

MCCBCHS (四大宗教咨询理事会)



Lest We Forget

Bishop Dents Dutton one of the founder members of MCCBCHS reminds us of the years of hard work and preparation that went into the final birth and registration of MCCBCHS in 1983. to tall into place in my own naive scheme of how things ought to be. I began to listen to people who cared and their ideas on how to encourage harmony in our country. Thus began a series of positive steps towards achieving a goal.

THE BEGINNINGS

In a time when "political correctness" is the watchword, should I tell it like it was or be just politically corrects?" I decided to just say like I saw the development of MCCBCHS.

This is my perception of the events that led to the [stressed of 'The Moths " I must stress that these are my personal perceptions. Others of my contemporary may have totally different viewpoints. With this understanding let me share my thoughts on this matter.



by
Bishop Dato Dr. Denis C. Dutton

As a young and energetic young pastor, I felt I was living in an ethos of suspicion and despair. Why can't people be allowed to practice and propagate the faith in freedom but in harmony with others, as long as they did not use unfair means to achieve determined ends? Our society seemed to be so fractions. Divisions of all sorts seem to abound. People of one religion appeared to be suspicious of the people of all other religious orientations. All this and more became very disturbing for a young man thrust in a responsible position of leading people.

Then came that accursed event in our Malaysian history-May 13 1969. What came starkly to my mind was a question, "could that event be avoided?" Some said it could others said it could not be avoided, given the political climate of the times.

I was invited by the late Tun Abdul Razak to serve on the newly formed National Council representing one religious sector on how we could help resolve ethnic tension and restore lasting peace to the nation. This was one important influence that inspired me to work and help set up a body which will help to solve ethnic and religious challenges for the common good of all people. I learnt that it would take patience,

statesmanship, a spirit of give and take, while holding fast to basic principles and tenets of our respective religious backgrounds.

I knew that there would be people within my church and without who would tell me that it is an impossible task. Greater and better people have tried and failed. My own conviction was that we must try again. Any attempt to unite people must begin with me. I examined my own attitudes to God, my racial origins, my feelings of suspicion, and my desire for a nation that I would be proud to belong. I could not begin to criticize and expect everything.

First, there was the late Professor Teo Jin Inn. Jin Inn, as a psychiatrist had connections that I had not. He helped to call meetings – meetings that included people of different faiths. I felt that it would be important to find common ground for consensus among us Christians before we could attempt to find a harmonious way of relating to people of other faiths. This was achieved when the Christian Federation of Malaysia was founded. I became its first Secretary. Some were skeptical of this movement. All that mattered was that the leaders were beginning to find that it was not so difficult after all to be on speaking terms, even if we differed in matters theological and traditional.

Then came the more apparently insurmountable task that of finding a way to bring the religion leaders together and work out a common basis for working together. One big section of the people of our country had the department within the Prime Minister's Department. How could the needs of the people who belong to other faiths have their feeling and thoughts expressed and taken notice of? There must be some forum that all can take seriously but at the same time not making anyone feel that this is yet another attempt to syncretise the religions of Malaysia.

After many months of talking, writing, and allaying fears we arrived at the need to form a Consultative Council. We agreed that it would be a forum to sort, decide, and guide our people in being good citizens of the nation. We also agreed that we would not align ourselves with any political party. This latter was important because many of the people who come to the same place to worship did not always belong to the same political parties.

It would refuse to be used as a political instrument of any unscrupulous persons. Therefore, we avoided any political contact that would show that we belong to any political party. The *people of* our respective religions must be given the right to determine their choice of political leaders.

The struggle for us was also to help calm the waters in case of any hard feelings that could develop in the propagation of our respective faiths. There were many times when serious trouble was defused because the matters that threaten violence were taken up by this council and dealt with in the best wisdom and religious statesmanship.