



Vol 10, No 1

June 1994

MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

**Special Issue on
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN
PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

**With Contributions from
William FEY, Ronald HUCH,
Joshua DAIMOI, Robert FERGIE,
Arnold AMET, Michael SOMARE,
Jimson SAUK, M. A. AHMEDI,
and others**

**Edited by
Theo AERTS**

**On behalf of the
PNG COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Port Moresby 1994**

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

\$4.00



MELANESIAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Journal of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* aims to stimulate the writing of theology by Melanesians for Melanesians. It is an organ for the regular discussion of theological topics at a scholarly level by staff and students of the member schools of the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), though contributions from non-members and non-Melanesians will be considered.

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* is ecumenical, and it is committed to the dialogue of Christian faith with Melanesian cultures. The Editors will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard on matters of concern to Melanesian Christians, and of general theological interest. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, and in duplicate.

The *Melanesian Journal of Theology* normally appears twice yearly, in April and October. The Executive regrets to announce that – starting this year 1995 – the basic subscription rate will become K8.00.

Editorial Board:

Bruce Renich

Philip Tait

Victor Johnson

All of Christian Leaders' Training College

Guest Editor:

Fr Theo Aerts

Ecumenical Religious Studies

University of PNG

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

A. Overseas	Developing Countries	Developed Countries	
Surface mail	US\$8.50	US\$13.00	£8.00
Air mail	US\$10.00	US\$15.00	£10.00
Single copy	US\$5.00	US\$6.00	£6.00
B. PNG			
Surface mail	K8.00	Air mail	K9.00
Single copy	K4.00	Air mail	K4.50
MATS students per issue	K2.50		
MATS membership (including annual subscription)	K16.00		

EDITORIAL AND SUBSCRIPTIONS ADDRESS FOR 1995

*Mr Bruce Renich, Christian Leaders' Training College, Banz
PO Box 382 Mt Hagen WHP Papua New Guinea*

Cover design by Br Jeff Daly CP, and John Kua

Copyright © by the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools

ISSN 0256-856X Volume 10, Number 1 June 1994

NO REPRINTS MAY BE MADE WITHOUT
THE WRITTEN CONSENT OF THE AUTHOR

CONTENTS

Editorial	
<i>Revd Leva Kila Pat</i>	4
BACKGROUND PAPERS	
Common Good vs Individual Freedom	
<i>Fr William Fey</i>	6
Historical Perspective of Religious Freedom	
<i>Dr Ronald K. Huch</i>	26
Christian View of Religious Freedom	
<i>Revd Joshua K. Daimoi</i>	34
Perspectives from an Evangelical	
<i>Robert D. Fergie</i>	46
The Interaction between Government and Religion in PNG	
<i>The Honourable Michael T. Somare, MP</i>	57
A Legal Perspective on Religious Freedom in PNG	
<i>Chief Justice Arnold Amet</i>	65
DOCUMENTS	
A Pentecostal Point of View	
<i>Port Moresby Pentecostal Pastors</i>	70
Papua New Guinea is a Christian Country	
<i>The Honourable Jimson Sauk, MP</i>	73
Islam's Concept of Religious Freedom	
<i>M. A. Ahmed</i> (Department of Works)	78
The Baha'i Faith in Papua New Guinea	90
Religious Groups in PNG, According to the 1990 Census	93
Contributors	95

EDITORIAL

In June, 1993, from the side of the Seventh-day Adventist church, a Congress on Religious Freedom was held in Suva. On that occasion, some community leaders from Papua New Guinea did express their points of view about religious freedom in this country; they asked themselves, among others, what was the real situation here, and whether there a need to introduce changes for the future.

Then, in November 1993, the PNG Council of Churches held a workshop on the same topic, where four more contributions to the issue were presented. Yet, the issue of reviewing the Constitution in general, and the one about freedom of religion did not die, and up to very recently the matter has been aired via news items in the national papers. Only in June this year, the Port Moresby Ministers' Fraternal organised a first meeting between representatives from the government and from the churches, to take these same concerns at heart, concluding among others that more of these meetings will be called for. In short, the issue is very much alive and worth serious consideration.

Because more than once the PNG Council of Churches has been asked to prepare relevant background materials, we are happy that our theological desk has undertaken this task, and that the Melanesian Association of Theological Schools, too, has lent its support to it. We now are happy to present our contribution to the ongoing debate.

We have tried to give the word to people from various disciplines: philosophy, theology, history, actual law and proposed legislation. The contributors to the present volume do not only belong to the mainline churches: Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, and United church – who all are affiliated to the PNG Council of Churches – but include also other Christians, and members of the Muslim and of the Baha'i communities.

Finally, an excerpt from the 1990 census has been added to give the actual strength of these various groups in the country. We trust that the present publication is not only topical in Papua New Guinea, but also constitutes a useful documentation for the present and future theologians in the region.

Revd Leva Kila Pat,
Executive Secretary
PNG Council of Churches.

Common Good vs Individual Freedom

William Fey OFM Cap.

1. HISTORY OF THE ISSUE IN PNG

The Executive Council of the PNG Council of Churches, in announcing this seminar, explained that, for some time, Christians have expressed concern about “new religious movements” in PNG, whose presence has “created confusion” among believers. Since 99 percent of the PNG population calls itself “Christian”, do we need other religions, or even other Christian denominations? Calls have been made to the government to “monitor” prospective missionaries seeking to introduce “new religions” into PNG.

As background, in 1948, the UN published a “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, which proclaimed that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; . . . to change his religion or belief; and . . . in public or private, to manifest his religion in teaching, practice, and worship” (art 18).

In 1975, the PNG Constitution drew upon the UN declaration, and stated that “every person has the right to freedom of conscience, thought, and religion, and the practice of his religion and beliefs, including freedom to manifest and propagate them in such as way as not to interfere with the freedom of others” (section 45(1)). Limitations on this freedom were recognised: “no person is entitled to intervene, unsolicited, into the religious affairs of a person of a different belief, or to attempt to force his, or any religion (or irreligion), on another” (section 45(3)).

The state can restrict someone’s religious freedom, if necessary to maintain public order, safety, health, or welfare, or to protect the rights of others. Restrictions should be imposed by a law, which is “reasonably justifiable in a democratic society” (section 38(1b)). What exactly it means to be “reasonably justified” should be settled by a court, making use of the UN Declaration on Universal Rights, and other similar documents (section 39).

In 1980 Mr Anthony Bais, then chairman of the General Constitutional Commission, suggested that a Provincial Council of Churches be established. Other MPs complained that some “radical sects” were destroying PNG cultures. There was concern about “religious unrest”, resulting from new missions arriving, existing churches dividing, and local religions emerging. Some new groups were making derogatory comments about older churches. Some churches were blamed for promoting “cargo cults”; others were accused of endorsing political candidates, or evading land taxes.

Also, in 1980, the Honourable Jacob Lemeki proposed an Employment of Non-Citizens Act, which would require work permits to be issued to all mission personnel. In 1981, the Honourable Steven Tago initiated a Religious Movement Bill, which would allow the government to monitor the activities of small sects, as well as larger, established churches. In 1983, this proposed Bill was again discussed, and seven “considerations” were released to church leaders for reaction.

In 1984, the Church and Government Policy and Program Integration Plan Workshop was convened in Goroka. Three resolutions were proposed:

- that the churches, themselves, need to resolve the scandal of a divided Christianity;
- that new groups should be allowed a “probationary period”, to show their willingness to avoid downgrading other churches, while proclaiming their own creed; and
- that the Religious Affairs Division of government could register religious groups, which claimed privileges.

In 1985, the Honourable Kindi Lawi, then minister of the Home Affairs Department, which included the Religious Services Division, proposed registering existing church groups, and putting a ban on any new ones entering. He argued that the country was almost totally Christian already, and some religious groups were creating confusion by preaching “against” other groups.¹

In 1986, another Church/Government National Workshop was held in Goroka. The conclusion reached was that the “churches and state must cooperate and dialogue, but should not amalgamate into one infrastructure”.

One result of this workshop was a detailed criticism of the seven considerations, proposed in 1983, as elements in a Religious Movement Bill.

In general:

- (1) no mention was made of “non-Christian religious” (Buddhism, Islam, Baha’i); it seemed that the government was proposing to only restrict the activity of the Christian religion, in its various forms;
- (2) the terms “church”, “religious movement”, and “cult” were left unclarified; and, finally,
- (3) while all “individual freedoms” need to be subjected to regulatory norms in a society – the justification for such a limitation on freedom is to maintain “public order”. BUT “public order” is not the same as the “common good” of people in society. “Public order” may, on occasion, require government to limit freedom; but the “common good” requires government to PROTECT it – unless there is clear evidence that someone, or a group, has violated “social justice, communal peace, or public morality”.

In particular:

- (1) The first “consideration” proposed that new missionaries be required to present credentials, showing affiliation with a church recognised, by the Melanesian Council of Churches.

BUT, while intending missionaries might be asked to promise in writing not to downgrade the convictions of others, while proclaiming their own, it would violate human dignity, and self-determination, to pre-judge who could, or could not, enter, because of a religious affiliation.

- (2) The second “consideration” proposed that every church be required, by law, to give notice to another church if it intended to seek converts in the other’s jurisdiction.

BUT, while churches need to display mutual understanding and respect, this proposal would go against the inherent freedom (expressed in the PNG Constitution) of each person to choose his or her own religion – and not be unduly pressured to accept the religion permitted in one’s geographical area. Government legislation, however, could seek to distinguish “personal witness to one’s religious convictions” from “unfair proselytism”. Proselytism infringes on an individual’s “right to choose a religion in freedom”, and, therefore, offends against “public order”. The state could create legal measures to check this abuse.

- (3) The third “consideration” proposed that anyone in PNG, who wanted to invite a mission to come, must, by law, seek written permission from the established “mother church”.

BUT this proposal seems to involve inappropriate interference by a government in the internal affairs of a church. However, it would not be inappropriate to require that churches be “incorporated in law”, so that the relevant authorities would be recognised, and held responsible for the management of church properties.

- (4) The fourth “consideration” proposed that any church, which preached against the “good customs of PNG”, would be legally restricted from spreading.

BUT it would be difficult, in law, to identify exactly what “traditional customs” are, or are not, “good”. Where it is clear that something is being preached, or practised, which is against the “public order”, or which violates “justice, peace, and public morality”– then the state is justified in acting to restrict such behaviour.

- (5) The fifth “consideration” proposed that any church, which does not contribute to the “spiritual and material” development of the people, but chooses to “preach and pray only” would be restricted from spreading.

BUT this proposal presumes, wrongly, that the state’s jurisdiction is the “holistic development of human persons”. In fact, a political society’s competence is not so all-inclusive. The role of government is “to protect and promote the human search for religious truth, not to judge it”. In addition, the human development of persons includes more than economic benefits. One religious group might emphasise “law and order”, while another emphasises “international peace”, or “personal moral uprightness”, or “prayerful praise of God”. There is a legitimate richness in such diversity.

- (6) The sixth “consideration” proposed that, if church leaders could not resolve their quarrels, the government should intervene.

BUT no government has the right to “solve ecumenical problems”. The churches, themselves, must take responsibility to dialogue about their “public order”, the matter should be dealt with under existing laws, invoking police action if required.

- (7) The seventh “consideration” proposed that church representatives be appointed as members of government, and be involved in the political affairs of the country.

BUT the roles of “church” and “state” ought not to be confused. The government ought not to interfere in the formation and appointment of religious ministers by a religious group. By way of exception, and at the discretion of church authorities, an “ordained minister”, or otherwise “official religious leader”, might become directly involved in politics. But, ordinarily, it is the proper role of lay members of

a church to directly bring their moral and religious convictions to bear on the ordering of the political society.²

Many of these criticisms and comments remain relevant today. In particular, it is important to emphasize that “religious freedom” is a freedom, rooted in the dignity of human persons, who are obliged to seek religious truth, and to embrace it, when found. To fulfil this obligation, they need to be “free” of all forms of coercion. The role of the state is to protect and promote an environment, in which its citizens can seek religious truth, in mutual respect, and open dialogue.

In 1993, the “Pacific Religious Liberty Congress” met in Fiji, with Christian and non-Christian representatives. This congress, among other things, raised the issue of religious liberty, in the context of “imported individualism” versus the “common good and public order”. Some groups strongly insist on their “religious freedom”, but in a way that can seem “individualistic”, or “self-centred”, without regard for the “common good” of everyone in the society.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTIONS

Philosophers are known for “raising questions”, more than “giving answers”. BUT it is important to clarify the cluster of questions involved here, before attempting to find solutions.

There are questions about TRUTH, which has its own innate “appeal”. You can argue to show someone that something is “true”, but you cannot “force” someone to agree with you – in any area, and, surely, in the area of “religious truth”. It’s not only “morally wrong”, it’s “logically impossible” (in a sense) to “force” someone, against his or her will to “really assent” to a belief (religious or otherwise.) No one can be “forced”, either to convert, or not to convert. Does “toleration” and “respect” of religious differences imply that no one set of religious beliefs is “better”, or “less free of errors”, than any other one?

There are questions about the limits of legislating any PUBLIC MORALITY. If no one can be “forced” to assent to something, which is true, likewise, no one can be “forced” to do something, which is GOOD. There are further questions in a “pluralistic society”, where there is major

disagreement over principles. Yet, it would seem unreasonable to say that a government cannot promote, or prohibit, any activity, until there is universal agreement about its “goodness” or “badness”.

There are questions about the relationship between CHURCH AND STATE, and when, or, if ever, a political society could consider one “religion” as, in some way, “established”, with special privileges. Is it right for a government official to talk about Christ (or Mohammed) in a public address? Or, for symbols of one religion (a Christmas crib) to be officially erected on public property? Should such actions be avoided, out of respect for even a minority of citizens of another religious persuasion? Or are they justified, when the vast majority share the same religious convictions?

There are questions about the meaning of FREEDOM or LIBERTY, in general, and in the form under discussion here, as well as questions about the meaning of common good, or public order, especially in relation to personal goods, and private rights.

I want to look more closely at two questions: does religious freedom mean religious indifference (heading 3)?, and: does the common good demand the denial of individual rights (heading 4)?

3. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE

In the late 17th century, “scepticism” was used to defend “religious freedom” (as well as “toleration” of alternative political viewpoints). Pierre Bayle argued, in 1686, that, since no certain truth is possible about the existence or nature of God, and, since there is no way to know which “opinion” is better than any other one, there is no good reason to persecute people for their beliefs. John Locke, in his 1689 *Letter Concerning Toleration*, argued in a similar way: no one has a right to impose religious beliefs on another person, because all religious beliefs are uncertain anyway.³

These arguments assume that, if I’m strong in my convictions, or think I know something, I will be intolerant, and will be inclined to persecute people with other convictions; but, if I’m not strong in my convictions, and admit that I may be wrong, then I will be tolerant, and will refrain from persecuting those who do not share my beliefs.

BUT these assumptions are false. When people persecute others, they usually do so, because they feel convinced, for example, that God will punish us if we do not persecute the heretics, or that the unity, needed for effective government, will be destroyed by a plurality of religions in the society, or that persecution will actually save those who are persecuted from the greater evil of immortal damnation.

- Someone, who has very strong religious convictions, could believe that persecuting others will NOT bring any of these benefits; and, therefore, could be quite tolerant.
- On the other hand, the religious sceptic, or fallibilist, could be quite intolerant. He might reason: there's no way to tell who's right in these religious (or political) matters; so I might as well impose MY views by force if I can. Why? Because a single religion (or political philosophy) would provide unity to the state, or it would benefit my own group.⁴

In fact, it would seem that conviction and knowledge, not scepticism, of certain truths about human nature, and even about God, and what He has revealed – are the only effective basis on which to build a defence of “religious freedom”, and a rejection of all forms of “religious persecution”. Ultimately, the reason why alternative religious belief systems OUGHT to be respected, is not because there is no way to know which, IF ANY, of them is true – but because all people have a duty to seek and embrace the truth, especially religious truth – and, therefore, have a right to be free of coercion in the search.

Instead of confusing “religious freedom” with “religious indifferentism” (fallibilism or scepticism), we need to clarify differences among situations, which call for different responses. Religious practices, which, though based on false belief, are compatible with the rights of others, with public peace, and orderly coexistence, in true justice, and with public morality, must be permitted by the state; religious practices, which do not meet those preconditions should not be permitted.⁵

4. COMMON GOOD AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Here, in a different way, conceptual confusion clouds moral judgments. Things are set against each other: the “community” and the “individual”, or the “common good” and “private good”.

Briefly, I think these ideas must be taken off of a “see-saw”, as if promoting one of them requires restricting the other one; as if lifting one side up implies pulling the other side down. It’s a mistake to say: we must restrict (pull down) “individual freedom”, in order to promote (lift up) the “common good;” or we must pull down the “common good”, to lift up “individual freedom”.

Instead, when, for example, Vatican II, in *Dignitatis Humanae*, spoke of the “due limits” of an individual’s religious liberty, set by the “just requirements of public order,” or “regulatory norms to protect against abuses of freedom”, which the community can impose on individuals,⁶ the intention was not to put down (restrict) something, which is really good, in order to lift up something else, which is good. Rather the intention was to put down (prohibit) something, which is not good: a false “individual-liberty”, that’s different from the real thing. For the authentic “human good”, intended by the expression “individual-liberty”, is a freedom to pursue, and embrace, religious truth, in common with others.

Similarly, when, for example, Vatican II spoke of the “limits” of civil authority, or the abuse of political power, when used to “control or restrict the religious activity” of individuals,⁷ the intention, again, was not to put down one good thing, in order to lift up some other good thing. The intention was to again prohibit something, which is not good: this time, a false “common-good” that’s different from the real thing. For the authentic meaning of the “common good” of a human society is a set of “benefits, which are enjoyed together by human individuals”.

In other words, rightly understood, COMMON GOOD means basic human goods, or possible purposes for choosing, which are rooted in human nature, precisely, as social. The expression “common good”, then, includes, not just “life”, but life, together with others; not just knowledge, but learning together, and communicating the truth to others; not just creative production, but working and playing together, not just “religious

harmony with God”, but, together with others, in a community of faith. These “human goods” are fulfilling for ME, individually, ONLY when they’re enjoyed together: with others in common.⁸

Another way to approach this is to talk about RIGHTS. Human rights, precisely, as the rights of human persons, if described in an overly individualistic way, reveals a distorted understanding of what it means to be “human”, in the first place. To be “human” means to be, by nature, “social”, and yet “unique” – to be unique individuals, and yet to be individuals together. As a result, “my individual good”, or my right to seek what benefits me (and, therefore, the duty others have to let me seek it), includes good things that benefit me ONLY, when they’re sought, and enjoyed, together with others in common.

