

# Church in Middle of Religious Pluralism: Presenting Environmentally Friendly Christianity

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**Abstract---** *The church lives during a pluralistic world and the church is amid religious pluralism. Religious pluralism in its journey has become a source of tensions many times and even triggers various wars. This is caused by every religion has its truth claims thereby forcing this understanding of individuals and even communities. Oneself is right thus assuming others are wrong. Yet in essence, no individual is willing to accept outrightly the religion s/he has adopted is wrong. Therefore, the church needs to maintain harmony between religious communities. To establish harmony and tolerance between religious communities, an effective way is needed, namely dialogue between religious communities for problems almost between each religious group. So, there is a meeting point or a common thread in warm communication. Perhaps during this time conflicts arise between religious communities that occur due to the interruption of the fabric of correct information between adherents of religion from one party to another, so that negative prejudices arise. The church needs to equip itself so as not to be easily swept away but also to remain open and respect the views of other religions without judging one another.*

**Keywords---** *Church, Religion, Pluralism.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian nation is a nation in which there is a very pluralistic society. Indonesia is an example of a multicultural society and as a multicultural society, the Indonesian nation is stated to be compounded not only by the diversity of ethnicity, culture, language, race but also in terms of religion. "History records Indonesian society is a pluralistic society of religions" (Johanis Siahaya, Yudhi Kawangung, Yuel Yoga Dwianto, 2020). The religions recognized by the Indonesian government during the current Reformation Era are Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Kong Huchu. This latter religion was the result of the Reformation Era in the government of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). In these religions, there was a difference in the religion of the Indonesian people. Having seen these differences if it is not properly maintained can lead to conflicts between religious communities that are contrary to the basic values of religion itself which teach us peace, mutual respect, and helping each other (Nazmudin, 2017).

The church lives amid the diversity of the world's people, so differences are inevitable. These differences and diversity are called pluralism. In Indonesia today, religious pluralism is a very hot issue to be discussed and reviewed. Intolerance is carried out by persons who claim to be religious figures these days are so tense and very disturbing to society at large. Differences in the views of each religion along with the claims of the absolute truth of each religion often lead to friction that is hard enough and not a few occurrences of violence in the name of religion. "The idea is carried out in order that the religious mission can be better understood by all Indonesian citizens in the

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*context of a pluralistic society so that the effort of relevant religious life is found in polite social harmony in the context of Indonesian plurality (Kawangung, 2019)*

Religion is a demand for human life in the world. This demand contains rules, procedures for worship, and social conduct among people. Social behavior in life brings good when truly based on religious values. Religion never teaches and guides its adherents to harm themselves, others, or even other creatures of God. Any bad behavior in the name of a religious command needs to be reviewed. Religion is not always used as an excuse and reason to make others suffer. Violence in behavior and actions reflects the beliefs and nature of the perpetrators. This appears based on an understanding of the doctrine and belief in self. Efforts to muzzle other parties for reasons of error and disobedience, not the way that must be passed. Errors and disobedience should be approached through wisdom and tolerance. Differences in perspective on something should not be the basis of violent behavior (Isnaeni, 2014).

The 2016 seems to be the time for some bad news. Terrorism issues are widespread, ranging from the shooting of the Russian Ambassador in Turkey, as well as armed conflict in Aleppo (Syrian Military). Also, various incidents of Molotov cocktails in the country, to cases were viral and reaped many pros and cons related to the blasphemy case were carried out by a DKI Jakarta Governor who went through a long court process (Widhi Adhiatma and Laurentius Purbo Christianto, 2019). This states that not a few cases of violence that occurred in Indonesia in the name of religion. The claims of the truth of each religion are the basic foundation for the existence of religion (Muttaqin, 2014). But in practice claims like these that often cause tension, because basically, the claims of the truth of each religion cause the religion to build a thick wall and make the religion as an exclusive group, so lightly consider other religions misguided. Whereas in reality there are no individuals who have embraced religion without hurting their feelings when deemed heretical, each individual will feel offended when a religion that is believed to be considered heretical by other religions. Not a few Christians also do things that hurt this fellow and become “little gods” who dare and loudly judge or determine others into heaven or hell. This begins when you begin to know the truth and assume that you have mastered the truth, and because you consider yourself to be the most righteous and the holiest, then, in the end, all actions are considered right. Not a few Christians lately like the prophet Jonah who is happy to wait for God to destroy other fellow humans who are not in line with his understanding. Though Christianity should not need to touch that realm, because it is the prerogative and sovereignty of God.

