

A REPORT ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN MYANMAR

Hilario Plureh

Assumption University of Thailand

Abstract

This essay examines the character of religious pluralism in Myanmar and how religious conflict can be solved through inter-religious dialogue, particularly as understood by the Belgian missionary and theologian, Jacques Dupuis', and his "inductive method".

INTRODUCTION

Myanmar is famously known as "a perfect ethnological museum or a melting pot" (Ling, 2005, p.11). The government officially acknowledges that there are eight major groups among the 135 ethnicities with more than two hundred dialects in the country.¹ It is, in terms of ethnicity, one of the richest countries in the world. Due to its diverse tribes and cultures, it is a big challenge to unite this diversity under an umbrella of one nation. This is the main reason why the central government has encountered intermittent uprisings of discontented ethnic groups. Each ethnic group wants to be independent because they want to keep their ethnic identity. After gaining independence from the British rule, the Burmans (the largest tribe in the country, approximately two-thirds of the total population) have been in control of the country and have occupied the majority of seats in the ruling military government. On account of this position, the minority groups (Kayin, Kachin, Mon, Kayah, Shan, Rakhine, and Chin) have not been satisfied with the military government. These ethnic groups accused the government of trying to 'implement a Burmanization policy' in the country. (Topich & Leitich, 2013, p.3). That is why, for many decades they have been fighting for independence in their own territories. In fact, some of these ethnic groups (for example