Human society is not a “collection of individuals” (like a beehive, or a group of parts), but a “community of persons” (like a family, or a circle of friends.) And so, the COMMON good of a “human society” is not just a “collection of individual benefits” (PRIVATE goods), or even the benefit of the “entire collection”, in which its parts, as parts, of course, share (the PUBLIC good). Rather, the “common good” refers to the good of human persons, as persons together in common.⁹ A little more should be said to clarify the meaning of common good and individual rights.

5. INSTRUMENTAL GOODS AND BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

First of all, I’m using the expression “basic human goods” to refer to intelligible possibilities for choice that fulfil human persons, or simply “aspects of human fulfilment”: for example, self-integration (harmony within oneself), justice and friendship (harmony with others), religion (harmony with God); also life, and health, and knowledge of truth, and appreciation of beauty, and skilful performance. These things “fulfil” persons, and are “good in themselves”, as ends of human endeavour.

Other things are “fulfilling”, but only in an “instrumental or useful” way: things that someone might “have” and “use”, as a means to find fulfilment; things like property, or money, or a formal education. “Having” these things doesn’t guarantee fulfilment. I might add that “liberty”, understood as “being free to do whatever I want”, is also only an “instrumental good”, something, which is certainly good, and even essential to find fulfilment,

BUT, in itself, not something that guarantees fulfilment. Good and bad people can both “have” this kind of liberty.¹⁰

The expression “common good” is sometimes used to refer to “instrumental goods” that a society “has” or “uses” in common: things like shared natural resources, public facilities, roads and parks. But the “common good”, which is a moral principle, should not be identified with these things. Rather, it refers to “basic human goods”, sought for their own sake by people in common. The “common good”, then, of a particular human society (a family, club, church, or state), is the set of “basic human goods”, which its members are committed to seek and enjoy together.

People talk about the “common good”, to emphasise that, in a community, relationships should be ordered in a “fair or impartial” way, that all members should work to realise these goods in such a way that everyone can share in their realisation. After all, in large societies, like a political community, some “citizens” may not cooperate, or may try to enjoy the benefits, without contributing to the community. At least, in one sense, then, it’s right to say “the common good is superior to the goods of individuals” – in the sense that the fulfilment of the group, through cooperative action, has priority over any unfair individual satisfaction. To look at common life selfishly, or to think of public life, only in terms of your little group’s “partisan interests”, is to seek unfair satisfaction, and violate the primacy of the “common good”.¹¹

Of course, not every “organised group” is a real community. People can “organise” their efforts to benefit each other for “selfish reasons”, in a way that does not make them a “community”. A politician could donate to charity, only to win votes, and NOT really “form community” with the people assisted by the charity. And people can “form community” in different ways:

- minimally, by recognising the others, whom you are with, as persons, and wanting to treat them fairly (like people in a crowded bus);
- by making MUTUAL choices to seek specific goals together in fairness (like people choosing to play tennis together), or to

simply enjoy some interpersonal good, which is “open-ended”, and not limited to any one specific goal (like people together in friendship, or marriage, or in a religious community);

- by making UNILATERAL choices to accept responsibility for others, who are then drawn into community (like parents choosing to have children, and forming a “family”); or
- by simply recognising relationships, which involve responsibilities, and accepting them (like brothers or sisters, who accept responsibility to treat each other fairly).

When people talk about “social justice”, or the responsibilities of members of a community, they often talk about the “common good”, to emphasise that “human fulfilment together” involves more than “being fair in private dealings, and keeping promises to others” – that human persons are “communal” by nature, and yet, their distinct personalities cannot be subordinated to any community, as if they were only “parts” of a larger “whole”. Often, communities are not entirely “authentic” human communities, but are, partly, “arrangements, by which some people exploit other people”. Talk about the “common good” is a way to speak against the injustice involved in such arrangements.¹²

In fact, the “common good” (as I’ve explained it), and each “individual’s good”, include each other. In communities, formed by choices to seek definite goals together, each individual benefits in attaining the common goal, and sharing the fruits of his or her effort. In addition, each one, as well as the community, benefits from efforts to treat each other fairly. In communities, formed by “open-ended” commitments to enjoy human goods for their own sake (such as marriage, family, or friendship), even more clearly the “common good” of the community, and the “individual good” of its members, coincide.¹³

BUT having said that, it’s also true that the “individual’s good”, as a whole, always comes first. No mere “human community’s good” includes the entire fulfilment of any of its members. Attaining collective goals can never justify sacrificing what’s essential to the whole fulfilment of any person. In particular, a political society’s “common good” consists of goods, which are INSTRUMENTAL to the fulfilment of persons. Such a

society is not organised to provide the ultimate and all-inclusive “good” of its citizens. It often happens that a political society does not contribute, in any positive way, to the explicitly “religious” part of a person’s fulfilment. In this sense, its “common good” is limited, and the individual freedom of persons is supreme. Yet, since individuals cannot realise their “good”, apart from the “common good”, their private interests are always subordinate to society’s “common good” of justice and fairness in relationships.

Again, a political society’s “common good” includes INSTRUMENTAL GOODS (public lands, roads, buildings). But it also includes certain “common interests” of those who live in the same region, which call for the formation of a political society: avoiding conflicts and promoting internal peace; preventing some people from offending the rights of others; restoring justice, by punishing wrongdoers; defending the community against hostile outside interference; fairly distributing resources; setting up arrangements to help families meet their responsibilities in education and health care; promoting and regulating economic activities; and so on. These interests constitute the distinctive “common good” of a distinctive “political” society or state. They include aspects of the basic human good of “fairness, justice, and interpersonal harmony”.

BUT the “political society” is only one community among others, and should be limited, so that it doesn’t displace the others. Individuals, families, and other groups promote various goods, such as marriage and parenthood, cultural pursuits, the understanding and enjoyment of nature, and friendship with God. A political society’s “common good” is not all-inclusive, but is “instrumental” to integral human fulfilment.

This doesn’t mean that a political society’s “common good” includes nothing “intrinsically good”. The political society’s purpose is to protect justice, in various relationships. And “justice in harmonious relationships” is an important basic human good, which is inherently fulfilling for persons. Still, this basic good should be realised in EVERY interpersonal relationship, not only in the political society – for example, in friendships, in marriage, and in churches, schools, business, and clubs of every kind. Ordinarily, this is done without any intervention by any government, although, at times, the political society can intervene to prevent injustice,

and to help smaller groups fulfil their responsibilities. For the most part, aspects of the “interpersonal harmony”, found in families and non-political groups, don’t pertain to the state’s “common good” – because they have limited impact, only on part of the country’s population, and because a lot of government interference would hurt more than help.

While the autonomy of families and non-political groups is limited, the state should respect the liberty and privacy of the communities within it. Excessive government interference would violate the “common good” of the political society itself, since its “good” is instrumental to the fulfilment of its citizens, not as isolated individuals, but, precisely, as persons, who find fulfilment in friendships, in marriage and family life, in the church, and in other non-political communities. Governments are not competent to directly promote “virtue” among their citizens. Indirectly, governments promote virtue, and oppose vice, by enforcing just laws, which reduce the competitive advantage of wrongdoing, and by assisting families and churches in more directly proclaiming moral values.

To use the criterion of “a political society’s responsibility in promoting its common good”, as a way to evaluate particular actions taken by a government, one would need to ask several questions:

- How would this action contribute to the common good? (Sometimes officials in power pursue private benefits, which do not deserve the cooperation of citizens.)
- Would the burdens and benefits involved by this action be distributed fairly among community members?
- Especially, would this action violate the just liberties of individuals, families, and smaller communities, or absorb functions, which, with suitable public funding or support, they themselves could fulfil? (This is sometimes called the “principle of subsidiarity”.)
- Would this action unfairly harm, or selfishly fail to help, any other nation or group of nations? (Perhaps an international

trade agreement would impoverish a less-developed trading partner.)

- Would this action violate the rights of any outsider? (An immigration policy could selfishly refuse to welcome deserving refugees.)
- In general, is this action morally excluded as always wrong?

In any case, it would be wrong to describe the “common good” of the political society as only a nation’s “power and prestige” in the international community, or as only a prosperous national economy, and high-quality public facilities; or as only equal opportunity for individual citizens to do what they please, and get what they want.¹⁴

6. SOCIAL DUTIES AND BASIC HUMAN GOODS

Finally, something more needs to be said to clarify talk about “individual rights”. DUTIES are moral responsibilities, which people have toward others. RIGHTS are not separate things. “Right” and “duty” are really the same thing – “right” refers to the person, toward whom someone else has a “duty”. For example, MY “right to life” is nothing but YOUR “duty not to kill me”. While people often begin a discussion of morality by talking of “rights,” in fact, “rights” can only be understood in terms of “duties”, and “duties” can only be understood in terms of “basic human goods”, and ways of responsibly remaining open to participation in them.

The ADVANTAGE of the talk about “rights” is that many claims to “social rights” are widely acknowledged by people, who, otherwise, do not agree about the foundation of rights, or the nature of morality. In fact, talk about rights is unavoidable in discussing social morality, since “rights and duties”, by definition, refer to social responsibilities. It can be helpful, for example, regarding the “right” under consideration here, to begin with the accepted “right to religious commitment and practice, against the infringements of political society”, and then go on to discuss the various “duties or responsibilities” that underlie this right: in this case, the duty of individuals to pursue religious truth, and the duty of political society to provide a setting, in which this can be done.

The TROUBLE is that talk about “rights” can be confusing, since it focuses on “claims”, and can be exploited in individualistic ways. The “right to religious liberty”, for example, is often misunderstood to mean that people are justified in teaching things that are not true, and acting on those mistaken beliefs.¹⁵

It is necessary to distinguish kinds of duties and rights. Duties that arise from one’s own commitments, or from the decisions of those in authority, can be called POSITIVE DUTIES, because they come from a definite (or “positive”) choice. They involve the moral requirement of “fairness”, yet they don’t come from “human nature”, as such. Other duties exist prior to any choice, and can be called NATURAL DUTIES, because they pertain to “human nature”, itself.

Some NATURAL RIGHTS (corresponding to “natural duties”) are “fundamental” ones, which everyone has (the right not to be killed, the right to be treated with respect, or to use things to meet basic needs.) They correspond to equally-universal “duties”, which everyone has toward others. Other “natural rights” correspond to duties in more specific relationships (for example, the right of children to parental care).

Some “natural rights” are ENTITLEMENTS (rights to receive some help or benefit), and correspond to moral “duties”, which everyone has (like the right to always be treated fairly by others). Other “entitlements” correspond to “duties”, which some have toward others in specific relationship (like the “natural entitlement”, which children have, to be cared for by their parents).

Other “natural rights” are IMMUNITIES (rights not to be interfered with, or harmed in some way), and correspond to moral “duties”, which everyone has (duties to never interfere with, or harm, someone in some way). But, other “immunities” correspond to moral “duties”, which are not absolute or universal (duties to ordinarily not interfere with someone in some way).

The “right to religious liberty”, then, is a “non-absolute natural immunity” that corresponds to political society’s “duty” to ordinarily not interfere with the free exercise of religion – or, in other words, not to interfere, unless some intervention is required for the sake of social peace or public

morality. The “limits” on the “duty” of non-interference come from the way “fairness”, and other “ways of responsibly respecting fundamental human goods”, set limits to political society’s tolerance of religious activity.¹⁶

7. CONCLUSION – RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND THE COMMON GOOD

I would like to refer again to Vatican II’s “Declaration on Religious Liberty” (*Dignitatis Humanae*), promulgated in 1965. An American Jesuit, John Courtney Murray, was the most-important figure in promoting the teaching, which the Catholic bishops endorsed in that declaration. He had argued that the question is a new one in the 20th century, because the relationship of political societies to religion has changed. Now, their chief duty toward religion is “to protect the liberty of citizens in this area”.¹⁷

An important emphasis of that Vatican declaration was that all people, with intelligence and freedom, have a DUTY to seek the truth, “especially religious truth”, and to “adhere to it once they come to know it”. However, people “cannot satisfy this obligation, unless they enjoy both psychological freedom, and immunity from external coercion”.¹⁸

This takes on special significance in contemporary pluralistic societies. Most sorts of differences within a nation are desirable, in so far as they enrich the community with their complimentary contributions. In this sense, not only different Christian denominations, but different non-Christian religions, can be understood as contributing something to the fullness of “religious truth”. There are, for example, traditions of mystical prayer in some Eastern religions, from which a Christian could learn, or emphases, which a convert could bring “to” Christian faith, and find enrichment there. But pluralism is desirable, only in so far as it leads to genuine dialogue, which moves toward unity in truth. Considered in itself, ongoing division about ultimate truths does not express complementarity, and is not good for community. It is only tolerable at best. In general, since beliefs have practical consequences, if part of a community is dedicated to a more-or-less false worldview, or way of life, whether religious or not, the error will threaten the well-being, not only of that part, but of the community as a whole. To recognise this, and to strive, through

honest dialogue, to lead others to what is true, does not violate religious liberty. Religious liberty is immunity from coercion in religious matters; its point is to allow people to seek religious truth and freely embrace it. Therefore, instead of being a VIOLATION of religious liberty, a non-coercive effort to share one's faith with others is an appropriate EXERCISE of that right.¹⁹

In conclusion, then, it seems clear that everyone has a RIGHT to the free exercise of religion, unless this disrupts public order, peace, morality, or orderly coexistence in true justice; and that, therefore, the state has a duty not to intervene. This means (and the PNG Constitution states) that all religious sects, Christian denominations, and non-Christian religions, should be permitted to operate in PNG, and no law should, in principle, interfere.

But the political society has a RIGHT to intervene, when necessary to protect public order, peace, morality, or justice. The state could act against a religious group already in the country, or block entry of members of a radical sect, if there is clear evidence that "public order or morality" is, or would be, threatened.

If this is correct, what next? What "action" is called for? It would seem that we should not call for a change of the PNG Constitution, to make Christianity "official" or "established". We should not urge the state to intervene more frequently, or make laws to facilitate legitimate intervention to maintain public order within or among religious, and, especially, Christian groups. Rather, as churches (especially as Christian churches), we ourselves should look for ways to settle disputes that disrupt, or could lead to disrupting, public order. And we should do this, before it becomes necessary to appeal to the secular authorities to intervene. One is reminded of Jesus' instructions to His disciples to settle disputes "while still on the way to the court"; or Paul's questions to the Corinthians: "Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a case between one member of the church and another? Must brother drag brother into court? Why, the very fact that you have lawsuits against one another is disastrous for you."²⁰

ENDNOTES

¹ See Alatini Kolofou, *The Rights of Conscience: Developments of Religious Freedom in the Catholic Church*, Bomana PNG: Holy Spirit Seminary, 1988, pp. 69-73/

² See “Religious Movements (Control) Bill 1981”; Letter from the National Parliament to the Heads of Churches, September 8, 1983; also Theo Aerts, “The Law and the Sects”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 2-1 (April 1986), pp. 76-105; Kolofou, pp. 76-105.

³ Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jesus-Christ “Contrains-les d’entrer”* (Amsterdam, 1696); John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), Indianapolis IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955.

⁴ See Thomas Russman, *A Prospectus for the Triumph of Realism*, Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1987, ch. 8: “Toleration”, pp. 93-107, esp. pp. 93-95.

⁵ See John Finnis, “*Historical Consciousness*” and *Theological Foundations*, Toronto Ont: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1992, p. 28, note 63; also Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Liberty: 1965) pars. 2 and 7, for example in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, Northport NY: Constello Publishing, 1975, pp. 800-805.

⁶ Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, pars. 2, 4, and 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, par. 3.

⁸ See Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol 2: *Living a Christian Life*, Quincy IL: Franciscan Press, 1993, pp. 332-334.

⁹ See Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, Notre Dame IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1966, pp. 31-89, esp. pp. 60-61 and 70.

¹⁰ See Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol 1: *Christian Moral Principles*, Chicago IL: Franciscan Press, 1983, pp. 121-122; vol 2: *Living a Christian Life*, p. 340. Also on “basic human goods”, see Germain Grisez and Russel Shaw, *Fulfilment in Christ*, Notre Dame: IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1991, pp. 49-59, or, by the same authors, *Beyond the New Morality*, 3rd edn, Notre Dame: IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1988, pp. 77-88.

¹¹ Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol 1, pp. 270-273.

¹² Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol 2, pp. 334-339, on kinds of community, and pp. 339-347, on the common good, and the good of each person.

¹³ For Christians, God’s self revelation as a Trinity throws light on this issue. God is perfectly one, and yet the three divine persons really are distinct. Human persons and

society are to be like the Trinity, for human persons are created “in God’s image”. See Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol 2, pp. 340-341.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 846-858.

¹⁵ Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol 1, pp. 263-265 and 269-270; vol 2, p. 506; see also Brian W. Harrison, *Religious Liberty and Contraception*, Melbourne Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1988.

¹⁶ Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol 2, pp. 329-332.

¹⁷ See John Courtney Murray, “The Problem of Religious Freedom”, in *Theological Studies* 25 (1964), pp. 503-575.

¹⁸ Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, par. 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pars. 2-4 and 14; see also Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol 2, p. 842.

²⁰ Matt 5:25 (par. Luke 12:58) and 1 Cor 6:5-6.

Historical Perspective on Religious Freedom

Ronald K. Huch

This forum is occasioned by a submission made to the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches to ask the government to consider restricting non-Christian religions from entering the country. It is recognised that Papua New Guinea is a “Christian country”, by which is meant that Christianity, brought to the country by European missionaries, is followed by a vast majority of the population. I am disinterested, although not uninterested, in this question, for a variety of reasons, but, principally, because it is for Papua New Guineans to decide whether religious freedom, or religious exclusivity, is best for their country. My task, here, is to review past efforts, by a number of states, to limit religious expression for those, who do not represent the majority faith.

Religious freedom, for me, means the opportunity to observe one’s legitimate religious beliefs, anywhere, and at any time, so long as the observance does not infringe on the rights guaranteed to others. It also means that a person of one religious persuasion should never suffer economic, political, or cultural sanctions, or be subjected to physical violence. There have been many instances, even in countries, who constitutions support religious freedom, where intimidation has forced individuals to limit religious expression.