In the end, people who call themselves religious, and God will survive and attack each other. The result is chaos as recorded in history that some time has passed, religion is the reason for various kinds of warfare (Bahia Tahzib-Lie Corporation, 2010). People who call themselves God have instead become the main causes, the causes of chaos in the world. This is certainly something contrasting and sad, instead of someone calling himself God, but on the other hand, is the cause of chaos. Though not necessarily what is done is an activity that is sanctioned or even ordered by God. A person who has a religion should have a healthy body and soul, respectful respect, and speech and actions that are pleasing to the eye. When these things are not found in people who claim to be religious, then there must be something wrong with him (Hidayat, 2007).

So, how is the church's attitude towards the tensions produced by religions? How does the church deal with the reality of being in a diverse world? Does the church have to feel superior and look down on others? Does the church

need to feel the most righteous and thus at will to criticize and label others astray? How does the church take a stand when living amid religious pluralism? Therefore the author raises the title “Church in the Middle of Religious Pluralism” to answer how the church's attitude should be in religious pluralism.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

A research methodology is the steps used in conducting research and analysis (Sandu Siyoto and M. Ali Solidik, 2015). It is often abbreviated with the term research method, which contains an explanation of what techniques are used in conducting research. The author in this paper uses a minor qualitative research method with a literature review approach. The literature review is a study that uses library resources to obtain research data. Literature studies limit their research activities to library collection materials (Kopeuw, 2017). Existing data, analyzed with certain techniques, to produce a theory that can be accounted for.

The analysis technique that I use is descriptive. Descriptive analysis techniques use three stages in analyzing existing data, namely: classification, reduction, and interpretation of data. *First*, data classification is a stage of grouping data obtained based on data collection techniques during data collection, in this study is about the church amid religious pluralism; *Second*, data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing and simplifying data continuously throughout the study. Data reduction conducted by researchers is about the church in religious pluralism; *Third*, data interpretation is an activity undertaken to obtain meaning carried out during the research process begins.

## III. DISCUSSION

Responding to the state of Christianity in this chaotic world, Henri Nouwen sparked a theology of peace. Theology of peace is a theology of peace whose mechanism of operation is following the operation of the peace greeting carried out by the Lord Jesus when meeting His disciples as recorded by Luke 24: 36. Greetings of peace or shalom by the Lord Jesus technically must be operated by the greeter after he was truly filled with what he was experiencing, namely peace itself. “The discussion in Nouwen's book also gives another perspective and helps to portray the context in Indonesia, which is realized to be different from the Nouwen context, that we all do not know any religious background as they are suffering because of the polarization of society, becoming victims of violence and terror committed by the fellow nation.” (Simon, 2013). Only those who have peace can share peace. Theology of peace is every human endeavor that responds to God's gift of peace from himself and is willing to share it with others so that other people also have peace, like himself, on one side. On the other hand, peace can not be prevented in a person will radiate and become the energy of those around him to participate in getting their respective benefits. Furthermore, by being filled with peace in this way other people who already have peace have the capacity and responsibility to share that peace. Every peace that is shared will not reduce the peace of the person who shares it. It is often precisely the peace that belongs to those who share it increases because the person concerned sees the power of God at work in those who are given peace.

In the Christian view, the church must be present to bring peace and love in the world. Likewise, other religions, who have understood that their existence in the world is peacemakers and love. But this will never be realized when

the truth fights still occur, consider oneself right, godly and enter heaven, thus judging the other party wrong, disbelievers and certainly go to hell. Christianity that results in peace and love results from Christianity that has an attitude of wanting to live in harmony with fellow human beings, and not having an exclusive attitude. Harmony is everyone's dream, in harmony, there is peace and love. The Bible records in Psalm 133: 1-3 that a harmonious atmosphere is a good and beautiful atmosphere, and where there is harmony, that is where God commands the blessing to flow and life takes place.

