secularization in non-western countries. For this project Rob van der Zwan is preparing a study on Christian Churches and Secularization in India. The present contribution in Exchange is meant as a second case-study and concentrates on the debate about secularization in Indonesia. From a preliminary orientation it became clear, that the Indonesian debate shows some special features. In 1970 the largest students' organization of the country, Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, HMI, a Muslim organization, launched a debate on the modernization of Islamic thinking, in which the word secularization became one of the most important keywords. This debate lasted until 1975 and is documented by a large number of articles and pamphlets. In 1981 it started again through the publication of (parts of) the diary of Ahmad Wahib, a former HMI-leader. Also a number of Christian theologians participated in this discussion. The most outspoken defenders of the idea of secularization (modelled after Harvey Cox' *The Secular City*) were Muslims.

A second issue, closely related to the secularization debate, is the Indonesian reception of the Theology of Liberation as developed in Latin America. During the 1980's the basic ideas of this theology were accepted by a small number of prominent Indonesian Muslims, especially Abdurrahman Wahid Wahid, General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama, and Dawam Rahardjo, an economist, leader of a non-governmental organization in the field of socio-economic development. Most Christian theologians who expressed their opinion about this theology, only made critical remarks and the overwhelming majority stated, that the Theology of Liberation was not suited for the Indonesian context. It could better be replaced by a Theology of Development. Why this difference in reaction between Christian and Muslim theologians? As an hypothesis we might formulate, that the sociological basis of Christianity of Latin America is quite similar to the situation of Islam in Indonesia: a large and secure majority of believers,
who often hold to a traditional faith in a syncretistic and not too doctrinal way. This similarity of the sociological basis might explain the similarity of the theological thinking of some of their more progressive and outspoken leaders.

A third issue discussed is related to the reactions of the Christian and Muslim communities towards the recent developments in the "Civil Religion" of Indonesia, the State Ideology of Pancasila. This ideology was accepted in 1945 as the basis of the new state, the independent Republic of Indonesia. Since 1975 its position has been strengthened: in 1975 the teaching of 'Pancasila Morality' became obligatory in all primary and secondary schools. In 1978 the Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila, commonly called P4, a program for indoctrination of Pancasila ideology, became obligatory for many groups, including government officials, students and many other groups. Since 1985 all social and political organizations in a very broad sense, including also the Christian Churches and all Islamic organizations, had to accept the Pancasila ideology as their sole basis. Reactions towards this development varied. Emanating from a tradition of separation of religion and politics the Christian leaders had welcomed the Pancasila as an alternative for an Islamic State. But they thought it difficult to accept a State Ideology as the basis for their organizations, including the National Council of Churches and similar bodies. In both religions an overwhelming majority finally accepted the development of this "Civil Religion", while a small minority continued its criticism. They like to stress the incompatibility of the way of salvation, as formulated in their religious tradition and the "Road to a Pancasila Man" or "Road towards a Pancasila Society", as found in the official and recognized ideology of the state.

All three issues deal with the relation between state, society and religion, and when compared, show a number of similarities in the approach of Christian and Muslim theologians. Both groups often do not rely on traditional schedules and doctrines, but coin new concepts for the debate and sometimes even borrow them from each other. Muslim theologians are also continuously awareness of the Christian positions and vice versa. As such these issues present a number of fine examples of Comparative Theology. A way of theological reasoning, in which a religion differing from one's own, functions as a major source and reference, not only for the sake of inventarization of ideas and positions (as is the case with Comparative Religion), but as a help for the formulation of a theological judgment.

The concept most frequently mentioned in the discussions is the Pancasila ideology. We therefore do not start with the theological debate and the theological concepts but with the politico-ideological context.