I used the phrase “legitimate religious beliefs” in the paragraph above. The phrase represents a problem, for how is it determined that one belief is legitimate, and another is not? Here, I mean this to be understood in a very narrow sense. I consider illegitimate any “religious” element that is organised around a guiding principle of doing harm, psychologically or physically, to either those within the group or outside. As we shall see, it is perfectly possible for those, who are part of a “legitimate” religion, to act in illegitimate ways. The continuing trials of author Salmon Rushdie, condemned to death by Muslim fundamentalists because they did not like his book, *Satanic Verses*, is just an example. In these instances of “illegitimate religious beliefs”, or of “legitimate” religious believers acting in illegitimate ways, it is the responsibility of authorities to suppress the illegitimate behaviour, to protect the rights of the community at large.

It is not surprising that religion inspires controversy and conflicts. People who follow one religion or another assume that their particular faith offers the certain path to whatever objective they have in mind: heaven, Nirvana, tranquillity of spirit. People seek the Divine to help them resolve, or accept, the uncertainties and miseries that all humans encounter. When a person finds that path, which will provide balm and security, they find it difficult to understand that others find their balm and security in something else. Moreover, with the onset of organised religions, there was often the imperative that true believers must spread the “true” faith to all others. The result has been enormous conflicts, even massively destructive warfare, between the great religions. Hindus chased the followers of the Buddha from India, pagan Romans sometimes tried to rid the Empire of Christians, and Christians have tried, on numerous occasions, to rid Europe and the world of Muslims and Jews, and Muslims, in turn, have tried to keep Christians out of territories they controlled.

The circumstances are further complicated by political interests. In the process of state-building, many leaders have assumed that their task would be made easier if everyone followed the same religion. Thus, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, when they were attempting to unify the Spanish peninsula in the late 15th century, decided that their task would be easier if they could force out Muslims and Jews. The result was that hundreds of thousands of Jews and Muslims, who had lived successfully together in Southern Spain for over 700 years, were persecuted. The terror was made all the more severe by Isabella’s absolute certainty that Jews and Muslims were the devil’s advocates. In 1492, the only Muslim city in Western Europe, Granada, fell to the Christian forces of the Spanish monarchy. The consequence of this assault was to remove from Spain people who had made a great cultural and economic contribution. Not even the influx of riches from the Americas over the next century could undo the damage and loss.

The advance of Islam was also motivated by the religious imperative to expand the faith, and by certain geo-political objectives. After centuries of trying, the Muslims finally succeeded in taking the Christian jewel in Asia Minor, Constantinople, in 1453. The city had remained a Christian bastion since the 4th century, when the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine, established it as the capital of the Empire.

As all religions must assume that the Divine is on their side, that they are, in fact, performing the will of God, the tenacity and violence, with which the messianic religions attack their enemies, is not at all unexpected. Nor is it surprising that political leaders, throughout the ages, have recognised that they can make this religious fervour work to their advantage.

Conflicts between major religious followings and organisations are often equalled, or surpassed, by divisions and conflicts within a particular religious group. The early Christian church was beset by various disputes, which are now referred to as “heresies”, and which were never fully resolved. I will mention just two of them.

In the 4th century, the Roman Emperor Constantine became so alarmed over a division in the Christian following that he called Christian leaders together at Nicaea to adjudicate the matter. The conflict arose over whether Christians should believe in the Trinity. A major North African bishop, whose name was Arius, proposed that there should be a clear separation of God the Father and Jesus of Nazareth. The Father and Son were not the same. Arius’ followers were called Arians, and they were very successful in spreading his ideas. The Council of Nicaea (325) very narrowly upheld the view that the Father and Son were of the same substance, and then produced the Nicene Creed, which all Christians were to recite. The followers of Arius were denounced as heretics, and forbidden to preach their anti-Trinity beliefs. Nonetheless, Arian missionaries continued their efforts, and many Germanic peoples were converted to Arian Christianity.

Still concerning the Arians, in the 6th century, the Popes became so outraged by their Germanic leader, Theodoric, that they agreed to an alliance with the Byzantine Emperor, Justinian, to force the Ostragoths (as these Germans were known) from the Italian peninsula. Justinian was head of the Eastern Christian church, and was considered a rival to the papacy in Rome, but, on this occasion, the two Christian leaders agreed to cooperate. The result was a war that lasted three decades, and devastated the Italian population and countryside. Justinian was not able to complete the campaign, which was part of his dream to reunite the old Roman Empire.

The other major dispute in early Christendom also dated back to the 4th century, and centred on the issue of the purity of priests. A Christian bishop,

Donatus, formed the opinion that all priests should be without sin, if they were to administer the sacraments. Eventually, he gained a number of followers (known as Donatists), who tried to convince other church leaders to insist that all priests lead a sinless life. When this effort failed, they attempted to create a new priesthood of supposedly pure men. Although Donatism, like Arianism, was declared a heresy, it remained a problem for the Christian church for many centuries.

Islam also experienced serious internal divisions in its early history, some of which still plague the faithful to this day. The major conflict arose over the issue of successors to Muhammed. The largest faction, known as Sunnites, accepted the historical succession, but another faction, known as Shi'ites, believed that Muhammed Ali, son-in-law of the Great Prophet Muhammed, had been murdered to exclude him and his line from the succession. The Shi'ites, therefore, rejected orthodox historical Islam. Over time, the Shi'ites became a major opposition within Islam, and, through the centuries, the conflict violently divided Muslims. In Iraq today, the ruling Sunnite king has carried out a campaign against the Shi'ites. In Iran, where political authority rests with the majority Shi'ites, Sunnite Muslims are treated badly.

In modern times, the 16th-century Western European Reformation in the Christian church led to many violent confrontations. Civil wars in France and German Europe in the 16th century, each with a religious and a political component, had serious consequences. In France, Roman Catholics and Protestants were taught from an early age to hate each other, a situation very similar to what exists in Northern Ireland today. Protestants eventually were permitted to establish what amounted to "a state within a state" in France, but this lasted only for a century.

The 17th century is replete with many attempts to limit religious freedom. The most catastrophic of the religious conflicts in the 17th century was the 30 years' war (1618-1648). This was political, at one level, and religious, at another. The struggle was instigated by a desire on the part of Protestant leaders in Central Europe to break the political stranglehold of the Catholic Habsburg family, who controlled Spain, Austria, and many areas in German Europe. That the war was substantially political is clear from the fact that the King of France (Louis XIII), who was advised by a Catholic Cardinal, sent his army into battle against the Catholic Habsburgs. But religious intolerance

was still a major contributor to the great damage and loss of life that occurred. The great majority of those involved in the combat assumed that they were engaged in a holy war, and fought accordingly. The atrocities accumulated on both sides. By the time the fighting stopped, more than 25 per cent of the population of Europe was dead, and hundreds of towns and villages destroyed. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) effectively divided Central Europe into Roman Catholic and Protestant zones, to be decided by the ruling authorities. There were over 300 separate Germanic states at the time, and Protestants, who lived in a Protestant territory, were forced to find shelter in a Catholic state. The 30 years' war proved that no Christian denomination would ever have exclusive control in Europe again, but it also proved that Christians could oppress each other with the same zeal they had shown in attacking Jews and Muslims on earlier occasions.

England was not directly involved in the 30 years' war, but religious freedom was under heavy attack during the early 17th century. Those who did not follow the Church of England, created by King Henry VIII in 1533, were under constant pressure. Then, King Charles I (1625-1649) and the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, began to violently abuse non-Anglican Protestant (dissenters) in England, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, began to violently abuse non-Anglican Protestants (dissenters) in England and Scotland. Many fled to the American continent.

Later, in 1672, Parliament passed the Test Act, which required that all holders of high office prove that they had taken communion in an Anglican church at least once in the 12 months prior to their appointment. The Test Act remained law, though it was seldom enforced, until 1828. In 1685, King James II tried to restore the supremacy of Roman Catholicism in England. He hoped to force all non-Catholics from office, and to replace them with those who followed the one "true Christian church". The opposition to James II was so great that he was driven out in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, to be replaced by the Protestant rulers, William and Mary of Holland. In 1701, the Act of Settlement decreed that all future crowned heads in England must be Protestant.

During the entire period under discussion here, Christians continued to harass Jews nearly everywhere. Martin Luther venomously attacked Jews for not converting to Christianity, and Roman Catholic authorities maintained that

Jews had been responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. Christians were, therefore, encouraged to view Jews as agents of the devil. King Edward I of England banned Jews from the country in the 1290s, and it was not until the middle of the 17th century that the Puritan leader, Oliver Cromwell, decided to reverse that policy. While Jews were allowed to enter England for the first time in over 350 years, they did not gain political rights for another 200 years. Although he had led the revolutionary forces against King Charles I in the 1640s, Cromwell himself had a very limited notion of religious freedom. His massacre of several thousand Irish Catholics had a great deal to do with creating the bitterness, which many Irish Catholics still feel toward England.

In France, King Louis XIV declared that Protestants no longer had the right to worship (1685), and hundreds of thousands left the country. They took with them much of the economic vitality that the king desperately needed. The effect of Louis XIV's order was much the same as that which occurred in Spain, when Queen Isabella drove out the Jews and Muslims.

It might be expected that those Christians, who experienced religious oppression in Europe, and then moved to the "new world" of North America, would have a more generous attitude toward freedom of religion. Alas, it was not often the case. In the American colonies, only Pennsylvania and Rhode Island were religiously open from the beginning. In the Southern colonies, Anglicans wanted to keep out all "tainted" religions, and, in most areas of New England, the Puritan immigrants had the same attitude. In general, the European colonists showed little regard for the religious beliefs of the American Indians. Over time, with more and more immigrants coming to North America, it was impossible for the colonies to remain religiously exclusive, and, by the early 19th century, all attempts to restrict religious observance were given up.

The 18th-century Enlightenment, with its severe criticism of religious fervour and intolerance, helped to sustain a period, where there was a more liberal attitude toward persons of different Christian beliefs. Christians still, however, rejected all other religions, and were particularly relentless in verbal, and sometimes physical, attacks on Jews. This was especially true in German Europe.

The 20th century has seen many attempts to limit religious freedom, and usually these efforts have been influenced by political and ethnic interests. Eastern Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholic Christians never fully accepted each other in South-eastern Europe. In 1992, with the power of the Soviet Union no longer in existence to maintain order, Croats (Roman Catholics) and Serbs (Eastern Orthodox) turned their mutual distrust and hatred into warfare. At the same time, both Christian elements attacked the substantial Muslim population within the old state of Yugoslavia. In the former Soviet Union, the Christians of Armenia, and the Muslims of Azerbaijan, have been fighting since Mikhail Gorbachev began to relax Soviet control in the late 1980s.

Catholics and Protestants continue to oppress each other in Northern Ireland. So much so, that the city of Belfast is now divided into separate Protestant and Catholic zones. A person's religious preference immediately establishes that person as either a friend or an enemy.

The historical evidence is clear. Attempts to limit religious freedom, and to oppress specific religions or groups within a religion, nearly always end in misery for all concerned. The constitution of Papua New Guinea provides a guarantee that the state is open to all legitimate religions. It is an enlightened provision, and, from a historian's perspective, it is a provision that should never be changed. It also seems to me that any country that is predominantly Christian is bound by the unequivocal teaching of Jesus of Nazareth to love and respect all other persons. "Those who hear My words, but do not believe, I judge them not" (John 12:47).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, N., *Christianity and World Religions*, Leicester UK: IVP, 1984.
Baille, J., *The Interpretation of Religion*, New York NY: Collier Books, 1962.
Baring-Gould, S., *The Origins and Development of Religious Belief*, London UK: Livingtons, 1870.
Barker, E., *New Religious Movements*, New York NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982.
Bartlett, J., *The First Amendment in a Free Society*, New York NY: Wilson Press, 1979.
Beckford, J. A., *Cult Controversies*, London UK: Tavistock, 1985.

- Burns, P., *Decline of Freedom of Religion in Indonesia*, Townsville Qld: James Cook University Press, 1985.
- Eliade, M., *Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969.
- Hick, J., *Truth and Dialogue: The Relationship Between World Religions*, London UK: Sheldon Press, 1974.
- , *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, London UK: Macmillan, 1985.
- Joseph, S., *Study of Discrimination*, New York NY: United Nations, 1960.
- Merkel, P. H., *Religion and Politics in the Modern World*, New York NY: New York University Press, 1983.
- Newman, J., *Foundations of Religious Tolerance*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.
- Rouner, L. S., *Religious Pluralism*, Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
- Webb, C. C. J., *The Historical Element in Religion*, London UK: Allen & Unwin, 1935.
- Whaling, F., *Christian Theology and World Religions*, Basingstoke UK: Marshall Pickering, 1986.

The Christian View of Religious Freedom

(Address given at the South Pacific Congress of the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), held at Suva, Fiji, on July 7-10, 1993.)

Joshua K. Daimoi

The missionary wave of the 19th century brought great changes to the Pacific nations. The impact of Christianity transformed spirit worshippers, cannibals, and warring chiefs into followers of Christ, lovers of people, and peace negotiators, within their societies. The message of Jesus Christ, contained in the Bible, has given the Pacific Islands freedom to worship, and practice their faith, to live out their lives, in the company of others of other persuasions.

THE COMING OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

Christianity is, today, the most-widespread and pervasive religion in the region, and the original peoples of the South Pacific are steadily making it their own. National churches, under indigenous leadership, have replaced most of the older missions. Churches, with long histories in the islands, proudly perpetuate distinct traditions of worship, combining indigenous and imported themes; politicians, some of them prominent clergymen, draw upon Christian values, to promote social development and self-reliance; villagers gather in local churches, to celebrate Christmas and Easter festivals, in which they competitively raise funds to further Christian expansion . . . isolated peoples listen raptly to sermons and gospel hymns, beamed to them in their language from evangelical radio stations in the islands, and beyond. The emerging religion is pervasive, diverse, and vibrant.¹

The above quote speaks about the way in which Christianity has become a strong influence in the South Pacific. This means that most Pacific Islanders will approach questions of religious freedom from a Christian point of view. Even if it is only in name, Christianity is regarded as the religion of the Pacific nations. The missionaries, who brought the gospel to the people, came with the conviction that true freedom can be found in Jesus Christ alone. This is the way the Lord Jesus viewed His mission in the world. "The Spirit of the Lord is one Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight

for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19).

As a Pacific Islander, I am grateful for the commitment and sacrifice made by the many missionaries, for bringing the gospel to us. As a Papua New Guinean, I pay tribute to the many Pacific Islanders, who freely gave their lives, together with others from other countries, to bring the gospel to our island. Many, who came to us, never returned to their homeland. Their graves speak of the price they paid for our freedom. They brought the gospel to us because, "it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. . . . For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Rom 1:15, 16). Salvation is about freedom, now, and in the future. The gospel of Jesus Christ has set Pacific Islanders free from slavery to spirit powers, has opened their eyes to see that God created them to belong to Him, and live in fellowship with Him. They have entered into this relationship with God, through faith, and are declared righteous. Righteousness, through faith in Christ, speaks about new freedom in Christ, freedom to live in the right relationship with God, and other human beings. For Christians, any thinking about religious freedom begins with this good news about experiencing a new kind of freedom in Jesus Christ.

This Christian view of religious freedom is centred deeply in God's great desire for all the people of the world. God sent His Son into the world for the salvation of everyone who will accept Him as his or her Saviour and Lord. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but, whoever does not believe, stands condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:15-18). God's offer of salvation is available to every person on equal terms. We must act, in freedom, to accept what God offers, or to reject it.

The Bible passages quoted above from the gospels of Luke and John, while allowing us the freedom to choose, also make sure that we clearly understand the consequence of our decision. According to Luke, real freedom can only be found in Jesus Christ. Pacific Islanders were imprisoned by spirit powers,

magic, sorcery, and witchcraft. Jesus came to set us free from this life-long bondage. John says that, to reject the offer God makes, is to place ourselves under the judgment of God. There is no force being applied on anyone here. What these two writers' are doing is simply clarifying to us their understanding of true freedom. Having understood the alternatives set before us, we are asked to exercise our basic human right: the freedom of choice. They also show the way Christianity fully respects the dignity of each human being's choice and responsibility in the religious realm.

Let me illustrate what I have said. Prior to the coming of Christianity, Pacific Islanders had a system of belief of their own. They were "believers" before they heard about believing in Jesus Christ. Their whole animistic background made them believe in the existence, and power, of the spirits. The early missionaries presented the gospel, and offered the people the freedom to choose between the new God, the missionaries represented, and the gods of their ancestors.

In many places, after a long time of thinking, and heart searching, the people made their decision to embrace the Christian faith. What we learn about Pomare II of Tahiti is true of other kings and chiefs of the Pacific Nations.

For the first decade of the mission (in Tahiti), and well into the second, there had been virtually no interest in Christianity. Those of the missionaries, who had acquired the language, itinerated, and did some preaching, but got no hearing. They had learned the language, and improved their vocabulary, having checked and crosschecked their list, which contained 2,700 words by 1806. Pomare II had learned to read and write, and so had a number of his people.²

Three incidents, in his experience, led Pomare II to decide what to do about Christianity. One was the war of 1809 onward that swept through the whole island. By this time, most of the missionaries had left the island. The first missionaries arrived in Tahiti in 1797; by 1798 – one year after their arrival – 11 had already gone to Sydney, and by 1807 only four of the original 29 were left. In turn, Pomare II was back in control of one of the five districts he had lost. The defeat he suffered in the war made him think whether he was under the displeasure of the Christian God. He made no real change at this point. "It was still to his heathen gods he appealed, with feasting and dissipation,

and the same old sacrifices. Many priests were employed in this service, many prayers, and great offerings, were made. The missionaries were not with the time, or nearby.”³

The second experience, he went through, was the death of “one child, in whom they had high hopes.”⁴ This incident made Pomare II turn from his gods to the God of the missionaries. His decision to change his religious allegiance was debated. There was no agreement on the matter, but Pomare II would not change his mind. Dr Alan R. Tippett believes Pomare II experienced a genuine change of heart.

Pomare II, like his father before him, was a careful man in matters of religion. As a pagan, he was sincere in his dealings with his gods, until, in these years immediately prior to his conversion, he had clearly lost his faith in them. His behaviour followed a normal Oceanic pattern. He disclosed his intention of changing faith to the social group, to which he was responsible. In the deliberations, there were differences of opinion – in terms of religion, not politics. . . . When he finally took the eventful plunge, he did so alone, inviting others, but not drawing back, when none followed him. When not under missionary observation, he could have relaxed, but he preferred to continue with the Christian prescriptions, and, when he finally regained his lost position, he chose to maintain his new faith, in a worthy manner. I see no reason for doubting his sincerity.⁵

The climax of his experience came when he chose to eat the sacred turtle under forbidden circumstances.