Harmony is the result of the attitude or nature of a person to give freedom to others and provide the truth of the act in recognition of human rights. In the context of the interests of the state and nation, religious harmony is an important part of national harmony. Religious harmony is a condition of interreligious relations based on tolerance, mutual understanding, mutual respect, respect for equality in the experience of religious teachings and cooperation in the life of society, nation and state in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on the Pancasila and the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia 1945. All religious communities must make a real contribution to the national development carried out by the Indonesian people. Religious values must be able to provide positive motivation and be the direction in all development activities in Indonesia. Unity and cooperation between religious communities are necessary. In Indonesia, regulations have been established as efforts intended for the maintenance of religious harmony, namely:

1. **Pancasila:** The basis of harmony between religions can be seen in the Guidelines for the Experience and Experience of Pancasila as stipulated in MPR Decree No. II/MPR/1978 (MUI, 1988: 33). Furthermore, it can also be seen in the items of the first principle of Pancasila.
2. The 1945 Constitution Harmony and Tolerance between religious communities is contained in article 29 paragraphs 1 and 2 of the 1945 Constitution.
3. Outline of State Policy (GBHN)  
Harmony and tolerance between religions in the GBHN is mentioned in MPR Decree No. II/MPR/1988, Chapter IV letter D, number 1 paragraph b, and paragraph f.
4. Other Laws and Regulations Legislation relating to inter-religious harmony is Law No. 1/PNPS/1965 dated 15 January 1965, concerning the Prevention of Abuse or Blasphemy of Religion.
  - a) Joint Decree of the Minister of Religion and Minister of Home Affairs No. 01/BER/mdn-mag/1969 concerning the Implementation of the Duties of the Government Apparatus in Ensuring Order and Smooth Implementation of Development and Religious Worship by its adherents.
  - b) Minister of Religion Instruction No. 4 of 1978 concerning Policies on Beliefs.
  - c) Minister of Religion Instruction No. 14 of 1978 concerning Follow Up
  - d) Minister of Religion Decree No. 70 of 1978 concerning Guidelines for Broadcasting Religion.
  - e) Minister of Religion Decree No. 77 of 1978 concerning Foreign Assistance to Religious Institutions in Indonesia (MUI, 1978: 10).
  - f) Decree of the Minister of Religion and Minister of Home Affairs No. 1 of 1979 concerning the Procedures of Religious Broadcasters and Foreign Aid.

- g) Minister of Religion Instruction No. 8 of 1979 concerning Coaching, Guidance, and Supervision of Organizations and Flow in Islam that is contrary to the teachings of Islam.
- h) Minister of Religion Circular No. MA / 432/1981 concerning Organizing Commemoration of Religious Holidays.
- i) Specifically, in West Java, there is Governor Instruction No. 28 of 1990 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of the Second Year Pelita V's Target Acceleration in Chapter III, Special Guidelines number 11.

This means that Indonesia pays close attention to the harmony of the diverse community. In the context of fostering and maintaining harmony in religious life, since a few years ago the Ministry of Religion developed a three-harmony approach (Harmony Trilogy), namely: Internal Harmony between Religious Communities, Inter-Religious Harmony and Inter-Religious Harmony with the Government. Harmony between religious communities and the government is very necessary for the creation of national stability in the framework of national development. This harmony must be supported by inter-religious harmony and internal harmony among religious communities. The harmony meant is not just the creation of conditions where there are no internal conflicts between religious communities, conflicts between religious believers, or between religious communities and the government.