Pomare had, for some time past, shown his contempt for the idols of his ancestors, and his desire to be taught a more excellent way. . . . The natives had watched the change in his mind, with the most fearful apprehension. . . . They were powerfully affected on one occasion, when a present was brought to him of a turtle, which was always held sacred, and dressed with sacred fire within the precincts of the temple, part of it being invariably offered to the idol. The attendants were proceeding with the turtle to the *marae*, when Pomare called them back, and told them to prepare an oven, to bake it in his own kitchen, and serve it up, without offering it to the idol. The people around . . . could

hardly believe the king was in a state of sanity. . . . The king repeated his direction: a fire was made, the turtle baked, and served up at the next repast. The people of the king's household stood, in mute expectation . . . of the god's anger. . . . The king cut the turtle, and began to eat it, inviting some that sat at meat with him to do the same; but no-one could be induced to touch it.⁶

Out of his own choice, Pomare II embraced the God of the missionaries as his God. One of the early Pacific Islanders to join the missionaries in spreading the gospel from island to island was Papeiha of Tahiti. At Rarotonga, Papeiha encouraged Tinomana, the politically oppressed Ariki of the Arorangi district, to become a Christian. When Tinomana hesitated to renounce his traditional gods, Papeiha patiently taught him a simple prayer for food, and parted with Tinomana provision: "to think seriously upon the subject; for, as it was a matter of great importance, it was not well to be in haste".⁷

Papeiha, like the two gospel writers, Luke and John, out of personal commitment to Christ, saw that true religious freedom is to be found in Christ alone. In his missionary service, he "showed that, for him, the central issue was a choice between the Living God and the traditional gods".⁸ Papeiha knew both the spiritual bondage the Pacific Islanders lived under and the liberating power He had experienced in Christ. Instead of forcing the people to decide for Jesus Christ, he advocated freedom of choice. Many people readily responded to the message they heard. Acceptance of Christianity, in many cases, was sealed by free public acts, such as the burning of all items associated with former worship, and the construction of church buildings, as centres of the new religion.⁹

Papeiha's motive of allowing the people to decide freely about their relationship to Christ was followed very closely by James Chalmers, the veteran LMS missionary, in his service in Papua. He confronted sorcerers with the claims of Christ, and allowed them to decide for themselves what to do about it. Even when the people did not understand the full meaning of conversion and discipleship, he accepted them as they were, and ministered to them.¹⁰

One of the greatest proofs of the power of the gospel is that it makes the fierce, excitable savage an earnest lover of peace.¹¹

Since the gospel of Christ has the power to transform human lives, be they civilised or savage, Chalmers, and his South Sea Island colleagues, were determined to preach the gospel, trusting in the Holy Spirit to bring them into full freedom in Christ.

Thus, the history of Christian expansion across the Pacific reflects a heritage of religious freedom for Pacific Islanders, both to change from their old religion, and actively to pass on the new religion.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE BIBLE

The Bible has become an important book for Pacific Islanders. Just as the Southern Cross guided our forefathers safely across the vast Pacific ocean at night, and continues to play that role for us today, so the Pacific Islanders regard the Bible as their guiding star, through the journey of life.¹² What Jesus said to the Jews is meaningful also to us in the South Pacific. “If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31, 32). Jesus linked Christian discipleship and freedom with His teaching, and Himself. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to experience true freedom. The teaching of Jesus reminds us that religious freedom is not an end in itself, but flows out of the discovery of truth. Therefore, the government must provide a climate, where people can search for truth, as the foundation for ensuring freedom.

For us, who have never seen Jesus, our understanding of Him and His teaching is dependent on the Bible. Jesus and the Bible are inseparable. The Bible testifies to Jesus, Christ affirms the authority of the Bible. “You diligently study the scriptures, because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about Me” (John 5:39). Obedience to the Word of God brings prosperity and success. “Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Josh 1:8). For the Christian, the Bible equips his or her life for effective ministry, “All scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:17).

The Bible has the enormous capacity to significantly influence our decision-making. It provides images of what it means to live

responsively with God and with our fellow men. The Bible confronts us with images, and pictures, of a life of caring, of loving one another, and of a world that recognises the image of God in us.¹³

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ came into the world, died, and rose from death, to deliver all mankind from the power of sin and death. “So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Not only did Christ set mankind free from the power of sin and death, He also sets us free from our lifelong enemy, Satan, who holds the power of death. “Since the children have flesh and blood, He, too, shared in their humanity, so that, by His death, He might destroy him, who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who, all their lives, were held in slavery, by their fear of death” (Heb 2:14, 15). Jesus sets all who trust in Him free from sin (Rom 6:18; 8:2), so that they may live in the freedom He offers them (Gal 5:1), and walk in freedom (Ps 119:45). The freedom Christ offers is a costly freedom, which He bought by His blood (Rev 1:5).

The Christian view of religious freedom has a strong relationship to Christ and His death for us. Christ gave up His life, in exchange for our lives. He took the place of all sinners on the cross. By His bodily resurrection, He opened the way into fellowship with God, here, and in the hereafter. The life, death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ determine the destiny for all humanity. Those He redeems are His representatives on earth to tell others about the freedom He offers. This witness is to be borne with love and understanding, free of all kinds of kinds of compulsion.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS CONTROLLED FREEDOM

The authority of the Bible, and the centrality of Christ, make religious freedom a controlled freedom. The Christian view of religious freedom is a freedom to believe, and act, according to the teachings, given in the scriptures, the teachings about Jesus Christ, and the biblical directives related to moral behaviour, individual dignity and destiny, the problem of evil, the person and activities of Satan and his many agents, universal brotherhood, and many more. To be a Christian, is to live by the truth of the scriptures. The teachings of the scriptures control human freedom, not to indulge the sinful nature, but, rather, to serve one another in love. “Live as free men, but do not

use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God” (Gal 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). Love for one another, and freedom to live, cannot be separated. True love for our fellow human beings will cause us to allow them to live the full freedom God wants them to enjoy. To love our fellow human beings is to treat them with respect and dignity. “Show proper respect to everyone: love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king” (1 Peter 2:17).

What we need to be careful about is that we do not let love and freedom become a licence to live, and do things, as we please. Individually, we are our brother’s, or sister’s, keeper. We are free to care and protect, we not free to destroy and kill. For the Christian, true love and true freedom are controlled, and directed, by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. The words, Jesus spoke, are applicable here. “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate, and narrow the road, that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matt 7:13, 14). Jesus Christ gives us power and freedom to follow His footsteps, to offer our lives, as He offered His for the freedom of others.

The idea of controlled freedom is not only a biblically-determined principle, it is also a practical reality. As citizens of our respective countries, we are expected to live by the laws of our countries. The traffic laws of our countries determine the side of the road, on which we drive, and the speed limits we are to follow. To disobey these laws, is to destroy ourselves and others. These laws are made by our governments, and we are to obey them.

According to the Bible, all government authorities have been instituted by God, they are God’s servants, to do what is good for their people (Rom 13:1-5). The Bible admonishes Christians to pray, intercede, and give thanks to God, “For everyone: for kings, and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives, in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim 2:1-2). These teachings from the Bible tell us that government authorities do not have absolute power. Their power is controlled by the purposes of God, for all the people. Governments are there to create good and wholesome laws, and administer them with justice, for the good of all the people. In the matter of religious freedom, no government has the right to stop the people from believing, and practising, what their conscience tells them. All human beings must be given the freedom to believe as they choose.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN DIGNITY

According to Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God created mankind in His own image (Gen 1:27), so that He can enjoy fellowship with them. Human beings are very special to God. God was very pleased with all that He created, but human beings brought much greater delight to Him. The creation of mankind touched the very core of the Father-heart of God. With mankind, the creator found Himself drawn intimately to them – the created beings, He picked them up, drew them closer to Himself, and in a very tender, loving, and personal way, God bent over, kissed them, and gave Himself to them. “And the Lord God formed mankind from the dust of the ground, and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and mankind became a living being” (Gen 2:7). What Genesis seeks to tell us is that human beings are very special to God. They are the crown of His creation, the joy of His heart, the apple of His eye. His greatest desire for them is that, like Him, they should have the total freedom to be creative, to rule over the rest of creation responsibly, to realise their full potential, to relate intimately to Him.

But God’s deep desire for mankind was interrupted by the subtlety of the serpent, and the free-will God accorded to mankind. Satan tempted, mankind made their choice, sin entered the world, and God and mankind separated. Gen 3 is the record and witness of this fact. It speaks to us of the reality of sin, the abuse of religious freedom, and the lust for power over others in the religious sphere.

Sin spoiled the beautiful relationship between God and the rest of His creation. What sin destroyed, Jesus, by His death on the cross, redeemed. By His sacrificial death, Jesus, once again, brought God and mankind into fellowship with each other. All who enter into fellowship with God through Christ become children of God, freely justified by His grace (Rom 3:24). They are set aside to worship Him, and enjoy His grace in freedom. This is their true dignity, and the goal, for which God created and redeemed them. God’s children must not be deprived of their freedom, their birthright, by force, or by law.

FREEDOM TO HEAR AND CHOOSE

Freedom is a basic human right. Christians have no right to force people against their free will. The decision to accept, or not to accept, the offer God

makes, rightly belongs to every individual, regardless of colour, culture, age, or gender. No individual has the right to force, or forbid, others from exercising their basic human right. To control people, by coercion of any kind, is to deprive them of their dignity as human beings. As human beings, we belong to each other as brothers and sisters, and are responsible to allow each other the freedom to practice our belief, to live as free men and women.

Religious freedom, in this respect, means every person must have the freedom to hear the message, and make the necessary decision. This is important, because the idea of human beings, created in the image of God, and redeemed by the death of Jesus Christ, reinforces human free will to hear and to choose. Therefore, as we have seen, Christians reject religious coercion, because Christ respects the right of people NOT to accept the gospel. Since Christ also respects the choices people make, Christians should work to ensure freedom of religion for all: freedom to worship, freedom to propagate their faith, and freedom to change their religion.

FREEDOM TO LIVE TOGETHER

Today's world is one of diversity and pluralism. We cannot ignore each other, or fight against each other. We must learn to live together, share our convictions, our fears, and frustrations, openly with each other, listen to each other, make our decisions in freedom, on the basis of the understanding we receive. In the area of religious freedom, we must allow each other freedom to believe, and practise, our faith. As we propagate our faith, we need to be careful that we do not lead people away from personal relationship with God their creator.

At last year's gathering in Manila, evangelical leaders around the world discussed "The Uniqueness of Christ in Pluralistic Society". Part of the declaration, coming out from the gathering, reads:

We affirm that God desires diversity in His creation. We must learn to accept, and even celebrate, that diversity. We, therefore, affirm freedom of conscience, practice, propagation, and witness, in the areas of culture, worldview, scientific investigation, and religion. We affirm that God has acted decisively, supremely, and normatively, in the historical Jesus of Nazareth. In His person and work, Jesus is unique, such that no one comes to the Father, except through Him. All

salvation, in the biblical sense, of eternal life, life in the kingdom, reconciliation with God, and forgiveness of sins, comes solely from the person and work of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

Pacific Islanders are community-oriented people. The community solidarity we know is the solidarity of totality. Our communities consist of the living, and the living-dead, the visible, and the invisible, human beings, and God, or spirits, the pigs, and the dogs, the trees, and the mountains, the land, the rivers, and the sky above us. Freedom to live together means freedom to believe and live, within this solidarity of totality.

CONCLUSION

We in the South Pacific are grateful for the freedom we have to live out our faith, without fear or hindrance. We are grateful to our respective governments for fostering this freedom. We thank God for the missionaries, who brought the message of freedom to us. Instead of being locked away in our little tribes, mountains, and islands, out of fear of each other, and the spirits, which held us captive to their power and control, the message of the gospel has given us new freedom, and bound us to each other, as brothers and sisters.

The Christian view of religious freedom, as I have outlined in this paper, encourages us to practise and propagate our convictions, with freedom and care. As we have seen, the Christian view of religious freedom is controlled by what the Bible teaches, and what Jesus Christ did on the cross, to restore to us our true dignity, as people created in the image of God. There is religious freedom all over the South Pacific. We must strive to maintain it that way.

ENDNOTES

¹ John Barker, "Ethnographic Perspectives on Christianity in Oceanic Societies", in John Barker, ed., *Christianity in Oceania: Ethnographic Perspectives*, (ASAO Monograph n. 12), New York NY: University Press of America, 190, p. 1.

² Alan R. Tippett, *People Movement in Southern Polynesia: A Study in Church Growth*, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1971, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 15, 16.

⁶ William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches During a Residence of Nearly Six Years in the South Sea Islands*, London UK: Fisher & Jackson, 1829, vol 1, pp. 191-192, cited in Tippet (1971), p. 16. See also Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society: 1795-1895*, London UK: Oxford University Press, 1899, vol 1, p. 197.

⁷ John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands (1873)*, cited in John M. Hitchen, *Training "Tamate": Formation of the 19th-century Missionary Worldview*, PhD Thesis, Aberdeen UK: University of Aberdeen, 1984, p. 672.

⁸ Ibid., p. 673.

⁹ Ibid., p. 673.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 717-718.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 719.

¹² Sir Paulias Matane, Former PNG Ambassador to the United States of America, in the paper he delivered at the seminar on "Bible, Culture, and Communication", held in Goroka, organised by the Melanesian Institute, titled his contribution "Our Guiding Star", as he sought to relate the importance of the message of the Bible to our daily living, *Catalyst* 18-4 (1988), pp. 12-15.

¹³ Pedi Anis and Esikiel Waisale, "The Bible in Decision-making", in *Catalyst* 18-4 (1988), p. 19. The authors were respectively Premier and Minister of Finance of the New Ireland Province (PNG).

¹⁴ *WEF Theological News* 23-4 (1992), p. 1.

Perspectives from an Evangelical

Robert D. Fergie

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper does not claim to be the official stance of the National Council of Evangelical Churches (NCEC, formally: Evangelical Alliance, or EA), though it was at the request of the NCEC that it was prepared. The primary motivation behind this paper reflects a concern to stimulate more-serious biblical reflection, regarding the spirit of Christ, towards competing ideologies and theologies, in an increasingly pluralistic Papua New Guinea.

The paper has been divided into three main sections. The first seeks to provide a brief overview of various attitudes to the infiltration of pseudo-Christian sects and non-Christian religions. The second section addresses two basic theological issues related to religious freedom, from a biblical perspective. Finally, an argument for religious freedom is presented.

2. HISTORICAL VOICES

The related issues of religious freedom and church-state dialogue have a long history in PNG,¹ as they have in other parts of the Pacific independence period,² they have been recurring themes, though sadly, each new discussion often appears to be unaware of earlier discussions.⁴ Given the growing pluralistic character of PNG, it is not surprising that there have been a variety of responses to the issue of religious freedom, as the following survey demonstrates.

2.1 Protectionist Viewpoint

This predominantly defensive viewpoint is often held by older establishment groups. Other newer sects are viewed as threats to the established denomination/religion. Proselytising is perceived as the primary danger to the *status quo* establishment. Guarding of comity agreements (also known as spheres of influence), often become primary agendas, in terms of people, territory, privileges, and theology.

2.2 Ambivalent Viewpoint

This predominantly-introverted viewpoint sees religious politicking as a counter-productive distraction to the primary task of fulfilling one's own mandate well. It is often characterised by a deliberate refraining from drawing attention to other infiltrating sects, accepting, with little resistance, the inevitability of increasing pluralism. On the other hand, ambivalence may also reflect a "head in the sand" nominalism, which, perhaps, demonstrates a vacillating universalism and/or ignorance.

2.3 Nationalist Viewpoint

This viewpoint aspires for the goal of a national religion. A number of the early Christian missionaries to the Pacific espoused the ideal of Christendom for example. A growing number of Islamic states have deliberately legislated to exclude other religions, to varying degrees, in much the same monopoly spirit. In more recent years in PNG, there has been a growing popular resurrection of this Christendom ideal, reflected in the call for all non-Christian religions to be prohibited from establishing ministries in PNG.⁵

This viewpoint appeals to the historical dominance of the Christian faith in PNG since the early 1870s, and to the preamble of the National Constitution, where reference is made to "Christian principles". It also reflects a degree of indignation towards the home countries of some non-Christian tentmaker expatriates (mostly from Islamic nations), where Christians are denied religious freedom. Essentially, the argument is "this is our country, and we aren't going to put up those who seek to exploit religious freedom privileges, denied to Christians in their land".

2.4 Open Market Viewpoint

This perspective does not necessarily reflect an attitude of compromise and diluted theological distinctives, though for some it may. While recognising many competitors for souls, this approach seeks a stable, democratic, socio-political environment, which facilitates the opportunity to promote one's own "gospel" package fairly. This approach seeks the opportunity to win new converts by virtue of the "better" quality of one's gospel package, rather than some unfair legislative advantage.

It is an approach, which believes in the superiority of its own message and ministry, and refuses, therefore, to be intimidated by other market competitors.

According to this view, legislation from the government is best designed to eliminate unfair advantages of one group over another. In the US scene, this principle has been taken to the extreme of prohibiting public prayer in schools.

It would appear that each of these categories do not necessarily reflect theological divisions. In fact, one could make a case, suggesting that various approaches reflect the peculiar historical stage and status of individual groups, who may, at different times, advocate different stances, to suit their current circumstances.⁶

The concern of this paper is not so much that of simply describing the various religious freedom stances. Rather, a more-fundamental question, set in the context of the phenomenon of increasing religious pluralism, needs to be addressed: “Which of these various stances more truly reflects the spirit of Christ and his kingdom’s purposes?”

3. TWO IMPORTANT THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To answer this question we now turn to a discussion of foundational Christian principles, related to the issue of freedom of choice.

“In the beginning. . . .”

The Bible records that the climax of creation was the creation of man and woman in the image of God (Gen 1:26-30). They were not there as forced labour, or mindless, manipulated robots. Mankind was created with a special GOD-GIVEN DIGNITY AND VALUE, which set them above the rest of creation. To them was given the special privilege and responsibility of being friends of God, and stewards of His creation. Though the fall (Gen 3) spoiled mankind’s relationship with their holy creator, God’s reconciling love was in no way eroded.⁷ The Bible records God’s amazing rescue mission, consummated in Christ Jesus’ incarnation.

“In the fullness of time. . . .”

Even though the chosen Jews so often misunderstood and abused the divine mandate for mission, Christ, the Word become flesh, proclaimed, in word and deed, the reconciling purposes of God (Heb 1:1-2). Though lost in sin, Christ, the Lamb without blemish, paid the ransom, and defeated the enemy through the glory of resurrection, so that the ROAD BACK TO GOD BECAME OPEN TO

ALL who would choose to repent, and be born of the Spirit, being restored by grace to the pre-fall relationship with their creator.

This history of “good news” not only demonstrates the holy, yet loving, nature of Almighty God, it also illustrates the essential character of mankind, as a moral being, created in the likeness of the triune Godhead.

While God made clear the REQUIREMENTS for the maintenance of covenant fellowship, and equipped mankind with the fibre of morality, He also endorsed the FREEDOM OF CHOICE necessary for any meaningful responsive relationship. Even after the fall, God continued to respect mankind’s freedom to choose their own destiny, though with the consequences of good or bad choices clearly spelt out.

1. The first principle to be highlighted here is that the image of God, even in fallen mankind, demands a respect, consistent with the dignity given to mankind by God.
2. The second principle demonstrates God’s willingness to maintain mankind’s freedom to choose spiritual allegiance, in contrast to a dictatorial enforcement of any one religious alternative. This is consistent with God’s eternal purpose that mankind enjoy willing fellowship with their creator. The following biblical passages illustrate this point.
 - a. The offer of life or death (Deut 30:11-20)

In this passage, we are confronted with the most basic decision, which God brings to mankind (vv. 11-14). The context makes it clear that, from God’s point of view, there is only one appropriate response, but that, in the end, each person must decide whether to obey or disobey.

God’s standards and expectations are clear, as are the consequences for decisions of obedience or disobedience. However, God did not force His will on the Jews, other than strongly encouraging them to choose wisely.

- b. The covenant renewal at Shechem (Josh 24:14-15)

In this passage, the faithfulness of God to His promises is recounted, followed by a challenge to choose to respond appropriately.

This statement came at a critical historical crossroad for Israel. Again, there was a clear statement of God's standards and expectations, as well as the consequences of a right or wrong choice (cf. vv. 19ff). However, it is clear that, in the end, a careful choice is required by every household.

c. The Light Yoke (Matt 11:27-30)

The New Testament continues a similar theme, though expanding our understanding, in terms of Christ's choice of us (John 15:16). There continues, however, an invitation to choose Christ, as Lord and Saviour. Unlike the religious leaders of His time, Jesus chose not to Lord it over His subjects, and, in so doing, redefined leadership, in terms of a humble, yet powerful, authority, demonstrated through service. He was a man among the people, who called people to Himself on the strength of His character, rather than the size of His army. Matt 11:27-30 provides a classic summary of His approach.

In the said passage, Jesus made it dear that He is the initiator of reconciliation, the one who calls people back to Himself. However, that call does not preclude a willing response on the part of the one being called. Jesus offered an invitation, and a promise (rest), and further explained what is involved in accepting the invitation (yoke). A decision is required, with the consequences explained, not only in terms of rest, but also work and attitude. The gospels offer many similar glimpses of Jesus' invitation to the disciples, and the right responses of His small band of disciples.

d. Other New Testament Passages

The rest of the New Testament presents the bold proclamation of the good news of Christ, calling people to a decision of repentance, in response to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. Peter's pentecostal sermon (Acts 2:36-41) inaugurates a continuing process. In contrast to the Jewish and heathen coercion of physical threat, or the discrimination of religious control legislation, the New Testament demonstrates the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, convicting of sin, and enabling true repentance. However, freedom of choice is never obstructed or infringed. People were challenged to make their own decision, in response to the strong claims of the gospel.

Significantly, the New Testament period reflected a situation, where the church was a small and unpopular minority. They were not in a position to lobby for legislation to control religious choices/options, though Paul, in particular, was not afraid to claim civil protection and justice, when under threat of more rule (cf. Acts 23-28, of Paul's hearings before Governors Felix and Festus, King Agrippa, and, finally, Caesar).

The unique approach of Christ, and His early disciples, to the task of extending the kingdom of God conflicts with the approach of so many other religions and ideologies of the past and the present. Jesus, with uncompromising authority, presented the options of obedience and disobedience, in the context of God's revealed character and standards. He did not, however, force people to accept His invitation, but called for a willingness to "take up one's cross and follow Him" (Luke 9:23-27), counting, carefully and soberly, the costs of discipleship.

e. The Epistles of Paul

Paul, in his missionary mandate to the Gentiles, consistently maintained Christ's approach. He did not cut himself off from the heathen, or the Jews, to whom the message of the gospel

was either anathema, or nonsense. He followed a standard procedure: going to the Jews, in their synagogues, first, until forcefully expelled by them. He willingly debated the resurrection at the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22ff), again fearlessly calling people to a response of repentance, and new allegiance to Christ.

While the context may be different in contemporary PNG to that of first century Palestine, a strong case can be made, suggesting that the consistent principle of the scriptures focuses on the task of calling people to Christ, rather than instituting prejudicial legislation, which effectively eliminates personal freedom to choose one's own religious allegiance.

This is not to say that Jesus and His disciples were ambivalent about counter-Christian dogma. In fact, the opposite was true (the epistles illustrate this graphically). They fearlessly sought to expose error and deception, as it conflicted with the clear teaching of the scriptures. They were keenly concerned to see the true faith triumph over the many adversaries of the gospel. However, their strategy was not to enact discriminatory political legislation, but to expose erroneous teaching, and then to lead their opponents to Christ, encouraging a willing "crossing of the floor", so to speak, as the truth of God, communicated in the power of the Spirit, brought people to a spiritual crossroad.

4. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: A CASE FOR ACTION!

In PNG today, there is a strong expression of many people's desire for Papua New Guinea to remain a "Christian" nation. Some, however, feel that the present national Constitution presents an unfortunate paradox, working against the noble goal. On the one hand, it speaks of up-holding Christian principles in the preamble, while later (Section 45 (1)) endorsing the right for people to practise any other religion, so long as it does not violate the rights of others, public peace, or public morality.

The said critics advocate a change of the Constitution, so that Christianity becomes the state religion, by law. Recent events in Fiji have, no doubt, fuelled

this view. However, though superficially appearing to have merit, there are a number of serious flaws in the argument, as will be noted presently.

On the other hand, other Christians, and members of other faiths, as well, appeal to the maintenance of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, upon which section 45 of the PNG Constitution is based. Clearly, it is in the non-Christian's interest to be free to practise and propagate, just as the active Christian will seek to do also.

However, rather than becoming pre-occupied with which option(s) will favour Christians over non-Christians, a good number of Christians recognise a number of important reasons why religious freedom must be maintained for all people, irrespective of their peculiar faith, in order for an authentic Christian testimony to be presented.

The following rationale may be developed, in this regard, from a uniquely Christian perspective.

4.1 THEOLOGICALLY, the clear witness of the Bible demonstrates a respect for the dignity of each individual, and the right to be able to choose their own response to the claims of Christ. To legislate, in such a way as to inhibit this freedom of choice, would de-Christianise some of the most basic principles of the Christian faith, devaluing the Christian presence to the oppressive and manipulative levels of other non-Christian religions, as in the case of Islam, for example.

4.2 ECCLESIASTICALLY, the enforcement of Christianity, as the only state religion, would inevitably induce counter-productive nominalism, which, in the long term, could easily strangle the church from within. In this sense, nominalism represents a greater threat to true Christianity than aggressive non-Christian movements. The danger of a defensive, protectionist approach to the challenge of non-Christian religions needs to be carefully weighed as well.

- a. In the first place, it, in effect, concedes that one's religion is weak, and unable to stand against competing non-Christian faiths, without special legislative privilege or bias.
- b. Similarly, it concedes a weakness, and impotency, in contrast to the vitality of faith, demonstrated in the power of God, through

transformed and committed lives, as demonstrated through the life of the early church.

- c. It concedes a disease of biblical illiteracy, where our members are easily deceived by subtle heresy, and false teaching, because we, the leaders of our churches, have failed to nurture, feed, and train them as soldiers in God's army, to take up "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph 6:17), as ambassadors of reconciliation.

4.3 LEGALLY, the removal of general religious freedom could easily prove disastrous, in the event of a shift in the religious status quo, where a competing religious movement became the favoured religion by the government, to the disadvantage of a formerly-dominant group. As Christians, we need to be aware of the danger of shooting ourselves in the foot, not only in terms of our own freedom to worship, practice, and promote our Christian faith, but also in our opportunity to be prophets to the nation, jealously guarding the standards of God, and the rights of our people.

4.4 MISSIOLOGICALLY, there is another very important issue at stake, if religious freedom were to be controlled. Currently, many non-Christian countries are closed to the gospel of Christ by law. It is extremely difficult and dangerous to place missionaries in these countries. This being the case, we need to recognise that Christian witness to expatriates from non-Christian countries represents a significant missiological springboard.

In many respects, these expatriates will be more open to hearing, and receiving, the gospel of Christ than back home, in the security and socio-religious control of their own culture. Conceivably, the most effective Christian witnesses to non-Christian countries will be converted nationals. This represents one very positive reason for Christians to exploit the opportunities of hosting non-Christian expatriates.

5. CONCLUSION

There seems little doubt that there is a clear case for action, with regard to the influx of various sects and non-Christian religions into PNG. However, the most needed change is for inner renewal of the church, rather than an external change of the Constitution.

Should we seek to change the Constitution, by removing freedom of religion, in order to eliminate the threat of non-Christian religions? This paper has come to the conclusion that to do this would, in fact, deny some of the most basic principles of the Christian faith, and could be counter-productive in other ways.

A better approach is to work a lot more aggressively, to strengthen our church members, so that they are growing and maturing in their faith. Then, it would not be us, who are afraid of our sheep being deceived and devoured by wolves in sheep clothing. Rather, it would be the wolves, who would be threatened with extinction, given the out-working of the power of God, through transformed, and committed, lives of our members.

What we need to aspire to in PNG is not more high walls, and barbed wire, to keep the heathen out, but the liberating and expansionist attitude of Paul, who said:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everybody who believes: first for the Jews, then for the Gentiles. For, in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith, from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith" (Rom 1:16f. NIV).

ENDNOTES

¹ This selected historical survey illustrates the recurring theme, with particular emphasis on the post-independence period in PNG.

1. Comity agreements (BNG 1890; GNG 1891-1899; Highlands 1957).
2. 1978 Control Bill (Stephen Tago).
3. Evangelical response to the Control Bill (Hitchen/Daimoi).
4. 1983 (February) Church-State Policy and Integration Workshop at Goroka.
5. 1984 (February) meeting of PM with the heads of churches (re the role of the Religious Affairs Division).
6. 1986 (May) workshop at Goroka for National Policy on Religion (focus on religious-freedom issues).
7. 1987-1990 MCC Consultation (Charles, Fergie, Zarriga, Kolowan).
8. 1989 tripartite consultation of churches addressing church-state relations (Fr W. Liebert).
9. 1992 meeting of PM with the heads of churches (re a Muslim mosque).
10. 1993 NGO policy consultation (re churches and other NGOs partnership in integral human development).

11. 1993 (November) PNGCC sponsored Seminar on Religious Freedom.

² F. L. Douglas, *From Christendom to Pluralism in the South Seas Church-State Relations in the Twentieth Century*, PhD thesis, Madison NJ: Drew University, 1969; John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*, Suva Fiji: Lotu Pasifika, 1982; Noel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, Melbourne Vic: Oxford University Press, 1978; John M. Hitchen, *Training "Tamate": Formation of the 19th-century Worldview*, PhD thesis, Aberdeen UK: University of Aberdeen, 1984; Aarne A. Koskinen, *Missionary Influence as a Political Factor in the Pacific Islands*, Helsinki: Academy of Sciences, 1953; Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua 1874-1914*, Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1989, esp. chapter 9: "The Sinister Trio"; Sione Latukefu, *Church and State in Tonga: The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries and Political Development 1822-1875*, Canberra ACT: ANU Press, 1974; Garry Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

³ In 1992, the National Executive Council endorsed the establishment of a Religious Affairs Division with the Office of Women, Youth, Religion, and Recreation. This division hosted a number of important church-state consultations, addressing the task of developing a national policy on religion for the government. The first consultation was held in Goroka, during February, 1983, and produced a joint statement of views, addressing the issue of religious freedom, particularly. In May, 1986, another major workshop was convened at the same place, this time to prepare a policy on religion for the government. While this document was never tabled in Parliament, it reflected a substantial collection of material related to freedom of religion. (See Robert D. Fergie archives, *Julial Paraha Files #1-2, Church-State Workshop Papers.*) This material is also available from Julial Paraha, Deputy-Secretary of the Department of Religion, Home Affairs, and Youth.

⁴ This point was made at some length in a paper presented to the 2nd NGO-Government Consultation, of March, 1993, where the agenda appeared remarkably similar to that of the failed Division of Religion in the mid-1980s. Robert D. Fergie, *Church-State Partnership in PNG, and the Folly of Re-inventing the Wheel*, Port Moresby PNG: Department of Religion, Home Affairs, and Youth, (1993).

⁵ This clearly was the motivation behind the 1978 "Religious Control Bill", and became the dominant agenda for the Religious Affairs Division in the mid-1980s. More recently, a strong reaction against plans to build the first Muslim mosque were raised by various mainline Christian leaders to the Prime Minister. Various Pentecostal, Evangelical, and UPNG Student Christian movements have raised similar concerns in 1993.

⁶ It is interesting, for example, to observe some of the newer Pentecostal groups, who, not so long ago, were a target of the 1978 Religious Control Bill, now adopting a protectionistic and nationalistic stance towards various pseudo-Christian and non-Christian religious groups.

⁷ Gen 6-7 records the new start, through Noah, within the context of judgment through the flood. The rest of the Bible unveils God's missionary exploits, designed to bring back lost mankind to Himself.

Interaction Between Government and Religion in Papua New Guinea

Rt Hon. Sir Michael T. Somare

Since man first walked upright, he has acknowledged a power greater than his own. We call this "religion". However, religious intolerance and intolerance of religion have been two of the root causes of disharmony in society since the beginning of recorded history.

In this 20th century, and with our increasing urge to know more about our ancestors, we have harnessed the miracles of technology, to open windows into the past. We know an amazing amount about life in ancient Egypt, about the Greeks, and the Romans, the Palestinians, and the Jews, and about the great peoples of Asia and India.

Throughout all these societies, there has been a common thread of worship, worship of a gallery of gods, as diverse as the races who paid them homage. For thousands of years, these gods, and the honour paid to them, were the foundation of the daily life of the societies, over which they ruled. Ordinary daily life was controlled by the all-powerful nature of the religious structure, and the rules and laws of the community flowed from that source.

Great wars and hideous deeds have been a seemingly-inescapable companion to the growth or decline of religions, and their gods. We have only to think of the crusades, waged by Christian Europe, in its struggle with the infidels of the Middle East; the horrors of the Spanish inquisition; the Holocaust of the Second World War, with the attempted eradication of the Jews as a people, and Judaism as a religion; or the continuing clashes of our own day.

Within Christianity, we see Ireland destroying itself, as Protestant battles with Catholic. Within newly-democratic Central and Eastern Europe, we see Muslims and Christians locked in a deadly struggle. And in the Middle East, the age-old struggle between Jew and Arab seems as insoluble as ever.

What has been our experience in the South Pacific, where the arrival of Christianity, and other religions, has been, in historical terms, very recent?

It is true that the first missionaries to the South Pacific were, on the whole, more interested in gathering souls than in gathering riches, although sometimes the two went hand-in-hand.

It is also true that they believed in the absolute superiority of their product, their religion, and its mighty God. Their perception of the “natives” of the South Pacific was that of animist societies, devoid of worship, devoid of Christian humanity and love. We were “pagans”, ungodly savages, to be saved from ourselves, by our more enlightened, and holier, brothers. It is fair to say that the zeal that so often typifies missionary effort had blinded these well-meaning soul gatherers to the reality.

The reality was that all South Pacific societies had religious systems that worked for them; that many of these were hundreds, and even thousands, of years old, and that the social structures flowed from them, with the same inevitability as they did from Christianity.

In Papua New Guinea, as in other South Pacific nations, there was a belief in the immortality of the soul, and in the life to come. There was a belief in the omnipotence of the people’s gods, and the sacrifices and penances of the Old Testament, frequently and conveniently overlooked by “modern” Christians, had their parallels in our societies. Concepts of absolute moral right and wrong were as much a part of our communities as they supposedly are of Christianity, or other major religions. It is reasonable to say that our traditional tribal gods served us very well in Papua New Guinea, and throughout the Pacific.

How then do we account for the universality of Christianity throughout the region, and the considerable inroads of other religious beliefs in even more recent times?

There is an inescapable link between religion and power, between religion and conquest – spiritual or secular. Papua New Guinea had not one or two, but hundreds, of traditional religions, as the nation, today, continues to

have hundreds of tribes, and hundreds of languages. There was very little overlap between these societies at the time of the first missionaries.

It is not hard to see that a religion that was accompanied by obvious material wealth, a religion that had the fascination of total novelty, and a religion that was generally backed by an administration of ever-increasing weaponry and might, was to prove irresistible.

I well remember, as young man, the consuming anger I felt when a missionary destroyed the traditional flutes of my people, saying they were evil, and justifying his terrible action in the name of God.

From the beginning of the Christian era in Papua New Guinea, and I believe throughout the Pacific, religion and government have been interwoven. It is true that they have often failed to see eye to eye. Successive colonial administrators, some of whom were “Christian” by convention, rather than conviction, often regretted the missionaries, who seemed to stand in the way of colonial commerce, and the clear need to exploit the resources of this strange colony. Yet, to all intents and purposes, Christianity and the colonial administrations seemed, to the people, like two faces of the one coin.

The administration found that Christian religions were in heady competition with each other to convert the tribes of Papua New Guinea. To avoid unseemly bickering, religious “spheres of influence” were created for the major denominations – the Methodist, the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, the London Missionary Society, and the Lutherans. To this day, the major Christian religions continue to reflect that early subdivision, and Christian names continue to echo the nations, from which those denominations came. There can be few third-world nations with two provinces, where ancient Anglo-Saxon names such as “Osric”, “Philswide”, and “Canute” are still in regular use; or where, in another region, it has become customary to name your sons “Hubert”, or “Otto”, or “Herman”!