The desired harmony is a condition for the creation of harmonious relations and real cooperation while respecting the differences between religious believers and the freedom to practice the religion they believe in, without disrupting the freedom of adherents of other religions (Nazmudin, 2017). Thus, there was a condition called social harmony. Social harmony is a state of shared life that is colored by a harmonious and peaceful atmosphere, without conflict, but rather acts and agrees in thinking and acting to realize shared prosperity. In social cohesion, all individuals are enabled to live together without suspicion, mutual respect and respect, and are willing to work together for the common good (Yudhi Kawangung and Jeni Ishak Lele, 2019).

The church must be able to ground the teachings of Christianity subtly and slowly on this plural Indonesian earth. The church must have the courage to make room for other religions to remain in their beliefs and continue to pay respect when other religions practice their beliefs. This enlightenment awareness is a heavy responsibility for religious leaders because this will certainly reap the pros and cons of various parties in the religion. But this needs to be done to create an increase in the faith of a community of followers of a religion that can provide a place for communities of followers of other religions of different faiths in peace and love (Mul Khan, 2007). When Christianity does this, even the views of other religions on Christianity will be different, so as such, there will be an environment-friendly Christianity atmosphere. When each religion is simultaneously aware that each tradition from other religions should be taken into account as truth. Thus this can answer the true understanding of religion, namely supporting brotherhood between human beings (I. Bambang Sugiharto and Agus Rachmat W., 2000).

To realize this, one of the ways that have begun to be promoted in Indonesia lately is interfaith dialogue. In this dialogue, one thing that must be a common foundation is that religions must acknowledge each other. This is the definitive first step to dialogue - tolerance and acceptance between religions. In interfaith dialogue, what happens is not only to express each other but also to the stage of listening to and understanding what the other is saying. Therefore there must be a deeper line of communication than just acceptance. The point is communication that goes

further, which leads to a common path or direction (Knitter, 2008).

Furthermore, in interfaith dialogue some conditions follow, the conditions in question are (I. Bambang Sugiharto and Agus Rachmat W., 2000): *First*, the dialogue must be based on personal religious experience and solid claims about truth. The point is that positive dialogue must be attended by participants who are not only intellectuals but also true believers. Because the truth can only be experienced as fundamental if someone not only knows but also experiences. So these strong claims are manifestations of the depth of his religious experience. *Second*, dialogue must be based on the belief that other religions are very likely to have the truth as well. This is an important matter because it will not be possible to truly understand the position of the other party unless you use the other party's glasses. This can be done by using imagination and empathy. Through imagination and empathy, a person will be able to enter the feelings of the other party and be receptive to the imaginations that are attached to the feelings and appreciation of the other party. It does not stop there, there are other demands, which are required to understand the logic (internal logic) in the whole system of dogma, rite, and law lived by the other party. Of course, this requires academic work that is quite serious and heavy.

Dialogue is a concept that points into post-council missionary activities. Dialogue is born from God's vision, which dialogue with each individual to reveal His will to save. He established the history of salvation not only for certain people but for the whole nation and even religion. Such acts of God must be an inspiration for the Church in its missionary activities. Dialogue is an instrument for seeking truth and sharing in truth. To establish the best interfaith relations is to develop an open attitude towards other believers, a willingness to listen, respect, and understand each other in their differences.

Dialogue between religions must be based on respect for human dignity in the search for fullness of life. Respect for the positive elements that appear in every religious experience. But Pope John Paul II in the Church in Asia reminded that from a Christian perspective, dialogue between religious people is more about knowing and enriching each other, but part of the Church's mission to proclaim the Gospel, which is an expression of mission ad gentes. The broad concept and scope of the mission, the proclamation of the gospel not only aims at repentance and unity in the Christian community but also aims to spread the values of the Kingdom of God. Interfaith dialogue can be a specific missionary activity that completes the proclamation and formation of a community. Experience in Indonesia shows that there is a concern for interfaith relations. Dialogic relations are carried out on various levels and in various ways. That ongoing dialogue is what people do at the level of ordinary society, dialogue in daily life. Asian bishops call it a dialogue of life and heart. This dialogue occurs when we respect each other as individuals, as humble as the Master, open and accepting and working together to build a community of love. Religious differences do not prevent people from living together and collaborating in various forms (Hariprabowo, 2009).