During the Second World War, much of the two territories of Papua and New Guinea experienced their first wave of non-European and non-Christian newcomers. These were the invading Japanese, many of whom continued to worship as they had done at home. Circumstances, combined

with the total unfamiliarity of language and custom, and the brevity of the encounter – at the most, four years – have left little, if any, religious impact on Papua New Guinea.

Following the war, the Australian administration returned, with a clear policy of running the country, still officially two territories, as one administrative unit. The Christian churches, now firmly entrenched in the major urban areas, began their post-war wave of outreach, and small Christian outposts began to appear in parts of the country that had been “off limits” to all before the war.

At the same time, and in an atmosphere of administrative peace, the arrival of new denominations has been most marked in Papua New Guinea, with the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches undertaking a remarkable level of dialogue.

By the mid-1960s, young Papua New Guineans were beginning to plan for an independent nation. Australia was aware of its responsibility to prepare its colonies for that day, but they were following a time frame that would have seen my nation gain its independence at the turn of the century.

The churches, in general, were agents of conservatism, concerned that their flocks might be scattered by too-early independence, and the huge amount of rebuilding, they had undertaken after the war, might once again have to be faced. It is fair to say that most churches had individual clergy, who were honourable exceptions to this rule, and who privately encouraged their young Papua New Guinean members to fight for independence.

By the early 1970s, it was clear that self-determination, as a precursor to full independence, could not be far away. Changes in the Australian government, and the emergence of a cohesive group of young Papua New Guineans, drawn from all over the two territories, pointed the way. They were not drawn from one denomination, and they were not, as a group, the product of any one church. In 1973, self-government was declared. Some churches feared the worst, fears that proved groundless.

On September 16, 1975, I stood with the representatives of all the major churches; with the first Governor-General designate, the late Sir John

Guise; with heads-of-state, and diplomats from all over the world, and heard Prince Charles declare Papua New Guinea a sovereign independent nation.

As first Prime Minister, I had for my guidance a constitution, which guaranteed the rights of the people, and which declared Papua New Guinea to be a “Christian nation”. Explicit guarantees were written into that constitution, guaranteeing the inalienable right of freedom of religion and worship, freedom of speech, and freedom of movement.

Those rights continue to apply 18 years later. Papua New Guinea is, by constitutional definition, “A Christian nation”. At the same time, all other religions have the same right to worship and develop. In recent years, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Bahai’s, Jews, Confucianists, and many others, have appeared in Papua New Guinea. They have settled, opened their houses of worship, and their schools, and blended with the population.

At the same time, there has been growing disquiet over the role of other churches and groups in the community. This disquiet has led to questions in Parliament, and demands for restrictions on the influx of new Christian sects into the country.

What has caused this breakdown of tolerance, and what is the government attitude towards this influx?

Papua New Guineans have observed that some of these “new” churches appear less concerned with fishing for souls than they are with fishing the seas, and less inclined to plant the seed of the good word than they are to plant cash crops. There is a suspicion that “Christianity” is being used – and they with it – for purely commercial gain. The immigration and business investment laws of the nation restrict the flow of wheeler-dealer exploiters; it is less easy to restrict the flow of supposed “churches”, which are always quick to gain adherents to their cause.

Papua New Guinea is rich soil for spiritual exploitation. The nation is in a period of enormous change, where traditional and established, imported beliefs are being challenged, where materialism is becoming all-important, and where the population is, overwhelmingly, under the age of 25.

With a high birth rate, ever-growing expectations that cannot readily be met in the short term, vast, almost unlimited, resources, and established churches, seen as unable to meet the new challenges, we have a potentially explosive recipe in the new religious movements or “sects”.

There can be little doubt that some of the “charismatic” and “born-again” movements, with their emphasis on speaking in tongues, rock music, and hard-sell evangelism, prove attractive to youngsters. Some of these groups are doubtless sincere in their approach. Some have doubtless recognised that the sometimes-cold formality of European-style church services makes an ill match with the more volatile and open character of Papua New Guineans. But, there are many of us in Parliament, who question the motives behind sects, which couple their zeal for souls with an equal passion for land, for resources, and for wealth.

What has been the real contribution of the established Christian churches to the welfare of the state? This is an easier question to answer.

Since Christianity’s earliest days in Papua New Guinea, it has been a practical religion, as concerned with the physical and secular welfare of its parishioners, as with their spiritual well-being. Throughout the nation, Catholics, Anglicans, Seventh-day Adventists, Lutherans, and United church administrations have built hospitals, nursing schools, primary and high schools, teacher-training colleges, technical schools, and tertiary institutions. They have a proud record of practical achievements, in the name of God, and many a modern Papua New Guinean leader owes his education, and often his health, to the churches. The colonial administration encouraged these developments by the churches, and assisted, as best it could.

Successive governments of independent Papua New Guinea have followed the same course of action, providing state-trained teachers for church-agency schools, state doctors for church hospitals, and considerable budgetary funding, across the board for the churches’ health and education initiatives. We can say that the relationship of these churches and others, such as the Salvation Army, with the national government, has been an understanding one, free of major disruptions.

But Papua New Guinea's life is complex, and likely to become more so, in the future. Law and order problems in our society are real, and the solutions are long-term, and sometimes evasive. The major issue is one of employment, and the need to involve the urban young gainfully in the economy. At the same time, we need to develop industries in rural areas that will help stem the flow of people, attracted by the lights of the cities, cities which cannot absorb them, clothe them, feed them, give them work, or accommodate them.

Are the churches to only look after the victims of this period of change and disruption? Is their role to be one of purely pastoral care? Will their "good works" of the future be only band-aid reactions to the wounds of an uncaring society?

I believe there is an enormous role for the churches to play in the immediate future. They must take up the role of supporting family life, far more convincingly than they have. Papua New Guinea's social ills increase as family life, with its imprinted ethics and morals, declines. Much of that decline, and much of the collapse of traditional morality, is directly the result of the "Westernisation" of our society. That is a fact, and it is a fact that we should waste no time mourning.

Papua New Guinea, and much of the Pacific, is being catapulted into the future, and the trend is non-reversible. We cannot return to the past. Nor should we. What we need, and where the churches can help, is to reach out to youth, with ethical and moral values, with discipline, and with a determination to provide pride in being a Papua New Guinean, pride in being part of a family.

Far too often, parents in a society in flux, such as mine, face a sense of hopelessness. The gap between them, and their children, in education, in outlook, in beliefs, seems bottomless. If churches are looking for an agenda for the 1990s, and the next century, it must be to help the government of the day to underpin, and develop, the structure of the family.

Some churches, in their haste to obtain converts, centre their whole ministry on the young. Parents, uncles and aunts, grandparents, mature and experienced adults, who have survived and prospered, are often ignored by

the churches, in their rush for the young. In doing this, churches ignore a major resource, in reaching their goal, for a wise use of older people would strengthen the family unit, go far towards bridging the generation gap, and give the whole society a renewed sense of Christian purpose.

I believe the best relationship possible between church and state, in my country, is one based on trust. I do not believe that Papua New Guinea should be a church state, with a preeminent denomination. Equally, I do not believe the constitution should ignore the overwhelmingly Christian nature of the nation. Therefore, it seems to me that trust and mutual understanding of aims and goals must be the basis for the future relationship between church and state.

If the two organisations are to turn in an optimum performance, they must work together. Churches must foster family values more openly, make far more use of the media, make far more effort to contact, and welcome, the over-25s, and tap their maturity and experience. And governments must take the values of religion into practical account, when they seek solutions to the major issues of the day, such as the social cost of economic development, and the law-and-order situation.

If this level of trust and cooperation can be fostered and developed, and if “fly-by-night” operations, which pay only lip-service to Jesus Christ and Christianity, can be exposed, I believe the constitutional guarantees, so explicitly in our constitution, will remain untouched, and the relationship between church and state will grow in strength.

(Address given at the South Pacific Congress of the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), held at Suva, Fiji, on July 9, 1993.)

A Legal Perspective on Religious Freedom in PNG

Hon. Chief Justice Arnold Amet

I am indeed very honoured to have been invited to participate in this very important subject of “religious freedom”. It is a subject of much interest in our nation in recent years. It has caused much debate, tension, dissension, and open conflict between members, followers, and adherents of different religious denominations, and religions of the world. It is, therefore, also a subject of much sensitivity, for it has the potential to arouse much emotional reaction.

I have, of course, been extended the privilege of addressing the subject from a legal perspective, principally because I am legally trained, and am a judge, but, more importantly, I trust, because I am a Christian judge, not simply a judge, who is a Christian, but a Christian judge, or at least one, who desires to be more of a Christian judge, because there is a marked difference, though some would suggest it is mere semantics. And so, I am going to address the subject from a Christian legal perspective as well, for which I make no apologies.

We declare in the Preamble to our National Constitution that:

“We, the People of Papua New Guinea – pledge ourselves to guard, and pass on to those who come after us, our noble traditions, and the Christian principles that are ours now. . . .

“We, the People, do now establish this sovereign nation, and declare ourselves, under the guiding hand of God, to be the independent state of Papua New Guinea.”

Section 45(1) then provides that:

“every person has the right to freedom of conscience, thought, and religion, and the practice of his religion and beliefs, including freedom to manifest, and propagate, his religion and beliefs in such a

way as not to interfere with the freedom of others, except to the extent that the exercise of that right is regulated or restricted by a law that complies with Section 38.”

A reference, in section (5), to religion, includes a reference “to the traditional religious beliefs and customs of the peoples of Papua New Guinea”.

And so, whilst, in the Preamble, we declare and assert ourselves to be a Christian nation, by adoption of Christian principles, the specific provisions of Section 45(1) and (5) permit the practice of religions, other than Christianity, as well.

Religion is not defined in the Constitution to mean simply the Christian religion. A simple definition from the dictionary means “belief in a superhuman power, or powers, to be worshipped, expressed in conduct and ritual, often involving a code of ethics”.

Because it is declared in the preamble that we adopt Christianity and Christian principles as our national faith or religion, it is thought that the specific provisions for the freedom of religion should mean the Christian religion, and its denominations, only. I think, however, that subsection (5) makes it clear that the expression “religion” is used generically, as the definition I quoted, and includes traditional religious beliefs, and religions other than Christianity, as well.

Section 45 provides, generally, for the freedom to practice one’s religion and beliefs, and to be free to demonstrate, and spread, that religion and belief in any way, as long as it does not interfere with the freedoms of other people.

This is, however, NOT an absolute right. It can be regulated, or restricted, by the state, by law, pursuant to Section 38, which allows the state to qualify certain rights, including freedom of religion and its practices, if necessary for the public interest in defence, public safety, public order, public welfare, public health, and so on, to the extent that the state, through Parliament, considers that such qualification is reasonably justifiable in a

democratic society, having a proper respect for the rights and dignity of mankind.

This simply means that Parliament can qualify this freedom, by regulating, or restricting, how a religion, and its practice, can be exercised by its members.

The effect, then, of this right to freedom of religion, and its practice, manifestation, and propagation, is that individuals, members, and followers of any religion have the freedom to exercise these rights in “such a way as not to interfere with the freedom of others”.

The state, however, has the sovereign responsibility, and right, to qualify the exercise of this right, by regulating, or restricting, its practice or exercise, in the public interest, in the areas of public defence, public safety, public order, public welfare, public health, the protection of children, and persons under disability, the development of under-privileged, or less advanced groups or areas, or in order to protect the exercise of the rights of others.

The state, meaning Parliament and government, exists for the benefit of its people. The institution of government, in whatever form is ordained of God for the good government, peace, and welfare of the people, HAS the RIGHT, such as prescribed by section 38, to qualify basic rights and freedoms, by regulating and restricting their exercise.

And so, quite simply put, if the socio-political, and other circumstances, of the country, at any given point in time are such that the government and Parliament, in its collective wisdom, considers it necessary, and for the specific reasons prescribed, that it is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society, having proper respect for the rights and dignity of mankind, to regulate and restrict freedom of religion, it has the responsibility to do so.

Many Christians, Christian leaders, as well as community leaders, ask the question, if this is a Christian country, do we not have the right to preclude other religions of the world from starting their religion, and its practice, in our country?

I think the answer to that must be NO. The Constitution recognises a universal fact that there are other religions in the world other than Christianity. We are a part of the world community of nations, and, given the fact that we have chosen to adopt the democratic form of constitutional government, we must also respect the rights of other people to their beliefs.

It is not necessarily inconsistent that, while we declare our nation to be a Christian one, we acknowledge the right to freedom of other religions. Rather, the acknowledgment demonstrates some of the qualities that are necessary in Christianity, such as tolerance, love, and peaceful coexistence.

Many Christians today focus much energy and attention on the conflicts, dissections, and emotional reactions between members of different denominations of the Christian faith, and between different religions, including Christianity. And, unfortunately, this causes much imbalance of our perspective. We begin to perceive issues of freedom of religion, and personal faith, from these perspectives, which are often emotionally charged, and not from that, which should be positive.

I believe that, if we Christians, and the church, do not become overly preoccupied with seeming differences and dissensions, and see these circumstances as opportunities to exhibit and propagate the positive values of our religion and faith, then the issues, or questions of freedom of religion, do not need to arise, or be debated.

You might well ask, what do I mean by that. I mean that, if we, the Christian church, would begin to focus on the values and the gifts of the Spirit that unite US, and all mankind, together, and begin to manifest them, and outline them, in our personal and corporate lives, such as love, which is patient and kind, which is not jealous, or conceited, or proud, not ill-mannered, or selfish, or irritable, or which does not keep a record of wrongs, then, really, the issue does not arise. We will learn to love those of other religious persuasions, in spite of our differences. We will learn to be tolerant, and begin to understand our difference.

And, friends, does that not provide an excellent opportunity to propagate our faith, by our actions and conduct, in obedience to the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus.

In conclusion, my humble submission and invitation to Christians, and to you, the leaders, is that we heed the command of our Lord Jesus, who said:

“I demand that you love each other, as much as I love you” (John 15:12), and

“I have given you an example to follow; do as I have done to you” (John 13:15).

This, I would exhort you all, is our call to action – LOVE IN ACTION.

FOR FURTHER READING

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Predecessors (1679-1948), *Textus Minores*, vol X, F. M. Van Asbeck, ed.,. Leiden: Brill, 1949, 99 pp.

The Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby PNG: Government Printer, 1975, 123 pp.

“Declaration on Religious Freedom” (*Dignitatis Humanae*), in *The Documents of Vatican II, with Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*, Walter M. Abbott, and Joseph Gallagher, eds, London UK: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965, pp. 675-700.

Carillo de Albornoz, A. F., *Religious Liberty*, New York NY: Sheed & Ward, 1967, 209 pp.

The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions, Secretariate for Non-Christians, ed., Vatican, 1984, 22 pp.

Brunton, Brian, and Colquhoun-Kerr, Duncan, *The Annotated Constitution of Papua New Guinea*, Port Moresby PNG: University of PNG Press, 1984, 596 pp.

Freedom of Religion: Basis for Peace and National Development (Proceedings of the South Pacific Congress of the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), Suva Fiji, June 7-10, 1993), 158 pp. [Available from IRLA Association, South Pacific Division, 148 Fox Valley Road, Wahroonga NSW 2076.]

DOCUMENTS

A Pentecostal Point of View

We, as representatives of the cooperating Pentecostal churches of Papua New Guinea, write to appeal against a decision of the Land Board to award the portion of land, Allotment 1 and 2 (consolidated), Section 138 Hohola, to the Islamic Society of PNG.

It is our understanding that we have 28 days to appeal against a decision of the Land Board. As the Board made its decision to award the above portion of land to the Islamic Society on Thursday, March 12, 1992, we now state our reason as to why we object to this decision.

At the Land Board meeting, 1,876 applications for the above portion were heard. At this meeting, proposals were presented by 12 parties. These were as follows:

1. Papua New Guinea Planning Association
2. Papanal Investment Pty Ltd
3. Monica Ding
4. Esa'ala Group
5. Talio Family
6. Tiare No 6 Pty Ltd
7. Kiriwina Community Ekalesia Congregation
8. Evangelical church of Papua
9. The church of Foursquare Gospel in Papua New Guinea
10. Christian Life Centre
11. Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church of Christ) Inc
12. The Islamic church of Papua New Guinea Inc

Had the application for the land resulted in one application only, namely the Islamic Society, then it is conceded that we may not have had grounds to appeal against a decision to grant the land to the Society. However, we find it unacceptable that, in considering the application by the Islamic Society, in conjunction with application by Christian churches, that the Board would give preference to a non-Christian group.

1. The Decision is Unconstitutional

As Christian leaders, we consider the decision of the Land Board to be in direct contravention to the Constitution of Papua New Guinea. In our estimation, this decision shows a lack of understanding, by the Land Board members, of the clearly-stated principles of the Islamic faith, and the affect that a strong Islamic community would have on “our noble traditions, and Christian principles that are now ours”.

2. The Islamic Faith is Opposed to Christianity

The Islamic faith is strongly opposed to Christianity, and, as church leaders, it concerns us that our government should find grounds to prefer to a non-Christian organisation over Christian churches.

3. In the Constitution, We Have Pledged to Guard Christian Principles

The Constitution of Papua New Guinea clearly recognises our heritage, to the extent that we “*pledge ourselves to guard, and pass on to those that come after us, our noble traditions, and the Christian principles.*”

The preamble to the Constitution makes the bold assertion that, “*We, the people, do now establish this sovereign nation, and declare ourselves, under the guiding hand of [the Christian] God, to be the independent state of Papua New Guinea.*”

4. Damaging to Christian Principles, on Which PNG is Based

Allowing the Islamic Society to establish a centre of worship in Moresby would be very damaging to the Christian principles, on which PNG is based. The establishment of a base for the Islamic faith would bring about a strong Islamic influence in PNG, and undermine the principles we have pledged ourselves to uphold, and pass on to those that come after us.

5. As Pastors, We are Concerned For Our Flock

It is as church ministers, responsible for the flock over which God has given us the oversight, that we appeal to you, a Minister, elected by the people of Papua New Guinea, to uphold the Constitution of this great nation. Sir, you have pledged to do this.

The action of the Land Board, to grant the above land to the Islamic Society, in preference to a Christian church, can, in no way, be construed as in the interests of the people of Papua New Guinea.

Minister, we feel most strongly about this matter, and we appeal to you to review the decision of the Land Board, and use your discretionary powers to ensure that the land is awarded to a Christian church.

Yours sincerely,

Pastor Joseph Walters, District Superintendent Assemblies of God

Pastor Peter Igarobae, National Chairman Christian Revival Crusade

Pastor Bob Lotu, National Chairman Christian Life Centre

Pastor Charles Lapa, Founder and Senior Pastor Jesus Centres PNG

Pastor Robin Lolo, Senior Pastor Foursquare Gospel church, Port Moresby

Pastor Momoti Kemopa, Senior Pastor Faith Fellowship, Port Moresby

Pastor Peter Hollands, Senior Pastor, Potters House Christian Fellowship church

Pastor Donald Onne, Senior Pastor Apostolic church of PNG

NOTE: The above letter (followed by an appendix about the nature of the Islamic faith) is dated March 19, 1992, and was presented by the Pentecostal pastors of the Port Moresby area, to the Honourable Rabbie Namaliu, at the time, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. The Land Board decision was not rescinded, and, at the present time, plans are being carried out for two mosques in Port Moresby.

Papua New Guinea is a Christian Country

Hon. Jimson SAUK, MP

1. Media Statement of April 19, 1994

“BAN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS IN PNG”

A call today, by a member of Parliament, is to ban all non-Christian religion in the country.

Member for Kandep, Jimson Sauk, said the government, and all the churches, should rally behind him, when he introduces a private member’s bill, in the November session, to amend sections of the Constitution, which allows non-Christian religions to come into the country.

“This is a Christian country, and we cannot allow our Christian values and beliefs to be eroded by an influx of non-Christian groupings,” said Mr Sauk.

He said, “Those non-Christian religions are known to create strife and wars in the countries they influence, and we have reason to ban them from our country, before they get out of hand.”

“I want all the 109 members of Parliament, and the Melanesian Council of Churches, to support my call for the interest of this country,” he said.

He said we can allow any Christian religion to come into our country, but not the non-Christians.

“Whether these non-Christian religions like it or not, it is their problem, because our people do not like them, and it is only proper we leaders should legislate against it.”

Mr Sauk said the preamble of our Constitution recognises Christian values and ethics, but, the fact that it also allows for the exercising of religious freedom, has led to the abuse of that freedom.

“As elected leaders, we must specify on the types of religions that we want to freely take root in this country, because other so-called religious organisations also strive to promote political and cultural influences, which leads to serious conflicts around the world,” Mr Sauk said.

2. Interview with T. Aerts, held on 15-5-1994

Q. Recently, the newspaper reported that you intended to submit a bill to Parliament, in order to change the Constitution. Is this bill something new?

A. There are regularly proposals made in Parliament to change the Constitution, because this is the proper task of the elected members of Parliament. Judges and courts have to uphold the existing laws; we parliamentarians make these laws, and so make for a better living.

One other example of a proposed change in the Constitution regards the abolition of the provincial government system, found in the Micah Report, although this proposal is now going to be redrafted, and to be submitted again.

The proposal, I want to make in the next session of Parliament, is new, in so far as nobody before me has tried to discuss the issue of religious freedom, as found in the Constitution.

Q. In which way does the text of the Constitution cause problems for this particular issue?

A. There is ambiguity in the Constitution. On one part, the Constitution claims that Papua New Guinea is a Christian country, and this corresponds with the facts. There are Catholics, Lutherans, United church, Apostolic church, and so on, who add up to well over 90 percent of the people in this nation. Maybe not all of these Christians are active and outspoken believers, but they do come from Christian families, and maybe 75 percent of them (like Michael Somare, Paias Wingti, and myself) were trained in Mission schools. Deep down, we all are, and feel, like Christians.

Q. What is, then, the problem with the provisions of the Constitution?

A. The preamble of the Constitution rightly says that we are a “Christian country”, but there is also Section 45, which allows for religious freedom, in general, and this section is nowadays used to allow Muslims, Baha’i, Hindu, Shinto, Mormons, and others, to enter freely into Papua New Guinea.

My proposal for a special Bill views, more precisely, the latter group of people, which are now made particularly welcome, since the government of the day has launched its “Look North” policy. Thus, instead of only maintaining the old links with Australia and New Zealand – down South – the attention is nowadays, rather, turned to Malaysia and China, and other countries to the North, which all do not share our Christian heritage.

Q. Still, apart from Section 45, the preamble of the Constitution makes also provision for PNG’s age-old traditions, and these traditions were not specifically Christian either.

A. That is true. But the meaning of the Constitution is to respect the religion of our people, as seen at the time when the Constitution was drafted. The intention was, then, to include, for instance, traditional worship, or, also, its newer forms, as cargo cults. It did not, however, include an influx of non-Christian religions, none of whom were here in the early 1970s. The situation today is completely different.

Q. What do you mean by “completely different”?

A. I am a politician; I have to see that we have good laws. I am not a pastor, or a minister of religion. But I am a Christian, too, and our laws must uphold our Christian principles. Hence, I have to defend the name of Jesus, my Saviour. He is the one who died for us. He is the one who gave His blood for us. We are saved by His blood only, and not by the blood of Mohammed, or Baha’u’llah (whom the Baha’i venerate).

It is not good to allow other people from other countries in PNG, so that, in the end, we are burdened with the problems they experience now. By this, I mean the hardships of religious wars between different religions, as we see them happen in the Middle East, and elsewhere, too. We are a Christian country, and it should stay like that.

Q. If we are a Christian country, we must be tolerant and respect other people's beliefs. Therefore, religious freedom is part of our Christian faith, and not something completely foreign.

A. We must be clear about our values and priorities. As Christians, we do not object that other people believe otherwise. Whatever they do privately, or in their houses, is OK with us. But this does not apply to public life, for which our laws are made.

Q. How can you believe and say one thing, and do another thing?

A. We are not talking here about private matters only. But there are problems of internal peace. Let me give you three examples.

1. When preachers of foreign religions apply to come to PNG, there should be specific *migration laws*, which do not allow them to do so, to conduct different religious services, and cause unrest.

2. Even if outsiders were allowed by NIDA (National Investment and Development Authority), or now, by IPA (Investment Promotion Authority), to start a *business enterprise* only, but this front acts as a religious agency, then they should be stopped, whenever they upset the internal peace and good order of the country.

3. There is a problem, too, when adherents of foreign, non-Christian religions want to build their places of worship, and ask for *plots of ground*. Such requests should not be approved, and the Lands Department should be obliged to follow the appropriate legislation.

Q. Would such legislation not jeopardise the position of Papua New Guinea on the world scene of the nations?

A. Not at all. We all know of Russia, which, at least, at one stage, forbade the selling, and even the free distribution, of Bibles. We know of India, which does severely restrict the entry of new Christian missionaries into the country; if they come to study, OK, but after two years they must go. And, of course, you must not try to build a Christian place of worship in a Muslim nation. Why should we allow them to do what they do not allow us to do? What is so special about PNG, that we cannot show our true colours, just as other nations do?

Q. Do you think that this is the right time to act? Do you have the numbers to pass a Bill, restricting religious freedom?

A. Right now we are at the talking stage; we are investigating various possibilities; we are seeking opinions about the interpretation of the Constitution. But the time is ripe to act, now that the numbers of foreign believers are still small, about one percent, expatriates included, as the census figures of 1990 make clear.

If we talk about numbers in Parliament, we must start from the 109 elected members. We, thus, need 73 favourable votes to have a two-thirds majority. The problem we face is, after all, a problem of the people whom the Parliamentarians represent. If part of the Constitution is not good for the people, then it has to be changed, and this is not impossible. Actually, there are many influential people in PNG, who think like that. If the PNG Council of Churches, the successor of the older Melanesian Council of Churches, and which represents about 85 percent of all Christians in PNG, would speak out against some sections of the present Constitution, then that part of the Constitution is going to be changed, and PNG can truly be a “Christian country”.

Islam's Concept of Religious Freedom

M. A. Ahmedi

The question of salvation, howsoever innocent it may appear to be, is potent in its danger to peace in the religious world.

It is one thing for a religion to declare that those who seek to be redeemed from Satan, and attain salvation, should rush to its safe haven. But, it is quite another thing for the same religion to declare, in the next breath, that those who do not come to it to seek refuge will be damned eternally. Whatever they do to please God, however much they love their Creator and His creation, however much they lead a life of purity and piety, they would most certainly be condemned to an everlasting fire.

When such a rigid, narrow-minded, and non-tolerant view is expressed in a provocative language, as it generally is by religious zealots, it is known to have produced violent riots.

People come in all shapes and sizes. Some are educated, cultured, and refined, and so are their reactions to offences committed against them. Yet, a large number of religiously-inclined people, be they educated or illiterate, are likely to react violently, when their religious sensibilities are hurt.

Unfortunately, this seems to be the attitude of the clergy of almost all religions of the world against those who do not conform to their faith. Even Islam is presented by most medieval scholars as the only door to salvation, in the sense that, ever since the advent of Islam, all the descendants of Adam, who have lived and died outside the pale of Islam, are denied salvation. Christianity does not offer a different view, nor does any religion.

But this bigoted and narrow view has no justification in Islam. According to the Holy Quran, *salvation cannot be monopolised by any single religion of the world*. Even if new truths are revealed, and new eras of light have dawned, those who live a life of ignorance, through no fault of their own, and those who generally try to lead a life of truth, even if they inherited false ideologies, will

not be denied salvation by God. The following verse from the Holy Quran elaborates this point further.

“Surely, those who have believed in Muhammad and the Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians – who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and do good deeds, on them shall come no fear nor shall they grieve” (Ch. 5; Al-Mâ'idah: 69).

The Holy Quran uses the term *Sabiana*, which is a term used by the Arabs to apply to the followers of all non-Arab and non-Semitic religions, which have their own revealed books. As such, followers of all religions, based on divine revelation, have been granted the assurance that, provided they do not genuinely fail to recognise the light of a new religion, and stick honestly, and truly, to the values of their ancestral religion, they have nothing to fear from God, and will not be denied salvation.

To prevent Muslims from censuring, indiscriminately, all those who do not belong to Islam, the Holy Quran categorically declares:

“They are not all alike. Among the people of the Book are those who are very pious and God-fearing, and who stand by their covenant; they recite the Word of Allah in the hours of night, and prostrate themselves before Him. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and enjoin good, and forbid evil, and hasten to vie with one another in good works. These are among the righteous. Whatever good they do, they shall not be denied its due reward, and Allah well knows those who guard against evil” (Ch. 3: Âli 'Imrân: 113-115).

There is a great misunderstanding, today, born out of the recent political rivalries between Jews and Muslims that, according to Islam, all Jews are hell bound. This is totally false, in light of what has been declared from the Holy Quran, and in light of the following verse:

“Of the people of Moses, there is a party, who guides with truth, and does justice therewith” (Ch. 7: Al-A'râf: 159).

MUTUAL RESPECT AMONGST RELIGIONS

It is declared, in unambiguous terms, in the Holy Quran, that it is not only Muslims, who stand firmly by the truth, and admonish and dispense justice righteously. Amongst the followers of other faiths, there are also people, who do the same.

This is the attitude, which the entire world of religion must adopt today, to improve the quality of relationship with other faiths. Religious peace cannot be achieved without cultivating such a broad-minded, magnanimous, and humane understanding attitude towards the people of other faiths. Referring to all religions of the world, in general, the Holy Quran declares:

“Of those We have created, there are a people that guide men with truth and do justice therewith” (Ch. 7: Al-A‘râf: 181).

THE UNIVERSALITY CONCEPT

Since time immemorial, many philosophers have been dreaming of the moment, when mankind can gather as one large human family under one flag. This concept of the unification of mankind has been entertained, not only by political thinkers, but also by economists, and sociologists, alike. But, nowhere has the idea been pursued with greater fervour than in the domain of religion.

Although Islam also shares this view with other religions (some having highly ambitious programmes of world domination), within this apparent commonality, Islam stands distinctly different in its attitude to the aforementioned ambitious claim. This is no place for developing this controversial theme further, and to enter into a debate, as to which religion has actually been commissioned by God to gather the whole of mankind under one divine banner. But, it is very important for us to understand the implications of such claims by more than one religion of the world. If two, three, or four powerful religions, with long-established historical traditions, simultaneously claim to be universal religions, will it not generate monstrous confusion, and uncertainty, in the minds of all human beings at large? Will their mutual rivalry, and struggle for domination, not pose a real and substantial threat to world peace?

Such movements, of global dimension, on the part of religions, are a matter of grave concern, themselves. But, to add to that, the danger of such movements

falling into the hands of an irresponsible, bigoted, and intolerant leadership, means that the risks will be manifold, and more real than academic.

In the case of Islam, unfortunately, there is widespread propaganda, carried to the effect that Islam promotes the use of force, where possible, for the spread of its ideology. Such words emanate not only from opponents of Islam, but also from medieval-minded Muslim “clergy”.

Obviously, if one religion opts for the offensive, the others will have the right to defend themselves with the same weapons. Of course, we do not agree, and strongly reject the notion that Islam advocates the use of force for the spread of ideologies – but to this aspect, we will return later.

Let us first examine the rationality of such a claim by any religion of the world. Can any religion – Islam, Christianity, or whatever – become universal in its message, in the sense that the message be applicable to all people of the world, whatever their colour, race, or nationality? What about a host of different racial, tribal, national traditions, social habits, and cultural patterns?

The concept of universality, as proposed by religions, should not only transcend geographic and national boundaries, but should also transcend time. So, the question would be: can a religion be accepted globally, by the entire mankind, and how could such a religion be competent enough to fulfil the needs for the future generations?

It is for the followers of every religion to suggest how the teachings of their religion propose to resolve the problems discussed above. However, on behalf of Islam, we summarise very briefly the Islamic answer to these questions.

ISLAM IS A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The Holy Quran repeatedly makes it clear that Islam is a religion, whose teachings are related to the human psyche. Islam emphasises that any religion, which is rooted in the human psyche, transcends time and space. The human psyche is unchangeable. Therefore, the religion, which is truly rooted in the human psyche, becomes unchangeable, by the same token, providing that it does not get too much involved with the transient situations of man, in whatever age, as he progresses forward. If the religion sticks to those principles, which

emanate from the human psyche, such a religion has the logical potential of becoming a universal religion.

Islam goes one step further. In its uniquely understanding attitude, it ascribes all religions of the world as possessing this character of universality to some degree. As such, in every divinely-revealed religion, there is always found a central core of teaching, which is bonded to the human psyche, and eternal truth. This core of religions remains unchangeable, unless, of course, the followers of that religion corrupt that teaching at a later period of time. The following verse illustrates the case in point:

“So set thy face to the service of religion, turning, as one devoted to God. And follow the nature made by Allah – the nature, in which He has created mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah. That is the right religion. But most men know not” (Ch. 30: Ar-Rûm: 30).

In view of the above, the question may be raised as to the wisdom of sending one religion after another with the same teaching. Further, one may wonder why Islam claims, in relative terms, to be more universal, and perfect, than all previous religions, if all had the same unchangeable universal teaching, applicable to human beings at all times.

1. In answer to the first question, the Holy Quran draws the attention of mankind to the indisputable historical fact that the holy books and scriptures revealed earlier than the Quran have been tampered with. Their teachings were corrupted by a process of gradual amendment, or new elements were introduced, through interpolation, until the validity and authenticity of these books and scriptures became doubtful and questionable.

So, the onus of proof that no change whatsoever has been affected, of course, lies on the shoulders of the people belonging to such religions. As far as the Quran goes, it occupies a unique and distinct position amongst all religious books and scriptures. Even some of the staunchest enemies of Islam, who do not believe the Quran to be the Word of God, have to confess that the Holy Quran, without a shadow of doubt, remains the same unchanged, and

unaltered, book, which was claimed by Muhammad – peace and blessings of Allah be upon him – to be the Word of God.

“There is otherwise every security, internal and external, that we possess the text, which Muhammad himself gave forth and used. . . . We may, upon the strongest assumption, affirm that every verse in the Quran is the genuine and unaltered composition of Muhammad himself” (Cf. Sir William Muir, *Life of Mohamet*, London, 1878, pp. xxvii-xxviii).

It is a completely different domain of controversy as to which Book was authored by whom. But the same Book, whose authorship by God is challenged by the other people of the Book, stands witness to the fact that the Torah and the Injeel (collectively the Old Testament and the gospels) were authored, in part, by God Himself. In addition, other books, belonging to different religions, in other parts of the world, were, without question, also authored by the same God – only the contradictions one finds in them today are man-made. Need it be said that the attitude of the Holy Quran is, by far, the most realistic and conducive to peace among religions.

2. As to the second question, the Holy Quran draws our attention to the process of evolution in every sphere of human society. New religions were needed, not only for the sake of restoring the fundamental teachings of older religions, which had been mutilated at the hands of man, but also, as society evolved, more teachings had to be added to previous ones, to keep up with the pace of progress.
3. That is not all. Another factor, at work in this process of change, was the element of time-related, secondary teachings, which were revealed to meet only the requirements of a certain people or period. This means that religions were not only made of central cores of unchangeable principles, but were also dressed up with peripheral, secondary, and even transient, teachings.
4. Last, but not least, man was not educated and trained in divine instructions in one single stride, but he was gradually carried

forward, step by step, to a stage of mental adulthood, where he was considered fit and mature to receive all the fundamental principles, which were needed for his guidance. According to the Quranic claim, a secondary teaching, inseparably used on everlasting fundamental principles, was also revealed as a part of the final, perfect, and consummate religion, i.e., Islam. That which was of a purely local or temporary character was abrogated or omitted; that which was still needed, henceforth, was provided and retained (see Ch. 5: Al Mâ'idah: 14-16).

This, in essence, is the Islamic concept of religious universality, which Islam claims to possess. It is for man to investigate, and judge, the comparative merit of different claimants.

Now, we turn to the question of such religions, which have set themselves the goal of global ascendancy. Clearly, Islam does entertain such ambitions. By way of prophecy, the Holy Quran declares that Islam is destined to emerge one day as the one religion of mankind.

“He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of the truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, even if those, who associate as partners with God, do not like” (Ch. 61: As-Saff: 9).