In its journey, the interfaith dialogue itself, in the twentieth century AD, was held, a world conference on religion and peace. The purpose of the conference was to be able to build the faith of religions that could cool the world, as the escalation of global violence increases. The conference was held for the first time in 1970 in Kyoto. The second took place in Louvain in 1974. The third conference was held in Princeton in 1979. The conference was attended by around 338 participants from 47 countries of various religions and faiths. An effort that shows

seriousness to stop or at least reduce violence, especially violence in the name of religion. The religious conference called for a form of peace, as a world community that was built based on love, freedom, justice, and truth. The meeting signaled the negative and positive role of religion towards the creation of peace. Religion is considered as one of the divisive forces, often being dragged into the interests of world rulers to legitimize their interests and behavior. The positive impact of the conference included being able to foster compassion, and empathy for those who suffered. But reality speaks more to negative impacts, where violence is felt to be increasing. While the perpetrators of violence are adherents of a religion and on behalf of their religion and beliefs (Isnaeni, 2014).

In interfaith dialogue, one important goal contained in it is to share religious experiences, not to debate or even argue. Therefore, this activity is not an activity that unravels the theological doctrines of each religion. However, it is also not to ratify the subjective truths believed by each religion, but rather to further enrich religious experience and knowledge of the traditions of other religions.

With interfaith dialogue, it encourages the Christian community to look for an approach that is different from before - before, and which is more correlational towards adherents of other religions. Thus the realization of a situation will be possible where all parties can seek and find truth in the form of wealth that never fades. Also, it will enable more effective cooperation to eliminate human suffering and the environment that is destroying the earth. In this way, exposure activities that compare aspects of similarity and religious experience take place in a dialogic atmosphere, and each religion can learn from their own experiences how the teachings of religion can be practiced. This learning must be done with a sincere, honest, and open attitude, not aiming to judge or find fault with others (Taher, 2009).

Individuals and communities of religious people who have the right religious knowledge and who carry out their religious teachings properly and correctly have an important contribution to the quality of religious communities. This will be reflected in the behavior and activities of life in a pluralistic society. Each religion in principle teaches to appreciate differences in other religious communities (Idi, 2015). To deal with this, the church needs to get right with itself first. The point is that the church must have a strong theological foundation first so that the church is not easily dragged away from leaving its faith when it is exposed by other religions in interfaith dialogue. But on the other hand, it still respects and respects the teachings of other religions, so that peace and harmony between religious communities are maintained.

Christianity needs to work on the process of maturing faith and the maturity of thinking so that people can live side by side amid differences. This process of maturing the faith must be carried out in every learning process that exists, such as sermons, seminars, or in sharing that is done in small groups of faith formation. The substance of teaching certainly must emphasize the importance of living together in harmony with people who are ethnically, religiously, and socially stratified. Also, the substance of the teaching must place special emphasis on interfaith cooperation efforts related to humanitarian issues. This diversity format is also referred to as a format for the future of religion (Supriatno, 2009). Therefore, if every consistent religious adherent firmly implements religious teachings well, and obeys applicable laws, it will create good harmony between adherents of the religious community and will avoid conflict, disputes, or clashes that can disrupt national unity. and national stability.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

A church that lives amid diversity must be able to understand and live out what the Lord Jesus said, which is as clever as a snake but sincere as a dove. The church must be able to live in religious pluralism. This does not mean that the church must be like a changing chameleon, but that the church needs to maintain harmony with the surrounding religions. The church must be willing to be open and accept the differences. The church must be able to respect the views of other religions. Also, the church itself must be in order with itself, have a sufficiently capable understanding of theology. Therefore the church needs to continue to equip itself so that it is not easily influenced. A good church, not only stops at the level of knowing or having a sound understanding of theology but must be able to embody theology's understanding in daily life that everyone likes and does not become a stumbling block for others. Thus, the church can carry out "diving while drinking water" activities, namely contributing to the development of advanced Indonesia, as well as being a witness of Christ in a life that can be a blessing to others.

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