Despite its commitment to the promotion of peace and harmony between various religions, Islam does not discourage the competitive dissemination of messages and ideologies, with a view to gaining ascendancy over others. In fact, it sets the ultimate ascendancy of Islam over all other faiths, as a noble goal, which must be pursued by the adherents of Islam, speaking of the Holy Founder of Islam, the Holy Quran states:

“Say, ‘O mankind! Truly I am a Messenger to you all from Allah, to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and earth. There is no God but He. He gives life, and He causes death. So, believe in Allah, and His Messenger, the Prophet, the Immaculate one, who believes in Allah and His words; and follow him, that you may be rightly guided’ ” (Ch. 7: Al-A'râf: 158).

However, to preempt frictions and misunderstandings, Islam prescribes a set of clear-cut rules of conduct, which guarantee fair play, absolute justice, freedom of speech, right of expression, and the right of disagreement, for all alike.

NO COMPULSION

How can a religion claim itself to be universal, international, or global, and yet, not cause frictions? No religion, with a universal message, and global ambitions to unite mankind under one flag, can even momentarily entertain the idea of employing force to spread its message. *“Swords can win territories, but not hearts. Force can bend heads, but not minds.”*

So there is no need for any coercion. Leave it to man to determine where the truth belongs. Addressing the Holy founder of Islam, God clearly indicates to him of not entertaining any idea of force in an attempt to reform society. His status as reformer is made very clear in the following verses:

“Admonish, therefore, for thou art but an admonisher; thou hast no authority to compel them” (Ch. 88: Al-Ghâshiyah: 21-22).

“But if they turn away, we have not sent thee as a guardian over them. Thy duty is only to convey the message. Leave it to God to make the message effective” (Ch. 42: Ash-Shûrâ: 49).

Even if a struggle develops in the process of the propagation of the new ideology, and violent reaction ensues, then Islam strongly exhorts its adherents to show patience and perseverance, and avoid conflict, as much as possible. This is why, wherever a Muslim is admonished to deliver the message of Islam to the world at large, a clear-cut code of conduct is laid out for him. Out of many verses, related to this subject, we quote the following verse to illustrate the point.

“Call unto the way of thy Lord, with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in a way that is best. Surely, thy Lord knows best who has strayed from His way; and He also knows who are rightly guided” (Ch. 16: An-Nahl: 125).

According to the Holy Quran, the survival, and ultimate victory, of a message depends entirely upon the potency of its arguments, and not on the material force

it can employ. The Holy Quran is very clear, and specific, on this subject. It declares that, even if the most powerful forces are employed to annihilate truth, and support falsehood, such efforts would invariably be defeated and frustrated. Reason will always prevail over the crude force of material weapons.

“but those who knew for certain that they would one day meet Allah said: ‘How many a small party has triumphed over a large party by Allah’s command! And Allah is with the steadfast’ ” (Ch. 2: Al-Baqarah: 249).

This is the everlasting principle, which has played the most important role in the evolution of mankind. Survival of the fittest is the essence of this message. That, in fact, is the methodology of the evolution of life.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Freedom of speech and expression is vital to the spread of a message, as well as to restore the dignity of man. No religion is worthy of any consideration, unless it addresses itself to the restoration, and protection, of human dignity.

In view of what has passed, it should become apparent that it is impossible for a religion like Islam to deny freedom of speech and expression. On the contrary, Islam upholds this principle, in a manner, and with such boldness, as is seldom witnessed in any other ideology or religion in the world. For instance, the Holy Quran declares:

“They say, ‘None shall enter heaven unless he be a Jew or a Christian.’ These are their vain desires. Say, ‘Produce your proof, if you are faithful’ ” (Ch. 2: Al-Baqarah: 111).

“Have they taken gods beside Him! Say, ‘Bring forth your proof. Here is the Book of those with me, and those before me! Nay, most of them know not the truth, and so they turn away from it’ ” (Ch. 21: Al-Anbiyâ: 24).

Liberty and emancipation are the two important slogans, which are influencing the entire world, with varying intensity, and different connotations, in different parts of the world. There is no doubt, whatsoever, that man is gaining greater awareness and consciousness, in the importance, and value, of liberty. There is a pressing need, felt everywhere in the world, for emancipation, but from what? Is

it philosophies; oppressive democracies and corrupt bureaucracies; the economic stranglehold of the poor countries by the rich; ignorance; superstition; fetishism?

Islam champions the cause of liberty from all these maladies, but not in a manner as to cause disorder, chaos, and indiscriminate vengeance, causing suffering to the innocent. The message of Islam is: “God does not like disorder” (Ch. 2: Al-Baqarah: 205). Islam, like every other religion, emphasises the role of balanced freedom, in a spirit of give and take. “Absolute freedom” is hollow, weird, and unreal, in the context of society.

Sometimes, the concept of freedom is so misconceived, and misapplied, that the beauty of the cherished principle of freedom to speak gets transformed into the ugliness of freedom to abuse, hurl insults, and to blaspheme.

BLASPHEMY

Islam goes further than any religion in granting man freedom of speech and expression. Blasphemy is condemned, on ethical and moral grounds, no doubt, but no physical punishment is prescribed for blasphemy, despite the commonly-held view in today’s world of both the West and Islam itself.

Although the Holy Quran very strongly discourages indecent behaviour, and indecent talk, or the hurting of the sensitivities of others, Islam does not advocate punishment in this world, nor vests such authority in anyone. Blasphemy has been mentioned a number of times in the Quran.

1. “When you hear the signs of Allah being denied and mocked at, sit not with them, until they engage in a talk other than that; for, in that case, you would be like them. Surely Allah will assemble the hypocrites, and the disbelievers, in hell, all together” (Ch. 4: An-Nisâ: 140)

What a beautiful response to the utter ugliness of blasphemy. Islam declares that people should register their protest, by staging a walkout only, and not even a permanent at that. On the contrary, the boycott is to last for the period that the act of blasphemy is being committed.

2. “For their disbelief and uttering against Mary (is) a grievous calumny” (Ch. 4: An-Nisâ: 156).

The Jews, according to this verse, committed a grave blasphemy by declaring Mary – on whom be peace – to be unchaste, and alleging Jesus – on whom be peace – to be a child of questionable birth. The Arabic word *buhtanam azeema* (grievous calumny) expresses condemnation of this folly on the part of the Jews in the strongest term. Yet no physical punishment is prescribed.

3. While the Jews are condemned by the Quran for an act of blasphemy against Mary and Jesus – peace be on them – at the same time the Christians are censured for committing blasphemy against God by claiming that a son was born to God through a human wife. In the following verse, the Quran declares it to be an enormity, yet no punishment of any sort is advocated.

“No knowledge have they thereof, nor had their fathers. Monstrous is the word that comes out of their mouths. They speak nothing but a lie” (Ch. 18: Al-Kahf: 5).

4. Now we come to the most sensitive area, in the sense that the Muslims of today are more sensitive to blasphemy against the Holy founder of Islam than blasphemy against anything else – even God!

There is, in the Quran itself, recorded the blasphemy of Abdullah bin Ubbay, known in the history of Islam as the Chief of the Hypocrites:

“They say, ‘If we return to Medina, the most exalted will surely drive out therefrom the most mean’, while true honour belongs to Allah and His Messenger and the believers; but the hypocrites know not” (Ch. 63: Al-Munâfiqûn: 8)

After returning from an expedition, Abdullah uttered the above quoted words, implying that the Holy Prophet, who was the “most mean”. The Companions were seething with rage, and, if

permitted, they would have, most certainly, put Abdullah to the sword.

It is reported, authentically, that no less a person than the son of Abdullah himself approached the Prophet, and asked permission to kill his own father. But the Holy founder of Islam – peace and blessings be on him – refused to grant him his request, and nor did he permit anyone else from the companions to punish the hypocrite.

“Abdullah continued to live in peace in Medina, and when he died, a natural death, of course, the Holy Prophet gave his own shirt to Abdullah’s son, so that he could enshroud his father’s body – a singular act of blessing, indeed. Not only that, but the Holy Prophet decided to lead the funeral prayer himself. This decision must have disturbed many of his companions, who could not forgive Abdullah for the grievous offence he had committed, and from which he never recanted. Finally, it fell to Umar, who later became the second Caliph, to give voice to the suppressed uneasiness.

“As the Prophet was proceeding to the funeral, Umar stepped forward and begged the Prophet to change his decision. Umar reminded the Prophet of the Quranic verse, in which, referring to some known hypocrites, on whose behalf, intercession would not be accepted, even if the Holy Prophet prayed for them 70 times. The Holy Prophet smiled and responded: ‘Stand aside, Umar. I know better. If Allah will not forgive him, even if I pray 70 times, I would seek forgiveness more than 70 times.’ The prophet then led the funeral prayers” (*Bukhari II Kitab al Janiaze*).

This is a fitting rebuttal to those, who are crying themselves hoarse in demanding death of the blasphemer, who dares to insult the Holy Prophet of Islam, and deserves nothing but death.

The Baha'i Faith in Papua New Guinea

Press Statement released on May 10, 1993

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i of Papua New Guinea would like to take this opportunity to clarify the nature of the Baha'i faith, its relationship to other religions, its principles, and its history.

The Baha'i faith began in 1844, and arrived in the South Pacific in the beginning of this century. Today, the Baha'i faith is the second-largest independent religion in the South Pacific region after Christianity, and is listed in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* 1991, *World Christian Encyclopedia* 1982, as the second-most widespread religion in the world. It first came to Papua New Guinea in the early 1950s. Currently, there are over 20,000 Baha'i in Papua New Guinea, and there are Baha'i in virtually every district of every province in the country. The Baha'i faith is a deeply-rooted part of Papua New Guinea society, with many Baha'i communities that have followed its teachings for two or more generations. There are over 300 consultative administrative councils, called Local Spiritual Assemblies, and a number of social and economic development programmes throughout the country.

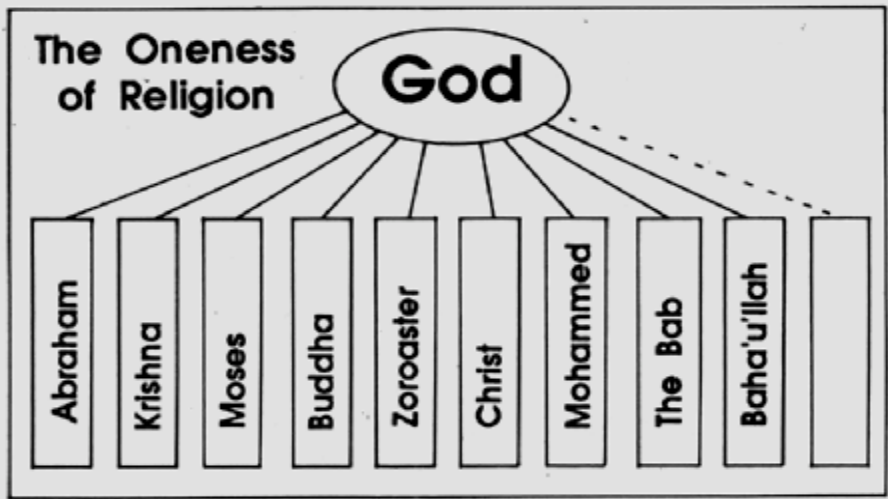
The Baha'i faith is an independent world religion, on par with recognised world religions, such as, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The Baha'i faith is not a sect of any other religion; it is a separate religion, and has consultative status with the United Nations agencies.

The fundamental principle of the Baha'i faith is unity. Baha'is believe that there is only one God, and that the successive revelations of God's will, through His messengers, have been the chief civilising forces in history. Baha'is follow the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the prophet founder of the Baha'i faith. Baha'u'llah (1817-1892) is regarded by Baha'is as the most-recent in the line of messengers of God, a line that stretches back beyond, and includes, Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Muhammad, and the Bab.

Corresponding to some essential principles, is the principle of the unity of the human race. Baha'u'llah says that, "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizen". Vital to the establishment of the unity of the human race, are principles such as:

- the abandonment of all forms of prejudice;
- the realisation of equal rights and privileges for women and men;
- the elimination of extremes of poverty and wealth;
- recognition of the common source, and essential oneness, of all the world's great religions;
- the value and necessity of universal education;
- the recognition that true religion is always in harmony with reason, and with the pursuit of scientific knowledge; and
- the need of every individual to adhere to high personal moral standards.

Religious tolerance is vital to the unity and stability of any society. Where there is intolerance, there is the evil of discord, strife, oppression, and hypocrisy. Where there is tolerance, there is peace, harmony, brotherhood, and love. The constitution of Papua New Guinea is a document, which upholds these important "Christian" ideals, and safeguards them from the dark clouds of intolerance, self-interest, prejudice, and ignorance.



The above diagram shows how – according to the Baha’i beliefs – all the world’s religions are related. Baha’u’llah taught that there is only one God, the Author of all religions; that there is only one great religion, which He has progressively revealed to man; that there is only one human family, which is destined to become unified under God; and that God will continue to send His messengers to mankind for eternity.

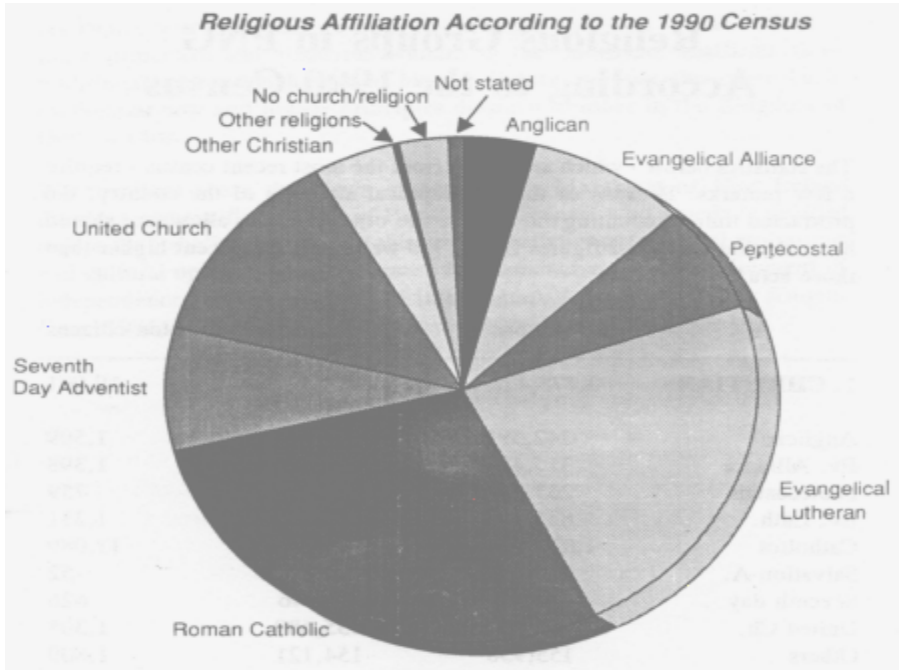
As Papua New Guineans, we have found, in the teachings of Baha’u’llah, those principles and standards, which, on the one hand, reaffirm those traditional truths, which uphold human dignity, and, on the other hand, establish new and higher principles, destined to usher in the kingdom of God on earth.

We, therefore, share the views of Mr Apelis Mazakmat, of New Ireland Province, and the first Baha’i of Papua New Guinea, who stated: “I decided to join the Baha’i faith, because this religion satisfies my spiritual aspirations, and cultural upbringing, and because it is conducive to the development of independence, self-respect, and spiritual welfare” (Isabel Kavo, in: *Niugini News* 1986).

Religious Groups in PNG: According to the 1990 Census

The statistics below – which are culled from the most-recent census – require a few remarks. Because of the geographical situation of the country, the protracted time of counting the results, and other reasons, allowance should be made that the actual figures from 1990 were 10 to 15 percent higher than those actually recorded.

	All persons	Citizens	Non-citizens
1. CHRISTIANS	3,478,478	3,458,577	19,901
Anglican	142,591	141,082	1,509
Evangelical Alliance	315,421	314,023	1,398
Pentecostals	253,845	253,086	759
Evangelical Lutheran	832,949	831,598	1,351
Catholics	1,023,180	1,012,091	11,089
Salvation Army	7,493	7,441	52
Seventh-day Adventists	290,072	289,446	626
United church	456,997	455,689	1,308
Others	155,930	154,121	1,809
2. OTHER RELIGIONS	11,478	10,319	1,168
Islam	440	237	203
Hinduism	460	146	314
Buddhism	459	5	404
Jewish	40	30	10
Baha'i	6,834	6,721	113
Others	3,254	3,130	124
3. NO RELIGION	96,105	91,771	4,334
4. NOT STATED	21,884	21,666	218
Totals	3,607,954	3,582,333	25,621



One may note that, because of political problems, a census for the North Solomons Province was called off – so that another 100,000 inhabitants of PNG are not included, either, and we still stay – for Bougainville – with the 1980 figures. (An indicative figure, taken from the *Annuario Pontificio* of 1993, puts the total at 134,800 people – of which, there would be 125,500 Catholics.)

Again, if one is interested in updating the figures given, further recalculations should be made, keeping in mind a yearly growth index of, say, +2.4%, as far as PNG citizens are concerned (as based upon the growth figures of 1980-1990). For expatriates there was, then, a negative factor of 3.4%.

Theo Aerts

CONTRIBUTORS

Revd Leva Kila Pat, from Gaire Village, Central Province, is the Executive Secretary of the PNG Council of Churches, Port Moresby

Fr Dr Willam Fey, OFM Cap, from the USA, lectures in philosophy at Holy Spirit Seminary, Bomana.

Professor Dr Ronald K. Huch, also from the United States, is the Acting Head of the History Department, at the University of PNG.

Revd Dr Joshua K. Daimoi is Principal of the Christian Leaders' Training College, at Banz, but teaches at present in New Zealand.

Mr Robert D. Fergie, also from CLTC, at its Port Moresby Centre, is presently doing post-graduate studies in Australia.

The Right Honourable Michael T. Somare, GCMG, CH, MP (Wewak), is a former Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

The Honourable Arnold Amet, CBE, from Karkar Island, Madang Province, is the Chief Justice of PNG.

The Honourable Jimson Sauk, MP for Kandep (Enga) since 1997, belongs to the Christian Apostolic Fellowship, and is presently Under-Secretary at the Ministry for Health, Port Moresby.

M. A. Ahmadi, B.Sc. (Hons), from Pakistan, is an Ahmedi Muslim, and works in PNG as Principal Engineer with the Department of Works, Port Moresby.

Fr Theo Aerts, MSC, from Belgium, is Protector of the "Ecumenical Religious Studies" at the University of PNG.